

THE
M A G I C I A N

BY
LEITCH RITCHIE

THREE VOLUMES

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TO

MY BROTHER JOHN

I DEDICATE THESE VOLUMES,

LEITCH RITCHIE.

THE MAGICIAN.

CHAPTER I.

IN the year of our Lord one thousand four hundred and thirty-seven, the famous city of Paris presented the spectacle of a royal entry far more interesting than the usual pomp of kings. For fifteen years before, a stranger had sat on the throne of France. For fifteen years, the foot of an English monarch had been on the neck of the French people; and Henry V., with the usual insolence of a conqueror, instead of humouring the writhings of his prostrate enemy, had only trode:

the fiercer at every throe. But the spirit of the Nation was now fairly re-awakened. Heaven itself had fought on her side; and by signs, and portents, and miracles, rendered holy the cause of Liberty. The apostle, and martyr, of the new revolution, was not a warrior, but a woman; not the scion of royalty, but a peasant girl. The mission of this illustrious Virgin was now fulfilled; the French people had risen up like a strong man from slumber; their enemies had been swept out of the metropolis; and, on the day on which our narrative commences, their wandering Prince, crowned with the diadem of his ancestors, was about to enter in triumph the gates of Paris.

Among the vast multitudes that rolled like a torrent through the streets, there was a single individual, who, although in some slight measure connected with the business of the scene, appeared, like ourselves, to be nothing more than an idle spectator. This was a young Scottish knight, who belonged to a party which had been sent forward to announce the coming of the king, but who had now, with the curiosity of a stranger, and the love

of foreign sights inherent in his nation, sallied forth alone to engulf himself in the crowd. He had lately fought, in the breaches of Montereau, against his ancestral enemies, the English ; and a little earlier had pranced through the city of Tours, in the train of the princess Margaret of Scotland, who had gone thither to wed the boy-dauphin : but never before had he beheld, or even imagined, so much splendour and confusion on so vast a scale.

As he elbowed his way from the island called the Cité, which formed the central portion of Paris, towards the wilderness of houses and palaces on the right bank of the river, he paused in astonishment on gaining the middle of the bridge—it was the Pont-aux-Changeurs—to look round upon the scene. Behind him, after his eye had traversed the Cité, the visible horizon was formed by the thousand dark roofs of the University ; and before, at the end of the bridge, his passage seemed to be barred by the stern towers of the Chatelet, although surmounting and surrounding these, the turrets of almost innumerable palaces attracted, irresistibly,

the curiosity. On either side the view was shut in by the ranges of shops and houses which lined the bridge like a parapet; and if sometimes an opening afforded a peep beyond, another bridge loaded in like manner, was seen at a few hundred paces distance.

The first thought of the stranger was of the enormous number of human beings which this densely packed mass of dwellings must contain.

"In God's name, messire," said he to a passer-by, "how many may there be of you here?"

"The first city in Europe," replied the bourgeois, pompously, "reckons within her walls three hundred thousand souls." The Scot stared in astonishment.

"Then, by our Lady's might," said he, "there are enough of you to eat up all Perth at one meal!—that is, if we would let you."

"I doubt," rejoined the citizen, "whether the capital of Scotland could afford us even a single meal; else why do so many hungry mouths cross the ocean almost daily, to eat and drink at the cost of France?"

"Because they are bidden," replied the Scot, lowering his voice, and compressing his lips, like a man who would not lose his temper. "If France could fight her own battles, there would be no need of our Scottish spears. But away! you are only a peddling churl, for all your embroidered doublet; and to-morrow I shall see you in the depths of some dusky warehouse, haggling for deniers, in a dress of serge and leather!"

"I am an echevin of the town!" cried the insulted dignitary.

"Were you the prévôt himself, I say you are only a peddling churl!"

"Masters, will you hear this?" said the echevin, turning to the crowd, some of whom had stopped to listen to the dialogue; "do you see my badge? Be there none here who follow the banner of Saint Luce?" But most of those whom he addressed walked away out of the row, and not a few of the others laughed outright. As for the Scot, whom the name of the banner had informed that his antagonist was a member of the confrérie of tailors, he turned indignantly away; and the inhospitable

echevin, alternately appealing to the passers-by, and tugging at his unwilling sword, was soon left behind.

The young knight pursued his way, rather less disposed to admire than before this adventure. The Chatelet, however, through the arch-way of which he passed, although no longer the Roman tower of Julian the apostate, appeared to him to be a fortress of incomparable beauty as well as strength; and the immense line of the Rue Saint Denis beyond, although he had heard that the Rue Saint Martin was still wealthier, seemed to contain in its countless shops and warehouses the riches of a whole kingdom. But every thing on this day had an aspect peculiar to the occasion. The street was hung in its whole length with canopies of rich cloth and carpeting, and here and there stages were erected for the performance of music, shows, and mysteries. The members of the different confréries of trades were seen hurrying along to their rendezvous, gorgeously dressed, and bearing the banners of their patron-saints; while jostling these, successive groups of minstrels,

jugglers, players, and above all, devils, hoofed and horned, elbowed their way to their various posts.

Nor were the women wanting in the spectacle. The caps alone of the ladies, made in the form of a sugar loaf, half an ell high, from the peak of which a white veil flowed forth, and descended to the feet, would have made them sufficiently remarkable; but the effect of this portion of the dress was heightened by the fantastic richness of the rest. They wore, no longer, indeed, the arms of their husbands emblazoned on their gowns; nor did their garments, like those of their great grandmothers, in the fashion of the open tunics of the Spartan girls, display their naked sides: but gold and silver, satin and velvet, combined to furnish figures calculated to adorn the festival of the gayest prince in Christendom.

Among the vast crowd of strange figures and costumes, the knight was surprised to find none belonging to the Hebrew nation. He did not know, or had forgotten, that, although still spreading its branches in other parts of Europe, the tree of Judah was not only cut down in France, but rooted up out of the soil. The Jews, in fact, had been

banished so strictly from this most Christian kingdom, by an edict of the last prince, that if one of them had been found to-day among that multitude of his fellow-creatures, he would in all probability have been burnt alive.

But, mingling with the peculiarities of the day, the common business of life went on as usual; and the stranger was almost stunned with the thousand discordant noises of a Parisian morning. Every article in daily use, from a roasted goose to a tallow-candle, had its crier; and every crier vied with his neighbours as to who should bawl the loudest. The commissioners of the baths were flying about informing the public that their water was hot, and, looking eagerly in the face of the passer-by, shouted, "Make haste! make haste!" The venders of wine were clamorously inviting the crowd to taste; the restaurateurs tempting the appetite with a catalogue of their meats; and in the midst of all, some men in black issuing from the houses, or the cross streets, ringing a mournful bell, called upon all who heard them to pray for the souls of the dead.

The number of beggars, especially, was so great,

and their endless litanies so loud, that they might almost be said to give the prevailing character to the scene. Besides the common poor who go to and fro upon the earth to this day with artificial wounds and stories of imaginary distress, there were shoals of vagabonds calling themselves Bohemians, distinguished from the rest by their shorn heads—so despoiled by the mandate of government. A still greater number of bald crowns belonged to the various orders of mendicant monks; and these were farther distinguished by the chin as well as the scalp being destitute of hair. The most remarkable of this class were the Jacobins, a colony of Dominicans, so called from officiating in the chapel of St. Jacques. One of these flogged St. Louis to his heart's content in the quality of his confessor; another assassinated Henri III.; and another canonized the assassin: but notwithstanding this illustrious fortune, they all begged in the streets of Paris. Then came the cordeliers, so celebrated for their dissolute manners; and then the Grands Augustins, the Celestines, the Carthusians; while, jostled by

these bold and libertine monks, some bands of Beguines, and *Sœurs Sachettes*, raised here and there their shrill voices among the crowd.

All these, however, were beggars by profession, and excited therefore but little of the knight's pity, although they drew some small coins from his pocket ; but it was with a start of surprise and concern that he saw, mingling with the clamorous crowd, and crying like the others for bread, some students of the university, habited in their black gowns and cowls. This common spectacle appeared extraordinary to him ; for the university was associated in his mind only with ideas of power, and grandeur, and the most prodigious audacity. But this was the university as a body ; this was the rector, the advocates, the regents of the colleges : he had now to learn how happily the students united to their clerical character that of the ruffian and the mendicant. The spirits of the Scot were depressed, as he thought how many high-minded, chivalrous adventurers had left and were still leaving his own country, to pursue the path of honour and fortune at this famous semi-

nary; and in particular a cloud settled upon his brow as he speculated upon the fate of an early friend, whom it was to be his business that evening to seek out in the city of colleges, on the left bank of the river.

On approaching the end of the street, which was terminated by the gate of St. Denis, on the same spot which it occupies to-day, the crowd became so dense, that sometimes a halt of several minutes at a time took place in the moving mass. On such occasions the principal confusion was occasioned by the valets, who enjoyed the reputation of being, next to the students, the greatest blackguards in Paris. So obnoxious, in fact, had they become to the authorities, that those who were out of place were forced to quit the city instantly, if they could not find some respectable person to become responsible for their conduct. Their costume was as various as that of their descendants of the present day; but many wore only a single sleeve of their master's livery. On the present occasion their delinquencies were confined to certain manual jokes played upon the lower class of women, and

some less innocent conversations which they held with the speaking birds, hung out almost at every window. And in these household favourites of the Parisians of the age, it must be said, they met with their match. Leading the public life they did, in which they were exposed to every sort of society, the natural morality of the birds was so far lost, that they had become fluent in every term of insult and indecency; and thunders of laughter were elicited among the crowd by the aptness of their repartees.

When the Scottish knight at length reached the gate of St. Denis, a scene took place which formed a strange prelude to the approaching ceremony. In those days the English were not the only ravagers of France. Famine, as usual, had followed the steps of protracted war; and troops of starved wolves, unable to live in their forests, came prowling, not only to the gates, but in the very streets of Paris. Women as well as children, if we may believe contemporary authors, were in some instances killed by these hungry and ferocious beasts; and not a few of the more daring citizens went

forth to combat the destroyer, in the same chivalrous spirit which inspired the heroes of the romancers, in their duels with giants and dragons.

At this moment a slain wolf of extraordinary size was brought in, as a trophy, by a party of these adventurers; and when the cortege reached the gate, in order to give greater effect to the exhibition, the tremendous brute was raised upon his legs, with his dead eyes and dripping jaws directed towards the street. The spectacle was hailed by the rabble with a universal shout; but the noise died away with unusual suddenness. It seemed as if the show had been taken as an evil augury; and this strange avant-courier of a monarch was ordered to make his entrance by another avenue. The wolf-hunters, however, were now anxious to become the spectators of a new and more splendid pageant; and the gaunt carcass was thrown down by the way-side, to remain till the living hero of the day had passed by. The incident was called to mind soon after, when the burdens which the necessities of Charles VII. compelled him to impose, were characterized

by the selfishness of the Parisians, not as the demands of a lawful king, but as the ravages of a wolf.

The whole of the space at the porte St. Denis, was taken up by the authorities of the city, lining each side of the way, with those in the middle appointed to receive the king. Above the gate was hung a shield, with the representation of France supported by three angels, and the following inscription :—

Tres excellent roy et seigneur,
Les manans de votre cité
Vous reçoient en tout honneur,
Et en tres grande humilité.

The ground was kept by the arbalatriers and archers of the town, arrayed in coats of arms; which, being of the livery colours of the city, red and blue, gave them the appearance of wearing a uniform, although this improvement in the dress of soldiers is of much more modern introduction.

The approaching cortege, which had been some time in sight, at length gradually reached the

ground ; and file after file, as they arrived, took up their position on either side of the way, till King Charles himself was seen through the long vista, approaching slowly and majestically, seated on a white horse, the emblem of royalty. At this sight the breath of the vast multitude, hitherto pent up, as it were, by curiosity and expectation, found simultaneous utterance, and the cry of "Noel ! Noel !" burst from every lip. The expression is a contraction of *Emanuel*, "Lord be with us !" and was used at that time as a cry of joy by the French people, instead of "Vive le Roi !" It was echoed from mouth to mouth, from street to street. The women and children in the most distant quarters of the metropolis gave back the sound ; the sick and the dying put aside their curtains, to gaze towards the window, and swell the shout with their feeble voices ; the clock-towers of every church in the city gave forth at the signal a joyful peal ; and even the great bell of the palace, whose hammer stirred only on extraordinary occasions, rang "Noel ! Noel !"

On the approach of the king, the prévôt of the

merchants—for the prévôt of Paris was a royal and not a municipal officer—presented the keys of the city; while a canopy of violet-coloured velvet was held by the echevins (answering in some respects to our aldermen), over the royal head. The city dignitaries then marshalled the way of their master into his metropolis.

The prévôt of Paris was attended by his sergeants on foot in great numbers, each wearing a green and red hood; and after these came a long line of notaries, procureurs, commissioners, advocates, and counsellors, followed by the lieutenant and guard of the governor, or, as he was termed in the grandiloquence of the age, the *king* of the Chatelet.

After this civic cortège, there followed one of a more extraordinary nature, or at least, one that few would have looked for in the triumphant march of a king. It consisted of Faith, Hope, Charity, Justice, Prudence, Courage, and Temperance, all on horseback, and all sumptuously dressed in character. Together with these, however, perhaps to redeem in some measure the

inconsistence, the Seven Deadly Sins came plunging on in terrible array. Treading on the heels of the latter, the gentlemen of the Parliament and Requests then made their appearance, attired in red robes ; and after them, a body of eight hundred archers, led on by the Count d' Angouleme, a Prince of the blood, of the house of Orleans.

Montjoye, king of arms, came next ; a grave and august personage, shrouded in an immense robe of violet-coloured velvet, studded all over with golden fleurs-de-lys, and large pearls. After him rode the Grand Esquire, carrying the royal helmet, which was closed with a double fleur-de-lys of gold. So sumptuously were this personage and his horse arrayed, that he might have been mistaken for the hero of the scene himself ; but following next in order appeared the white steed, which, in the processions of that age, denoted the royal rank of the rider. This superb animal was covered with velvet housings of celestial blue, planted with golden fleurs-de-lys, and trailing to the ground. His forehead was covered with a

plate of polished steel, and surmounted by a magnificent plume of ostrich feathers.

Nor was the rider unworthy of the steed. Whatever may have been the defects of Charles's person, none were visible on the present occasion. The disproportionate shortness of his legs, which caused him, it is said, to introduce the fashion of long garments, was now hidden by his dress; and his lofty and soldier-like bearing, at a moment like this, so full of pride and triumph, partook, no doubt, still more than usual of a graceful haughtiness. Clothed in gilded armour, with a rich coat of arms over the cuirass, and shaking to the motion of his steed a cord of glittering gems, which hung upon his hat, onward pranced the hero of the day, bowing and smiling to the enthusiastic greetings of his people, and looking "every inch a king."

After the principal personage had passed by, the interest of the Scottish stranger seemed to increase rather than diminish; and he gazed at the next in order with an earnest and critical eye. This was a young lad of fourteen, armed, dressed,

and mounted in all respects like Charles himself. It was the dauphin, the *husband* of the Princess of Scotland; of that beautiful, amiable, sensitive little girl of eleven years, whom the knight had assisted in transplanting from her native home at so early an age. The spectator sighed, and shook his head, as he had often done before, on perusing the features of the boy; and the gloom that settled on his brow told how deeply he regretted that the royal Scot had not matched his daughter in her own country.

The knight followed the young dauphin with his eye, till the pages of both king and prince, coming closely after, intercepted his view. The Bastard of Orleans then appeared, armed from head to heel, and both himself and horse blazing with jewels. This splendid warrior led on the "battle" of the king, consisting of a thousand lances, all armed to the teeth, both man and horse. The long array was closed by an Esquire of the Stable, bearing a vermillion lance, spangled with gold stars, at the head of which there hung a standard of red silk, with ornaments like those

of the staff surrounding a portrait of St. Michel. After him there rolled an immense multitude of lords, knights, and bourgeois, with the peasantry, as it seemed, of the whole province; all dressed to the extent of their means, and in the fashion of their degree.

The official part of the procession having now passed, the young knight pushed lustily on after the principal personages; but not before examining, with a glance of curiosity, the appearance and costume of the various classes of the people before him. The profusion of gold and silver in the dress surprised him much, and the hoods of black or red cloth worn by the high bourgeois did not appear to his judgment to be far inferior in richness to the silk and velvet of the nobility. Short coats, although disliked by the king, were worn by many of his subjects, and were embroidered with silk, and often with pearls, both before and behind. The longer dresses were generally of two colours, called *robes mi-parties*, and produced, in the eyes of the knight, an odd and fantastic effect. The countrymen were usually

dressed in brown coats and breeches, with spatter-dashes bound with iron, and slouching hats, ornamented with a leaden medal of the Virgin.

Our adventurer, who endured a squeeze with incomparable patience, speedily found himself once more within view of the persons who were supposed to form the most interesting portion of the procession. He reached the fountain of the Ponceau, which he found surmounted by a large vessel, covered with a fleur-de-lys spouting from its three points, *pro bono publico*, hypocras, wine, and water. Two *dolphins* (in compliment, no doubt, to their brother Louis) were swimming in the well—at least, so saith the “Cereimonial de France.” A triumphal arch was then passed through, painted of an azure colour, and sprinkled with the ever-recurring fleur-de-lys. An image of Saint John the Baptist, pointing to an Agnus Dei, adorned the summit, with a choir of good fat angels, of the confrerie of Saint Julien, flapping their wings, and playing their fiddles with all their might.

At the hospital of the Holy Trinité, the patent

theatre of Paris, a stage was erected, on which the mystery of the Passion was performed in pantomime; the recollection of which, however, was almost immediately effaced by other stages, and other pantomimes, which presented themselves as the procession advanced. When the Chatelet was at length gained, a great rock had grown out of the Place before it, on which a number of shepherds, tending their sheep, were in the act of receiving the news of the nativity, and singing *Gloria in excelsis*. At the bottom of the rock reclined three personages, whose costumes unfortunately have escaped our research; but their names were, the Law of Grace, the Written Law, and the Law of Nature. The Scottish knight, however, was more edified by a spectacle opposite the Boucheries, which represented Paradise, Purgatory, and Hell; with Saint Michel weighing souls in a balance.

At the bridge, Saint Margaret and a dragon were the gate-keepers (in honour, perhaps, of poor little Margaret of Scotland, and the hereafter Louis XI.); while the baptism of our Saviour, by Saint

John, was going on. But after entering the cité from the broad avenue of Saint Denis, the spectators could hardly move with the procession through the narrow streets; and by the time the king had reached Notre Dame, our knight could see little more than a multitude of black hoods, interspersed with mitres, and shaven crowns. The proprietors of these articles were, the Ruler of the University, the archbishop, bishops, abbots, monks, regents of colleges, monitors, sub-monitors, and students.

Here Charles took the customary oath, between the hands of the bishop of Paris, to maintain the privileges of the chapter, and was then permitted to enter the church. This majestic edifice—where you see at least the memory of old Roman and Lombard taste through its Gothic romanticism—was illuminated by thousands of tapers, although it was still day-light. The glimpse which the indefatigable Scot was able to catch of the interior, showed him three arcades running up the nave, all thickly planted with tapers, and terminating nobly with the majestic forms of the master altar.

The treasury of the church was opened on this occasion, and numberless relics presented to the eyes of the people, holy enough to redeem a soul from sin by the very sight. Among them was the identical crown of thorns purchased by Saint Louis for one hundred and fifty-six thousand, nine hundred livres of the money of to-day ; and also the scourge of iron links with which the same pious monarch loved to chastise himself.

After prayers and thanksgivings were offered, *Te Deum* was given forth by the choir, assisted by thousands of worshippers. The whole atmosphere vibrated with the lofty music. As the sound rolled forth like thunder over the heads of the vast multitude assembled round the cathedral, all sank upon their knees. The neighbouring churches joined in the majestic strain, and those beyond heard and repeated it, like an echo ; till the same voice, the same song of triumph and adoration arose from every altar in the city, and every knee in Paris bent to the earth, while every heart repeated, We praise thee, O God ! The Scottish knight, brave and reckless as he was ; "daring in

love, and dauntless in war"—rose up trembling. A tall, black, sinister-looking object, elevated near the church, met his eye at the moment, and divided his feelings between the terrors of heaven and earth. It was a gallows, denoting the right of "haute justice" exercised by the bishop.

The great business of the day was now almost over, and Charles VII. had nothing more to do than to repair to the Palace of the Cité, and exercise the duties of hospitality to all, indiscriminately, who chose to favour him with their company. The street leading to this ancient edifice—famous long before Paris became a metropolis—was narrow and tortuous, crowded with shops, and in every way unlike the avenue to a royal dwelling. Nor was the aspect of the Palace itself a great improvement to the picture. Two sombre and narrow gates admitted the now disordered procession into the Cour du Mai, where the space was too small comparatively to afford any definite idea of the immense pile of buildings in front. Two outside staircases conducted to a great door, which seemed the principal mark of the struggling

and panting multitude ; and our knight, attacked at once by curiosity, and a most savoury and generous dinner-smell, allowed himself without reluctance to be carried on by the tide.

If disappointed outside, all in the interior was enchantment. The hall into which he entered was so vast and so lofty, that it seemed only fit for the dwelling of giants. It was paved with white and black marble ; and the roof, entirely of wood, was elaborately carved, and supported by wooden pillars of azure and gold. All round the walls were seen the statues of the French kings, with the hands raised, if the reign had been fortunate, but hanging disconsolately by their sides, if otherwise. At the further end was a prodigious table of marble, occupying almost the whole breadth of the hall, and so large, indeed, that it was sometimes used as a stage for the performance of farces and mysteries. At this table were seated the king and princes of the blood ; while humbler boards, disposed throughout the room, received the other dignitaries—care having been taken to provide separate accom-

modation for the Town and University. Immense as was the company, the repast was brought up from the kitchens underneath with far less confusion than might have been expected ; for here every thing was on so vast a scale, that the stairs of communication, which were two in number, were broad enough to allow the whole army of cooks to march up side by side at one time.

When our young knight, who had eaten nothing since the morning, had done abundant honour to his royal entertainer, and taken more than one hearty draught of wine, which was served in proportion, he bethought himself that his wanderings for the day were not yet over. Taking advantage, therefore, of the noise and confusion incidental to a popular toast, he got up and made his exit, sincerely praying that the king might live long enough to give many more such feasts, and that he himself might be one of the company.

On descending into the Cour du Mai, he found that its whole area was filled with tables, crowded with company, many of whom were the very lowest of the populace. Near the stairs, however,

there were numerous individuals of a higher rank who had found the tables full in the interior ; and he listened for a moment, as he passed, to a voice which seemed to be familiar to his ear.

" I tell you, masters," said the speaker, " it was nothing to this ; the English hogs like eating too well themselves to give generously to another. Henry V. deserved to lose the first city in Europe, were it only for his hungry feast. Why, I'd as lief dine with a beggar under a hedge, as sit here and eat the cold scraps of a king, with hardly a cup of wine to wash them down ! The very poor of the Hôtel Dieu cried shame of it. Down with the English ! say I. Come, my masters, pledge me to this toast, ' Down with the English, and up with the banner of St. Luce ! ' "

" Bravo, my friend," cried the Scot, as he passed by, " Down with the English, and up with the banner of St. Luce ! "

" What, is it thou ? Hast thou eaten, ha ? Hast filled thy belly ? Art satisfied ? "

" Abundantly."

" And wilt thou still talk of Perth in the same day with Paris ? "

"Never, never," answered the knight, who was now in excellent humour.

"Sit down then, in God's name," said the mollified echevin, "Sit down ; here is more to eat, and wine without stint."

"Another time, friend echevin ; although a Scot, I would not eat you up at one meal !" And in the midst of the laugh which this little sally occasioned, he made his escape from the house of feasting.

CHAPTER II.

THE streets were still crowded ; and the stranger, calculating that the students would not betake themselves to their colleges for some time yet, amused himself with wandering about the precincts of the palace and Notre Dame. The Sainte Chapelle more particularly attracted his attention, the relics of which, collected by St. Louis alone, cost more than a hundred thousand livres tournois. But this price will not be thought extravagant, if it is recollected, that among the valuables there was not only a piece of the true cross, but a portion of the identical iron which pierced the side of Christ.

Around the cathedral there were grouped so many churches that one might have imagined himself, on such a spot, to be altogether free from

the intrusion of sin ; but besides the gallows of the bishop, which spoke eloquently of crime and suffering, there were other objects calculated to drag the thoughts of the passer-by from heaven to earth. In passing through a certain street, the knight was accosted by females, whose shameful trade was evident by their want of the customary hood, denied to them by statute. This place, existing from time immemorial in the holy ground of the Cité, was called the Val d'Amour ; and the inhabitants formed a female confrerie with St. Magdalen for patroness, whose fête they celebrated with religious festivities. But not only was the Venus Vaga thus converted to Christianity, but the repentant members of the sisterhood were received as nuns under the name of the Filles Dieu ; and the knight had seen distributed, during the procession, at the door of their convent in the Rue St. Denis, a silver goblet-full of wine to all who passed by and chose to drink.

As the evening closed in, the tumult of the streets began to die away ; and the noise of the waters of the Seine, as they boiled and whirled

among the wheels of the Pont-aux-Meuniers, rose above the lessened din, and seemed

Imposing silence with a stilly sound.

Even without inquiring, the stranger easily found his way to the bridge which led to the university, by the crowd of black figures bending thither, from all quarters, their sometimes unsteady steps.

When at length he had reached the left bank of the river, he found himself in altogether another town, differing from the one he had left in every characteristic, both moral and physical. Few shops, few merchants, few tradesmen were to be seen—few even of the omni-coloured nondescripts who belong, one knows not how, to a city. But instead, there was a population of black figures, black cloaks, black cowls, and a mass of black houses, more resembling public buildings, than private dwellings. Yet, on nearer inspection, the same inequalities were observable which are seen in every large collection of human habitations. Some of the houses were old, some new; some mean, some majestic: and their occupiers, in the

same way, exhibited, in the outward man, all the varieties of sublunary fortune.

The knight, in inquiring his way, addressed himself like a prudent stranger, to the more respectable class of the passers-by—to those whose substantial-looking tabards, worn over their college dress, showed that they were at least graduates of the university; but after some time he found himself involved in a labyrinth of mean and narrow streets, where the appearance and manners of the inhabitants were but little calculated to inspire confidence. Groups of students rolled along, quarrelling and fighting as they went; screams, mingled with laughter, were heard from every opening; and the clash of weapons, often more sonorous than cudgels, made the stranger at last bethink himself, whether he had not made some odd mistake—whether he was in reality traversing the Jerusalem of science, the holy city of priests and scholars?

While hesitating for a moment as the idea occurred to him, he was suddenly and violently pushed by a party of students, who appeared to have been skulking behind him; and the Scot, not-

withstanding his good humour, instantly collared the nearest offender. This, of course, produced a *row*, which seemed to be all that the black gowns wanted; and in an instant, three or four cudgels were whistling about his head at the same time. Still he did not draw his sword, for the weapon in its sheath was hard and heavy enough almost to make up for the odds against him; while the hauberk beneath his coat of arms defended his body from serious injury. In other respects, however, he was not more than upon a par with the enemy. His coat was merely an ornamental garment, emblazoned with the arms of his family; his immense spurs, made in the fashion of the age, as large as a man's hand, somewhat impeded his pedestrian motions; and on his head he wore only the common pointed cap of the time, protected from spirits rather than men, by a sprig of the holy rowan tree, or mountain-ash.

But his forbearance, attributed, in all probability, to a dread of the University—which learned body would have hung, without mercy, a much more distinguished man for shedding the blood of a

scholar in any quarrel—only increased the violence of his assailants. While wondering whether this was anything more than an ebullition of the blackguardism of the most turbulent youth in Europe, his doubts were at once dissipated by an exclamation which mingled with the shouts and yells accompanying the attack.

“Down with the false Scot!” cried one of the students; and the young knight, perceiving at once that he was in danger of assassination, stood no longer upon ceremony, but drew his sword. His enemies were, no doubt, some of the English who had been permitted, out of respect to the University, to remain at their colleges; and such were the feelings which existed at that time between the two nations, that the energies of the Scot were now still more roused by national hate than by the instinct of self-preservation.

His new position, however, was only calculated to accelerate his fate; for at the same time three of the students threw down their cudgels, and drew a short two-edged sword, concealed under their gowns; and which, strange as it may seem, under such circumstances, they had probably been

prevented from using before, by certain feelings of honour. At the sight of this weapon, forbidden to their order, our adventurer perceived that the case was now become very serious indeed; and having an excessive repugnance to the idea of being thus put to death in a corner, he began to shout lustily for help, and at the same time to help himself with redoubled energy.

"Shame upon you, ye pock-puddings!" cried a voice at this juncture, from a window above their head, "to fall like a pack of hounds upon a single man! Who is it ye are slaughtering now? One of yourselves I trust,"—for by this time the daylight was almost entirely gone, and the speaker, who had been attracted to the window by the shouts, could not at first distinguish colours.

"It is a knight, ye false loons!" continued he, in a tone of greater interest, as he bent out of the window, "a belted knight! and, holy saints! a Scot—and his cognizance—O Christ!" At these words the speaker suddenly disappeared from the window, but the next moment his voice was heard sounding like distant thunder through the house.

"Bauldy, Nigel, Andrew," shouted he, "clubs,

ye villains ! hurry for your lives ! What ho ! to the rescue ! It is a kindly Scot, and a Douglas to boot—Saint Bride for the Bleeding Heart !” and with this cry he darted out of the doorway, followed by three wild uncouth-looking figures, who rushed in pell-mell among the students, dealing right and left such sudden and tremendous blows, that each individual had floored his man almost before their presence was observed by the belligerents.

The knight, having now more elbow-room, seconded his friends so stoutly that blood began to flow in great abundance ; and the tread of a body of horse being heard at the same time in the distance, denoting the approach of the night guard, the English, if English they were, at length fairly took to flight.

“ Not a step !” cried the leader of the rescue, as the knight was about to follow in pursuit, “ not a step for your life ! And know, messire, that however well off you may think yourself at this blessed moment, that red puddle which you have spilt upon the street, may yet cost you your neck !

But come, these English cut-throats, it must be allowed, have some indistinct notions of propriety, after all ; they will give and take whole skinfuls of broken bones over night, but are not the lads, like some other nations I wot of, to go groaning and blubbing to the rector in the morning."

"And yet," said the knight, "notwithstanding the boasted virtues of the English, I am happy that I owe life and limb to my own countrymen."

"Spoken like a true Scot !" cried the rescuer : "but come, there is no wisdom in standing here in the dark, till the guard come up ; and so, messire, you must just step into the college, and let us have a crack till the jaw go by."

The stair was in utter darkness, and so ruinous, that the ascent took some time. In the meanwhile, the conductor continued to be the spokesman of the party.

"Don't be in a hurry," said he, "for in a case like this—I should say a stair-case-haste is not the father of speed. You must know, I am a Douglas myself, by the mother's side ; and that is the reason why my heart warmed to the cognizance

of the house, when I saw it on your coat of arms. But mind the next step—there—hoot! I should have said the hole where the step was ; but I hope you are not much hurt. We collegians, you see, are a thought wild at times, and besides, the stair is older than our day ; and Bauldy there, and Nigel, and Andrew, some whiles contrive, God knows by what luck they manage it, to get their mouths to the wine-flask ; and then they come triumphing home in a way that no stone and lime can stand. And now we are in the schoolroom. *Cedant arma togæ*. I always put my stick where it can be found in the dark. Bauldy, my man, will you not have the decency to light the candle ? that is, if there be any of it left : if not, we can easily rive a piece off this bench, and make a fire, which will answer the purpose as well ; and when the regent sees the damage in the morning, it is easy laying it upon the rats.”

Bauldy, however, after much rummaging, found a small dirty bit of tallow candle, and at length succeeded in lighting it. While this operation was going on, the knight, who had stood for

some time in profound silence, suddenly grasped the arm of his rescuer, and demanded, in a voice neither very clear nor very steady, "Am I really in what is called the Scottish college? Speak!"

"Take off your fingers from my arm, then, my man," replied the scholar; "I can speak without the screws. Truly, are you in the Scottish college; and, although I say so who should be silent, there is not a college like it in the whole university!" At this moment the light gave a sudden flare, and was as instantaneously extinguished by the awkwardness of Bauldy.

"God be gracious to me!" exclaimed the scholar—"What is this? My heart leaps to my mouth; the tears rise into my eyes; old times, and old places, and old friends, and old by-gone dreams come back, as if conjured by a spell! Speak! Who are you? But need I ask? You are a Douglas; you are—"

"David!" cried the knight, opening his arms as the flame of the candle re-appeared.

"Archibald!" and the two friends fell on one another's necks; the one struggling with his tears,

and the other, less acquainted with the customs of society, weeping aloud.

"And you, that I thought were never to have left home!" said David, when they had recovered breath; "more especially, after the connexion of your name with France had ceased, or at least, had become nothing more than a name, by the death of your chief, Earl Archibald, duke of Touraine! Tell me, friend and comrade of my young days, and cousin five times removed—tell me, Archibald of the Braes, what made you leave your father's fireside?"

"War—woe—want," replied Sir Archibald; "my father is dead in a border foray; my patrimony is eaten up by the creditors; and, as a baillie of the tailors' most truly, but most impudently, cast up to me to-day, I have come to France, that I may continue, as heretofore, to eat of the wheaten bread, and drink of the red wine."

"Alas, the day!" ejaculated his friend; "he was a worthy man, your father, and my mother's near cousin! It is no wonder I did not know you, for you are a head taller, and your voice is like a drum. But you bleed, Archibald!"

“It is nothing.”

“No more it is: and if otherwise, we know nothing here of the art of the leech, which Messire Walter of Metz justly casteth into contempt, as having only to do with the perishing body. It has no part in our clergy, formerly termed the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, and which consisteth only of the noble arts and sciences of astronomy, music, geometry, logic, natural philosophy, and grammar. When these lads are wounded, which happens to them, poor fellows, seven times a week—Set down the candle, Bauldy, and don’t hold it at us, as if we were world’s wonders; and wipe your eyes, and shut your mouth, my man: he is come, Douglas, of gentle kin, and is every inch of him a kindly Scot. And there is Nigel, with a headful of fiery hair like a comet, he is a cousin not far removed of my own; and Andrew at his back, who counts lineage with the Kerrs of Cessford. Away with ye now to bed, sirs. Fye, I heard the bell of the ignitegium, or couvre-feu, an hour ago; and besides, I have a long crack to get over with Sir Archibald: for you already know, my friends, that, although an Armstrong by

name and by nature, I have the blood of the Douglasses in my veins."

The Scottish students, who appeared to be entirely under the management of David Armstrong, took the hint promptly; and, after shaking hands roughly and warmly with Sir Archibald, retired to find their way to bed in the dark.

"And mind me, lads," cried David, bawling after them before he shut the door, "it will hardly be worth while to take off your clothes so late; but keep your cudgels within arm's length at the least, in case of call; and above all things, commend your souls to the care of God and the Blessed Virgin before ye dare to close an eye!"

"Not that I would have you think, Archibald," continued he, after he had fastened the door, "that they are likely to forget their prayers, poor lads; or, in fact, for all my jokes upon the stair, that they are more *ebriosi*, or, in the vulgar speech, given to drink, than most of the other students: but enough of this for the present; you will know them better, if you remain long in Paris."

"I have cause to know them already," said Douglas, "and to remember them all my life; but as for how long I shall remain in Paris, or whither I may bend my steps when I leave it, or what I am to be about; these are questions, my dear friend, that I cannot answer, seeing that I am in profound ignorance upon the subject myself."

"Well, if that is not amazing! So near a kinsman, and a godson to boot, of the Earl Archibald of Douglas, duke of Touraine, whose soul may heaven assoil! Why, I should have thought you might have put forth your hand at will among the loaves and fishes. But it is the way of the world, I suppose. The Earl is dead on the field of battle; and so is his son; and so are most of the five thousand brave Scots they brought over with them; and the English are flying the country, bewitched even by the ashes of that wonderful wench Jean; and Charles VII. is the little king of Bourges no more, but the master of lordly France. Well! well! well!"

"Your thoughts fly too fast, good David, and overshoot the mark. I have been received by

king Charles with a distinction due to the name I bear; and I have reason to believe, that my chance at court is far higher than my personal deserts. But yet, I know not how it is; I feel, as it were, unsettled. I—," and the knight paused, and observed that the candle wanted snuffing.

While Armstrong was performing this operation, slowly and methodically, by taking out the candle-end from its socket with one hand, and decapitating the burnt wick with the finger and thumb of the other, he threw a keen glance of observation upon his friend, between his half-closed eye-lids. His expansive and sagacious brow then began to curl towards the nose; he sucked in his cheeks; and his mouth twisted itself awry; but having subdued these indecorums of features usually characterized by a kind of good-tempered solemnity, he turned gravely to the knight.

"Archibald of the Braes," said he, "I was forgetting to ask after the health of Margaret Leslie of the Lynhead."

"Alas, poor girl! she is dead of consumption long ago."

"May her soul find grace! But it was rather the young Agnes of the Holmes who was in my thoughts; she for whom you may remember you fought so bitterly with the knight of Lochmahow, when as yet you were both pages."

"Agnes of the Holmes," replied Sir Archibald composedly, "is now the wife of the knight of Lochmahow."

"A-hem! And Mary Elliot? whom in our wild days, may the Lord forgive us! we used to call the Virgin Mary, because of her pride and fierceness to the young men."

"Tush! her golden hair has turned as red as Nigel's."

"God's will be done! I have nothing to say to it."

At this moment the candle sunk to the bottom of the deep socket, whence it emitted only a fitful glare. The apartment was vast, and solidly built; but time and neglect had defaced and injured the massive walls, which they could not altogether ruin. Some benches seemed to be the only furniture; and these were formed of rough

planks, which had experienced at divers times the fate so recently threatened them : but a dusky object, also, appeared in the distance, which might have been a pulpit, or other seat of honour, consecrated to the service of the regent. The fire-place was a vast gulf, which contained the dust and litter of the school, for aught we know, from the time of St. Louis ; but the damp, unwholesome air of the room proclaimed, that fuel was not considered an object of necessity in the Scottish college. .

When the knight had gazed for some moments at this scene, by the dying light of the candle, he withdrew his eyes, to fix them on the face of his friend. David Armstrong's features were all decidedly handsome ; but taken collectively, they formed a portrait more full of what is called character, [than manly beauty. His expansive forehead was intersected by several small horizontal wrinkles ; his eyes, glowing rather than sparkling with a steady light, were set deep in his head, and overhung by dark eyebrows, delicately pencilled, but somewhat fuller than became his

age ; his nose, arched, massive, and firmly placed, conveyed an idea of decision and determination ; while his mouth and chin, divested of the beard, expressed a degree of benevolence amounting to softness ; and his head was surmounted by a small, round, black cap, almost the shape of the skull ; from the sides and back of which, a mass of dark matted hair fell down to his shoulders. His gown, open in front, and betraying every possible mark, both of neglect and strife, disclosed a strong square-built, yet symmetrical, figure of the middle height ; while the hood, or cowl, falling in absolute rags upon his back, threw an air of poverty and desolation over a portrait which, otherwise, would have been only striking and picturesque.

As Sir Archibald looked, the embarrassment which had been visible in his manner wore off, and an expression of kindness, tinged with pity, took its place.

“ My dear friend,” said he, grasping the hand of his old comrade, “ it was to answer all your questions ; to tell you all I know ; and to crave

the counsel, and, if need be, the aid, of one who is wise and true, as well as brave ; it was for this that I am here to-night. But there is now no time for a story like mine ; it is late, and we shall soon be in the dark ; and, to say the truth, David, I feel that I ought not to speak to you *here* of any affairs but your own." David's eyes followed those of his friend round the room.

"It is well-sized," said he, "that you must allow ; and yet not so well cared for as it might be. The truth is, we students, as I said before, are a thought wild, as it were ; and although, in this individual college, owing to the war, and accidents, and desertions, our whole number, at the present blessed moment, amounts to no more than four ; yet Bauldy, and Nigel, and Andrew, poor fellows, will have a break out at times, and then stone and wood cannot hold them ! Man ! I have seen them battle their way home, with a train of friends and enemies at their heels, till within these four walls we were seven score of us poor scholars, all fighting pell-mell, like so many devils !"

" Poor scholars indeed !"

"And then, you see, Archibald, the luxuries of the world, in whole furniture, and evenly-plastered walls, and swept floors, and darned gowns, and such like vanities, would ill become the vocation to which we are called—"

"Hold ! what vocation may that be ?"

"What vocation may that be ?" exclaimed the student with heat, "was there ever such ignorance heard tell of ? Do you not know that we are the *clerks* of the University ? Do you not see the sacred tonsure ?" and snatching off his cap, he showed his scalp bare about a hand's-breadth. The knight stared in amazement—he even felt the bald crown of his friend, with something like the infidelity of St. Thomas.

"Yes, Archibald of the Braes," continued David with solemnity, "we are priests before the Lord, every mother's son of us ! But we are not monks, my dear friend ; on the contrary, we hate with a religious hatred all such lazy and luxurious vagabonds. We are not brethren of this or that order, but brethren of the whole Gospel ; we are aspirants of the holy ministry, whereof the

ministers are the canons regular of the church of Christ !”

“ You must allow, notwithstanding,” said Douglas, when he had recovered from his surprise, “ that the church takes but little carnal care of her nursery.”

“ Too much ! too much !” replied his friend, “ our privileges unite in one those of the clergy and nobility. And is it nothing to belong to a body which controls the very state ? which gives its sanction, sometimes, even to a treaty of peace ? which cites the very magistrates before its tribunal ? which excommunicates the officers of government themselves, when they put forth their tax-gathering fingers upon the carnal wealth of a scholar ?”

“ But touching this carnal wealth—”

“ Why, it is but a few years, as I may say, since messire de Savoisy, the chamberlain of the king, was dismissed from his office, and banished the kingdom, because some of his people rode through our procession on its way to St. Catherine of the Val des Ecoliers, thereby compelling the poor

students to break the heads of the intruders with stones !”

“That is excellent,” exclaimed the knight, rubbing his hands ; “but I would fain know by what means the University exercises a power so extraordinary, and, no doubt, so reasonable.”

“By means of a humble remonstrance and petition, imploring the government with tears and groans, as it were, not to drive it to the cruel necessity of exiling itself from a city where such outrages could be perpetrated with impunity. Supposing the document, for instance, to be addressed to the king, it shall commence thus, ‘Vivat rex ! vivat rex ! vivat rex ! May he live corporeally ; may he live spiritually ; may he live civilly ; may he live spiritually, lastingly, and reasonably. This beautiful salutation is offered and proposed by the daughter of the king, by the fair clear sun of France, and of all Christendom—’ ”

“By whom, in the name of the saints ?”

“By ‘the daughter of the king,’ I say, ‘the fountain of all science, the light of our faith, the

beauty, the ornament, the honour of France and of the world—the University of Paris.’ ”

“Excellent, wonderful!”

“Or, supposing the rector petitions in behalf of his suffering mother, as in the aforesaid affair of messire de Savoisy,—‘In exposing to you,’ says he, ‘messeigneurs,’—for, you see, we were at that time even as a helpless orphan, because of the lunacy of king Charles VI., and were therefore obliged to address the parliament—‘In exposing to you, messeigneurs,’—and a slight snuffle, but so slight as to be hardly observable, gave a richness to the scholar’s voice,—‘thé pitiful and very miserable complaint of the daughter of the king, my mother, the university of Paris, I shall commence by a suitable saying of Scripture : Estote misericordus!’ ”

“Good! good! ha! ha! ha!” shouted the knight; and his hearty laugh, which had been preparing while the student spoke, rung through the room. David Armstrong, however, continued with imperturbable gravity, and without noticing,

even by the slightest expression of feature, the mirth of his friend.

“As for carnal wealth, Archibald,” said he, “seeing that we are but seekers after wisdom, and fore-destined ministers of the sanctuary, what end would it serve? In general, we are bursars; and it is only lately that they have begun to throw open the colleges to boarders and day-scholars. If stipendiaries of the school, the regent, who is but human after all, tries, no doubt, to turn the penny by us as well as he can; if *martinets*—for so we term those who are able to flit about, like swallows, from teacher to teacher—the Lord have mercy upon us, when it comes to argumentations and examinations!”

“That is to say, you are as badly off in one case as in the other.”

“Not so: the bursars are educated, and supposed to be fed at the expense of the founders of the bursary; while the *martinets* must feed themselves, and pay besides a matter of four sous a month, for leave to learn in the college.”

"That accounts," said Douglas with emotion, "for the spectacle I witnessed with horror and disgust to-day in the public streets."

"They were not Scots!" cried the student quickly, and he withdrew his face into the shade. "But what matters it?" added he, after a moment's pause, "poverty is the badge of the scholar, and will be so to the end of time; and if there be among us those who cry in the highways for bread rather than die like wolves, without a howl—why, Archibald," and he leant forward once more, and allowed the light to stream full on his untroubled brow—"why, man, they are but dunces in philosophy, that is all that needs be said."

"Scholarship, David," said the knight, "who no longer felt any desire to laugh, "is with you a profession. Tell me, what are your hopes? What are your prospects? The church is a lucrative and noble field."

"Truly is it, Archibald," replied the student, "the church is indeed a lucrative and noble field; lucrative to the rich, and noble to the high-

descended! But besides the small number of rich and noble, besides the proteges of the rector, and the cousins, and cater-cousins of the eighty regents, there are thirty thousand of us here who are neither rich nor noble, who call not the rector friend, nor the regents cousin. To read my fortune, you must calculate the chance of these thirty thousand in the mass, and then divide that chance into thirty thousand parts—one whereof is mine."

At this ominous conclusion, the flame of the candle flashed suddenly up, illumining for a moment with a dull imperfect glare the dreary room, and bringing out, in Rembrandt lights and shadows, the remarkable head of the student, and the martial figure of the young knight. It then sunk as suddenly in the socket, and disappeared in utter darkness.

"And now, Archibald," said David Armstrong, continuing to speak as if an eclipse of the kind had been of too common an occurrence to be worthy of remark, "You will ask why I continue to waste my life in so hopeless a pursuit? You will ask—"

"Ask !" interrupted the knight with indignation, as he started up from the bench, and floundered out into the middle of the room, where his voice sounded amidst the obscurity like the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "I will ask, indeed, why Philip Armstrong's son chooses to sit starving of hunger, and shivering with cold, in a den of wild beasts, rather than buckle harness on his back, like his ancestors before him, and carve out his way to fortune with his father's sword ! Why, man, thou art bewitched ! They have thrown a spell over thee with their hellish gibberish, which has benumbed thy faculties. What ho ! Awake ! Come with me into the light of day, and let us be comrades in arms, as we once were brother imps in mischief ! Trust me, this night-mare of the soul will vanish at one blast of the war-trumpet !"

"It would, it would !" cried the student, rising, "I know that it would ; even I, who see, although afar off, the glories of science, and who feel by anticipation the pride, the power, the——O Archibald, you cannot comprehend me. I eat of the coarsest, and drink of the thinnest : my bed is of

straw, my apparel of rags, my habitation of ruins ; and think you that I look for my reward in the gown of a curé or a curé's vicar ? No : I have an aim far higher than your eye can reach, or even your soul understand ! But this is not the time to be more explicit. My struggles on one hand, and misgivings on the other, have of late been severe ; but the hour approaches quickly which shall determine my fate." Douglas could hear the unquiet step of the speaker in the remotest corners of the apartment, and the labouring sighs with which he was delivered of these words ; and for a moment the idea entered his mind that his friend was insane !

"David," said he, "will you accompany me to my lodgings ? It is cold here as well as dark, and the breath of heaven will do us both good."

"Of a surety," replied David, in his usual tone, "I will not leave you to your own guidance on the hill of Sainte G  n  vi  ve. Come, where are you now ? You are not the first who lost his way in the grove of Academus. There, take hold of my cowl—but not so, as if it was a banner

which you were wresting from the enemy. The dress of a student, I assure you, costs money, and the tailor's account, besides, is written in Latin : 'Pro capucio,' so much ; 'pro corneta cum farcitura,' the Lord knows how much more. And now, being at the middle of the stair, you will make a wide straddle to get over the hole, whose depths you would needs explore in coming up ; and there is no need for starting as if you heard unexpected thunder, when it is only Bauldy, and Nigel, and Andrew, poor fellows, slumbering like babes in the next room. We are now in the street. It must be late indeed, for all is quiet."

The friends pursued their way, guided more by the local knowledge of Armstrong, than by the lamps that burned dimly, here and there, before statues and pictures of the saints. As they approached the side of the river, they met more than one passenger, coming on with a lantern in one hand and a sword in the other ; but the strangers always took to flight on seeing two persons wandering along in the dark. They at length reached the bridge leading to the palace, where Sir Archibald had been assigned a lodging.

"You are now at home," said the student, "I shall be with you to-morrow, if I am a living man, after the first class; and in the mean time, go straight to your bed, without turning to the right or to the left, and the blessing of the saints go with you!"

CHAPTER III.

THE student stood gazing for some time after his friend, till his form had disappeared in the darkness, and the echo of his tread died away. He then tightened his leathern belt, drew his gown more closely round him, pulled the tattered cowl over his brow, and crossing his arms upon his bosom, walked slowly homeward, like a man plunged in the deepest meditation. The great city slept. The night wind sighed along the streets, as if they had been ruins ; and the river answered with its stilly voice, to the sound. It was the hour when spirits were supposed to be permitted to walk the earth ; and when the noises of winds and waters were easily syllabled into their mystic speech, by the imaginations of men.

David, however, seemed either free from the superstition of the time, or his preoccupied mind afforded no room for its fantastic creations. He walked slowly on, without raising his eyes from the ground, till he had almost reached the Scottish College; he then turned suddenly into a lane to the right; his footsteps became both swifter and lighter; and if his dark figure had been seen gliding thus quickly and noiselessly through the gloom, he might have been taken himself for one of the supernatural beings who haunt the night.

From one long and tortuous lane, he glided into another, till it might have seemed that he was walking for exercise, or for the purpose of counting every turning and winding on the peopled hill of Saint G  nevi  ve. At length he stopped before a mean and ruinous-looking house, in the darkest part of a dirty and almost deserted street. This, apparently, was his destination. After looking round for a moment, as if to make sure that he was not observed, he plunged into a miserable gateway, the door of which, unnecessary as it seemed to the poverty of the inhabitants, was unfastened. He

crossed the silent court; entered the door of what seemed in former times to have been a kitchen, and found himself beyond in a labyrinth of roofless walls, and ruined apartments. Here the student, after looking round once more, with hardly necessary caution, entered a low and narrow opening, where the gloom of the night was at once converted into utter darkness.

After groping his way for some time, the path was shut by a strong door, which he opened by means of a concealed spring; and having entered, he closed it carefully behind him. Another, another, and another barrier of the same kind were passed, the level of the ground always sinking as he proceeded, till he appeared to have descended into the very bowels of the hill of the University. At length his art seemed to be at fault: a door of treble strength, which he tried like the others, refused to yield; and, after listening for a moment, he struck three blows with a stone upon the massive frame. The summons was answered speedily from within, in a voice which sounded distant and indistinct.

"Whom seekest thou?" was the challenge.

"Trismegistus," replied the student. A rumbling noise of bolts and locks then succeeded; and the heavy door began to revolve upon its hinges, till, having opened to the width of a few inches, its progress was suddenly checked by a strong iron chain.

"Is it thou?" said the voice querulously; "Art thou come at last?" and before David could open his eyes, blinded by the glare of a lamp, the chain fell, and he found himself drawn impatiently, but feebly, into the room.

"Stand not," said his host, whispering tremulously, while he performed this operation, "but come in at once! Hush! Not a word above thy breath! What!—thou wert not observed? Art sure? Silence! Not a syllable till the door is fast. Now speak: no, waste not time in words; but come, for the great work stands, and I have need of the strength of thy young arm."

The apartment had the appearance of a vast and lofty oblong cavern, cut with tolerable regularity at the sides, but roofed by the unhewn

rock. At the farther end there was a great furnace, on which a large open cauldron bubbled audibly; and near it stood a table covered with manuscripts and writing materials. There were, also, disposed in various parts of the chamber, huge piles of different substances, chiefly of a mineral nature; and here and there, a smaller furnace and crucible awaited the need of the operator. At the sides of the oblong area were several dark vaulted recesses, used apparently as storehouses, and bearing a sort of rude resemblance to a series of lateral chapels opening from the nave of a Gothic church. This idea would, no doubt, have been further assisted, in the mind of an imaginative spectator, by the ground rising towards the farther end of the cavern, so as to look like a chancel; and by the huge and massive table near the wall beyond, occupying the place of the master-altar.

When the high-priest of this strange temple of Science, where the deity was as yet an idol, and the worship a blind and mystic superstition, had ran, rather than walked, up to the table, he seated

himself with the feverish haste which characterized all his motions, and began to turn over the papers with a tremulous hand. His dress was mean and common; but a cap of unusually large dimensions, and made of faded velvet; falling over his brow till it overshadowed the eyes, gave him, upon the whole, rather a singular appearance. About his face there was nothing common-place. His dark eyes still sparkled through the films of age; and looked up at the person he addressed with an eager, watchful, and suspicious glare, from beneath an overhanging canopy of brows as white as snow. A hooked nose, a well-formed mouth, and a flat and individually unmeaning chin completed the inventory of his features; while these were set off by a long white beard, that would have looked venerable if clean. He was evidently a foreigner in France, but of what nation it would have been difficult to tell; and yet, his was precisely the physiognomy which excites, while puzzling, the curiosity.

“Why hast thou tarried?” said he, suddenly, as if reverting to an idea which had escaped him

in the hurry of his thoughts; and pausing in his occupation, he fixed a glance of intense scrutiny upon the student's face. David Armstrong was standing beside the table, with his hands folded across his bosom, and engaged in perusing the features of the old man with such undisguised earnestness, that the latter withdrew his eyes as suddenly as he had raised them.

"Did you make a remark, doctor?" said David, awaking from his abstraction.

"I asked a question," replied the doctor angrily, "why hast thou tarried? It is not thy wont: thou lovest not the lean commons of thy college; and the time of our evening meal is long past."

"I care not for warm meats at night," said David; "if the fare be good, it will not be the worse for standing. But as for the delay, which seems to you so remarkable, it was caused by the visit of a friend."

"Of a friend! What friend?"

"A foreigner."

"A foreigner! What foreigner? A traveller? Whither have been the steps of his pilgrimage?"

To the East? My God; and these things are to be kept from me! What did he tell thee? Does he know more than I? Good David! am not I thy friend? thy best friend? thy only friend? And thy supper, cold though it be—for I know thou lovest it cold—hath it not tarried even till now for thy coming? Ho! daughter!" and he opened a chink of a small door behind him; "the meal of the young man, even of the good young man, David! and a pint of wine, daughter; yea, a whole pint! Come David Strongarm, let us commune together. Are we not brethren? Are we not father and son? Do we not seek, hand in hand, the hidden place of the Ter Maximus, yea, of the Great Interpreter? Who was this visitor, this stranger, this traveller? Speak!"

At this moment the door opened, and David's supper appeared; whereupon the student, who had hitherto waited patiently, found an opportunity of replying to his categorist, which he did in a voice so cold and sedate, as to contrast strangely with the feverish tones of the other.

"He is a man of war," said he, and he knows hardly the names of the seven metals."

The meal, not cold, but luxuriously warm, and set out with peculiar neatness on a wooden salver, was then placed before the hungry Scot; and a gleam of sunshine seemed to steal over the still features of David Armstrong as he dipped his fingers in a bason of water, held to him by the Hebe of the feast. This was a young woman, who bore what is called a striking resemblance to the doctor, and yet, was as absolutely *unlike* him as one human being can be to another. Her eyes were singularly bright; and her eyebrows full, like her father's, but exquisitely pencilled; her nose, too, was arched, but so delicately modelled, that it would not have seemed out of place on a Greek statue; her mouth, half pouting with a beautiful seriousness, appeared to reprove the wishes it inspired; and a chin, broad and unmeaning in the old man, when filled up in her with the rich ripe plumpness of youth, redeemed with a dash of voluptuousness a certain virgin-severity of expression, which characterized the rest of the portrait. Her hair was as black as night, and so

luxuriant, that the simple head-gear she wore was hardly able to confine it within the customary bounds; while, owing perhaps in part to the effect of contrast, her complexion seemed absolutely colourless. That her mother had been a native of some foreign, perhaps some Eastern, clime, like her father, was evident. David could have believed that she was a Spaniard, had the paleness of her cheek exhibited any tinge of sallowness.

"It is a fine night, mademoiselle," said he, blushing with the effort, while his fingers lingered in the water, thrilling with its coolness, and his eyes were fixed bashfully on the beautiful face before him.—"It is a fine night in the upper world, mademoiselle, only dark, and cold; and inclining to wind and dampness." The damsel smiled demurely at this almanack information, and bent her head.

"You will not have been up stairs to-night, perhaps?" persisted the student. She shook her ringlets, and attempted to withdraw the bason suddenly.

"Thanks to you—it is a great refreshment "

continued he, holding fast; "O mademoiselle, what a lonely life you must lead here! One would think you would be glad to open your lips to a Christian man, and a clerk of the University to boot, an Armstrong by name, and a Douglas by the mother's side!"

"My God! what is all this?" cried the father, raising his head: "What planet were you born under, that you will stand with your hands in cold water, while on one side the savour of the meat escapeth, and on the other, the great work standeth still?"

"Chide him not, father," said the damsel, suddenly; "the young man means kindly and speaks kindly—and God knows such accents are strange enough to our ears to be welcome when they come!" David heard her voice for the first time; and for the first time her eyes met his, in a full, frank, confiding, yet melancholy look. The student's heart throbbed wildly, and his brain began to swim: the next moment the damsel was gone.

It was a property of this girl to come and go

like an apparition. Summoned by her father's voice, she was accustomed to stand before them as suddenly as a spirit called up by enchantment ; and when the wondering scholar was in the very midst of his gaze, and perhaps turning over in his mind the most potent spell to make her speak, even so would she vanish. Her stature was above the middle size, and her form neither slight nor spare ; yet her footfall gave no sound to his ear ; and her approach was only made sensible by the waving of her garments, and by a strange faintness, as David averred to himself, which came over his heart.

He had thus beheld her every night for several years ; he had watched her ripening beneath his eye, till her spring of youth had begun to warm and brighten into summer ; he had seen the clear transparent paleness of her cheek grow richer and richer every month, yet not less pale ; and by degrees, the heart that had followed with surprised delight the fairy motions of the girl, began to quake and tremble at the approach of the young woman.

In vain had he tried again and again to engage her in conversation, or even to elicit a single monosyllable from her lips: she answered with an inclination of the head, a smile, a look as quick as thought; and if he persisted, she either vanished like a spirit, or, if her brief duties were not over, took refuge at her father's side. In vain had he tried to draw even from her eyes something more than a mere assent: he could not fix them for an instant. When they encountered his, they sought the ground, the roof, the distant entrance of the cavern, and always returned more sad, yet more high and proud, from the excursion. She said, as plainly as silence could speak: "Between thee and me, there is an impassable barrier:" and David Armstrong would have given every drop of the Douglas blood in his veins to know what it was, or that it gave her grief to say so.

On the present occasion, as soon as she had disappeared, he sat down to a meal which, judging by the celerity and avidity with which he dispatched it, had probably caught some fascination from her hands; if these symptoms did not rather

indicate an excellent appetite produced by the economy of the regent, some of whose brethren, it is said, considered the expenditure of a sous a day sufficient to keep up the carnal man of a student. David, after eating neither like a lover nor an alchemist, seized the goblet with the haste of one who would make up for lost time.

"Here's to it!" said he, nodding gravely to his companion, and he emptied the measure at a draught. "And now, doctor (it is but thin drink, that!), let us to work in earnest." He fastened his cloak in such a manner as to prevent its impeding his motions, furred up his sleeves to the elbows, and stretched forth his muscular arm for a paper which contained, we suppose, the *recipe* of the night. His brow, in the mean time, resumed the wrinkles which had been chased away by the damsel; the sunny smile which in her presence had decorated his staid features, vanished; and a deep shade of care and study descending upon his countenance, added at least a dozen years in appearance to his age.

As the doctor handed him the paper across the

table, the old man stopped suddenly short, and looked towards the entrance of the vault with a wild and terrified expression. His assistant's eyes sought the same quarter, and both listened for some time without breathing. The silence, however, was like that of the grave. The upper world, whose business and turmoil might have produced some vibration which perhaps could be heard even here, was drowned in sleep; and the cavern was far beyond the approach even of those animals that burrow deeper than man in the earth.

David, smitten with the contagion of a fear, of which he knew not the object, looked around him, as if for the first time. The tall piles that rose here and there like spectral figures, and to which the unstable flame of the furnace gave an appearance of life and motion; the smaller openings, gaping like vaulted tombs at the sides; and the descending distance, overhung with black shadows as with a pall—all the strange, fantastic circumstances of the scene, with their adjuncts of time, place, occupation—and even the countenance of the high-priest of Hermes, with its ashy com-

plexion, its white, trembling lips, its staring eyes, its singularly lofty brow, from which the cap was thrown back, and where the damps of mortal terror were gathering in large drops: every thing concurred to fill the student with a species of awe, to which his mind had been hitherto a stranger.

“In the name of the ever-Virgin, doctor,” said he in a whisper, “what is it?”

“Silence! name not the woman!”

“What!”

“That is, speak not—hush! It is nothing!” and the doctor drew down his cap, with a sigh of relief, although his hand still trembled, and, turning to his pupil, he writhed his lips into a smile that would have been ludicrous if it had not been ghastly.

“It was perchance a dog,” said he, “yea, it *was* a dog, even a houseless cur, that wandered for shelter into the passage; for I heard with mine ears the touch of a living thing upon the first door.”

“Messire Jean of Poitou, and doctor of I know not what!” said David, enraged with his master

for having made him afraid, and excited besides with a religious suspicion; "even if it had been no dog, but a true spirit of the abyss, which you heard, methinks there was all the more occasion to speak reverently of the blessed Mother of God!"

"I speak reverently! My good young man—my worthy David Strongarm, thou didst not hear: as thy soul liveth, thou didst not hear!"

"You forbade me to name her."

"I did, my excellent friend; for even holy names will betray those who hide from the face of the seeker."

"But you called her—"

"What? A woman! My good David, wouldst thou have had me call her a dog? Dost thou dream? Art thou drunken with wine? Hast thou forgotten the torture of fire to which two of our brethren were so lately exposed, in order to make them declare the secrets of their science? Is thy own young life of less value to thee than are these few and miserable white hairs to me?"

David looked as sour as a controversialist who is staggered in argument, and yet believes, that after.

all he may be right: he had nothing to reply, however; and turning doggedly forth, he stretched his hand once more for the paper. It dropped, however, from the extended fingers of the adept, and floating away to some distance, its fall upon the earthen floor was distinctly heard amidst the profound silence of the moment.

“There, there!” cried the old man, growing again as pale as a corpse, “I was right, it is no dog! Daughter—” and his voice rose to a shrill shriek as he called instinctively upon the ministering spirit of the place. She was by their side before David could turn his eyes to the small door, to watch her coming; and in another instant, darting like a moonbeam through the gloom, her form was lost among the shadows near the entrance of the vault. A pause of intense anxiety ensued, during which a sound from without, hardly louder than the fitful sighing of the wind, reached even the unaccustomed ears of the student. The young woman was then seen gliding out of the darkness, like an apparition; and when she stood suddenly beside them, David

looked at her almost with awe, so tall, so still, so majestic she appeared.

"It is the footstep," said she slowly, and after having fixed her eye for some moments on her father, as if to give him time to recollect himself; "it is the footstep of one to whom the secrets of the passage are known!"

"Secrets," whispered the adept hoarsely, while a gleam of fierceness shot through the terror in his eye, "secrets that are known only to us three, and to the dead! What am I to think?" and his hand slipped, with an imperceptible motion, into the folds of his cloak, as he turned to his pupil.

"Think that the dead have risen again," said Armstrong haughtily, "if it be necessary to solve the problem." The young woman grasped her father's arm with one hand, and with the other caught up a small lamp from the table, which she held to the face of the student. When the light had played for a moment upon the disdainful curl of his lip, upon his bold and open brow, and upon the deep bright eyes that were turned half re-

proachfully, half bashfully, upon hers, she withdrew her hand from the old man's arm, and set down the lamp.

"I will answer for him with my life," said she.

"And I will defend you with mine!" exclaimed David, in an under-tone, and with a thrill of delight.

The sound of knocking was now heard distinctly at the door of the cavern.

"God of our fathers!" cried the adept, "what is to be done? We will escape by the dwelling-house; we will hide among the ruins; we will take the wings of the morning, and flee away from this city of destruction. No; I will not leave thee!" and he extended his arms wildly towards the cauldron. "As the Lord liveth, I will not leave thee. Here have I travailed by day and by night; here hath my life glided by, like a cloud and a shadow; and here will I be slain, even as it were at the horns of the altar! I tell thee, daughter, I will not stir! Let them come; the pincers are ready, yea, in mine own furnace; and here is the flesh!" and he bared his shrivelled arm to the

shoulder, "tear your fill, ye idolatrous dogs, for I will die in silence!"

"Thou must open to him that knocketh," said the daughter, calmly, after her father had exhausted himself. "If our enemies are upon us, the entrance must be beset, or an individual would never trust himself alone; if only one man cometh upon his own adventure, lo! there be here two of you."

"Thou art right, thou art right," said the alchemist, while a gleam of hope passed across his ashy face.

"And if the sea," continued she, "hath indeed cast up her dead—"

"Name it not!" interrupted her father with horror, "the bond is cancelled by his death; and rather than give up my soul again to the dominion of hell, I would—I would part with my last—with half—yea, with a tithe of my gold, and sacrifice—all else save the sure and certain hope of the stone of Hermes!" The knocking became louder, longer, and more impatient.

"I must be alone," said the adept, who seemed to have fairly turned to bay; retire thou, and

David Strongarm, out of hearing, but yet within call."

"Not so, father," said the damsel, "a stranger may not enter our private dwelling; but the young man will bestow himself in one of yonder distant cells, where thy voice cannot reach him, unless perchance thou call aloud for aid."

"Again thou art right," said the father; and, drawing from beneath his cloak a long two-edged, sharp-pointed knife, or dagger, he put it into the hand of the student. "Thine arm is strong, good David," said he, "as thy name truly implies, and thy spirit is valiant; remember, the danger that comes threatens us both; and if otherwise, I know thou wouldst not see the old man slain, thy father in the spirit, thy brother in the great search. Go, my daughter shall conduct thee; and be ready to come forth, even like a man of war, when thou shalt hear the cry of my lips, 'To your tents, O Israel!'"

David's fingers twisted themselves instinctively round the hilt of the knife, as he followed the young woman towards the entrance of the cavern.

"Remember," said he to her, in a low voice,

"that what I shall do this night is for your sake!"

"For the sake of any one thou wilt," said she, when they had gained the farthest of the lateral vaults, "thou shalt do—nothing. If our visitor be one of the authorities of the city, surrounded as our dwelling must be by his comrades, resistance would only be a waste of blood; if it be he whom I fear it is, thy interference will do harm, but cannot possibly do good. Promise me, that thou wilt not go forth, whatever cry thou hearest, unless thine eyes see that my father's life is in danger."

The damsel spoke as one having authority; but David hesitated.

"If you think," said he, "because I am a student, and a sort of embryo priest (or rather, I should say, a neophyte, seeing that, as yet, I am under no vows), that I am unable to cope with the best sword in France, you know but little of the Armstrongs, to say nothing of the Douglas blood that runs in my veins!"

"I know that thou art strong and brave,"

replied the damsel, "and good, and kind, and true! Wilt thou promise? It is my first request, and it shall be my last."

"No, not the last—recall that word, and I will do your bidding to the death! There! the knocking becomes louder, and your father approaches with the lamp: speak!"

"The last! the last! the last!" and she glided swiftly away, and whispering a word to her father as she passed, disappeared from the cavern.

As the adept went by, with a quick jerking step, which, however, cleared as little ground as possible, he motioned to his pupil to retire farther into the recess; and then, taking leave of him with a piteous and imploring gesture, he proceeded to the entrance door. The knocking was now mingled with the tones of a human voice without; but so massive was the material through which the sounds had to pass, that nothing more was heard than an indistinct noise, like the muttering of thunder. The old man's heart seemed to die within him; his step became slower; and when, on gaining the door, he turned round and

looked towards the recess, as if to sustain himself with the idea that help was near; David could see that his face was shrunk and livid, like that of a corpse. He at length put his mouth close to the timber, and with a mighty effort called out, in a voice that resembled a shriek :

“Whom seekest thou?” David could not hear the reply ; but the adept, who had placed his ear to the door, staggered back. It was evident, by the motion of the lamp, that he trembled in every joint ; yet, with the haste of one who seeks to admit a welcome visitor, he instantly undid the bolts ; the chain fell with a heavy clank ; the door swung open ; and a personage entered the cavern, touching whom the reader, if he hath any curiosity on the subject, may consult the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

“Messire Jean of Poitou,” said the stranger, in a rich deep voice, and at the same time throwing off the alchemist, who fawned upon him like a spaniel—“this methinks is but tardy greeting to so dear and intimate a friend, and benefactor to boot, after an absence of years!”

“Let me look at him!” cried messire Jean, in an ecstasy, which, however, did not restore the blood to his cheeks; “let me touch his raiment so that I may be sure it is no shadow from the grave, come to mock me with the form of my lost Prelati! And is it really thou? And hath the ravenous sea truly given up her dead? Come, let us be merry. Ho! my man-servants and my maid-servants, bring hither the fatted calf and

kill it! Let us put a garment upon him, yea, a new garment, and a ring upon his finger, and shoes upon his feet!—Alas! joy maketh me forget that I am a beggar. My household is scattered like dust upon the four winds of heaven; we have drunken our water for money, and our wood is sold unto us, but we have no more any gold and silver to buy withal!" Thus rejoicing and lamenting, with terror in his eyes, and a smile on his wan lip, the alchemist hung upon the heels of the stranger, as he strode up the cavern, now venturing to fondle his arm, and now starting back, like some caressing hound at an impatient gesture of his master.

The student, in the meantime, burning with curiosity to obtain a view of the object of all this dread and adulation, could hardly restrain himself till they had passed by. When they were fairly beyond his lurking-place, however, he put forth his head, but could see only a tall and stately form marching on gravely and sedately, and by the force of contrast making the spare figure and feverish motions of the alchemist appear mean and

ridiculous. David crept out of his vault almost unconsciously, and followed the ill-assorted pair till he had gained the next recess; whence, encouraged by success, he made another, and another sortie, till, thus hanging upon their skirts, he found himself securely niched within a few yards of the table. This proceeding seems more natural than honourable; but the student had in reality no object but that of obtaining a distinct view of the stranger; and it was not till retreat had become impossible, that he remembered the anxiety of Messire Jean, and even of his daughter, to prevent his overhearing what might pass at the interview.

“And so, old friend,” said the stranger, as he threw down his ponderous sword upon the table, with a noise which made the cavern ring, and the adept leap from the ground—“still burrowing under the earth? still at the great work? still striving to cut off the raven’s head? Ha?” He turned full round as he spoke; and David, who had expected to behold a Gorgon’s face, was surprised to see instead, a handsome and noble phy-

siognomy, where the traces of five or six-and-forty years only served to give precision to features that in a woman would have been called beautiful. His plain cloak, falling open, showed a black cuirass beneath, uncovered by a coat of arms ; and his hat, unfashionably low in the crown, and strengthened by plates of steel, proved its wearer to be a man who cared more for safety than show. The symmetry of his form, however, his well-knit limbs, and soldierly bearing, proclaimed at the same time that he had as little need as any knight of the age of artificial defences ; and David Armstrong acknowledged to himself—for it would not have become his border blood to have acknowledged more—that if he could venture to disobey the damsel's command, and answer to the scriptural battle-cry of her father, he would need all the little diversion which the latter could give to make up for the difference in the length of their weapons.

“ I am here, even as thou seest,” said the adept, in reply to Prelati's questions, “ but for how long, who can tell ? I have wasted my substance, till I

have no longer wherewithal to live ; I have molten my gold and my silver in yonder cauldron, and the product hath been smoke and ashes. My daughter crieth for bread, and behold there is none in the house ! Truly, I am sore vexed because of mine iniquities. What saith the Scripture ? ‘ He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes ! ’ ”

“ I am sorry for you,” said Prelati, mildly. “ Do you believe that I am one whose words, for good or for evil, are sure to come true ? ”

“ Yea, I believe, even as the angels. ”

“ Or rather as the devils—for, while believing, you tremble. Well ; I will assist you ; ” and nodding his head mysteriously, he sunk his voice to a whisper, as he repeated, “ I will assist you ! ” The eyes of the adept dilated as he heard, his face was lighted up with wonder and joy, and seizing the cloak of his friend, he kissed the hem.

“ Then thou hast succeeded ? ” cried he ; this comes of thy wanderings in foreign lands, where hidden things may be gathered from the boughs like unto the fruit of the tree of knowledge ! O

wonderful man, how the nations will honour thee ! And thou, thy head is still calm, thy heart still true ; thou hast not forgotten thy servant in the midst of thy glory ; but comest in the night-time, to bring comfort to the desolate cave of him who first launched there in quest of that mystic stone which thou alone hast had the strength and skill to discover. Go to, why should we lose time ? there are still some trifles left of my substance. Must it be gold ? Come, how many bags shall I bring ?” and, seizing the bellows, he began to blow the furnace with a dexterity which had already procured for his fraternity, among the profane, the name of *souffleurs*.

“Your thoughts gallop, my good friend,” said Prelati, speaking slowly, “I have given up the search.”

“God of Jacob !” cried the stunned adept, as the bellows fell from his hand.

“But never look so dismal,” pursued the other ; there are things in nature,—or out of it, for that matters not,—more high, more grand, more mighty than the Philosopher’s Stone !” Messire Jean

groaned and shook his head, and bit, till the blood sprang, the infatuated tongue that had named the name of gold to the ears of Prelati.

"Listen," continued his friend, "and leave off your grinnings and chatterings. Do you remember the nucleus of your wealth? of that same gold of which you vaunt so proudly? of those heavy bags that cumber the closet on the left hand of your subterranean parlour; to the door of which, by the same token, you turn your face, when you would persuade yourself you are praying to Jehovah?"

"I do, I do," replied the adept, growing paler than ever, "but God hath forgotten my transgression, because of my prayers and alms; and why should man remember it?"

"Then you remember," persisted Prelati, "the noble Gilles de Laval, lord of Retz, and of a hundred other lordships besides, whom, under pretext of guiding in his research after the Hermetic stone—"

"As God is my judge," interrupted the adept, "it was no pretext. But he was wild, and wilful, and impious, given to strange women, and a con-

temner of holy things. What could come of such fellowship? What booteth my fastings and prayers? I tell thee, I led him not astray, although I left him by the way side."

"Right," said Prelati with composure, "he was impious, he was unfit to be your associate in the holy work, and therefore you robbed and forsook him."

"It was my wages—it was my wages—as thy soul liveth, it was my wages! And yet, nevertheless, I have prayed until the Lord hath heard me; I have fasted till my bones pierce my flesh; and to this day I continue to give alms every year to the amount of the interest of the moneys. Wait a little while, and I shall pass by like a cloud. What would it avail thee to betray a man like me?"

"Fool," exclaimed Prelati, with a growl like that of a tiger, "if I wanted to betray you, why should I take so much trouble? Were you even as immaculate as you are dishonest, were you even a seeker of God instead of gold, what more have I to do than name your name, or even point with my finger, to have you and your daughter

torn to pieces, the fragments burnt with fire, and their ashes scattered upon the winds of heaven?"

The interest which David Armstrong took in the conference, became at this point so strong, that he could hardly restrain himself from rushing out of the recess to compel Prelati, at the point of the knife, to explain what was the strange and awful fate which seemed to envelope, not only the alchemist, but even so fair and innocent a being as his daughter. Messire Jean himself seemed to be moved by some feeling different from the abject fear which had hitherto paralysed him. Instead of wringing his hands, he now ground and crushed his fingers within each other; his chattering teeth were firmly locked; his eye emitted a baleful glare, which seemed to illumine the whole face; and he looked round the cavern with the half fierce, half terrified, air of a hunted beast who contemplates turning to bay. The student expected every instant to hear the war-signal burst from his lips; but David's heart had sworn to the damsel, and he was determined religiously to keep the oath.

The adept's courage, however, proved to be not

in action, but in endurance ; or else his policy suggested that it would be better to sacrifice, if need were, a portion of his gold, than to risk every thing on the doubtful issue of a battle. He withdrew his eyes from the distance, where the young Scot, doubtless, appeared in his imagination, with the dagger ready in his grasp ; his hands fell lifeless by his side ; his jaw collapsed ; and his head dropped upon his bosom.

“Thou sayest it,” exclaimed he, in a tone of despair, “I and mine are in the palm of thine hand !”

“Then why,” said Prelati, “will you doubt a friendship which is proved by the very fact of your standing there, at this moment, safe and sound ?” He had watched the changes in his manner with the interest which an angler bestows upon the struggles of a fish which he has hooked ; and now that all was calm, he glided without an effort into his usual mildness of tone.

“Gilles de Laval,” continued he, “deserted by you, and baffled by the want of virtue of which you justly complain, has abandoned a search which only the pure and religious can prosecute with advantage ;

and in lieu thereof he was taken to a higher and mightier study, in which a trifle of the kind is no obstacle. Gold is a means with him, not an end, as with you; and he has fallen upon another mode, more easily attainable than the philosopher's stone, of obtaining riches, grandeur, honour, length of days, and dominion over the minds and fortunes of men. In this sublime science, his master is—"

"Prelati," cried the adept.

"No—a friend."

"Then, as my soul liveth, it is the Evil One—the Adversary—yea, Satan himself!" Prelati emitted a Sardonic laugh at this sally, which writhed his fine features into an expression of mockery instead of mirth.

"Call him by what name you will," said he, "that matters little to my errand. A certain length has been gained, and at a vast expense; but more gold is wanting, and the ready money of the lord de Retz is exhausted. Now hearken, for the assistance I promised to render you is this. Lend—mark me—*lend* the sum that is necessary; and you shall not only have good interest, but a

free pardon from the lord de Retz, and permission, through his interest with his sovereign, the Duke of Brittany, to settle at Nantes (whither all your family have gone) when it shall become necessary for your safety to leave Paris."

The alchemist heard this proposal with less dismay than might have been expected from his character; but it was only what he had anticipated, and his mind was the more easily made up to the sacrifice, as it seemed to open out to him a possibility of leaving Paris with safety, which he had determined to do the instant he knew that his tormentor was alive. When his friend, however, mentioned a sum, really very considerable, but enormously extravagant to the imagination of the adept, he emitted a cry, like a wild beast struck by the hunter.

"Think of it," said Prelati coolly, "there is no hurry: I shall come again to-morrow at mid-day, and, to prevent any risk of discovery, I shall enter by your dwelling, upon the surface of the earth."

"Come not in the day-time," gasped the adept,

"come at night, and even here, if thou wouldst not destroy me utterly!"

"Before night I leave Paris." Messire Jean again wrung his hands.

"Besides the money," continued Prelati, "I want something else, with which I know you can supply me. I want a youth who understands the operations of chemistry, and who is also daring and enthusiastic. Know you such a one?"

"I did," said the adept, with a look of horror, "I knew two; I gave them to you, one after the other; and I have heard that they are both dead!"

"Why, that is precisely the reason that another is wanted. Of what use are the dead to me? come, will you serve me? will you pleasure me?"

"My money! my soul!" cried messire Jean, "Let the day perish wherein I was born! Good friend, what is this you require of me? Doth my dead wife still bring forth male children, that, like Saturnus, I may devour them up, one by one? Lo, I am here a solitary beggar, and you say unto me, Where be your moneys? where be your young men?"

"You were not wont to drink wine at night," said Prelati drily, pointing to the cup, "nor to address commands and cautions to yourself," taking up the recipe from the floor. "But why this distrust? A pupil of yours must be skilful in his business, and he must also possess a portion of that daring enthusiasm which is indispensable to me. In the service to which I destine him, a youth like this cannot fail to rise to wealth and distinction. Come, we shall be better friends to-morrow; we shall once more have a confidential talk in your subterranean parlour, and the little Hebe—zounds! your daughter must by this time have grown quite a young woman! Has her beauty kept its promise? Does love begin yet to peep out of her dark infidel eyes?"

"My money! my soul! my daughter!" groaned the adept, tossing up his arms wildly. His eyes began again to glare, his teeth to clench, and his maddening look to wander round the cavern.

"Will you serve me? will you pleasure me?" repeated Prelati.

"What is it thou demandest," said messire Jean

hoarsely, "My money for thy need?—the gold that I have gathered with the sweat of my brow, with the vigils of the weary night, and the hunger of the dreary day! I say unto thee again, what is it thou demandest? My young man for thy bondman—the staff of my feeble age, and the lamp of my feet; aye, even the young man David," and he raised his voice so as to be heard at the extremity of the cavern, "the true and the brave, who, were he here, would smite thee where thou standest! And yet a third time I say unto thee, What is it thou demandest? My daughter for thy bed—the virgin hope of my house for thy concubine! Man of Belial! if thou hast neither shame nor remorse, art thou yet a fool as well as an incarnate fiend? Knowest thou not that the trodden worm will writhe up again? and am I less than a worm that creepeth on his belly? Thou shalt have no gold—no young man—no daughter! Challenge, and I will answer; strike, and I will strike thee again; back, robber, murderer, ravisher! I spit at, and defy the!" and darting like lightning upon the sword of Prelati,

which lay upon the table, he whirled it away with preternatural strength, while his shout rang like a trumpet through the cavern, "To your tents, O Jacob ! To your tents, O Israel !"

Prelati looked like a man amazed by a show, rather than a reality. The adept had seized a hammer, and stood upon his defence, glaring upon his enemy, with eyes dilated so widely, as to take in at the same time the whole area of the place, while he waited, in fearful suspense, for the appearance of his ally. Some moments passed—all was silence !

"You are not accustomed to drink wine at night," said Prelati, calmly,—*"you are feverish. Or is this a trick, a jest ? Are we to be merry ? Ha ?"*

"Verily it is a jest," answered the adept, *"yea, verily ;"* and the hammer dropped from his hand, and he staggered against the wall of the furnace, and broke into a hollow laugh, which shook him like a convulsive fit, without changing a single muscle of his countenance.

"But it is not all a jest," added he, regaining

his presence of mind, before his physical energies were sufficiently recovered to enable him to stand upright ; " Good friend, thou didst try me sorely, and my spirit wandered, and a dream of deliverance came upon my soul ; and, like the woman of old, I saw, as it were, gods ascending out of the earth. But alas ! it was all a lie and a mockery ; the Holy One is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by visions. Thou hast conquered, and I yield—lo ! I am the captive of thy bow and of thy spear. Come to me to-morrow as thou wilt, at the noon of day or of night, either on or under the earth ; and show unto me thy commands, that I may make haste to obey."

" Be it so," said Prelati, " take the lamp, and show me to the door." He lifted up his fallen weapon as they went, drew forth the blade, and followed the trembling alchemist sword in hand. On reaching the last of the lateral vaults, to which his keen eye had no doubt traced the glance of the seer during his vision of deliverance, he took the lamp in his own hand, and went in ; leaving mes-

sire Jean at the entrance in a state of mind more easy to conceive than describe. When he emerged again, to the inexpressible wonder of his friend, there was neither blood upon his sword, nor fury in his looks; and immediately conceiving that David must have found some means of escape, the adept ventured the question—

“Whom seekest thou?”

“Your gods, old heathen!” replied Prelati, retracing his steps up the cavern, in order to search the vaults *seriatim*.

The student, in the meantime, had witnessed the foregoing stormy scene with varying emotions. The character of the old man, it appeared, was anything but immaculate; but yet the extremity of his wrongs, and the unexpected spirit he had at last displayed, invested him with a species of dignity, which covered the rags of his unrighteousness as with a cloak. David's feelings, however, were so far divided, that when he saw there was no risk of his sustaining bodily injury, he watched with a pleasure, not very different from that of a mischievous boy, the new suspense and con-

sternation into which he was thrown. But when it appeared to be Prelati's intention to search the whole cavern, our student had something else to do with his thoughts.

Sorely was he tempted to stand the hazard of the die. It would be no transgression of the damsel's commands; for in this case the battle would be forced upon him by the enemy, an alternative highly agreeable to the bellicose propensities of one who was at the same time a student of the university, and a border Scot. But on the other hand, there was the risk of being beaten—of which, however, he persuaded himself the chance was not great; since, without the smallest scruple, he had determined, in the event of a conflict, to run in upon his better armed opponent, before he could be kept at bay with his mighty sword, and stab him in the embrace. If beaten, however, the fruits he should reap from the struggle would be disgrace, if not death; and even if he gained the day, his *opima spolia* would be at best but the arms of the conquered; for the death of Prelati, instead of unveiling, would seal, perhaps for ever,

the mystery which enveloped the adept and his daughter. Upon the whole, David Armstrong, after weighing the pros and cons maturely, although in less time than we take to state them, determined that it would be his wisest plan to embrace the opportunity now offered him of entering without rudeness the penetralia of the house. There he would no doubt meet with something to solve the enigma which perplexed him ; and there, at any rate, he would be able to demand the thanks of the damsel for having obeyed her commands.

In pursuance of this resolution, he no sooner perceived that Prelati was fairly engulfed in another of the recesses, than, darting from his ambush, he flew as swiftly, but as stealthily, as a cat, to the small door, and made his escape from the cavern unobserved.

He found himself in a kind of vestibule, from which there were several openings, and one steep ladder-like stair, ascending till it was lost in darkness. The place was dimly lighted by a lamp fixed to the wall, and the adventurer having

no means of guiding his steps, plunged at random into one of the gulfs beside him, the entrance of which had somewhat more the appearance of a doorway than the others. This proved to be a passage leading into a room, which was, no doubt, the parlour spoken of by Prelati; and here, by the light of a silver lamp which hung from the ceiling, the wondering student beheld a scene of magnificence, such as he had never heard of, except in the tales of the minstrels and fabliers.

The earthen floor was covered with a stuff which might have served for the coat-of-arms of a prince; and the walls were hung, on one entire side, with cloth of gold, and on the others, with carpets and tapestries of the richest description. Here there was a mirror, so extravagantly large for the period, that it might have shown the entire bust; and there a portrait on velvet, the frame of which glittered with gold and gems. Some of the stools were square, in the form of a chest, and covered with silk and embroidery; others were supported on pillars carved and gilded. The benches, from five to twenty feet long, were orna-

mented with figures, in carved work, representing the heads of various birds and beasts ; and one vast bed, more than twelve feet square, and ascended by a carpeted flight of steps running its entire length, was covered with a counterpane, silk on one side, and precious fur on the other.

These articles, however, amazed the student more by their number than their rarity ; and he was not altogether confounded, till he observed the princely luxury of an *arm-chair* ; an invention which he had lately heard of as the *ne plus ultra* of modern voluptuousness ; and which was still very rarely seen out of royal palaces. It was covered with vermilion leather, ornamented with golden roses ; and its fringes of silk were fastened with gold nails.

Notwithstanding all this display of wealth, however, there reigned throughout the apartment a kind of incongruity which struck David, unaccustomed as he was to such sights, with surprise. The furniture did not match. The articles seemed individual specimens, rather than sets ; and he asked himself, whether he was in the private

dwelling of a man of princely fortune; or in a warehouse, appropriated to everything most rare and costly? He had no time, however, to consider of the question; for at the moment the voice of the adept in the vestibule made him start like a man threatened with detection in the midst of a crime. For one moment he was determined to confront the master, into whose secrets he was plunging so recklessly, and, with such explanation as he could give, demand a safe conduct to the upper world; but the next, as the idea flashed upon him, that what he had already done might be the means of dissolving finally his connexion with the family, he stepped suddenly behind a screen, with some indefinite view of obtaining speech of the damsel before departing. This movement was hardly completed when messire Jean entered the room.

“And take care,” said he, continuing to speak, “that thou withdraw the bolt before thou descendest. Perchance some son of a dog may be prowling about, even now, for our destruction; and so, when he thinketh to climb down upon us,

he will surely fall into the pit. And haste thee, my daughter, for it is now the middle watch of the night; and verily, mine eyelids are as heavy as my heart, and my limbs bend beneath my body, even as my spirit fainteth under its troubles. The unbelieving villain!" he went on aloud, after having shut the door, and drawn a strong breath, like a fugitive who finds himself in an accustomed place of safety; "Be there still whales within the deep, to swallow up, and spue forth again, their prey upon the dry land? Why did I throw away his sword? Why trust to the arm of a stranger, when I might have stabbed him where he stood? But a day shall come round—the day of the Lord is at hand! No more, indeed, the lion of the tribe of Judah goeth up from the prey; but Dan is still a serpent by the way, an adder in the path!" The old man's face grew calmer and paler as he spoke; the perspiration dried upon his brow; and he walked several paces up the room with a noiseless but determined step.

Soon, however, his mind seemed to revert to its usual occupations. He was evidently preparing

to retire for the night ; and, after having opened the door of a closet, where his bed appeared to be placed, he sank down upon his knees to pray. In his prayer, which was delivered with energy and deep devotion, the student joined mentally ; and as the form of supplication was not peculiar to the personages of our history, but common to many of those who were in that day engaged in similar pursuits, we think it well to present the reader with the following copy :

“ O God ! almighty, eternal, from whom cometh every good thing, and every perfect gift ! Grant me a knowledge, I beseech thee, of that universal wisdom which is around thy throne ; which created all things, and which sustaineth and preserveth all things. Deign to send it unto me from heaven, which is thy sanctuary, and the throne of thy glory, to the end that it be in, and work in me. For it is that divine wisdom which is mistress of all celestial and occult arts, and of the science and understanding of all things. By its spirit may I possess the true intelligence ! May I proceed infallibly in the noble art to which I have

consecrated myself, even in the search of the miraculous secret which thou hast hidden from the world, in order to reveal it to thine elect! May I commence, pursue, and achieve the great work which I have to do here below, and enjoy it for ever! In fine, O God, grant me, I beseech thee, the celestial Stone, angular, miraculous, and eternal!"

When the adept had finished his supplications, he took up a book, the binding of which, in the gorgeous fashion of the day, was studded with gold and gems; and, laying it upon a small table, near the screen, drew in a stool, and began to read some portion inwardly, apparently as a sequel to the religious service of the night. David would fain have raised his head over the screen, to look what the manuscript was; for a strange misgiving, he hardly knew of what nature, had been gradually stealing upon his mind. The book, he could say with certainty, was not a church missal, neither had it any resemblance to a religious homily. The very characters in which it was written, from the single and distant glance he had obtained, were

strange—nay, suspicious to his eye ! But in the midst of this new dilemma, the door opened, as if by a spring ; his eyes dazzled ; and he knew by the beating of his heart, and by his thickening breath, that the damsel was in the room.

She stood motionless upon the floor, her head reverently bowed, and her hands drooping at her sides. David forgot the vague suspicions that had begun to gather like a kind of horror upon his soul, and he enjoyed, for the first time in his life, a full and uninterrupted gaze at this phantom shape which had haunted him so long. The serene gravity, just touching upon melancholy, which was the habitual character of her face, tinged at this moment by religious feeling, acquired an air almost of sublimity, without losing any of its sweetness ; and her pale and placid features looked as if they were shone upon by a stream of sunlight. The youth felt his pity and admiration mingled with awe while he gazed ; and when the old man at length raised his head, and his daughter bowed herself almost to the earth before him, in the form of salutation peculiar to the oriental

nations, David could have fancied that the whole scene, so strange in locality and expression, and so touching in sentiment, was but the fragment of a dream.

"And now, my child," said the alchemist, "get thee to bed at once, and may the God of our fathers be thy guard! But yet another word. The young man—verily I am worn out with strife and watching—even the young man Strongarm, he no doubt escaped by thy means, when the heathen dog was exploring the vaults. Thou leddest him up the stair without permitting him to enter here, where the sight even of this holy book might give our bodies to the fire, and our ashes to the winds of heaven?" At these questions the damsel appeared for a moment to be ready to sink to the ground, overwhelmed with surprise and dismay.

"All is safe," said she at last, and in a voice steady enough to deceive her father in the present exhausted state of his faculties.

"It is well," he rejoined, "thou art brave and quick-witted, but thou hast a woman's pity, and a

woman's trust, and even if he had made the discovery, I fear thou wouldst have permitted him to live." During this speech David could see, through the minute chink which had hitherto served him, that the damsel's eyes were rivetted upon the screen with a glance of mingled threatening and terror. Enough, however, had occurred to stimulate his curiosity and suspicion to a pitch of madness; and when the old man was in the act of extinguishing the lamp, giving way to the natural recklessness of his character, he suddenly raised his head over the screen, and fixed his eyes upon the volume. The next moment all was dark; and as the scene fled from the scholar's vision, he leaned back against the wall, and was only preserved from fainting by the iron strength of his constitution.

The reader has perceived long ago, that the alchemist and his daughter were of the Hebrew nation; thus exhibiting a knowledge of national character which it was impossible for the scholar to possess. Among a people at once simple and poor a Jew could not exist, to say nothing of the shrewd

sagacity attributed to our countrymen; and accordingly, the weary foot of Israel had found little or no resting place, on the barren mountains and desolate heaths of Scotland. In France, a law had passed during the last reign, which banished the entire tribe from the kingdom, on pain of instant death; and thus, David had in all probability never seen, to his knowledge, a descendant of the patriarchs in his life. The seclusion and mystery observed by messire Jean, as he thought proper to call himself, were easily accounted for, by the persecutions to which philosophers of his mystic school were liable; and the oriental form of his phraseology was perhaps calculated rather to lull than excite suspicion, familiar as it had become to the student's ear, in its association with his theological studies. David, brave and ardent as he was himself, could form no conception of the species of enthusiasm which impelled the alchemist thus to bury himself alive, rather than break off in the midst the mysterious search to which he was devoted, and which, every day, appeared on the eve of being crowned with success.

The feelings, therefore, which had beset him this night, were of so indefinite a nature, that he was probably not aware himself, of the nature of his suspicions, till they were confirmed by the instantaneous glance he had caught of the Jewish Talmud.

His sickness of heart, accompanied by "an horror of great darkness," continued for some time, and he had not yet been able to collect his bewildered senses, when he felt himself drawn out from his lurking place by a small, cold, but steady hand. David trembled at the touch. He felt as if his soul was in the grasp of a demon, but he had no power to struggle. When they had gained the vestibule, the damsel took down the lamp from the wall, and pointing to the steep stair, rudely cut out of the living rock, she motioned him to ascend, while she lighted his steps.

They went on for some considerable space in silence, till they reached a kind of landing-place. Here the stair ended, and from this, the communication with the world above was by a suspended ladder ; upon which David was about to step

mechanically, when he was withheld by his conductress.

"First swear," said she, "that thou wilt not reveal even to thy bosom friend, what hath this night come to thy knowledge."

"Tempt me not," answered the student, hardly knowing what he said, "I will not swear."

"Swear," repeated the damsel, sinking her voice to a whisper, "swear, if thou wouldst live! My father's life is in the palm of thine hand; were it mine own I would trust thee without an oath."

"I swear," said the student.

"By Him whom thou namest thy Redeemer?"

"By Him crucified!" said David bitterly; and, bowing his head, he made the sign of the cross upon his bosom.

"Then go in peace, and may the God of the Jew and the Christian go with thee!" David grasped the ladder with an unsteady hand, and mounted the first step; when the damsel touching a spring concealed in the wall, the portion of the landing-place on which he had just stood gave way, and swung, by means of hinges, in what

appeared to be an unfathomable abyss. David looked for a moment at the danger from which his oath had saved him; and then, bestowing upon the Jewess a parting glance, in which admiration and despair struggled with religious horror, he ascended the ladder into the dwelling-house above, and, groping his way to the door, staggered out into the night.

CHAPTER V.

WE are told by certain philosophers that the human body undergoes a perpetual process of change, and that a man, at different epochs of his life, so far as the *materiel* is concerned, is thus absolutely a different individual. The revolutions of the mind, on the other hand, although they are much more apparent, do not affect its individuality. We may receive a new bone or a new muscle, without perceiving the trick which nature puts upon us; but when one set of sentiments takes the place of another, we are conscious that it is merely a change and not a renewal.

We may illustrate this by the example at the present moment nearest at hand. When David Armstrong went to bed after parting with the

Jewess, he felt as if the world had passed away from him like a scroll, and as if he himself was a single solitary atom, dancing unseen and unknown in immeasurable space. When we meet with him again in the morning, he is calculating whether it will be *worth his while* to pursue his search after the philosopher's stone with his present master, seeing that this individual was an unbelieving Jew, such as God would, in all probability, consider unworthy of success. Yet David is all the time the same intellectual being.

His air and manner on this morning were so slightly different as to evoke no observation on the part of his college companions ; and the deliberate yet energetic pace with which he usually traversed the hill of St. Genéviève, was as deliberate and energetic as ever. There was, notwithstanding, *some* change, though slight, as well in the outward as in the inner man of the scholar. His face was a shade paler, and his ragged hood hung over his shoulders with even more of blackguardism than yesterday. In his whole person, in fact, he might be said to have somewhat more the look of

a desperado than heretofore ; while throughout the day there was exhibited a kind of exaggeration even in his most ordinary feelings which sometimes both surprised and annoyed Sir Archibald Douglas.

The knight had given due reflection to the case of his friend, and had arranged a plan for bringing him forward in the career of arms, besides turning his present services to account in a very important matter which related to himself. Their new meeting, besides, was in the morning and in a palace, not in a ruin and in the dark ; and it is not wonderful, therefore, that the gaze which he bestowed upon the student's figure, was as full of mirth as of renewed astonishment. David, whose satisfaction, in ordinary cases, was expressed by what may be called a brightening of the face rather than a smile, and who was never, on any occasion, provoked to laugh outright, suffered himself with great gravity to be turned round by his friend, and surveyed from head to heel.

“And now, Archibald,” said he, “if your curiosity is satisfied, let us hear at once the newest

gibes on the dress of a poor scholar, and then we may proceed at once to the purpose of our conference without more grimaces."

"Let me laugh, then, once for all," replied his friend, "and then I shall be as solemn as yourself. O what a sight were this for the old wives of the Border, whose fire-side stories are still warm with the deeds of Philip Armstrong! Off, ye rags!"—and he tore down suddenly a large fragment of the hood. "Away with your spider's webs, for here are steel and leather in exchange!"

"Permutatio Diomedis et Glaucis," said the scholar; "it would be the exchange of golden armour for brass. Yet, nevertheless, I am in nowise bigotted to a particular garb. As for the hood—let it go; although I will not say that it might not have been becomingly worn for some while yet. Neither, Archibald, was it anything like the weavings of that Lydian lass, Arachne, to which you liken it, as many a tug and haul which it bore in its day, will testify. You must know it was the true *epitogium*, and was absolutely indispensable *ad loquendum in universitate*; without it

I could not have opened my mouth. In the day-time it was a garment ; in the night-time a blanket ; and whatever rents it had were received in defending my skin. Well, well, old friend, fare thee well in God's name !”

“ A most moving epitaph ; and now for the interment in yonder heap of ashes in the fireplace.”—

“ Hold !” cried the scholar, “ It may still serve to mend the gown it once ornamented ;” and, folding up the rag carefully, he put it into his pocket.

“ I have said,” continued he, “ that I care not for the form of a garment, and it is even so : yet the profession of a student affords me certain privileges which are useful ; and above all things, it is an ostensible employment which draws off, from my goings out and comings in, the prying eyes of the world. But for these circumstances I should prefer a steel jacket to a scholar's gown.”

“ And what harm are you about that you should dread the eyes of the world ? ”

“ The greatest harm imaginable. I am about

surpassing the rest of the world, or at least attempting to do so, in a species of knowledge which would make me at once the envy and the victim of my fellow-men. But you cannot comprehend me. You are ignorant of the progress of science and discovery. The affinities, the attractions, the antipathies which exist in physical objects, you either pass unobserved, or attribute them to the power of magic. The influence of the stars, felt by all nature, both animate and inanimate, you confine to the vast ocean. You believe what you see, but will believe nothing on even the most direct and infallible deduction."

"I believe this, my dear friend, that you are talking very learnedly; but, for the life of me, I cannot tell on what subject."

"You believe," continued the scholar, "that what exists was made; and you must therefore believe that there is an art of making it. To the ordinary species of knowledge we are permitted an easy access; but to the higher and more sublime, we can only attain through the intermediate steps of science, and by the direct favour of God.

In natural history, for instance, we know that sulphur and quicksilver are the bases of all the metals; while astrology teaches us that the formation of each is presided over by a particular planet: that of gold, by the sun; of silver, by the moon; of copper, by Venus; of tin, by Jupiter; of lead, by Saturn; of iron, by Mars; and of quicksilver, by Mercury. We know these things, not as possibilities, but as sure and certain facts; and the necessary deduction is, that when natural philosophy and astrology are completely understood, the man who is permitted by heaven to attain to such divine knowledge will be able to convert the baser into the more precious metals at will."

"Then you are an alchemist?" said the knight, with some surprise.

"I am a humble chemist, striving to attain to the perfection of his art, which is called alchemy. Still another grimace? What, may I ask, do *you* believe?"

"I believe that the precious metals were given to the world merely to stimulate valour and industry. The artizan labours for them with his

hands ; the merchant, with his peddling craft ; and the knight, with his good sword : and God will never permit so wise a system to be overturned by the alchemists. As for the stars, I believe, according to Scripture, that they were intended for nothing else than lamps to enlighten the earth."

"According to Scripture, O ignorance ! 'Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion ?' But to argue is vain. Astrology is a science built entirely upon experience, and must therefore be cast down by facts, not disputations. It existed in the days of Job, and it exists in ours. Nothing can be simpler, and yet more incomprehensible. Why a planet being at one distance from the zodiac rather than another, or why entering a house or region of one sign rather than another, it should influence or foretell certain fortunes to him at whose birth it presided, it is impossible to understand. Astrology, however, by a series of experiences carried down from age to age, establishes the fact ; and with this we must be satisfied. 'Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven ?' saith the Scripture, 'Canst

thou set the dominion thereof on the earth? Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea; or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? By what way is the light parted which scattereth the east wind upon the earth?'—Alas! the very utmost height to which even the alchemist can hope to attain, is the substratum of knowledge, composed of facts, the meaning and origin of which are hidden in impenetrable darkness. Beyond this, all the learning of Nigidius Figulus himself would be foolishness."

"As for Nigidius Figulus," said the young knight, who now foresaw the demolition of his plans by means of the stars, "he bears but a heathenish name, and I thank the Virgin I know nothing about him—although I can readily believe his learning to be foolish enough."

"Hold!" cried the scholar indignantly, "Nigidius Figulus was the most learned man in the most learned age of the world; he was the superior even of the prodigious Varro—the friend of Cicero, and the first natural philosopher and astrologer of the time! It was he who read in the stars the

fate of Octavius, and foretold that he should be master of the empire. But what avails all this to such as you? Can pearls be appreciated by ——”

“Swine. Never mince the word. Were you a soldier, it might be dangerous; but a moping student, who passes his life in dreaming of the stars, and reading Nigidius Fig-fiddle,—what is his name?—may use any pearls of eloquence he pleases.” David’s lip grew as rigid as marble, and he strode through the room with the air of a moss-trooper; while his long black gown, soiled and torn, and the remaining rags of the hood streaming down his back, gave a touch of the ridiculous to his anger.

“Archibald of the Braes,” said he, stopping suddenly short, and confronting his friend, “you have yourself assisted to unfrock me. Beware that I do not complete the work, and thus throw aside altogether the protection of my scholar’s garb!”

“Over God’s forbode!” cried the knight, “for, judging of the under by the upper garments, the exposure would be something less than decent.

But what is the matter, man? My only offence is, having offered you a dress of steel and leather instead of these miserable rags—having endeavoured to turn you from a starving student into a roystering soldier—having desired to convert you from heathenism to Christianity—”

“Hold!” interrupted the scholar eagerly, “it is a base, vulgar, and abominable error, to suppose that the sciences we talk of are included in the anathemas of the church. They are neither vain, conjectural, nor erroneous, but essentially founded on experience and calculation; and in the synodal statute to which you refer, *De Sortilegiis*—”

“Bah! I know nothing of such trumpery; I only say that this *Nigulus Figforus*—But, holy St. Bride, what noise is that? Have the English rallied, and retaken the city, or are the poor students at it again?”

“Touching the statute *De Sortilegiis*,” persisted David; but his voice was drowned in a shout which burst from an immense crowd now flooding the street opposite the windows; and, following his friend, who had bounced out of the room

without ceremony, he took hold of his arm, and while they shouldered their way through the mass, continued a defence of the orthodoxy of the sublime sciences, of which the knight heard not one syllable.

The crowd consisted, not only of the usual rabble of the street, but also of persons of the upper ranks, who lent their voices like the others, to swell the din. In the middle a line of horsemen—if men they could be called—broke slowly through the living surge, singing, shouting, leaping, and discharging squibs, crackers, and other fire-works. Most of them were in the garb of beasts, stuffed, as it were, into the skins of the animals they represented; but instead of the head, some hideous and extravagant face grinned from their shoulders, and was surmounted by a pair of enormous horns, which proclaimed the wearers to be devils. Mingling with these, several personages appeared with cowls and tonsured crowns; but instead of the robes of priests, their dress was white; their heads were ornamented with asses' ears, and in one hand they held a green or yellow conical cap,

while in the other they flourished a bauble decorated with bells.

"It is an announcement of the brotherhood of the Passion," said David, "It is thus the citizens are invited to attend their representations at the hospital of the Trinity."

"Accepted for two," cried the young knight joyously, "See what it is to travel! By St. Bride, they will hardly believe me in Scotland, when I tell them of these doings!"

"The cost is two sous," said David, with a sigh.

"It matters not."

"Each!"

"Were it twice the sum, you and I shall make two of the company."

"Well, you will need a friend at your elbow; and it may be, that you will find me worth the money. But take notice, Archibald, that I go entirely upon your invitation, and for your behoof; and that the said amount is to be set down to me neither as a loan nor as a gift. And in troth," continued he, rubbing his hands when the affair was settled, "you say well, that the folks of the

Borders would hardly believe you! Why, it was only in the reign of Charles's father,—poor demented creature, whom God can hardly condemn, since he did not vouchsafe him reason for a guide,—that the brotherhood of the Passion became what they are to-day. Before that time, some miserable farces were played upon the streets by the jongleurs, with fiddles, and bells, and drums, and shouting of profane songs; but to-day we have a regular theatre, and magnificent scenery, where the most sublime mysteries are performed by a whole convent of actors, most of them sworn ecclesiastics."

"I have seen that same brotherhood," said the knight, "I have seen whole waggon loads of them, and their scenery, passing from one town to another, drawn by oxen; and I could desire no better refreshment for a wayfaring man, than to ride by their side, and listen to the songs with which they beguiled their journey, taken from the mystery of the Nativity, or of the Canaaneean."

"Those, my friend, were but strolling players; and, although each troop calls itself the *Confrérie*

of the Passion, not one of them has any right to the name. The original Confrérie was transferred from St. Maur to Paris, in the second year of this century, authorized by letters patent; and so devotedly attached to the divine art did the Parisians become, that it was feared the theatre would eclipse the church, and that men would go to kneel and pray before the scenes of the mimic Passion, instead of attending to the service of the altar. For this reason the hour of vespers was changed, in order that it might not be interfered with by the hour of the play; and if you are devoutly disposed, as I trust you always are, before going to the Trinity, we can take our ghostly comfort at the new temple of St. Julian of the Minstrels, where the mass will not be the worse for good music."

"Agreed, David," said Sir Archibald, "provided you will enjoy with me, in the first place, the carnal comfort of a good dinner in the palace, for it is now mid-day."

"I am not accustomed to dine so early," replied the scholar, "howbeit, as it will cost nothing to either of us, I may as well sit down with you. At

the same time, Archibald, if your allowance of vivres should not be fairly enough for both, I charge you do not balk your appetite, seeing that it is my wont to fast till midnight ; and while you eat, I can entertain you with some brief account of the origin, scope, and tendency of the synodal statute *De Sortilegiis*."

David's misgivings were not confirmed ; for the allowance being proportioned, not to the supposed appetite, but to the knightly rank of the guest, it turned out to be amply sufficient for two men. With an entertainer of inferior station, the student must certainly have had recourse to the expedient proposed, of filling his mouth with hard words ; but as it was, he did not utter a single syllable during the meal.

"It were a shame," said he, at length, resting upon his elbows from sheer fatigue, although his knife still maintained its perpendicular, with a threatening edge towards the remains of a couple of roasted fowls, "it were a shame that the guests of a king should not do their devoir, with such truly royal fare before them ; but if the circum-

stance reach the ear of Charles, I trust that most gracious prince will, so far as 'I am concerned, take the will for the deed ; seeing that I am only a poor clerk and scholar, and more accustomed to fast than to feast." David, however, did so wonderfully well for a person of abstemious habits, that the knight amused himself with admiring the prowess of his friend, long after he himself was hors de combat. The fare, to say the truth, was of a quality which our student was but little accustomed to. A few eggs, when their price did not exceed six sous a hundred, or a salted herring in lieu thereof, formed the larger share of his daily comforts at the university ; and even his subterranean supper, though so well dressed, and so agreeably served, rarely afforded anything better than beef, which (together with pork) was the common food of the artizans. On the present occasion, mutton, veal, and fowl graced the board ; and even a small portion of game—a dainty appropriated exclusively by the nobles.

"Come, my friend," cried the knight, with that exulting feeling of after-dinner comfort,

which in persons of an active, out-of-doors life, betokens good health; and in others, the approach of paralysis or apoplexy—"Come, David, since we have at least done our best to do honour to the king, let us now drink a cup to the health of our ladies!" David winced as if he had been wounded; his jaw fell; and a look, not only of sadness but dismay, clouded suddenly the brightness which had risen into his face.

"It is a custom," said he slowly, "at least of doubtful orthodoxy. In the more ancient authors we find no trace of drinking to the health, although persons sitting together were in the habit of inviting, or challenging one another to the potation—a practice, by the way, forbidden in the capitulaires of Charlemagne. As for drinking the health of the absent, it belongs, I fear me, rather to heathenism than Christianity; for has not toasting the saints themselves been strictly interdicted by the church? It is indeed a superstition of the fancy, a libation, as it were, to some spiritual form seen by the eyes of the soul—"

"On what look you?" interrupted the knight;

for David had turned his head, as if to gaze at some object on the wall.

"Afar of," continued he, "lonely, and bright, and beautiful—rising, like a star, in the desert and impassable waters, a Venus Anadyomene of the heart!"

"Alas!" said the knight with feeling, "you are a priest, and you may not love without sin."

"I am yet unsworn!" replied the student, starting; "and even were it otherwise, it is lawful to doubt upon the subject. Not to talk of the example of many of the disciples and apostles, the marriage of priests was legalized by the great Council of Nicea; and after that time, the names of Carterius, Sydonius, Simplicius, and a multitude more—all bishops, and all married, give warrant for the practice. Was not the famous and holy St. Gregory the son of a bishop? and in the throne of St. Peter itself, has there not been an Osius, a Boniface, a Felix, a John, an Agapet, a Silvester, all children of ecclesiastics?" * Having

* Eneas Silvius, afterwards Pope Pius II., during the lifetime of our friend David Armstrong, but a little later than

finished this speech, David emptied a mighty goblet at one pull, and then filled again.

"Come," cried he, starting wildly from his seat, "Where there is so much room for controversy, of what advantage is it to be scrupulous? Though we may not drink to the saints, angels are not included in the interdict! Here, then, to our lady-loves! Here, to the very dregs—were poison at the bottom!" and emptying the measure at a draught as before, he set down the goblet, looking pale and horror-stricken. The knight stared at the vehemence of his friend; but as love is a subject on which all sorts of extravagances both in speech and action are permitted, his surprise did not continue more than a moment. A reaction, however, appeared to take place in David's manner; his spirits sunk; and the generous juice which he had swallowed in an unusual quantity, seemed to have no effect either in opening his

the present date of the story, defended the marriage of priests; declaring eligible to the papal chair, not only a man who had been, but a man who actually was, married—"Non solum qui uxorem habuit, sed uxorem habens, potest assumi."

heart or his lips. It was already too late for vespers, but they got up soon after to go to the theatre; the knight not a little disappointed that the turn which he had purposely given to the conversation had not led to the mutual confidence he desired.

The street St. Denis was crowded by persons of all ranks, whose destination was, like their own, the hospital of the Trinity; and more especially at the openings leading from the great churches or convents, the thoroughfare was almost choked up by tributary streams of population flooding from vespers. The knight and his friend, however, made good their passage with very little delay; David, who recollected his office of guardian and conductor, leading the way with great strides. With his clasped knuckles before him, to serve for a prow, his elbows close to his ribs, and his gown inflated by the wind, he bore steadily on through the crowd, like a ship under full sail. They at length reached the door, and having paid their money, passed through a region of noise, where the spectacle was announced by the beating of

drums, and by men bawling at the pitch of their voices, and entered the house.

Sir Archibald, who was thrown into a tumult of wonder and delight by the novelty and magnificence of the scene, overpowered his friend with questions.

“In the name of God,” cried he, “what are those vast paintings, that are ranged round the walls?”

“That is the temple of Solomon,” replied David, whose spirits seemed to rise with the hurry and excitation around him; “that is the palace of Herod; that is the house of Caiaphas. But hush! hush! there they come; hold your tongues, will ye? Hurra!” and he and the young knight joined lustily in the general shout, with which the appearance of the actors was hailed by the audience. The whole strength of the troop presented itself upon the floor at one moment; amounting perhaps to a hundred and fifty individuals; but of these a good many were seated, indicating that on this occasion they were not to take any share in the scene. Having thus

presented themselves to the company, the prologue was spoken, which finished by requesting silence ; and they all withdrew to allow the piece to commence.

The scenery consisted of paradise, hell, and purgatory ; as well as numerous earthly habitations : and the personages, besides Jesus and the disciples, Pontius Pilate, &c., included a goodly company of devils, angels, doctors of law, scribes, pharisees, priests, kings, saints, virgins, knights, shepherds, clowns, and thieves. The gates of hell were represented by immense gaping jaws, by which the devils made their entrance and exit, surrounded by smoke and flames. The clowns were habited like those they had seen on the streets, and their jests were frequently directed against the clergy themselves, and couched in language so indecent as would have been tolerated nowhere else than on the stage. The actors being chiefly priests, it is needless to say, that the female parts were performed by boys.

The audience seemed to take the most intense interest in the piece, and to identify themselves

completely with the actors. They knelt, they wept, they shouted, they screamed, they beat their breasts, they joined in the chorus, they emitted thunders of laughter and applause. A bad actor, or even a bad action, was received with hisses and groans; but when pleased, the cry of *Bé! Bé!* (*bis—encore*) resounded through the theatre. The clowns especially received a full portion of the public patronage, but above all—the devils; and at one time almost every individual in that vast multitude might have been heard joining in the burden:

“*Saulce d'enfer, saulce d'enfer,
Aux serviteurs de Lucifer!*”

The knight was in particular surprised by the intimate acquaintance which the audience seemed to possess, not only with the events, but even with the words of the drama. The Parisians, however, were accustomed to see the mysteries performed at processions, and on other public occasions, as well as in the theatre; and even in the provinces, when the number of actors chanced to be short,

it was often filled up instantaneously from among the spectators. It was a common occurrence, indeed, either in town or country, when any actor happened to be too slow, or to have altogether forgotten a sentence, for a hundred voices at once either to prompt or anticipate him.

The knight for a considerable time was too much occupied with the actors and the story, to bestow any attention upon the audience ; but all on a sudden, his eye appeared to catch some object among the latter, which rivetted his gaze, as by a spell. David, absorbed in the interest of the scene, had hitherto answered his friend's questions, and responded to his acclamations, rather mechanically, than as fully comprehending them ; but when these all on a sudden ceased, his mind bestowed that cognizance upon the negative interruption, which it had failed to do upon the positive.

"Will you not look, man?" said he, jogging his companion, "will you not listen? Fye, Archibald! do you reverse the custom of the *Lamiæ* of Plutarch, and shut up your eyes when you come abroad? See to that ill-favoured goblin with the

flame-coloured beard ! Hark ! thwack ! thwack ! These were wallops like the echoes of a listed field : and faith, no wonder, for the chiel's shoulders are cased in iron under his leopard's skin. Hear to him now—what a sublime roar ! Heard you ever the like of that ? Now off, ye villain ; vanish, good Lucifer ; jump into yonder fiery jaws, and make room for your comrade, Hashmodai, who will by and by bounce out before us from the cinders of hell like a roasted chestnut. There—did I not tell you ? *Vadit*, he goes out ; *silent minestrelli*, the music ceases ;” and a momentary pause in the action taking place, David had time to follow the direction of his companion's eyes.

“Is it thereabouts, you are ?” said he, “A comely lass, as I am a sinner !—with blue eyes that look down kindly yet loftily upon the earth, and hair like an ancient Gaul, whose locks, as Pliny relates, were died by artifice of a still brighter blond than nature had painted. What saith the *Lai de Lanval* ?” and he sung the following lines from that popular romance so loudly and so well, as to attract the attention even of the lady concerned :

Flor de lis, et rose novele,
Quant ele pert on tans d'été,
Trespassoit elle de biauté.

When the lady had turned her eyes towards the group whence the voice proceeded, she appeared to be suddenly agitated by some deeper feeling than modesty or bashfulness, for her blush did not merely illumine her cheeks, but overspread both brow and neck. The knight at the same moment pressed his companion's arm fiercely, in token to be silent, while he endeavoured to withdraw his own person into the shade.

"Take away your fingers, Archibald," said the scholar; "it is an evil custom you have—and I would strongly beg of you for the future to express your wishes by word of mouth. But if you still retain the faculty of human speech, tell me, I beseech you, who is he beside the damsel—that tall old man, with the brilliant and benevolent eyes, and beard as white as the drifted snow. The face gleams upon me like some spectral head I must have seen in my dreams; for sure I am it never before appeared to my waking eyes."

"That," replied the knight, "is the famous Orosmandel, an Arabian philosopher, who has travelled ten times farther than Marco Paulo, or Sir John Mandeville, and to whom, in learning, your Nigulus Figulus is a fool. He is, besides, the friend, confidant, and instructor of that magnificent nobleman, the Lord de Retz—"

"Of whose daughter and heiress, the damsel of Laval, I have just now sung the praise?" demanded the scholar.

"Even so; but speak out, man; I cannot read your face, although it is written over with signs as black and deep as the new characters of Guttemburg."

"Anon, anon," replied David, with another meditative gaze at the objects of his curiosity; "but here comes Hashmodai! Look to the stage, Archibald, if you would know what acting is, and what a devil can do!"

The student speedily forgot, not only the Arabian philosopher and the damsel of Laval, but his companion beside him, and he became once more completely absorbed in the interest of the

scene. His gestures at length were so extravagant as to attract the notice of Sir Archibald, whose thoughts and eyes were busy enough in another quarter; and unacquainted with the things which had so recently agitated his friend to the very centre, the young knight made the mistake of attributing entirely to wine, effects which were in reality produced by a variety of concurring causes.

The actor who personated Hashmodai was either unwell, or imperfect in his part; and the voices of the audience were loud both in prompting and condemning him. Among these, the smooth sonorous tones of the students, capable, as one would have thought, of any degree of expansion, were predominant; and at length the pas of criticism seemed to be surrendered to him by universal consent, and his accents were heard, lofty and alone, above the suppressed murmur which filled the theatre. The unhappy performer, confused and alarmed, soon lost all presence of mind; and at the precise point which required the greatest energy, he stopped suddenly in his speech, and

stood stock still. The noise was now deafening, some voices prompting, some hissing, some groaning ; when, in the midst of all, David Armstrong suddenly bounded through the crowd, leaped upon the stage, tore off the dress from the foundered actor, and clapping his prodigious horns upon his own head, went on with the "maimed rites" of the part, shouting in a voice that rang like thunder through the house:—

" Devils of hell, horned and horrible,
Great and small, with eyes of basilisks,
Infamous dogs ! what has become of you ? " *

The astonishment with which Sir Archibald beheld this scene was lost in delight ; and he joined the loudest of the loud, in the applauses which filled the house. David went on with the part with admirable spirit ; and in the passages which

* Diables d'enfer, horrible et cornus,
Gros et menus, aux regards basiliques,
Infames chiens, qu' êtes vous devenus ?

Mystery of the Conception.

actors were accustomed to interpolate of their own authority, he seemed to take the opportunity of easing his heart of a whole load of bitterness. The state, the clergy, and above all, the university, were by times the object of his sarcasms; and in the closing scene, when he bounded into the jaws of hell, and disappeared in smoke and fire, the cheers which echoed through the theatre were the most enthusiastic ever remembered.

When all was over, the spectators, according to a very general custom, rose like one man to demand the re-appearance of the successful actor; and cries of "Hashmodai! Hashmodai!" resounded on all sides. But Hashmodai was gone. He had thrown down his horns behind the scenes, and continued his run till he escaped from the house, and engulfed himself in the crowd of the street St. Denis. The audience at length retired, in some doubt as to whether the goblin-like figure they had seen was not Hashmodai himself, come express from hell to amuse the inhabitants of the first city in Europe.

CHAPTER VI.

THE disclosure which our young knight had intended to pour into the ear of his selected confidant, is perhaps familiar, by personal experience, to all our readers; but in this instance, it was marked by circumstances peculiar to the age, and, in fact, to the epoch, when, owing to intestine dissensions, and the presence of a foreign enemy at the same time, the wildest confusion reigned throughout the country. These circumstances, however, will of necessity be so amply developed in the course of the following narrative, that at present we shall content ourselves with declaring what is necessary to be known, in as few pages as possible.

When Sir Archibald Douglas of the Braes

found himself, at the death of old Sir Archibald, the inheritor of little more than a sword, which had been long famous in the border wars, he determined, like a youth of sense and spirit, to go forth into the world, to push his fortune. At that time, and for centuries before and after, France was the Canaan of the Scots; and all those who were driven forth by fate or folly into the wilderness, turned their faces toward this land of promise. These adventurers being, without exception, brought up to arms from their infancy, and being, generally speaking, distinguished for military faith as well as valour, never failed to find a welcome from their warlike hosts. The two countries, besides, had been bound together by alliances, or treaties, from time immemorial; and thus when a Scot descended from his mountains, and betook himself to the fertile fields of France, he found that he had only changed his home.

But Sir Archibald had another inducement, already known to the reader. That gallant earl of Douglas (his godfather, near kinsman, and chief), who had led over five thousand Scots to

the aid of Charles VII., then in the extremity of his distress, had been created, in the year 1424, in testimony of royal gratitude, duke of Touraine. The duke, indeed, was slain in the same year, and so was his son; but the barren title at least remained in the family, and the recollection of such important services could hardly have been obliterated from the mind of the king in the course of thirteen years.

Whatever the knight's resolution, however, might have been, it was his fate to go to France. His outfit was no sooner completed—and, truth to say, it was too slender to require much time—than he was summoned by the influence of his friends to attend the princess Margaret in her journey. This little bud of Scottish royalty, the eldest daughter of James I., had been betrothed to the Dauphin when she was only three years of age; and now, although not more than eleven, she was considered old enough to be married to a lad of thirteen. Sir Archibald, it need hardly be said, obeyed the call with the most joyful alacrity; and, no longer a solitary knight-errant, set out for the land

of adventure, in the suite of a princess, the daughter of his king. He would have preferred, no doubt, a command in the military succours which accompanied the expedition, as the dowry of the young bride; but his powerful friends willed it otherwise, and the knight consoled himself with the idea that at a juncture like this, there must be abundance of fighting even in the most peaceable offices, at the court of Charles VII. In explanation of the policy of his friends in this respect, so different from what might have been expected from the house of Douglas, it may be added that it was the singularly handsome person of Sir Archibald, which induced them to choose the court for the scene of his adventures rather than the field.

The circumstances of the journey have nothing to do with our narrative, till the bridal party arrived within a few leagues of the city of Tours, where the royal family of France then resided. Here the little princess was met by numerous groups of the nobility and bourgeois, who came, either by command or to show their zeal, to escort

her into the town ; and Douglas, with the curiosity of a wandering Scot, set himself to gaze with all his eyes at the strangers. Among the parties who successively approached, there was one which more particularly interested him ; consisting of a young lady, attended by a knight clothed from head to foot in complete armour, who did not raise his vizor the whole time.

The female, in the eyes of the young knight, was distinguished from all the rest of her sex, by a peculiar elegance of form and demeanour such as he had never beheld before. The riding dress of ladies of distinction, in that age, as we see in the Colbert manuscript of Monstrelet, was not greatly different from that of the present day. It displayed the shape of the body, and muffled up the feet ; but at the neck, instead of rising to the chin, it allowed the rich stomacher to be seen, and the fall of the shoulders to be guessed at. If Sir Archibald's opinion, therefore, was erroneous, it was not for want of opportunity of judging.

The face of the stranger possessed the character of loveliness which is termed majestic ; although

this appeared to exist more in the expression than the features, which were rather petite than otherwise. Her eyes were of the darkest blue, bright, and yet of that meditative cast which is rarely conjoined with remarkable brilliance ; while her complexion being at the same time delicately fair, and her hair of the beautiful blond, celebrated by almost all the poets and fabliers of the three preceding centuries, she presented altogether those contrasts and contradictions in female beauty, which are, perhaps, still more exciting to the imagination, and dangerous to the heart, than regular perfection.

Her dress, although sufficiently common when seen at a little distance, appeared on nearer view to be of a quality so rich, that Douglas conceived her to be at the very least a princess. The veil which descended from the lofty cone of her hat, and, although supported on her left arm, reached the stirrups, was of a texture far more delicate than that of the dauphin's bride ; her stomacher was of cloth of gold, studded with gems ; and surmounting it, in a kind of frill which encircled the neck,

appeared a portion of her chemise, as fine as the two which Isabella of Bavaria possessed, and which were esteemed by her age as luxuries worthy of a queen. The purse at her girdle, called an *ausmonière*, perhaps, from its original destination, was peculiarly elegant in form, and the *paternoster* (a chaplet of beads) which hung beside it was of pure gold.

The Scot looked long at this gracious apparition ; and yet, but for a circumstance about to be mentioned, he would have had to describe her to his friend David, only as one of those phantoms, who pass us by in the crowd of the world, and are no more seen :—

One of those forms which flit by us when we
Are young, and fix our eyes on every face ;
And oh ! the loveliness at times we see
In momentary gliding, the soft grace,
The youth, the bloom, the beauty which agree
In many a nameless being we retrace,
Whose course and home we know not, nor shall know,
Like the lost Pleidad, seen no more below !

The young imagination of Margaret of Scotland was greatly touched by the appearance of the

lady; and when, in answer to her inquiries, she was announced as the damsel of Laval, the guardians of the princess hastened to advise her to receive, with some mark of peculiar courtesy, the daughter of one of the most distinguished men of the time. Sir Archibald Douglas, who chanced to be standing near, was accordingly despatched to invite her to approach; and all on a sudden, he found himself thus thrown in contact with the object of his admiring gaze.

The damsel, with her knight, and an escort of four men-at-arms, had in the meantime fallen behind; and Douglas, as he rode up to them, observed her companion extend his hand hastily towards the young lady's bridle, as if to prevent her advance. The Scot, however, delivered his message, and Pauline de Laval accepted the invitation promptly.

"It will displease your father," said the armed knight, hastily, in a low voice, "there are powerful reasons; and being here in his stead, I entreat—nay, I—"

"Sir!" exclaimed the damsel in a tone of sur-

prise, as she turned her eyes upon his iron-veiled face.

“Tarry, and I will explain,” said he, in one of those deep, full, melodious voices, which captivate the ear, and win the confidence; “or at least return promptly, and I will show my meaning, as we follow the procession.” On this understanding they parted; and the damsel, with a radiant smile to Douglas, put her palfrey to a pace which compelled him to use his long spurs in order to keep his ground by her side.

The interview with the bride lasted but for a moment. As the young lady drew near, Margaret, either prompted by her naturally affectionate disposition, or counselled by her guardians, opened her arms, and would have embraced her; but Made-moiselle de Laval, leaping lightly from her horse, bent her knee half way to the ground, and kissed the little princess’s hand. She then regained the saddle as suddenly as she had descended, but not before the ready Scot had had time to render her such assistance as at least convinced him that she was a being of earth’s mould; and, with a glance

and bow, which he appropriated entirely to himself, she bounded back to her attendants.

A turning of the road soon after concealed her party from his view ; but Douglas had observed, just before they disappeared, that the same kind of debate which he had witnessed, appeared to be still going on. The knight was evidently attempting, as his gestures showed, to dissuade the damsel from advancing in the path of the royal cortege ; while her manner betrayed much more reluctance to comply than could be accounted for, even by girlish curiosity to see the princess's reception at Tours. Added to this, he had perceived the knight, during the brief absence of his charge, in closer and more confidential conference with the men-at-arms, than their respective stations, and the light nature of their present duty, seemed to warrant ; and these circumstances, which at the present day, if marked at all, would leave no trace upon the mind, filled the observer in the wild and disjointed times of which we write, with anxiety and suspicion.

This, we allow, may be traced in part to the

interest which the singularly beautiful person with whom his thoughts were busy had inspired, and to the natural disappointment he felt at losing sight of her so suddenly; but Douglas, besides, brought up as he had been, in comparative seclusion, was deeply imbued with the feelings of that romantic chivalry which was already little more than a tale of the olden time, and perhaps any woman, in similar circumstances, would have produced the same course of thought and action. After lingering for an instant, he disengaged himself quietly from the procession, and followed by four men-at-arms, whom he had whispered, rode back briskly, though without any appearance of violent haste, to the turn of the road.

The line of road beyond was visible for several miles without interruption, and yet was utterly deserted. Douglas and his followers instantly dashed into a side path, near which the objects of their pursuit had been last seen; and on reaching an eminence, observed the four men-at-arms, without their chief, scouring hastily away in another direction, through the thicket. More

than ever astonished at this spectacle, the Scot continued to follow in the path at a headlong gallop ; till at length a succession of shrieks in the distance confirmed all his suspicions.

The knight and the damsel were soon in view ; the former grasping the bridle of the palfrey, and urging the animal on to the pace of his own magnificent horse ; while Pauline de Laval, struggling with her ravisher, rent the air with her screams as they flew. Maddened by this sight, the young Scot put his charger to his utmost speed, and gained rapidly upon the ruffian knight. By dint of whip and spur he was soon near enough to make his voice heard ; which he did in the usual terms of reproach and defiance, making known at the same time in the gallant spirit of the age, the challenger's name, by the shout of " Douglas to the rescue !"

The knight at first disregarded this salutation, but on the sound coming nearer, he halted suddenly, leaped to the ground, tied the forelegs of the palfrey, and, regaining his seat in an instant, put his lance in rest, and awaited the pursuer. At this time one of the Scottish men-at-arms was

in sight; and before Sir Archibald had approached within the length of a cross-bow shot, or in other words, near enough to allow the unknown to commence advantageously his career, a second appeared in view. Nothing daunted, however, by the odds, even of three to one, the ravisher coolly poised his lance, and awaited the proper moment to spring. But before this came, the third and fourth men-at-arms were in sight; and the knight, after an instant's hesitation, shook his arm threateningly towards the damsel of Laval, and spurred into the thicket.

"You are in safety, Madam," cried Douglas, whose border blood was now running in a whirlpool; "the royal cortege is at hand; and under the escort of my trusty followers, no harm can befall you. Permit me to ride after yonder recreant, and teach him —"

"Hold!" cried Mademoiselle de Laval, for the knight was already commencing his ride as he spoke; "come hither—hither;" and with a gesture of her finger, which was irresistibly commanding, from the mere absence of all doubt as

to its power of command, she drew him to her side.

"I must desire of you, Sir Knight," continued she, quietly, "to add to the service you have already rendered, by escorting me yourself in person into Tours. It is a duty which, doubtless, you feel to be at once more agreeable and more honourable than that of pursuing a flying enemy."

"As to the pleasure and the honour," replied Sir Archibald, "they are only greater and richer than I deserve; but, ruffian as he is, the fugitive appears, in all respect of arms, to be worthy of my sword; and neither can he be said to have been fairly vanquished, seeing that he only fled from a force of five men—"

"And a woman."

"Permit me, at least," said Douglas, compelled to smile in the midst of his chagrin, "to inquire the name and lineage of this recreant; that on some future occasion I may finish the feud which I hereby take upon me, most noble lady, in your behalf, and in the name of St. Michael the archangel."

"At the court of king Artus," replied the

damsel, "he is recognised as the Unknown—no, as the Black Knight. May I venture to ask in turn the style of his challenger? Have I the honour of having obtained for a servant Sir Tristan, Sir Méliadus, or Sir Lancelot?—Sir Lanval, or Sir Gruelan the faithful and beloved?—or, in fine, Sir Gauvain, he who dared the terrors of the Enchanted Sword for the sake of a kiss?"

"I am none of these," said the young knight, blushing and smiling, as, notwithstanding his little acquaintance with the popular fabliaux of the time, he could not help feeling he was quizzed. "I am not even one of the worthies of the court of king James, or of king Charles. My name is Archibald; I am of a younger branch of the Scottish house of Douglas; my domain consists of a few acres of brown heath, called, in our homely tongue, the Braes, with a border tower rising from the banks of Tweed; and, for fault of fortune and occupation at home, I have brought my father's sword to the wars of France, and to the service of the most amiable and lovely of her daughters."

"Thanks, noble stranger," said the young lady,

dropping suddenly her tone of raillery, and blushing in her turn, as she bestowed a momentary glance of surprise and interest upon the ingenuous countenance of the Scot,—‘ Here you have found but a distracted country, and a wilful maiden, for the exercise of your chivalry ; but, if men say true, even the meanest feud will furnish a field of honour for the Bleeding Heart.’ Douglas bowed, even to his horse’s neck, as with a flushing cheek and glistening eye, he replied to this compliment to his family.

“ I feel,” said he, “ that the name of my clan will receive no stain at my hands: more especially,” he added, after an abrupt pause, and in the spirit of an almost by-gone chivalry ; “ more especially, if Pauline de Laval will deign to inspire me ! yet, I pray you to observe, and thereupon I take you strongly to witness, that I am of a younger branch—that I am poor and alone—and that thus no discredit can reasonably attach to the house, even if it should be the fate of Archibald Douglas to fight undistinguished, and fall unhonoured and unknown.”

While thus conversing, they were rapidly gaining upon the procession; but when just about to mingle with the last of the crowd, Pauline hung back.

"Touching the knight," said she, "of whom you have inquired, it would be bootless for you to know his name, and worse than bootless to pursue the feud. Powerless himself, he is protected by a power with which it would be madness to contend. Let it suffice to know—if indeed you take more interest in the subject than concerns your own fame—that I am safe for the future, and that, so far from renewing his attempt, he will never more dare even to meet the eye of Pauline de Laval."

They had now gained the town, the streets of which displayed, on a small scale, the same sort of confusion and magnificence described in the opening chapter of this work. The bride was mounted on a white horse, whose bridle, studded with gems, was held on each side by a distinguished noble of the French court. After her came a brilliant train of ladies, likewise mounted,

and dressed uniformly, with hats of extraordinary height, and long white veils depending from the crown. Then followed two chariots filled with ladies; and then a troop of gentlemen of the French and Scottish courts.

The procession stopped at the château, on the banks of the river, which was the royal residence; and Margaret, dismounting, was led in by the Count de Vendome and a Scottish earl, and met in the great hall by the queen of France, the queen of Sicily, the princess Radigonde, natural daughter of the king, the Countess de Vendome, and other distinguished persons. Immediately after, the boy-dauphin entered, and the future Louis XI. kissed his little wife, when the ceremonial of the scene was at an end.

During the whole of this time the pertinacious Scot had remained by mademoiselle de Laval; and as soon as the reception was over they proceeded together to her father's house. This mansion, though but rarely occupied by the lord de Retz, was little inferior in magnificence to the royal château; and Sir Archibald's heart sunk within him at the view—he knew not why.

"Alas!" thought he, gazing, as if unwillingly, at the palace-walls before him, with their rich and vast gardens swelling on the one side, and the broad and beautiful Loire rolling its silver tide on the other. "Alas, my poor little border-tower, and its heather hills, and the brawling Tweed below!"

When they had dismounted, and were just about entering the house, a clatter of horses' hoofs was heard behind them, and an old man, wholly unattended, spurred into the court. Douglas's heart beat, for he thought, by the sudden emotion displayed by Pauline, that this must be the lord de Retz; but a single glance, when the horseman had dismounted, served to banish the idea. He was a man apparently not under seventy years of age; although the keen expression and extreme brightness of his eyes, indicated an unabated freshness and vigour, both of mind and body. Surmounting the ordinary habiliments, he wore a garment resembling the oriental kaftan. The colour was black, but the material of the richest silk, and minutely figured with such antique and unintelligible devices, as showed that the fabric belonged to another country, and per-

haps to another age. The most remarkable appendage of the wearer, however, was a beard of extraordinary length, and so intensely white as to give an unworldly air to the whole figure. The damsel of Laval bent before him with what seemed to be habitual reverence, mingled with astonishment.

"I am happy," she faltered, "yet surprised—"

"To see thine ancient friend," said the old man, with a benign smile, "a hundred miles from where you supposed him to be? This morning, however, I discovered a neglect which might have led thee into danger."

"This morning!"

"Ay, or yesterday, or a week ago—what matters it? and I am here, in time, I find, to congratulate thee on thy escape, and to present my fervent thanks to thy deliverer."

"Had the damsel of Laval permitted me," said Douglas, "I should indeed have deserved your thanks, by avenging her quarrel on the ruffian."

"She was wiser than thou. In the hands of that ruffian thou wouldst have been but as a wand."

"Even so, messire, to chastise him withal," said the Scot, reddening: "but, methinks the neglect you acknowledge, since you could not have known of my timely presence, would have been best remedied by sending before you some trusty followers of the Lord de Retz, to the relief of his daughter." The young lady looked distressed, and even alarmed at this taunt, but the old man did not appear even to have heard it.

"The neglect," said he, in a tone almost of soliloquy, "was natural. How could I have thought of suspecting danger? He was the lineal descendant of my sister—he is the only being who can count kindred with me upon earth. Howbeit, were he my own son, he shall pay the forfeit of his crime. He loves thee, lady. It was his purpose to carry thee off by force to a far island in the midst of the sea—farther still than Madeira, and beyond even the uttermost cape of Bojador; and there, untrammelled by the distinctions of wealth and rank, to have made thee his for ever. Fool! he thought to fly from *me*! as if my eye could not see him, and my hand reach him, were

he in the depths of ocean itself! But his life is forfeit. Speak the word, Pauline de Laval, and he dies in thy presence."

"I demand not his death," said Pauline, "nay, I beg his life of you, as a boon. Let him go, if he lists, to the regions of that far island. Such as he will be received with welcome by prince Henry of England; and in the service of that explorer of unknown seas, his rank and adventurous spirit may yet win for him honour and renown.

"So be it," said the old man, "my unworthy kinsman shall set forth for Sagres, by the light of this day's sun, to seek the English prince."

Such was Douglas's first adventure in France, or rather, we ought to say, its commencement. Had Pauline de Laval appeared to him all on a sudden as the daughter of one of the greatest lords in Europe, it is probable that the wandering knight would have regarded her as "some bright particular star," fit only to be worshipped at the distance of that impassable space interposed between them. But the fame even of the lord de Retz had as yet hardly penetrated to the Ultima Thule of the Scot-

tish border ; and Pauline was beloved as a woman before Douglas knew that in rank and fortune she was only beneath a queen.

There had been something so dazzling about the career of the lord de Retz, that most men imagined his constant good fortune to be more than natural. Left an orphan heir at twenty years of age, brave, generous, accomplished, and the handsomest of the handsome, there would have been nothing extraordinary in a moderate portion of prosperity. But the favours of that destiny which is called accident, descended upon him in a continuous shower ; and, as in the case of King Midas, everything he touched seemed to be turned into gold. In addition to his own large fortune, the beautiful Catherine de Thouars brought him a queenly dowry when he was only twenty-four ; and by the death of relations, one after another, he inherited estate after estate, till his possessions extended over several provinces in France and Brittany.

As a soldier, he was equally brave, skilful, and fortunate. Besides his other almost daily exploits, Charles VII. was indebted to him for the château

of Lude, which he captured with great valour, slaying the commandant; and he chased the English, unassisted by the king, from the fortress of Rennefort, and that of Malicorne on the Maine. In 1429 he was the principal ally of the Maid of Orleans, in throwing supplies into the city; and he was one of the great chiefs who, in the midst of this mighty revolution, solemnly anointed Charles at Reims. Count and marshal of France, and privy-counsellor and chamberlain of the king, and afterwards lieutenant-general of Brittany, his native country, under John V., the possessor of more estates, as the historians of the time relate, than his memory served him to reckon by their names—Gilles de Retz, at the commencement of our story, was still in the very flower of life, being little more than forty years of age.

It was only by degrees the Scottish stranger learnt the true rank of his mistress; and not until certain passages had taken place between them—imperceptible indeed to the world, but O, how important in the journals of the heart!—which would have made it equally base and impossible

to retract. As for Pauline, ever since the above adventure, her young heart was in such a flutter of fear and delight, that she had no time to inquire into the nature of the spell which bound her. Hitherto her admirers had been the rude and ignorant barons of her own country, or those hired mercenaries whose trade was not noble war, but blood and plunder. Douglas, in the midst of such men, appeared like some phantom knight whom her fancy had conjured up from its stores of tradition and romance. At first she could hardly comprehend him; and her heart, already drilled into the cold forms of the world, almost distrusted an enthusiasm so new to her outward senses, yet so familiar in her dreams. Even when she fully understood his character, he remained separated in her imagination from the breathing mass of mankind; and in those moments when the mind is accustomed to flee away from the realities of life into the regions of poetry and fiction, it was he who was the genius of the song, the hero of the tale—an impersonation of the brave, the generous, and the beautiful. Let us add, although the

observation is trite, that the very difference in their fortunes must have presented something piquant to the fancy of Pauline; and that the vista along which her spirit looked, must have been not the less tempting for those obstacles in the way, which the heart of eighteen *knows* to be impossibilities, yet *hopes* to surmount.

Douglas was not long of discovering, that the old man was a very important person in the family of the lord de Retz.

"*Make Orosmandel your friend,*" was the constant injunction of the damsel; but to her lover's simple question, "Why?" she could give no satisfactory answer.

"Is he noble? is he wealthy? is he high in office? has he an army of vassals at his beck? has he the ear of the kings of the time?"

"No, no, no. He has no rank, no command—he is moneyless, landless, and alone. He is an Arab, and his name is Orosmandel, and that is all even my father knows. He is kind, gentle, and humane; but his resolves are as irrevocable as destiny. I do not comprehend him. He appears

to do nothing, yet everything is done according to his desire. He rarely stirs from our château, on the banks of the Erdre, yet there are traces of him everywhere. My father, who would not brook a haughty glance from a throned king, is his obedient, revering, helpless child ; and I, a spoiled and wilful maid, although I love more than fear him, feel as if I only existed by his permission."

"Then," said Douglas, "he is either a sorcerer or a man of genius, and I shall try to make Orosmandel my friend."

The knight passed a considerable portion of a year at Tours, and then accompanied the king to the siege of Montereau, while the damsel returned to her accustomed home in the city of Nantes. As this was previous to the commencement of our story, the reader will not demand a detailed account of the parting of the lovers. That Douglas, however, was still sustained by some kind of wild and indefinite hopes, may be inferred from the fact, that his chief purpose, in seeking out his friend at Paris, was to invite the student to accompany him on a journey into Brittany, which

he meditated. The sudden apparition of his mistress at the theatre, attended by the good or evil genius of the family, bewildered him so much, that at first he could form no plan of action; but at length, with the customary frankness of his nature, determining that the boldest was the best policy, he watched the moment of their leaving the boxes, and joined them in the street. The result of this interview must be given hereafter, for we have only too long delayed inquiring into the consequence of Philip Armstrong's playing the devil.

CHAPTER VII.

ON the morning after David Armstrong's exhibition at the theatre, the first faint glimmering of the dawn disclosed him and his three comrades lying, as usual, in one room, buried in sleep. Their beds were four heaps of straw, covered with a ragged woollen cloth, and for a pillow each had under his head a bundle of straw bound with thongs, which the students of the university were in the habit of carrying with them to the class to sit upon. The apartment was large, but dreary and desolate; the floor was covered with litter; and every here and there the large stones of the wall were seen bare, and rough, denuded of the plaster which had adorned them in the days of yore.

Three of the four sleepers seemed to have but one character among them. They had fair hair, clear skins, and a ruddy complexion. Their foreheads were broad and massive; their noses firmly set; and their mouths, though pencilled in the rounded lines of youth, exhibited a certain rigidity, expressive of firmness and determination. Two of them were tall rather than otherwise, and strongly built; but Nigel was almost a giant. They all three slept as if soul and body had been alike unconscious. David, who was the handsomest of the four, was also the palest, owing, no doubt, to his midnight vigils; his brow was loftier than the others, and the whole head more intellectual. His sleep was troubled; his breath came thick and unequal; and his lips moved uneasily. At length, starting as a stronger beam of light touched his eyelids, he awoke and sat up in his bed.

“And am I here after all?” said he, “and was it nothing more than a trick of the enchanter Morpheus, the ‘figuræ formator,’ as Ovid truly describeth him? Here!—and for the last time!

No more shall the tiptoe visits of Aurora find me on this straw, a too reluctant Cephalus! No more shall I tread these venerable walks of Cadmus—‘*In sylvis Academi quærere verum!*’ And ye, my comrades, or, rather, my children—my babes, as I may call them, for whom my heart yearns, even like the heart of a mother—what will become of you? Well may you groan, Bauldy, a sure sign that you are nigh the waking; well may you hitch up your leg, Andrew, like a demoniac in the spasms; well may you shrink, my huge Nigel, like Tityus from his vultures, when he lay in hell, covering with his body nine acres of the burnt ground! What had I to do with Hashmodai? What was it to me if he had repeated the forty thousand verses of the Destruction of Troyes, and had been wrong in every verse? But yet it was indeed a torment to hear the dunce; and to do the citizens justice, they proved that they could appreciate talent, as well as condemn stupidity. Oh, it was a grand moment!—Hem!

“Devils of hell, horned and horrible!”

"The Lord save us!" cried Bauldy, and Nigel, and Andrew, with one voice, as they started from their sleep at this invocation, and sat up in their beds.

"Is it clubs, David?" cried Nigel, swinging round his arm, so as to grasp conveniently a huge weapon of the kind, which lay within reach.

"Who named the name of the Evil One?" demanded Bauldy in dismay.

"And at this blessed time of the morning," added Andrew.

"It was I,—Hashmodai the damned!" and David sprung from his couch, threw himself into a true demoniac attitude, and went on with the quotation :

"Devils of hell, horned and horrible!
Great and small, with eyes of basilisks!
Infamous dogs, what has become of you?"

"Excellent! excellent!" cried the awakened audience: "Bis! Bis! Hashmodai! Hashmodai!"

"It is enough, my sons," said the master student; "Hashmodai has played his part, and so

let him rest. Now up with ye, sirs, one and all, and shake yourselves well; and dash your heads into the water-pail; and put your fingers through your hair; and draw your cloaks evenly upon your shoulders; and so look seemly and respectable. And now, countrymen and lovers, lend me your ears!"

As David went on gravely and methodically with an account of the circumstances of the preceding evening, the three young men testified the amusement they received by shouts of mirth; and more especially, when he repeated the bitter jokes he had taken the liberty of introducing on the subject of the University, they laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks. But when all was concluded, they became suddenly silent, and looked inquiringly into one another's faces; while a kind of dismay seemed to creep over their minds, as the reflection forced itself upon them, of what must be the consequence of their friend's exploit.

"And now, my friends," continued David, "you are aware that in our days the scholastic discipline has suffered at least a partial relaxation. We no

longer, for instance, stand at our tasks naked from the waist upwards, that we may receive more feelingly the regent's stripes. But what of that? These were honourable inflictions, and left no shame behind. The penal laws, however, of the University, are the same to-day as formerly; and, as the statutes describe, for acting immodest pieces, or impugning on the stage the character of the Light of the Faith, the offending scholar must suffer publicly, '*supra dorsum nudum, pulsante campana.*' Think of that—on his bare back, to the tolling of their infernal bell!"

The audience groaned.

"And now, sirs," he went on, "as for such a degradation befalling *me*, who am an Armstrong, as you well know, and a near cousin of the name of Douglas by the mother's side, it is of course out of the question: but being so, it behoves me to take the wings of this blessed morning, and flee away."

"Whither?" cried the three in one breath.

"Whither the Lord willeth," answered David, looking upwards, "for I am even as a straw let loose upon the wind, to go wheresoever the wind shall carry it."

"Let there be four straws of us then," cried Bauldy, "and let us all go where the Lord willeth."

"By no means," said Nigel. "Let us thrash the witnesses till we turn their tongues inside out."

"Nay, nay," suggested Andrew, "we know not what even an hour may bring forth. Let us wait till the last moment, and then either fight or flee, as occasion may require."

"Hold your tongues, sirs, I desire you!" said David, "How dare you speak of such a thing to me? Is it likely, think you, that I should consent to take you from under the maternal wings of the University, when, as God shall judge me, I know not where this night to lay my own head? The days of knight-errantry are past and gone, or we might even sally forth, and take our share with the rest, of anything that was going, blows or pudding; but for decent men's sons, and students of polite learning to boot, to turn themselves into ruffians, who fight for an hire, it is a thing I would neither permit nor countenance. And, in what

other way would ye propose to get your living? Do you know the mysteries by heart, like me, so that you might enter into some strolling brotherhood of the Passion? Or are ye qualified to enlist under the banner of the King of the Minstrels? Or would ye sing litanies in the streets of Paris, for your miserable bread, and lie at night, higgledy piggledy, under the bridges, with the thieves and ill women of the profane side of the river—the Transtiberian bank, as I may stigmatize it, seeing that it is there such offensive trades are carried on? No, no, Bauldy—no, Nigel—no, Andrew, ye must still continue, lads, to live decently, and cultivate humane learning; and, if it should be the fate of David Armstrong to sink in the whirl of that world on which his fate or follies have cast him, he will sink *alone*, and so his moan will be the sooner made."

A deep silence followed this oration; during which, David arranged his cloak upon his shoulders, looked at the window, which was now brightening in the early sun, and turned ever and anon a furtive glance at his companions. As the moment of

his exodus drew near, the four friendless lads felt the ties that had bound them together in a foreign land, drawn tighter and tighter over their hearts. At last a sudden sob was heard, though manfully smothered in a clearing of the throat; and the youthful giant Nigel strode forward with an unsteady step, and looking down upon the castaway, addressed him in these words.

“ It is of no use, daddy David; you have more sense than us all three put together, and if you withdraw your counsel, we shall only get brained some night by the other students, or hanged some morning by the University. Besides, if any of us have a chance of getting on in this kind of priest-craft, it is you; and to lose the labour of years for a joke, is not to be thought of. Touching the matter of the public flogging, it is no doubt a sore thing both for soul and body, but what of that? My father, honest man, though a kinsman of yours, was little better than a reiver himself; and it may be, that I am some whit thicker in the mind, as well as skin, than you. My shoulders, too, are broad enough to bear the burden of a still

greater transgression ; and in short, sit you down at your ease, cousin, and do not throttle yourself in that fashion with your cloak. The whole three of us will make oath that you are as innocent of Hashmodai as the babe unborn ; and, for your sake, David, I will take all upon myself, devil, whip, and bell !”

“Shame upon you !” said David, in strong agitation, “and you a kinsman of the Armstrongs, and a kindly Scot ! Away, I have done with you ! begone ! And to think that I would let them tear your young flesh and crush your proud spirit to save my own, when you knew well I would lay down my life for yours ! Fye, lad, fye ! Come here, you overgrown whelp. Nigel ! May the Lord bless and preserve you for ever !” and David, unable to struggle longer with his feelings, hid his face on his friend’s bosom, and lifted up his voice, and wept. In the midst of the sobs of the whole party, there were heard, at some distance, the ominous sounds of a bell.

“It is enough,” said David, disengaging himself from the Herculean clasp of his cousin, “You

have betrayed me into a girl's weakness, Nigel; but since I see we are all pot and kettle in the business, it is the less matter. It was my purpose, lads, to have said a parting word for your benefit; but, as time presses, I can do little more than bid you remember, in all your outgoings and incomings in the world, that you are Scottish and Christian men. For yourselves, individually, take no thought; but bear constantly in mind, that you belong to your race and nation, and that your conduct may reflect either honour or discredit upon your fathers before you, and your children after you. Abstain from the cup, except in so far as decency and good manners permit. If you are offered a drink in moderation, take it without grudging, as one who is willing to make a due return when circumstances permit. But it is always a thriftless expenditure to buy wine for a man's own mouth; which is a subject, however, on the which I need not enlarge, seeing that you are not likely often to have the price of a bottle in your purse. Of that other and more fatal cup, drugged with the Circæan enchantments of beauty,

I say unto you, beware ! If you have left behind you a fair and innocent mistress, or, if you bear enshrined in your fancy some lovely Vision, of which you hope to fall in with the reality on earth, invoke that saving angel in the hour of temptation ! Avoid evil company ; or if that is impossible, look upon it even as mariners look upon a beacon on the shore—a sign to warn and deter, not to invite. Fail not, night and morning, to address yourselves to God, and the Blessed Virgin, at your lying down, and rising up ; and finally, my dear friends, at some odd moments now and then, in those pauses of life when the wearied heart retires into the past, think—kindly if you can—of David Armstrong !” The bell was now heard nearer and nearer ; and the young men wrung one another’s hands, while silent tears were raining down their cheeks. David stepped upon the ledge of the window ; but it was not till the tread of the authorities was heard ascending the stairs, that he sprang into the back court below, and disappeared among the buildings of the college.

He had truly said, that he knew not where

that night to lay his head ; and yet it must not be supposed that David, even in so sudden and unforeseen an emergency, was without his plans and purposes. The stranger, whom messire Jean had called Prelati, was perhaps not precisely the sort of person whom, under ordinary circumstances, he would have chosen for a patron ; but still, even before his self-expulsion from the university, he had balanced within himself as to whether he might not try his service for a while. This man was without a single mean or cruel trait in his countenance ; and the only gleam of fierceness he had exhibited was when virtually accused by the adept of contemplating an ungenerous action. Was it not possible that the latter, when he regarded him as an incarnate demon, was under the influence of the worse demon of avarice ? And might not the great bulk of Prelati's transgressions amount to the fact—which David did not consider a very heavy matter—of his being as ready as his neighbours to redeem the spoil of the Egyptians on every feasible occasion, from the fangs of the Jew.

If such had been his reflections before his fateful visit to the theatre, it may be supposed that this favourable hypothesis was strengthened, if not altogether confirmed, by the appearance of the Arabian philosopher. Orosmandel was doubtless the "friend" alluded to as the master of the lord de Retz, in some science still more sublime than alchemy; and well might Prelati smile at the Jew's mistake, in connecting such a man with the idea of the prince of darkness! A mild dignity was the chief characteristic of his face—a dignity arising, not from external, but intellectual grandeur; and David recognised, through all their disparity of years and figure, a sort of family resemblance between him and the subterranean visitor, which, without derogating from the former, exalted the latter to a tenfold pitch in his imagination.

But, even supposing his favourable opinion to be founded in error, David, whose nerves were good, considered that, with the sense both of mind and body open, he should run but little risk. Something good *might* befall him. The lord de

Retz, however short of ready money at the present moment, had the character of being both wealthy and generous. On the spot he would have an opportunity of serving his friend, Sir Archibald, either by furthering his love plans—for he had read the history in a glance—or by detaching him at once from a hopeless pursuit. And as for danger, if such should prove to exist, he was perfectly ready to trust to a quick eye, a ready hand, and, if need were, a clean pair of heels—always, over and above, the protection of the most holy Virgin, and the blessed St. Bride. “The Marmaridæ,” concluded he, with a quaint erudition, which in his time was not the small pedantry of a village schoolmaster, “the Marmaridæ, as we find in the verses of Caius Silius Italicus, lived among serpents, and were poison-proof!”

Such were his reflections on his way home from the theatre; where, in all probability, his exploit was proximately caused by that sort of reckless desperation, which sometimes prompts a hesitating climber to end the debate, by kicking the support from under him. Till then he had an idea almost

equally strong, of continuing, as usual, his research after the philosopher's stone; in the hope that the demerits of the Jew would be overlooked out of regard to the merits of the Christian. But now the thing was settled. The university was as sharp as the law in looking after its victims; and unless he was content to dwell for life with his unbelieving master, "burrowing," as he said "in dens and caves, like the Troglodytæ," he must quit Paris instant. As for Douglas's proposal, that he should turn a military adventurer, he knew very well that dry blows were, as often as otherwise, the lot of such desperadoes, whom every body was anxious to get rid of the moment their services could be dispensed with. This profession would by no means do for one who sought fortune as a means of comfort and independence; and the student had determined, rather than embrace it, to enlist among those explorers of unknown seas and far-away lands, whose fame was now beginning to ring throughout Europe; and so give himself a chance of falling in with some new Pactolus, whose tide rolled over golden sands.

The Hebrew maid, whose sudden appearance in her own character, was the real cause of the commotion which had taken place in his mind, and the change, as it appeared, in his destinies, was a subject on which he had not permitted himself to dwell. It was enough that a barrier existed between them which hope itself could not overleap; and even when contemplating the possibility of his still remaining her father's assistant, he looked upon *her* as on some disembodied shape that might haunt him like a spirit, but whom he must never more think of as a woman. Still, when seeking his way, as he did now, by by-paths, to her dwelling, with almost the certainty of seeing her—if, indeed, he saw her at all—for the last time, he experienced a sensation more painful than it had ever before been his lot to endure. A portion of this might, no doubt, be accounted for by the parting scene he had just undergone, and by the loneliness and desolation of heart he must have felt in his present outcast situation; but, however this may be, when he reached the ruined buildings, and was about to enter the door, and to

breathe the atmosphere where *she* lived, and moved, and had her being, he felt as if he would have fallen to the ground.

At this hour he knew it would be necessary to make his descent by the dwelling-house, and, lifting the latch softly, he entered the humble and ruinous abode. All was so still, and had so dreary an aspect, that he began to hope *painfully*, that the mysterious family had vanished; but the next moment the daughter of messire Jean stood before him in her usual ghost-like fashion.

"Thou hast tarried," said she, while a slight colour rose into her cheek, "my father hath watched all night for thy coming."

"Damsel—" replied David.

"My name is Hagar."

"Hagar! It is the name of the bondwoman who wandered of old, fainting, in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. It is the name of an Egyptian;" and the scholar seemed to derive some satisfaction from the idea.

"It is a type of our nation! Even so wander-

eth Israel to this day, cast forth, and forsaken of God and man—wearied, heavy in heart, and way-sore !”

“ It is you who forsook and were not forsaken. Turn again, O daughter of Jacob, and God and man will receive thee !”

“ It may not be. We await, like Hagar, the coming of One who will show unto us a well in the wilderness, saying, ‘ Fear not ; for I will make of thee a mighty nation !’ Pass on, stranger to our race, and take no thought of the daughter of the desert !” She turned away, as she spoke, and led the way into the interior ; but when just about to descend the ladder which conducted to the subterranean chambers, she again spoke, approaching a step nearer to the listener.

“ David,” said she. David started, and an indescribable thrill shot through his frame.

“ My father, thou knowest, is sorely beset, and his judgment is clouded by reason of the dangers that encompass him. Accept not of the advancement he will offer thee. Tarry with him, if

thou wilt, till he is able to flee away from this city of death ; but follow not his footsteps, neither go thou before—not for a king's ransom ! ”

“ And you ? ” said David, in a tone of breathless interest.

“ As for me,” she replied, smiling sadly, “ I am accustomed to wander alone in the wilderness. Take no thought of Hagar ;—but heed well her words, which concern thy life—peradventure thy soul ! ” and stepping upon the ladder, she disappeared in the abyss. David followed, like a man in a dream.

Messire Jean was sitting, as usual, at his table, but from habit, as it seemed, more than business : for that furnace was now cold, which was wont to be watched as religiously as the sacred fire of the Parsees. When David went in, announced by his daughter, the old man did not at first raise his head ; and when he spoke, there was a hesitation, amounting even to timidity, in the tone of his voice.

“ Thou hast tarried, my son,” said he, “ but thy fortune waiteth. Behold, our fire is out ; and that

shall let thee know that a voice of no little potency hath called me, and that I must perforce turn back, even with my foot upon the last step, and go forth again into the world. Without me, thou canst not continue the search, for thou hast neither means nor instruction ; but I have cared for thee, even in the midst of my travail, and I have found thee a new friend, and according to the calculation of men, fairer prospects. What sayest thou? Art thou content? Wilt thou forth, even this night, in the path I shall show? ”

“ Show it me, and I shall answer: If I am to go forth, tell me whither ; and if I am to serve—for I guess it is not to command—say who is to be my master, and what my wages.”

“ How ! Art thou in a condition to make terms? Where be thy lands, and thy moneys? Is thy cloak whole, that thou shouldst stand up, and say unto me, Do this, and this ? ”

“ I have no land, nor money,” replied the student; “ my garments are no longer new ; and I am this morning an outcast from the University.

Speak, for the time passes ; and ere the coming of the night, I have to provide myself with a shelter from my pursuers, and with a place whereon to lay my head."

"These things will I provide," said the Jew eagerly, while his constraint was replaced by an air of visible satisfaction ; "Is it not our duty to be a father to the fatherless, and to take the wanderer in ? If harm comes of it, is it the fault of the benefactor ? These things are in the hands of the Almighty ; but thou, valiant David, who wast born when the Sun was in the sign of the Lion, thy planet is stationary, and thou needest fear no evil."

"In other words, I may escape destruction, provided my hand can protect my head."

"Destruction ! Is it destruction to serve in the laboratory of a philosopher, who is protected by the greatest lord in Europe ? Go to, thou art still a boy. And yet I bid thee not slumber, as if thou wert in thy mother's cradle—that were a counsel unworthy of my age, since it is written that 'years should speak, and multitude of days

teach wisdom." Are not the watchful and the bold more likely to succeed than the heedless and timid? I will give thee a sword, good David Strongarm, and a dagger which thou wilt wear in thy girdle, and a suit of new raiment; and in the family of the lord de Retz thou wilt flourish exceedingly—and yet never cease to be wary. But what wilt thou do in turn for me, thou who hast eaten of my bread, and drank of my cup? Lo, I demand of thee but a very little thing. Stand back, daughter—silence, for I will not hear thee! Get thee gone, and prepare the morning meal. I am even as a stranger here, good David; for while tarrying in this place, year after year, absorbed in the great work, the world hath passed by, and forgotten me. I have no one to whom I can say, Do this, and he doth it; and to you alone, of all the myriads of mankind around me, can I open my lips. The task, I know, is unfit for thy years; but thou art wise and sober-minded, as well as faithful and brave; and wert thou none of these, thou art my only stay, and I must trust thee. I have a daughter—"

David started.

"Tarry, for I will be brief. I mean the young woman who was wont to bring in thy supper, she who was here even now—didst thou mark her?"

The student flushed to the roots of the hair; but he replied only by a calm inclination of the head.

"It is needful that she set out this day, towards the dusk of the evening, for the city called Nantes, where our kinsfolk dwell; tarrying as little as possible by the way, more especially till she hath passed the frontiers of France. Now the service I have to beg of thee is this: to permit the girl to travel so far in thy company, and, if need be, under thy protection. What! thou refusest? Verily, it is on the road to the château of the lord de Retz; it will not put thee out thy way an inch; and Hagar—I would say the young woman—is modest in her speech. She will be no more trouble to thee than a spaniel dog, who followeth his master without being called or driven. Verily, it is but a little thing!" David, to whom an idea like this had never occurred as within the

range of mundane possibilities, was in a profuse perspiration.

"It is not a little thing, it is a weighty matter," stammered he at last, "young women, I have heard, are uncanny gear; but, nevertheless, I will do your bidding; and the Virgin grant I get well over it!"

On hearing this acquiescence, a weight seemed to be taken off the old man's mind; and, untying a bundle, he produced an entire suit of clothes, including a hat, and a serviceable, if not a handsome cloak; for which David exchanged upon the spot such remnants as still remained upon his back of his scholar's apparel. The alchemist then presented him with a sword and dagger, the latter of which he fastened with his own hands, in such a way that it was entirely concealed; and the student remarked, as an unusual circumstance, that his clothes and belt were expressly adapted for this purpose.

He was now better dressed than ever he had been in his life; his hand grasped a sword which was his own; and steady as the mind of the ex-

scholar usually was, a flush of youthful confidence rose to his brow, and he walked several paces down the cavern, with a step so elastic that he seemed to tread on air.

"Have you nothing else to ask of me?" said he, returning, "for, by St. Bride, this were goodly payment, were the service to transport even the fury Megæra to Nantes, of whom, as Annæus Lucanus testifies, Hercules himself was afraid. What will become of *you* when we are gone? You will doubtless follow, for so I predicate from the extinction of the furnace, as soon as you are able. Do you want no assistance—no strong and trusty arm?"

"For what? Have I not given up the Search? And what else should make secrecy desirable?"

"I spoke not of secrecy," replied David, his lip curling with disdain at the Jew's dissimulation, "but be it even as you will."

"And yet, is there anything better than secrecy," resumed messire Jean, "in troubled times like these? When I said unto thee, Be watchful, and be bold, I should have said like-

wise, Be secret! Thou art the son of a people who, as men relate, are all three. Be there more of you, good David, at the University?"

"Go, seek at the Scottish college," answered David, who would not lose the opportunity of serving his friends, "and take the first you meet, for you cannot go wrong: but more especially, if you meet first with one who shall remind you of a poplar tree, or a cedar of Lebanon, or a church steeple, you may think that you have fallen in with as true and brave a fellow as ever cried 'clubs!' at a friend's need."

"Then let him come to me," said the alchemist eagerly, "for I know not how my eyes may serve me in the unwonted light of day. Let him come to-morrow night to the upper dwelling. Shall it be so without fail?"

"Without fail."

"Then fare thee well, good David Strongarm. When thou returnest in the twilight, thou shalt find my daughter awaiting thee at the door, and alone. Remember the words of my mouth: Be secret, bold, and watchful! Now go." But he

still continued to grasp the young man's hand, while he looked in his face with an expression, in which David, instructed as he was, was able to read at once, affection, pity, and remorse. At length he undid the convulsive pressure; and, repeating in a tone of solemn warning the word, Remember! he pushed him towards the door, and turned away.

Hagar was waiting in the vestibule; and they both ascended the stairs without exchanging a word. When they reached the door, and were in the light of day—

"You see," said David, with an attempt at gaiety, which was almost ludicrous in the relation in which they stood at that moment with each other, "You see that I am now somewhat better fitted to be the esquire of dames!"

"I know not," replied she coldly; "I am a Jewess, and understand not the needs of chivalry."

"Then, adieu, till the evening."

"Stay, I meant not to hurt thee: but—no matter. A single word, lest I may not have

opportunity again to speak it. Thou bearest a dagger at thy girdle: it is a talisman which will protect the life of the wearer just so long as it is worn concealed upon the person, and ready to the hand. Remember!"

CHAPTER VIII.

SOON after David Armstrong had made his escape from the Scottish college, the three forsaken students received a visit from Sir Archibald Douglas. The knight was not now so ignorant of the character of the university, as to be much surprised at the turn affairs had taken; neither, indeed, was he at all sorry that anything had occurred to detach his friend from the pursuit, either of the thin, cold gown of a cure's vicar, or of that ignis fatuus of science, the philosopher's stone. The absence of the scholar, however, at this particular juncture, was annoying in the extreme; for Douglas had determined to set out the next morning for Brittany, and to take his early friend with him, as an ally in the adventure, if his powers of persuasion could bring it about.

After some fruitless inquiries as to the probable quarter to which their comrade had retired, he at length left Bauldy, and Nigel, and Andrew to their studies; and then returned to his own apartments, in the hope that by this time David might have found his way thither. The day, however, wore on in idle expectation; and the knight had determined, with a heavy heart, to set out on his journey alone; when he received a note from his friend, he knew not by whose hand, appointing a meeting, in the dusk of the evening, at a well-known inn and tavern, called the Pomme-du-Pin, for the purpose of exchanging farewells.

Sir Archibald's impatience did not allow him to wait till it was actually dark; but as soon as the broader light of day began to fade, he sallied forth from the palace, and sought out his rendezvous. The Pomme-du-Pin was a large building, which stood, as the modern French express it, "*entre cour et jardin*." Around the court were placed at regular distances sundry *montoirs*, or horseblocks, of different heights; so as to allow the guests, whether men, boys, or women, to mount their

mules or horses without inconvenience. In the middle was a post, surmounted by a large lamp, whose yellow flame already began to mingle with the posthumous rays of the sun.

The walls of the house were brilliantly white ; while the wooden posts or joists, which intersected them, were painted with the colours of the sign, green and vermillion. The sign itself was hung from the peak of the gable, which fronted the street. An air of comfort and substance overspread the whole picture ; which was not diminished by the clean and jolly appearance of the host, who happened to be standing at the door, dressed in bonnet, doublet, and breeches, all as white as the walls of the hotel ; with his snowy apron tucked up on one side, so as to disclose a long knife stuck in his girdle, with a handle of burnished copper. This costume showed that the Pomme-du-Pin was not a mere tavern, where the citizens assembled to drink ; but also an inn, where travellers were sure of finding a dinner suited to their means and inclination. The innkeepers—as is still the case in the provinces—were always cooks.

When the knight entered the salle, or traveller's room, he thought within himself that king James was not better provided with a banqueting-hall. The walls were handsomely wainscotted to the very ceiling, and adorned with engravings, laid upon velvet, and well framed. One of these represented Noah's ark, with a selection of the animals it inclosed, looking out at the windows. Another contained the patriarchs, dressed like substantial burghers, with their paternosters hanging on their arms. Another showed forth the tower of Babel, with its ramparts defended by cannon; and another, the twelve months of the year, sowing, pruning, reaping, feasting, or killing a pig, according to the individual character.

Stools and benches were ranged along the walls; and sideboards groaning under piles of trenchers and porringers, some of wood, some of earthenware, but most of bright pewter. In the middle of the floor, stood a long, narrow table for the public dinner, or table d'hôte; and at the sides, some smaller ones for the convenience of excommunicated persons, or other guests who might choose to eat by themselves. The fire-place, since

it was not cold enough for a fire, was ingeniously hidden by wainscoting, going upon hinges, and carved on both sides, so as to appear part of the wall, either when open or shut.

Douglas, who continued to lounge about the room for some time, indulging his curiosity, was set down by the drawers as an unproductive guest; and even, when at length he seated himself upon a stool which commanded a view of the door, and at the same time permitted him to lean his back against one of the sides of a kind of box, resembling the subdivisions of a modern coffee-room, he was left entirely to his own reflections. These were frequently disturbed by the entrance of various groups of guests; for it seemed now to be the time of evening, when both travellers and citizens were accustomed to refresh themselves after the labours of the day, and more especially for those of the mercantile profession, to sanctify their bargains by drinking healths to each other in full measures of wine.

He at length observed a person enter, substantially and genteelly dressed, in a traveller's cloak

and boots, with a pointed hat adorned with a plume of feathers, signifying that the wearer either assumed, or was entitled to, the rank of a gentleman. A sword of formidable dimensions hung at his girdle, while an *escritoire*, or ink-horn, beside it, proclaimed that the stranger was something more than a mere military adventurer. Douglas started, and looked like a man who cannot believe his own senses; but the next moment his eyes were fixed, with overpowering curiosity, upon a female who leant upon the stranger's arm. She too, was in traveller's costume, and her face was completely concealed by her hood; a circumstance which somewhat relieved the knight, for a disgraceful suspicion had risen unconsciously in his mind. But, although furred and cinctured like the respectable women of the time, she had neither the *agnus* nor the jet chaplet, without which, they rarely went abroad; these things, like the others we have mentioned, being among the articles of ornament or apparel, forbidden by statute, to the votaries of the *Venus Vaga*.

The lady and gentleman were earnestly engaged

in conversation, and seated themselves within the box, without having observed the curiosity they had excited.

“Why hast thou entered here?” said the former, looking round anxiously from under her hood, “would it not have been wiser to have tarried near the stables till our horses were ready? But, peradventure the clerks of the University are forbidden to frequent such places as this.”

“Truly, you may say so,” answered her companion;” and even if the statutes were silent, it is not likely that we should run much risk of meeting them where the wine, I will be bold to say, is as much as two sous. No, no, you must go to the cabarets for such gentry, or to the Val d’Amour—hem! I would say the Val des Ecoliers. But, mademoiselle, I will crave permission to leave you alone for a while. I expect a friend here, who is also, I may say, a far-off kinsman, and on no account must he see you. He is a decent youth, and his morals, I doubt, would be shocked at the mystery that is between us; and since you will not untie my tongue—”

“What is this place wherein thou leavest me? Methinks I am more likely to attract observation here, than if seated in the open room.”

“Be satisfied that no one will enter, of his own will, beside you—not if he has room elsewhere in the broad lands of France. This is the table of the—”

“Of the what?”

“Of the excommunicated. But be of good cheer. Turn away your head when you see my friend join me; and the moment he is gone, we shall mount and away—where our voices will be lost in the burthen of the Seine, and our figures hidden in the bosom of the night.” He rose up to leave the box, and, at that moment, encountered the eyes of the knight; who, leaning both hands on the partition, was staring down with unceremonious wonder, upon the mysterious pair.

“A good even to you, Archibald,” said the scholar, after looking solemnly at his friend for nearly a minute, “You are before your time, rather than behind; but this calls for no especial commendation, since the trysting-place is a tavern. I

am here, however, to drink healths neither to saints nor angels—a custom to which I grieve to observe you are too much addicted : I pray you avoid it for the future. In a word, the University will not hear the truth, even from the father of lies ; and as Hashmodai was banished to Upper Egypt by the angel Gabriel, even so I, his unworthy representative, have received a hint to travel—whither think you, Archibald ? ”

The knight glanced at Hagar, who sat without moving, her hood hanging far over her face, and then answered as distinctly as eyes could speak—
“ To the devil ! ”

“ You are wrong, my friend,” said David, “ my destination is the chateau of La Verrière, on the banks of the Erdre ; where I am to be the servant in science of the Arabian philosopher, Orosmandel.

“ Holy Mary ! is this a jest ? or have you been musing again upon your Venus Dominie, and drinking her health till you fancied there was poison in the draught, and saw spectral castles on the wall ? ”

"Come, mademoiselle," said David, in huge dudgeon, "the night blackens apace, and our horses no doubt wait."

"Stay, I meant no harm : but if you can show me anything in the affinities of physical objects more curious than this coincidence, I shall renounce Christianity, and become an alchemist myself. Why, man, I spent this whole day in searching you out, that I might beg of you, for the sake of old friendship, to accompany me on that very journey. Even now, my horse is saddled, and my leave taken, and although it was not my purpose to have departed till the early morning, let us away, in God's name !"

"That may not be, for I have other company whose need is greater than yours. Howbeit, if we travel the same road, it is not unlikely that we may meet at the end. In the mean time, fare you well, Archibald."

"And this, then, is all ? Why, what a fool of imagination I have been ! But go !—I only regret that a woman who travels alone with a young man in the middle of the night, and chooses a public

wine-house for her starting place, has no likelihood of being able to make up to her victim or seducer, whichever he may be, for the loss of a friend. Farewell, my heretofore comrade—I wish you more fortunate in your trust than Archibald Douglas !” and the knight turned indignantly away.

“A word, messire,” said David, following him, and speaking in a stern but low voice. “You know I am a man of peace : nevertheless, when we meet again, if, on my rendering such explanation as I may see fitting, you do not make instant amends for the wrong you have done the lady, who is now under my protection, I vow to the blessed St. Bride, I will make you feel the weight of the sword wherewith her father has entrusted me to defend his daughter !” On this address, Douglas, already chafing with disappointment, turned round like a lion touched by the hunter’s spear ; but, at the moment, the object of their contention, throwing back her hood, glided in between them.

“Sir Knight,” said she, “the indelicacy thou

hast so well and so sharply reproved is no fault of ours, however appearances may be against us. Thy friend will tell thee—and thou canst not doubt his word—that however low and mean I may be held in the estimation of the world, I am yet a virgin of unblemished character. If thou knowest of any respectable lady about to travel to Nantes, and wilt recommend me to her protection so far, even in the quality of a handmaiden, thou wilt relieve thy friend from an irksome and unprofitable task, and so far as regards myself, perform an action worthy of the calling to which thou art devoted by oath.” Douglas gazed for a moment upon the face of the young woman, and then bowed with reverence.

“I have wronged you, damsel,” said he, “and I cannot better make amends, than by procuring you the advantage of travelling in the suite of a family of distinction, who leave Paris for Nantes to-morrow morning. A single line which I shall now write—if, in token of forgiveness, David, you will lend me your *ecritoire*—provided you can deliver it into her own hands, will ensure you a good reception

from the lady. Am I pardoned, my old comrade?"

"Provided you will pardon me first," said David, and the two friends shook hands.

While Sir Archibald was writing, her protector, apparently relieved of a load of care, took the opportunity of assuring Hagar, in a whisper, that he was a man of delicacy and honour, and of the best blood in Scotland to boot;—whereof he himself, David Armstrong, unworthy as he was individually, had a certain portion in his veins, thanks to his mother, of blessed memory.

"You have no time to lose," he added, "and at any rate, it is always better, as we say, to take Occisio by the forelock: so we will both escort you to the house this blessed moment, and the affair will be arranged one way or other, on the instant."

"Not so," replied Hagar, as the knight put the missive into her hands—"I know the address, which is not far distant, and I will go alone."

"That is impossible," said Douglas, "at such an hour."

“Not to me. I have already tarried too long with you, as the eyes of the company intimate; and thy friend, Sir Knight, knoweth that I am wont to come and go without making more noise, or attracting more observation, than the shadow on the wall.”

“It is even so,” said the student, “let it be as she wills, Archibald, for she is wise beyond women.”

“Then await me here, even till the eighth hour; and if I come not then, think that I am in safety, and that the wandering maid is praying to the All-good for her protectors!” She turned round as she spoke, and piloted her way so dexterously through a party of entering guests, and vanished so instantaneously at the door, that even the knight, who knew her less than David, was satisfied of her safety.

The scholar continued looking towards the door, in an attitude of intent listening; while Douglas regarded him with a look half of curiosity, half of such ridicule as the most serious passion in the world provokes even from those who feel most its power.

"Do you hear her footfalls still?" said he at last.

"Hear her footfalls?" replied David starting, "as well might you listen for the music of Aspendius, who touched his lyre so lightly that the tones were inaudible to human ears! Truly, she is none of the daughters of Zion, who 'walk with stretched-forth necks, and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet.'"

"Bravo, my friend! Ever while I live I shall have more confidence in devils; for, by my faith, Hashmodai is the very god of love!"

"You are nearer the mark, Archibald, than might be predicated of your ignorance as a man of war. Hashmodai does indeed resemble in some sort the infernal Cupid—not the son of the celestial Venus—but he who was born of Erebus and Nox. They say he loved Sarah the Ecbatanean woman so violently, as to strangle her seven husbands, out of jealousy, one after the other.

"And how may a man guard himself against the visits of so terrible a deity?"

"On that subject there is some difference of opinion among the learned. Many are for broiling the heart and liver of a fish on live coals, according to the advice given by the angel Raphael to Tobias; while others are more inclined to put their faith in the smoke of sulphur, notwithstanding the adverse testimony of Ovidius :

'Nec fugiat vivo sulphure victus amor.' "

"I am of the opinion of that same Ovidius, if it be against sulphur. I abominate the article, which serves for nothing else than fuel to the devil and his philosophers. But come, let us wash our mouths of the subject with a cup of wine. Ho! mine host!"

"Hush, Archibald; you forget you are not now at the king's cost. We can say we are waiting for a friend, and that is God's truth, you know—Well, if it must be so; but I cannot say I approve of such extravagance when we are by ourselves."

A flagon of wine, and some walnuts, were set down by the knight's orders, and, in compliment to their genteel appearance, a small silver cup was placed between them. This pocillum, how-

ever, as he called it, David insisted upon his friend appropriating to his own use, while he contented himself with one of pewter.

"And now, Archibald," said he, "if we had the day before us, I would willingly listen to what you are willing to tell, if you could set about it. But at this hour of the night, it behoves me to render you such assistance as may be in my power in opening your heart; for if Hagar—that is, the hooded maiden—return disappointed, it may be some days before we meet again. You love the damsel of Laval, that is the sum of your secret.

"If a man may be said to love a star!"

"And why not? The poets feign that Cynthia herself descended to the summit of mount Latmus to kiss Endymion. Passion knows not space, nor time, nor rank. Impossibilities are its sport: yea, if the lover cannot soar high enough, the mistress descends, and so they meet, like the Latmian shepherd and the moon, between heaven and earth."

"Thanks, David, your words stir me like a

herald's trumpet. But I would not have my love descend. For one kiss of her eyelids, I would climb that same Latmus, were it ten times higher than Ben-nevis, whose head is hidden in the clouds. And why indeed should I despair? I have an arm, a sword, a heart; my veins are filled with the blood of a hundred sires; and I walk abroad encircled by the brightness of a name, which, although it may not be made more bright, shall never be tarnished by me. O my friend, if you felt the thrill which ran through my soul, when she told me that even 'the meanest feud would furnish a field of honour for the Bleeding Heart!' Methinks I was a coward till that moment!" The knight started up as he spoke, as if to obtain room to breathe; and he strode across the room with a step which made the other guests start. His burning cheek and flashing eye contrasted strongly with the pale, haggard, and dispirited look of his companion.

"Your love is virtuous," said David, in a hollow tone, when he had resumed his seat, "and therefore it is possible."

"I never loved but her since I was a boy; no maiden have I betrayed; the name of woman was as something holy in my imagination; and to support, cherish, and defend her, I have ever considered a part of my honour as a gentleman, my oath as a knight, and my religion as a Christian."

"Then love on without fear: for your mistress shall not assume in your dreams the form of a fiend, commissioned to waylay and destroy you!"

"How?"

"You will not see blood and tears drop from the crucifix when you pray!"

"David! your mind wanders!"

"Love which is inconsistent with honour and religion is unholy, were its object an angel—and there's an end! Now, Archibald, what are your designs?"

"I obtained speech of the damsel of Laval last night for only an instant, and she whispered something, which fills me, in spite of myself, with alarm. You must know that, at the commencement of our acquaintance, I had the good fortune

to rescue her from the hands of a villain, who is some relation to Orosmandel, and who, the old man believes, is now by his commands on a voyage of discovery in the African seas. This wretch the damsel saw, or imagines she saw, either in body or spirit, on the streets of Paris ! To-morrow she returns to Brittany ; and it is my purpose to watch over her unseen, till it be ascertained, whether the apparition was an illusion or a reality—if indeed it was not the spirit of her enemy.”

“A relation of Orosmandel ! Describe him, I pray you.”

“I cannot. When I saw him, he was cased in black armour from head to foot, and his vizor closed.” The scholar mused for some time.

“It is strange,” said he, at length, “how your affairs and mine, Archibald, appear to be woven together. It is my fate to reside under the very same roof with the damsel of Laval, where I may serve you even like a familiar spirit ; while the information you have just now given involves matter which, perhaps, concerns my life. Lupus

in fabula ! O holy St. Bride !—look you there, Archibald !” and, catching his friend’s arm as in a vice, he motioned him to follow the direction of his eyes.

Two guests, whom they had not observed before, were about leaving the room, one an elderly, and one a middle-aged man ; the former in the showiest dress of a bourgeois, and the latter without any thing in his air or habiliments which could draw observation of one kind or other.

“ Let the lord de Retz be whom he may,” said the bourgeois doggedly, “ his debt is now large enough for a king to think worth paying ; and, in short, I must have my money.”

“ Your money is safe,” replied the other mildly ; “ but if you will take the counsel of a plain man, you will execute the magnificent order I have now given you, and then solicit payment for all together. I know you come sometimes to Nantes. Why not bring the things under your own convoy ? Nay, why not bring your daughter with you—I think you have a daughter—and combine pleasure with business ? She would find the damsel of

Laval every thing that is kind and condescending; and as for you, taken notice of by the lord de Retz, perhaps even residing for a day or two at the château, till the money was ready (I could contrive myself to keep it back), the echevins of the town would not know how to pay you honour enough."

"Then you think I should be sure?"

"Absolutely. What is it to me? I am paid to perform my employer's business, not to deceive."

"Well, it is a heavy outlay; but I can afford it: it shall be done."

"I knew you were wise as well as wealthy; I am not accustomed to throw my pearls to swine. Good night."

"Good night—and with my humble commendation to my honourable lord." When the agent of the lord de Retz was gone, David relaxed his gripe of his friend's arm, and, fixing his eyes on his face, whispered mysteriously.

"Who is that, think you, Archibald?"

"It is a baillie of the tailors," replied the knight with a look of surprise, "and a special

friend of my own. Good even to you, messire ; here is a gentlemen would be glad to make your acquaintance."

"Ha, my sprig of mountain ash ! do we meet again ? What, still munching ? still guzzling ? wilt never have done ? But hold ! your brewing, I see, is something of the weakest ; and that men say, however it may be otherwise convenient, is not overly agreeable to the Scottish palate. Argenteuil, I grant you, still maintains at least a memory of its reputation ; but in general the wines of the capital may be considered misfits. Here, mine host !"

"The emperor Julian," said the scholar, "admired the wines of Lutecia ; and if we are even now wetting our lips with them, it is for the sake of their classic reputation, not from motives of economy. Although I will not say but the drink is somewhat wersh as it were, and not just so comfortable to the stomach as would give a conscientious man the warrant for swallowing it of St. Paul's advice to Timothy."

"As I live, I knew the face, although the cloak

was strange to mine eyes ! And is it even thou, my son in the outer man ?—or rather, son that was, for I see you have renounced your father.”

“ I have neither renounced my father nor my cloak ; but the latter, after some years of faithful service, I grieve to say it, has renounced me.”

“ What, the epitogium ab loquendum—or ad loquendum—for I never could tell the difference ? But why not come to me to replace it ? It was honestly paid for, as it was honestly made ; and you know I was never a man in that case, to distress a scholar for the amount of his bill.”

“ You misapprehend. The epitogium, though none of the newest, was still nothing less than respectable ; and if Sir Archibald, here, (whose trade, as I may say, is destruction) had kept his hands off it, there would have been no need, for some while yet, either to try the depth of your patience or of my purse. In a word, I am no longer a scholar ; and my business calls me, perhaps, in some half-hour hence, to the city of Nantes. As for my present habiliments, to be frank with you, I know not the name of the fashioner ; but I

will say this for him, that he is as good a workman as ever followed the banner of St. Luce ;” and David, stretching forth his leg beyond the end of the table, so as to display as much of his figure as possible, looked with great complacency upon his flowing cloak, his coat of double cloth padded throughout with wool, and his inexpressibles double-stitched, and fortified with leather.

“As for the workmanship—hum !—the mere needle and thread affair—I do not say that the garment will let in hailstones bodily : but do you tell me that it would take an ell of cloth, of five quarters breadth, to make two such breeches as these ? If not, your fashioner cuts neither by conscience nor by the statute. As for the coat, it merits condemnation, inasmuch as the inner fold is evidently of old cloth, a thing strictly forbidden by law—and, for that matter, by Scripture too, as a priest once told me, under the parable of old wine and new bottles. Then, if the silk with which it is bordered has not already been on the back of a noble—a fraud common to the whole confrérie ex-

cept myself—say that Jacquin Houpelande knows not his trade!”*

“God forbid that I should say anything of the kind,” replied the ex-student—“for it is well known that Jacquin Houpelande—although, in making out his accounts in Latin, for the university, he will sometimes confound the accusative and ablative prepositions—ought to be considered the king of the tailors. This, however, I will say, after an adagium, or proverb, we have among our border riders, that it is neither wise nor civil to examine too curiously the mouth of a gift-horse.”

“There are confreries of less substance that have their king, as for example, the minstrels, and why not the tailors? I am the richest man of my trade, if the lord de Retz be as good as his word; I am an echevin of the city. Good youth, you

* This was not a fraud thirty years later; for the Letters of the King, dated 24th June, 1467, relating to the pour-pointiers of Paris, expressly permit this application of old silk to the coats of bourgeois; the regulation setting forth, that silk which had been used by gentlemen was not too much worn for the purpose.

are too complimentary, although no one can deny that you are passing wise withal ; and I am glad to my very linings, to hear that this is an ominous suit."

" Anonymous, perhaps ?"

" Well, be it so : and one which you did not bespeak, but receive as a gift. And now, as touching the wine, I was minded to order the boy to bring us a flagon of the Orleanais ; but, although still somewhat in vogue, this is no more like what men say it was in the days of Louis le Jeune. As for Rochelle, you have plenty of it in Britain ; what do you say if we try the brewings of Anjou, or Provence, or Burgundy ? Come, in a word, let us have a leathern bottle of Bordeaux, one of the most ancient, as it is one of the best of the wines of France."

" We have already drunken," interfered the knight, " and it waxes late."

" It is indeed not very far from the eighth hour," said the student, " and for my part, although beholden to you for the offer, I am not Xenagoras, nor yet Xenarchus—if these be indeed two persons—to

swallow either nine or twelve gallons at a sitting. But for the wine of Bordegala, or in the vulgar tongue Bourdeaux, it is indeed an ancient drink ; being celebrated in the following verses of the poet Decimus Magnus Ausonius, who flourished in the fourth century of our era—”

“ Hold !” cried the echevin, “ You could drink the wine in less time than you will take to praise it in poetry ; or if you must needs recite, methinks a cup will be all the more necessary to wash down the Latin. And here it comes in good time. What say you, sir knight ?”

“ The wine, by all means, if we are to have the Latin.”

“ Come then, sir student, will you pledge me.”

“ That will I, Jacquin, were it in the measure of Novellus, surnamed Tricongius—a matter of three gallons ! The custom of pledging, Archibald, is derived from the pledges or securities offered in matters of law. When a man committed any of the lesser crimes, he escaped imprisonment previous to trial, by getting another to become his pledge ; or in other words, to undertake to endure in his stead, what-

ever punishment might be awarded, in the event of the criminal absconding. Again, when the queen of St. Louis, in danger of shipwreck, vowed to St. Nicholas a silver boat, she satisfied the saint he should not be defrauded, by getting Joinville to become her pledge. In like manner, when a man was challenged to drink, if he found himself a weak brother, he was allowed to obtain a pledge, and so drink by proxy."

"And is it thus you would pledge me? By the holy Saint Luce, I were unworthy to be the first man in the confrèrie of tailors, and an echevin of the city to boot, if I could not drink for myself! and so, messire, I empty this measure to your prosperity; touching which, I see the knight is busy consulting the dregs of his cup."

"I was thinking," said Sir Archibald, starting, "of another toast."

"And yet divination," remarked the student, "is a thing more to be condemned than despised, since, before it was forbidden by Moses, in the book of Leviticus, it was practised by Joseph in Egypt, who was an augur, and had a divining cup."

In our time, the manner of the ceremony is to turn towards the east, and pronounce the words, 'Abraxa, per dominum nostrum?' when the contents of the vessel will straightway show forth the inquirer's destiny."

"It is a pagan error," said the knight, setting down the cup hastily; "and if Joseph practised it, it was because he was a Jew and no Christian!"

"You are right," cried the master-tailor, whose voice began to wax loud, "if Joseph was indeed a Jew, he could be no Christian, say I. But since there is sin in the dregs of a cup, let us fill the faster. Come, shall we sing? there is no harm in that. If you love me, sir scholar, let us have one of the priestly chants of the university:" whereupon David, to his friend's surprise, began without more solicitation, and in his usual grave and methodical manner, the following strain—

"Beuvs d'aoltant au soyr et au matin
Jusqu' a cent sols,
Et ho!
A notre hotesse ne payons point d'argent
Fors ung credo,
Et ho!"

"Archibald," said he suddenly, in the midst of the echevin's plaudits, "what was the other toast of which you were thinking?"

"The Venus Dominie" replied the knight, "it is past eight o'clock."

Come, sir Bourgeois, the bottle is out, and we thank you for your hospitality, which at another time we shall be proud to repay. Tell me, in the meantime, who is that man to whom you talked even now when my friend called you?"

"Plague on it, are you gone already? Never talk of payment except in the case of an epitogium ab—ad—no, ab loquendum. But as for the man, he is a confidential agent of the lord de Retz, and that is all I know about him."

"God be with you—we shall meet again, if my auguries do not deceive me," and so saying, David drained his glass, even to the sinful dregs, and hurried away, followed by Sir Archibald.

"The decent man!" said he, in a low voice, when they had left the house—"I should not wonder if that wine stood him a matter of three sous!"

They walked on for some time in silence, the knight leading the way, till they reached a very large and very handsome house, dimly seen in the moonlight.

"This is strange," said the conductor, "all is dark, and the gate is shut: they must have changed their intention, and set out this evening instead of to-morrow; I cannot comprehend it."

"Of whom talk you?"

"Of Orosmandel and the damsel of Laval."

"Holy St. Bride! And it was to them you recommended Hagar? Archibald, the man concerning whom I even now questioned the echevin, if I have any understanding within me, was your enemy—and mine!" The knight was thunderstruck. They made every inquiry that was possible in the neighbourhood; but of the very few inhabitants whose houses were still open, not one had observed the departure of the travellers. They then resolved to follow on the instant; and Sir Archibald, felicitating himself on possessing a friend who felt for him in the dilemma, precisely the same as if the case had

been his own. They soon found themselves, late as the hour was, without the walls of Paris, and progressing at a steady trot on the road towards Brittany.

CHAPTER IX.

AT this period Brittany was under the sway of John V., a prince remarkable for neither courage nor talents, yet, who had contrived, for some time past, to preserve his duchy in comparative tranquillity in the midst of all the storms which agitated the west of Europe. The Bretons, from time immemorial, were a bold and turbulent race, engaged in almost perpetual wars and rebellions; and if, by some miracle of chance, there occurred a moment's breathing time at home, their youth were accustomed, like the Scots, to turn soldiers of fortune, and carry their swords to foreign broils. Many of them, for instance, followed the Bastard into England; and were not forgotten when that famous brigand divided his booty.

Norfolk and Suffolk fell to the lot of Raoul de Gaël ; York to Alain Leroux ; and other rich morsels of the opima opolia to their companions.

The same fierce and factious spirit animated the peasants ; and it is a curious circumstance, and one not adverted to by any historian we remember, that in this country of heroines the signal for the servile wars was given by a woman. In the eleventh century, when duke Geoffroi was hunting, his falcon stooped unbidden upon a chicken ; when the amazon to whom it belonged instantly caught up a stone, and whirled it at the head of the prince. The blow was fatal to the duke, and had nearly been so to the whole body of the nobles ; for a general rising of the peasants took place immediately after ; which the widow of the murdered prince, who, according to the Breton custom, led on the nobles in person, found much difficulty in putting down.

If the national character of the Bretons resembled that of the Scots, the history of the two countries, in like manner, presented various points

of resemblance. From the year 1340, the little state was torn asunder by two powerful families, one wearing the ducal crown, and one seizing every opportunity to grasp at it. The Montforts and Penthievres of Brittany, were the Stuarts and Douglasses of Scotland; with this difference, that in the latter country the heroes of the two parties were men; in the former, women. Jane of Flanders, commonly called the Countess de Montfort, and her rival, Jane de Penthievre, with the exception, perhaps, of the illustrious Virgin of Dom-Rémi, were no doubt the most remarkable of all the warrior-women mentioned in modern history.

France and England took part in this bloody feud; the former on the side of the pretending, and the latter on that of the reigning house. Brittany therefore became the battle-field of these two great powers; and the centre, in consequence, to which military adventurers and ruffians of all kinds flocked from the rest of Europe. Even when a truce took place in 1354, between the two rival kings, it was stipulated, strangely enough, that

the struggle of the Montforts and Penthievres was to go on as usual ; and thus the country, when no longer the seat of national war, was torn in pieces by petty convulsions, and ravaged by banditti instead of armies. Marauders of all nations traversed the soil from end to end, leaving the print of their footsteps in blood and ashes ; and, whether in the pay of France or England, when compelled by the truce to relax their gripe from each other's throats, they threw themselves, shoulder to shoulder, upon the natives. An outrage committed by one of these brigands was eventually the cause of the famous Battle of the Thirty ; a duel fought on foot between the English and Bretons ; and decided in favour of the latter by one of their combatants betaking himself to his horse—a treason for which, in the purer times of chivalry, he would have lost his head.

Jane de Penthievres' husband at length died ; peace was proclaimed ; and Brittany remained the vassal of France. Duguesclin relieved the country of many of the brigands, who were now called the Great Companies, by carrying them off to

attempt the conquest of Spain ; but some new contentions began between France and England, and, in consequence, new troubles in Brittany, new massacres, new burnings ; and at the sound of the first trumpet of war, new banditti arose as suddenly in the land as the host of Rhoderick Dhu. Among them, perhaps, should be reckoned the famous, or rather infamous, Olivier de Clisson, who carried fire and sword through the country on his own account.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, John V. ascended the ducal throne, vacant by the assassination of his father ; and for many years his reign was as calamitous as those of his ancestors. At one time he was himself carried off bodily by the Penthievres ; but his party getting the upper hand, this powerful family was at length crushed. His friendship, it may be supposed, was now courted by the French as well as English, the affairs of both in France being in a very critical state. But John, taught by experience, and perhaps benefiting even by a want of strength in his character, treated with both, and acted as little as

possible for either. At the epoch of our story, therefore, the curious spectacle was presented of this little state, which had so long been the shuttlecock of two mighty nations, playing the coquette between them; and of John V., who possessed nothing in his character remarkable in one way or other, setting the example to succeeding sovereigns of that subtle species of policy which since his time has so frequently been practised on a larger scale.

Sometimes the ostensible ally of England, and sometimes of France, Brittany was the place of refuge both for French and English; and the recruiting officers of both nations might be seen plying their trade in the same villages. As for the system of brigandage, although not put down, it was at least kept in check; and altogether, the country, if not quiet, was at least as much so as could be expected where so many elements of disorder existed.

Douglas and Armstrong found little difficulty in traversing the French territory, through which their road lay; for, since the victory of Monte-

reau, all this part of the country was in the hands of Charles VII. But they had no sooner crossed the frontiers, than the scene changed. Sometimes they were challenged as they passed a solitary château, and sometimes even detained to answer questions, the real drift of which was, probably, nothing else than to discover whether they were worth robbing. Their appearance in the villages excited suspicion and distrust; and occasionally they found that they were dogged by one of the peasants till he had seen them fairly out of the district.

The two friends, however, were "canny Scots." They took things as quietly as they could, talking companionably to the men, and making themselves at home in the cottages; where David joked in scholar-like fashion with the young women, and, like King Alfred, helped the old wife to toast her cakes. When all this would not do, they made no scruple of taking by force what was necessary for their own and their horses' subsistence; for the laws of Black Archibald of Douglas were no more attended to in cases of necessity, on the

Scottish borders than on the borders of Brittany. It would have been hard to tell, indeed, for which mode of "living on the road" the friends were best calculated, since they were at once courteous and brave, gentle, social, and good-tempered, yet

"Steady of heart, and stout of hand,
As ever drove prey from Cumberland!"

They had been able to preserve the whole way the track of the damsel of Laval, which they had found soon after leaving Paris; and David's mind was relieved by the certainty that Hagar was of the party, while Prelati was not. Soon after entering the Angevine territory, they had found themselves in the midst of the endless estates of the lord de Retz; and the hopes of the young knight, as he gazed around him, grew colder and colder at every step. They passed Champtocé, one of the most celebrated strongholds of the family, the gaunt ruins of which still look down upon the road between Angers and Nantes. They traversed the town of Ingrande, one half of which was in Anjou, and the other half in Brittany; and

yet still found that every thing around them—town and country—belonged to the lord de Retz. After entering Brittany, his possessions still continued to present themselves, one after another; and almost every question they asked respecting the ownership of a tower or fortress was answered with the words, “a domain of the lord de Retz.”

It may be supposed that the progress through the country of the daughter of a house like this, attended by an escort of two hundred men at arms, excited no small sensation. All Brittany, in fact, seemed to be astir; the motions of the fair traveller were as publicly known as those of the sun in full day; and our two adventurers, receiving fresh information at every step, were able to continue their course at the exact distance of the small number of miles which they judged it proper to leave between them and the object of their espial.

By carefully comparing notes, Sir Archibald and his friend had come to the unavoidable conclusion, that the Black Knight, as Pauline had proposed to style him—and whom David, in his

own mind, identified with Prelati—was actually in the country, and by the connivance of Oros-mandel himself. He was employed in the confidential affairs of the lord de Retz; he was even in the habit, as might have been gathered from his conversation with the echevin-tailor, of residing at the château. It was impossible, however, that the lord de Retz could know that he was the same individual who had attempted to carry off his daughter; and the philosopher, therefore, was guilty of at least culpable deceit towards his employer. On a former occasion, this old man had suffered himself to be led into a dangerous mistake, by the amiable prejudices of blood and family. Might not this be the case again? The knight, who was one of those men who may be said to be constitutionally generous, made the inquiry doubtfully; but the suspicions of David, who had received through his companion new materials for speculation, without being at liberty to give his own in exchange, was not disposed to view the affair so favourably. He came at once to the conclusion, that wise as the philosopher

might be, he, and through him the lord de Retz, were the dupea of Prelati ; and the scholar's own mission to the château was now no longer to extend his acquisitions in science, but to serve his friend, and arrive at promotion, credit, perhaps fortune, by baffling the designs of a villain.

But this fine dream was occasionally disturbed by conversations they heard on the road respecting the lord de Retz ; and David, who was only superstitious in matters of science, was at once provoked and amused by the supernatural causes assigned for the natural, however uncommon, circumstance of a prodigious fortune.

"Wait, wait," said an old peasant—"it will not last. Ill gotten, ill gone."

"But how was it ill gotten?" demanded the scholar ; "dowries, and legacies, methinks, go frequently enough with marriages and deaths."

"You are right," replied the old man ; "in our time the devil rarely works miracles: it is the common accidents of life that are his tools."

"Hold there," interposed another ; "if the devil does not work miracles, what say you to the ad-

venture of old Christine, who picked up the pieces of silver which Gilles de Retz threw among the crowd? For fear of losing them, she laid them carefully by in a stocking, and going to the fair to buy a cow, brought the owner home with her for the money. Instead of silver coins, she found in her stocking only a few withered leaves; and the man, who had lost the chance of selling his cow, and been taken many miles out of his way, thinking that it was a cheat, beat her so severely that to this hour she keeps her bed!"

"Ill gotten, ill gone!" repeated the first peasant.

"Then I presume, my friends," said David, "that if the lord de Retz were to throw his money among us here, it would lie untouched upon the ground."

"I would say an ave before I looked at it," replied one.

"I would take it straightway to the church," said another, "and dip it in holy water."

"Does he often practise liberality? Does he live agreeably to his fortune?"

"He gives away his gold (if gold it be), as freely as men give withered leaves. No king in Europe keeps half his state; and the prince of Brittany himself, arrayed in scarlet and furs, would show by his side like one of his hired retainers."

"Ill gotten, ill gone!" groaned the first peasant again.

"For that matter," said a man who had joined the group in the middle of the conversation, "it begins to go already. I am just from Nantes, where it is all the talk that Gilles de Retz is selling his estates to the duke, league by league, and that the thing gives sore displeasure to the whole family of Laval."

This intelligence was the most interesting part of the conversation to our two travellers; the rest being set down as nothing more than the exaggerations and delusions of ignorance. David thus knew that the lord de Retz was at one and the same time in debt to his tradesmen, borrowing money from the Jews, and selling his estates piecemeal. Could this ruin—for such it was—be occasioned by nothing more than the usual extra-

vagances of a man of rank? Would not the sale even of a single estate have been sufficient, to cover any probable embarrassment? Was it certain that Prelati had authority to extort a loan from messire Jean? might he not have done this on his own account, though in the name of his lord?—and might he not, in the same way, have embezzled the money destined to pay Houpelande, and, perhaps, many others? If it was still his purpose to carry off the damsel of Laval—behold her dowry!

With regard to Orosmandel, they were more and more perplexed at every step. The peasants were not ignorant of the existence of such a person, but they declined speaking of him, except in the most general terms; a thing that was the more extraordinary, as no one seemed to have anything but good to tell. They never pronounced his name themselves; but as soon as it was mentioned, hastened to say a few words of commendation, and then shrunk from the subject. On one occasion, in the parlour of a village inn, David, determined to gratify his curiosity, was so pointed in his questions, that the company, consisting of peasants and

travellers of humble condition, unable longer to evade them, got up hastily and left the room in a body.

“Will you not speak !” he said, seizing a rustic beauty by the arm, as she was vanishing at the door, “why do you fly ?” The girl turned towards him a face which he had selected from the rest on account of its more than common intelligence, and with terror and warning in her eyes, replied in a whisper :

“Imitate our silence, if you be wise ! Ask not questions which we cannot answer if we would, and would not if we could ;—but above all things, name not a name which we know by experience the very winds of the desert can carry more than a hundred miles.”

Musing on these things, the two friends pursued their journey, at the slow pace which was necessary in order to keep them from coming within sight of the procession. They had, hitherto, travelled with a circumspectness sufficient to have concealed them even from the ken of a wizard ; avoiding, since they had crossed the frontiers of Brittany, not only

the castles, but the monasteries, although these, generally speaking, were the only places of harbour which answered the purpose of inns to travellers of their rank. As they now entered further and further into the country of the lord de Retz, it was proper, if possible, to be still more cautious ; and on the present occasion, when it was necessary at twilight to halt till the following morning, finding no shelter at hand of the kind they wished, they did not hesitate to encamp for the night under a tree.

The spot was on one of those magnificent co-teaux which sweep suddenly, yet hardly precipitously, down to the brink of the Loire. The shadows of evening hung heavily upon the river ; and its numerous islands and sand banks rose dimly through the mist. The world was steeped in a kind of dreamy silence, only interrupted by the distant sound of the waters, rising indistinctly and brokenly upon the ear, like the murmur of one who sleeps. On a neighbouring eminence, surrounded by tall trees, stood a fortress, keeping guard, as it might have seemed, over the enchanted scene. It

was there that the damsel of Laval reposed for the night ; and on that dusky, grim, and threatening object, were the eyes of her lover fixed, like those of a mariner, who watches the star which guides him over the deep.

It may be supposed that neither Douglas nor his friend were much inclined to sleep under such circumstances ; for the fortress contained a cynosure for David, as well as the knight, although gleaming, as our scholar dreaded, with more unholy splendour. Of the two, however, he of the hauberk was more vigilant in his watch ; and long after his friend was fast asleep, Sir Archibald continued to gaze and to dream.

He at length rose up in that slight degree of fever which attends unwonted sleeplessness, and began to pace slowly the plateau of the hill. By degrees, and almost unconsciously, he extended his walk in the direction of the fortress, till he could see its turrets clearly defined against the sky.

At such an hour, there was little risk of observation, and yet he hesitated to advance needlessly

from the trees which covered the side of the hill into the unsheltered plain that lay between him and the eminence whereon the castle stood. He remained, therefore, in the black shadow of the grove, leaning against the trunk of an oak, of which he himself might have seemed to form a portion, even the parti-coloured emblazonments on his coat of arms resembling, in the obscurity, some of the thousand tints of autumn by which he was surrounded.

His eyes were fixed upon the fortress, and his thoughts were busy with her it contained; while the idea of the black knight flitted ever and anon, like a spectre, across his dream.

"Oh!" said he, almost aloud, "that it were my fate to meet with him again! If unable to cope with him in mortal strife, I should be unfit to wear the prize for which we contend, and the sooner I hid my dishonoured head in the grave the better. But what are his advantages? Neither in name nor blood, neither in strength nor courage: and for that magical prestige which is said to surround him in his connexion with Orosmandel,

I could well trust to a Christian's mass, and a soldier's sword. Come, skulking traitor, even if backed by all the fiends in the abyss ! In *her* cause I defy thee and them—Appear ! I summon thee ! ”

The invocation, as is usual with such bursts of youthful enthusiasm, was spoken aloud towards the close, and in a tone of the same earnestness with which a man summons an enemy who is within hearing. When he had finished, Douglas, after gazing breathlessly for a moment, pressed his hands upon his eyes, like one who would drive away some illusion called up by the enchantments of imagination ; but on looking again towards the distance, the object of his wonder had not passed away. It was a human figure, standing in the middle of the small, lonely plain, which, but a few minutes before, he had himself been withheld from traversing by the fear of being observed from the battlements of the distant fortress.

A momentary thrill of terror passed through the blood of the young knight ; but, crossing

himself devoutly, and calling in one breath upon his saint and his lady, he unsheathed his sword, and stood upon his defence. In another instant his recollection returned, and he dropped the point of his weapon. Why should he suppose this to be a supernatural visitation? The ghostly enemy did not confront him, when invoked, face to face, as was the regular process; but made his appearance at a considerable distance, and seemed to approach gradually like an ordinary man. Some dark clouds were sailing sluggishly across the sky: might not their shadow, although unobserved by him, have concealed this wanderer of the night till he had gained the middle of the plain? Nay, could he even tell how long his pre-occupation of mind had lasted, or that it had not been strong enough to prevent his taking cognizance of such an object, when actually present to his eyes?

While these ideas passed rapidly through the knight's mind, the figure continued to approach in a direct line. It was, as might have been expected, that of an armed man; for none else would venture out at such an hour. It was at length

near enough to be seen distinctly. It was the figure of a tall man, sheathed in armour from head to foot. It was the Black Knight !

Douglas's first impulse was to advance from the shadow of the trees, in order to meet his challenged foe in the open plain ; but the sword of the latter was still in its scabbard, and his attitude was not that of a man prepared to encounter an enemy.

"It may be after all," thought the Scot, who would rather have attacked a whole army than a single opponent offered to him by magical art, "it may be after all, that this is nothing more than a coincidence. Let me, in the first place, watch what is his errand. If it be to me, I am ready. My challenge has been given ; and, if he heard it, he will answer." At the moment the sable figure, who was now near enough to have been struck by a lance thrown from the hand, stood suddenly still. Douglas felt that his eyes were fixed upon him ; but neither party moved. At length the stranger, raising his arm above his head, with a gesture which might have been either of menace or invitation—for he was now half hidden in the dark

shadow of the trees—turned abruptly away, skirting with a quick but noiseless step, the confines of the wood. Sir Archibald, at this spectacle, had much difficulty to repress a shout of defiance which rose to his lips ; but, calling to mind his purpose of watching the motions of the enemy, he muttered anew an invocation to his patron saint, and glided after him with a pace as stealthy as his own.

They coasted for some time round the involutions of the wood, which at length became so numerous that Sir Archibald began to be in doubt as to whether it would be possible for him to find the way back to his sleeping comrade. He quickened his step, but did not gain upon the retreating knight. He called out to him to turn, in the usual terms of challenge ; but the dark figure continued gliding dimly before him, like a phantasm seen in a dream. Our adventurer at length stood still in amazement, not unallied to superstitious terror ; and at that moment the figure stopped also, and, turning round, made another sign with the arm.

Douglas renewed his pursuit, but more slowly ; for the ground was here broken and uneven, and at any rate, he perceived that he whom he followed now awaited his approach. The inequalities of the soil were not greater than those in which antiquarians sometimes discover the vestiges of a Roman camp ; and as the space was open for a considerable distance, he could see distinctly enough, notwithstanding the growing obscurity of the hour, the form of the sable knight standing tall and lonely in the midst. Sir Archibald stepped forward more quickly, for he was now close to the object of his pursuit ; arranging his dress as he advanced, and loosening his sword in the scabbard, like a man who prepares for an immediate and desperate encounter. These operations, however, could not have withdrawn his eyes from the motionless figure before him for more than a few seconds : and yet, on raising his head to address his enemy, he found that the spot whereon he had stood was vacant. No rock, no stone, no bush, no tree, large enough to conceal the figure of a man was within many hundred

yards; a deep silence reigned on the desert place; and as Douglas gazed wildly around him, the idea took possession of his mind, that he had all the time been walking in his sleep, and had just awakened from a dream.

No process of reasoning could account for what he had seen. If the figure had been in bodily presence that of the Black Knight; was it likely that this desperado, who had not shrunk from his sword even when it was backed by those of two of his followers, would have declined meeting him on an equal field? If a phantom presented to him by magical art, and this seemed the more rational supposition of the two, was it commissioned express from hell for the doughty purpose of leading him a short distance out of his way? He had heard of men who had been unhorsed and wounded by spectre-knights; but, on the present occasion, his antagonist's triumph appeared to consist in causing him to extend a little his midnight walk, in order to leave him suddenly alone on a desert plain!

At all events, it was necessary to regain his

camp with as little delay as possible ; otherwise, he should have to enter on the morrow, and its increasing chance of adventure, after a 'sleepless night. The place could not be far distant, nor very difficult to find ; for it was on lofty ground, which would doubtless present itself after he had walked on for a few minutes in any direction. The night was hazy, but could hardly be called dark ; for the moon was at least dimly visible through the film which overspread the sky.

Sir Archibald walked on, thoughtful and perplexed, directing his steps towards the nearest eminence. A little way beyond this he saw, without much surprise, the main road ; and entering it with alacrity he proceeded at a brisk pace in search of the opening where he and his friend had left it to seek an encampment for the night. He had not gone far, however, when the appearance of a low roofed hut, built against a bank which lined the right-hand side of the highway, convinced him that he was beyond the place ; for a shelter of this kind, had they been aware of its existence, would have seemed to our

travellers greatly preferable to the open air. After standing undecided for a moment, he was about to turn back, with a hearty anathema directed against the phantom-knight, when the door of the cottage opened, and a female, putting forth her head, enveloped in a hood, beckoned him to approach.

"Is it you at last, messire?" said she in a low voice, "I had given up all hope of seeing you; although, there being no nearer shelter even for a dog, I could not conjecture what had become of you."

"For whom do you take me, my pretty maid?" demanded Douglas, paying this compliment to an extremely handsome face, which he saw dimly, peeping from under the peasant's hood.

"For a foreign knight, by your garb and tongue; and for a friend to the damsel of Laval, by your brightening glance and flushing cheek, when we talked of her this morning in the hostelrie."

"By my faith, you have a keen eye for such matters," said the knight; "but does its ken extend no further? Why have you sat up so late by this hazy moon, which seems fitter to light a

spectre through the church-yard, than to serve as the lamp of love?"

"Where is your friend?" demanded the young woman impatiently, without regarding this address; "why tarries he? In this country, Sir Knight, you should be aware, fellow-travellers are only too happy to have the advantage of one another's protection even in daylight."

"It is a country, I allow, where a man may meet with strange comrades under the beams of the moon. But as to my friend, I trow he is fast asleep on a hill side, somewhere about two miles off; for you shall know that he and I came from a land where weary travellers are not nice about their lodgings."

"I am sorry for it; for I would trust more to his keen eye and ready tongue, than to the sharp sword of ere a knight of you all!"

"Nay, as for that," said the knight, who had no touch of envy in his disposition, "my friend lacks not a sharp sword to boot, nor yet a stout heart and strong arm to use it. But come, the time flies apace: let me know your trouble; and

if your quarrel be good, this poor weapon of mine may even stead you as well as another."

"I would there had been two!" said the young woman; "and yet, against odds of at least a score, what matters it? Come on, Sir Knight, follow me, in the name of God, and for the sake of your lady love!" and, gliding away from the hut, she pressed up the steep bank beside it, with an agility which cost the knight, cumbered as he was with thirty or forty pounds' weight of armour, no little exertion to emulate.

"I call you to notice," said he, when they had gained the summit, "that the odds you mention, although they may possibly be held at bay for a moment in the *méleé* till rescue comes up, cannot be opposed, with the slightest chance of eventual success, by a single sword. I am willing, in terms of my knightly oath, to attempt in your behalf all that man may attempt; but still, I pray you to remember, I can do no more than man may do."

"Listen," replied the girl, "and waste not time in speaking. This is not the first time I have committed myself to the protection of the most

holy St. Julian. Last year I made another journey, in the course whereof I was overrun, and trampled on the ground by a furious horseman. On that occasion, my life was preserved by the damsel of Laval ; who, forgetting the meanness of my rank in the greatness of my misfortune, caused me to be carried into one of her father's castles, where she tended me, even like a young mother nursing her sick child."

"Weep not, good wench," said the knight, touching the corners of his eyes with his gloves ; "weep not, but say on ; for I already take upon me the adventure you have to propose."

"The times have now turned round," continued she ; "I am well and safe ; and the damsel herself is this night in sorer peril than that from which she rescued me."

"St. Bride of Bothwell !" cried Douglas, "what is this ? Why, trifier, did you not speak at once ? *She* in peril ! Say on, thou prating fool."

"Hush ! hush ! I thought—" and she shook her head—"I thought from the first that the other would have been the better man ! But

still, even a mere warrior is better than nobody at all; and the moment is now come when something must be done. Sir Knight, it was known to-day in this country-side, that there was some mischief brewing for the house of Laval. The lord de Retz is said to be stripping his house-tree, branch by branch, by the sale of his estates to the sovereign duke. The remonstrances of his kindred have been listened to with coldness by the buyer, and with haughty and indignant surprise by the seller; and it is thought that the end will be nothing less than a civil war in Brittany. Now if you are astonished that such an event could be brought about by the quarrels of a single family—”

“Tush! I am astonished at nothing of the kind:—it is our way over the water. Go on, in the name of God!”

“There is something more, however, than the mere sale of the estates. Gilles de Retz is a man of such prodigious pride, that the heavens themselves do not seem to him to be high enough for a canopy for his head. More than one bold baron,

claiming kindred with himself, has already demanded his daughter, and been scornfully refused ; and it is now believed, that he looks far over the crests of them all for a husband for the heiress of Laval. If this be true, whatever may be the cause which sets them to loggerheads, the damsel will be snatched at in the confusion by more than one gauntleted hand : and this very hour, it will be debated among the malcontents, whether she shall not be seized upon her journey, and detained as a hostage, till all questions are settled between them and the lord de Retz."

"How know you this?" demanded Douglas, "and who are you who speak above your seeming rank?"

"My rank is what it seems ; although, being the favourite niece of a priest—whose soul be happy !—I received better instruction than I have use for. My real insignificance, and apparent ignorance, united with accident, have allowed to come to my knowledge what I have told you. Is this enough ? Am I right in guessing you to be one who would venture life and limb in the service

of the Damsel of Laval? Am I right in supposing that the principal, if not only purpose, of your journey has direct reference to her?"

"You are right," replied Douglas.

"Then, messire, since I have gathered this from words and looks marked by no one else, and probably unconscious even to yourself, I demand of you credit for more quickness of wit than you would expect to find under a peasant's hood! Now listen. In yonder ruined castle, once a powerful stronghold of the family of Laval, and now not altogether the ruin it might seem to be, the malcontents meet within an hour, for the purpose of receiving certain information from Nantes, and debating on what is to be done in consequence. Their number will be unknown to themselves; and they will repair to the rendezvous at this dead hour, cased in armour, and probably vizor-closed, distrusting even one another, until they absolutely ascertain that it will be prudent or necessary to form the league in contemplation. Go thou too, sir Knight!—go boldly in among the rest, and observe what is said and done! Having

learnt this, take what steps may seem wisest to to you as a practised soldier, for the rescue—if it be necessary—of the damsel. As for me, my part is fulfilled ; and if the very worst happen, I shall be able to weep without self-reproach.”

“What is the worst?” said Douglas, in a constrained whisper—“Even if a captive, will she not be in the hands of her own kinsmen, and those who wooed her for their bride?”

“Ask me not ! ask me not !” replied the damsel, drawing her hood over her face—“This is a wild country, and these are fearful times. No matter with whom the Damsel may be a captive :—she will find herself in the hands of a brigand, ready to commit *any* crime that might serve to secure his prize !”

“Enough. Yonder ruined turret is the place, scarcely taller than the trees that surround it ? But stay—the name which you this morning forbade—”

“Stay not for names. Away, if you be a man !”

“I would but ask, if timely notice given to

Orosmandel—" but at the word, the young woman dived down the steep of the bank; and Douglas, turning away with an exclamation less courteous than was his wont, pursued his way towards the ruin.

CHAPTER X.

As Sir Archibald approached the spot, he found that although the turret, when seen at a distance, certainly gave the idea of a place long since abandoned to the owls, there were other parts of the building in better preservation. It seemed to have been one of the strongest of those strong castles for which Brittany was once renowned ; and although now in ruins, and altogether deserted, except by a keeper of humble rank, its fortifications and outworks, as well as a portion of the interior, were in the taste of the last century.

The edifice stood upon the steep of a thickly-wooded hill, the sides of which were broken, and



rendered of difficult access by rocks, ravines, and precipices. The faint light of the moon only revealed the outlines of the loftiest towers, while the rest of the building was enveloped in doubtful shadow. An air of dusky and mysterious grandeur presided over the whole object; and as Douglas, after crossing the moat by a permanent bridge, approached the gate, he half expected his summons to be answered by one of those goblin forms of which he had heard in the tales of the minstrels.

The gateway, however, was open, and the door half embedded in the earth. The arch was ornamented with heads of wolves and wild boars grinning down upon the visitor: it was flanked at either corner by turrets, where the warders once kept their ceaseless watch; and surmounted, in the middle, by a lofty corps-de-garde. Three ditches he thus passed, and three walls, from six to eight feet thick; and while traversing the dreary courts between, our traveller, it must be said, trode softly, rather from feeling than

policy, as if thinking that even the sound of his armed heels upon the ground was there an intrusion and an impertinence.

He at length found himself in the great square court, surrounded by the buildings of the castle. Underneath were the cellars, the subterraneans, and the prisons; above these, on the ground story, the habitable apartments, as well as the stables, fowl-houses, and dovecotes, to the right and left of the gate; and on the upper story, the stores, larders, and arsenals. The whole of the roofs of this grand square were bordered by parapets *macheconlis*, *chemins-de-ronde*, and turrets. In the centre of the court was the lofty donjon, rising like an enormous tower from the midst of the surrounding buildings, and containing the state apartments, and the treasury. This, which might be called the heart of the fortress, was encircled by a deep ditch; and although its walls, like those of the other parts of the edifice, were at least six feet thick, it was further strengthened by a shirt, or second wall of equal thickness, formed

of solid blocks of cut stone, and rising to one half the height of the donjon itself.

The prodigious strength of the donjon, as might have been expected, had withstood more successfully than the rest of the building the effects of neglect and time. The sides of the square of which Douglas made the complete tour, were in some places open to the weather, and in all, ruined and desolate. Sometimes, by the uncertain light of the moon falling through the broken roofs of the chambers, many of which were vaulted, he could see the remains of the stained glass with which their ogive windows had been adorned. In some apartments, the floor was paved in squares of different colours; in others, the pillars which supported the joists were still encrusted with fillets and flowers of tin; in others, the walls still showed the remains of paintings, representing figures as large as life, holding scrolls in their hands, on which it was the custom, in great houses, to inscribe moral sentences for the edification of the guests.

Having ascertained that the meeting could be held in none of the ordinary apartments of the castle, our adventurer now proceeded with a firm step, but an anxious heart, to the donjon ; and having crossed the moat by a drawbridge, embedded in the earth, and long since become a permanent avenue, he struck with the hilt of his sword upon the mouldering door. When the hollow echoes of the sound had died away, he heard a voice within, followed by the efforts of some feeble or unsteady hand to withdraw the bolt.

“There is the last !” said the voice, in a cracked treble, “By St. Gildas ! there hath scarce been such a jubilee in my time ; no, not since the murder of the young lord in the Devil’s Chamber.* he ! he ! he ! What, art sleep old Raoul ? Put thy pith to it, man, as if feigning thou wast flesh and blood, instead of a dried skinful of rotting

* *In Camera Diabolorum*—in *Camera Viride*, and similar names taken either from the colour of the tapestry, or the representations it contained, occur in the manuscript inventories of the fourteenth century.

bones. 'Slife ! I must help thee myself, although I am the seneschal, and thou only my valet. Now, stand on one side, and hold thy skeleton erect while he enters, for the credit of the house of Laval !"

Douglas was received with a profound bow by the personage calling himself the seneschal ; a little withered man, at the very verge of human life, with a beard as white as snow, who leant on a stick of the same colour, taller than himself, and resembling the rod of a gentleman usher. The appearance of the valet was in nowise different from that of his master, except in dress, and also by his skeleton being rounded at the back like a bow, whereas, that of the other was as straight and official-looking as his wand.

"There be no more of you, I trow, messire ?" said the seneschal, in the tone of asking a question, of which he knew the answer, while the valet shut and bolted the door.

"I know not," replied Douglas, "are there many before me ?"

"A round dozen! twelve, as I am a sinner! Is it not thus, Raoul?"

"Yea: he is the thirteenth."

"He! he! he! said I not so? Go to: it is not a man who hath kept a house like this for fifty years, that thou wilt find napping. I knew his tread the moment he entered the inner gate; tramp, tramp, tramp, it went round the square—and thou, like a superannuated fool, would have called him in, as if he wanted bidding of ours! Wait, said I, wait, old Raoul; have but a grain of patience, for those feet will carry him here, were his eyes shut, and a tombstone on his back. Said I not so?—the very words?"

"Yea," answered Raoul, "I will not gainsay it."

"He! he! he! See what it is to be a fellow of experience! Tramp, tramp, tramp, came the footsteps again by the other side of the square; and knock! knock! knock! went the hilts against the door! Thou art the thirteenth, sir knight, and there's an end!"

"That was the number then expected !"

"Nay—twelve," interposed Raoul.

"Thou wilt talk ! God sain thee, neighbour !
Alas, old Raoul ! And in troth, sir knight, it was
twelve, as this poor man says—but when will the
devil be left out of such a reckoning ? Now, the
twelfth man, you must know, was to have been the
victim !"

"How !"

"It is gospel-true. Have I lied, old Raoul ?
Speak up, if thou yet hoardest a morsel of tongue
for the worms !"

"It was the twelfth man—I will not gainsay it :
and moreover—"

"Moreover ! Moreover what ? Over twelve ?
Why, that would give thyself the lie ; for, over
twelve is thirteen. And so, messire, it being a dark
moon, like this of to-night, and one of the com-
pany, whose heart failed him, slipping behind the
tapestry to be out of the mischief, the twelfth
man, entering with vizor closed like the rest, was
counted for the eleventh. Thus did he escape,

surrounded by ten hands, each grasping its *miséricorde*.* But even as St. Abraham was tricked by the devil, who caused him to sacrifice his own flesh and blood, instead of a good fat buck ; even so was foiled that day the lord de Retz. For, lo you now, sir knight ! who should enter thereupon, unwished for, and unbidden ? Who, I say, should mount those very stairs, against the will of those who kept them ? Who should force himself, head and shoulders, into an affair with which he had no more business than thou ? Who, but the young lord himself ? I tell you, Sir, there were ten daggers clashed in his body in the same instant ; and his father's clashed the loudest ! Is it not so, old Raoul ? Answer, if there be anything but mere bones within thy skin ? Hold up thy defunct face, and tell me, whether I have lied !”

“Thou hast spoken truly ; I will not gainsay

* The small dagger which the knights made use of to dispatch the enemies they had overthrown ; so called, from the exclamation for “mercy,” with which the vanquished could avert the blow.

it: and, by the same token, the castle from that day was suffered to fall into ruin; being deserted by all but you and me, who were left in charge, and—”

“And another! He! he! he! Well said, old Raoul! Well said, i’faith! And so, sir knight, being the thirteenth, as I have said, we bid you heartily welcome!”

The entrance hall was not deep enough to require much time to traverse it; and yet the thirteenth visitor—although appearing disdainful and impatient—did not reach the farther end, till the last words of this ominous tale had fallen upon his ear. He then, partly deceived by the want of light—for the place was only illuminated by a single lamp fixed to the wall—and partly, from pre-occupation of mind, instead of mounting the great staircase, struck into a dim opening beside it. He discovered his mistake after ascending two or three steep and narrow steps, and returned hastily. The two old men were looking eagerly towards the spot, with a ghastly smile on

their faces ; but when the knight made his appearance again at the opening, the merriment of the seneschal broke forth in a shrill, cracked, "He ! he ! he !" and was joined, for the first time, by the laugh of his comrade, which sounded as if it came from a coffin.

"That is the way thou must go," said he of the wand, "for it is the stair of the Thirteenth ; and, being wiser to-day than we were fifty years ago, we will not try to stay thee. Tell me, old Raoul, for thou wert by ; did not the young lord dart into that door, when we held him off from mounting the great stair with the point of our weapons ? Open thy jaws and answer, if thou hast any dregs of life in thee."

"He did so ; I will not gainsay it. Yet nevertheless, it was by the great stair he returned."

"Well said, old Raoul, well said, i' faith ; now answer me again ; unclosethy lips once more, if they be any thing else than musty parchment, damp with mouldiness, and worm-eaten like a coffin that hath served two corsés,—after what

manner came he down the great stair ? Expound, as thou be'st a true valet ! Ha ?”

“ He ! he ! he ! Heels foremost ! He ! he ! he !”

“ He ! he ! he ! By St. Gildas, thou art a rare companion, all that is left of thee ! I tell thee what, Sir Knight, it is of no use to stand shilly-shallying. About face, and away with thee, for thou canst not choose.”

The feelings may be conceived with which Douglas listened to such ominous discourse, between two creatures who, although dressed like living men, and standing on their legs, looked as if a winding-sheet was their usual costume, and the grave their abiding-place. Their laugh, however, although it had chilled his blood more than their words, sounded so much like a taunt that his knightly pride was at length roused. He remembered that the secret passage was the best and safest avenue he could take in his present character ; and controlling as well as possible, the kind of horror which crept through his blood, he

turned round, as the seneschal directed; and, without uttering a word, began anew to ascend the steep staircase. He was pursued for some time, as he climbed, by the ghastly laugh of the old men; but, praying fervently to every saint whose name he could recollect in the confusion of the moment, he at length found himself out of hearing.

He was in utter darkness; and the stair, besides being so steep and irregular that, in more than one place, he was obliged to use hands and knees in the ascent, was so close and damp that he might have fancied himself in a burying vault. The idea again occurred to him, that he was walking in his sleep; and the wild legend he had just heard, relating, as it appeared, to an ancestor—perhaps the grandfather—of the present lord de Retz, seemed only a natural sequel to his dream.

At length, however, he was once more on even ground. The floor felt smooth beneath his feet, as if it was of marble, or polished tiles; and he

heard a sound as if of the *silence* of a group of human beings close at hand. He was no doubt in the Devil's Chamber ; although still in utter darkness, because of the tapestry, which he felt hanging before him. He did not venture to touch the fold of the cloth, which he knew must be opposite the staircase, in order to admit secret visitors into the room ; but speedily a faint gleam of light conducted him to a place where there were several circular holes, the size of a man's head, and about the same distance from the ground. These were, of course, for the purpose of espial, and enabled the hidden spectator to substitute his own face for that of the figure wrought on the tapestry. Here, therefore, our adventurer took his stand ; and here he beheld a picture which might have afforded worthy materials ; even for the skilful needle that had adorned the walls.

The room was lofty ; and, from the gracefulness of its Gothic ceiling and windows, would have looked light and elegant but for a single enor-

mous pillar in the middle, as thick as a full-grown oak, which supported the vault, beginning to mingle gradually with the nave of the arches when little more than midway from the ground. This gave a stern and heavy aspect to the hall, well befitting the appearance and purpose of its present guests ; who consisted of about a dozen men, clothed in iron from head to foot, some leaning against the pillar, half hidden in its shadow ; some standing motionless with crossed arms ; and some resting, with their hands clasped on the hilts of their mighty swords, breast high. The room was completely hung with tapestry, representing devils in a thousand grotesque yet terrible attitudes ; and as the faint and flickering beams of the moon, now glanced upon the armour of the mailed figures, and now touched with mysterious light the spectral forms upon the wall, they seemed to bind together even the incongruities of the scene, and confer upon the whole a kind of unity of character which made the knight hold his breath for awe.

The stillness of the assembly continued unbroken for several minutes ; but by degrees some symptoms of impatience manifested themselves. Here a hoarse sound from the throat startled the silence of the room like a blasphemy, and there a foot grated harshly and heavily upon the floor. Two or three of the reclining figures raised themselves up erect, their armour rattling as they moved ; others stepped lightly, and, as it were, cautiously, towards the window, endeavouring to look down into the court ; and by and bye, one Herculean figure began to pace through the hall, his armed tread increasing gradually in force and rapidity, till the noise shook the vaults. All were now astir. Impatient mutterings and angry maledictions were heard rumbling in every casque ; the iron-clad figures approached nearer and nearer to each other ; and the gigantic warrior, halting suddenly in the midst, and glaring round upon the group, as if he would read their physiognomies through their helmet-bars, addressed them in a fierce and disdainful voice.

“By the holy mother of God!” said he, “one would think we were a company of truant boys, about to conspire, if we could muster courage enough, to rob an orchard by moonlight! Are we so unused in Brittany to execute either right or wrong by the strong arm?—or do we doubt, that on the present occasion we are upheld by the laws of the country, and the privileges of our rank? When, only a few years ago, as I may say, we rescued John V. from the dungeons of the Penthievres, and set him firmly on his throne, it was that he might preserve order in the country, not at his own will, but as the president of the nobles. We gave him no charter, to add to his domain the estates of his vassals, and cripple the body of the nobility, by lopping off its fairest and strongest limbs. For what do we wait? It appears to me that this subordinate agent whom we employ binds us all, as with a spell; since we cannot commence even our deliberations without his sanction. Hitherto we have ascertained one another’s sentiments at second hand. We have

now met to deliver them face to face; and since the emissary has not made his appearance at the appointed time, I see no reason why we should not proceed without him. Away with this mystery, which can serve no purpose, but to harbour and conceal treason. Here for one is a face—if you can see it by this corpse-candle of a moon—which was never hidden before, either from friend or foe; and I give all who are short-sighted to wit, that it stands on the shoulders of Claude Montrichard!" The grim warrior raised his vizor as he spoke, and was cheered by 'most of the company, all of whom followed his example.

"Be it understood," said one, who was slower than the others, "that I am here, by appointment, to receive information on a point nearly touching the peace of Brittany; and not to enter into a cabal, without knowing why or wherefore. Who, I demand, is the leader in this affair? By whose summons are we here? Your name, Claude Montrichard, was mentioned to me by the messenger, and yet you seem to know no more of the matter than the rest of us!"

"By St. Briec!" said Moutrichard, "it was your name that was mentioned to me; and, knowing your caution, I believed the envoy the rather that it came only in a hint."

"What matters it?" cried a brawny, thickset man, in a strong German accent, "what matters it by whom invited, so that we *are* here? It seems to me that you have as pretty a cause of quarrel before you as could be desired, if you will only let it alone; and as for waiting for more information, all I can say is, that as neither I nor my fifty lances are inclined to eat our horses, we must be up and doing on one side or other, before this moon is many days older."

Loud murmurs now arose among the company, most of whom seemed dismayed at the idea of being so nearly afloat in such an affair, without either pilot or commander.

"Where is the agent?" cried they, tumultuously; "how do we know that he is not doubly a traitor?"

"He is here!" answered a stern and commanding voice; and the Black Knight, making his

appearance at the door, strode into the midst of the group.

"Who doubted my honour?" demanded he, looking round.

"That did we all," replied the German.

"And I first," added Montrichard.

"Then you, Claude Montrichard, on fitting time and field, I shall hold responsible. It would be sheer folly to defend my character otherwise than with my sword. If my face is not uncovered, my actions, so far as you are concerned, are so. I have hitherto told you nothing but what was confirmed afterwards by public report; and if you will not trust me from your own experience of my fidelity, it would be a waste of words to attempt to sway you by reason or argument."

"I accept your defiance," said Montrichard, "were it only to see of what stuff you are made of in the field—you who are so hardy in the closet, and so valiant in the council. But come, let us to business. I seek not to pry into the motives of your actions; and I allow that you have

hitherto dealt fairly with us. Now, open your budget !”

“The duke, who seems bent upon humbling the whole of the nobility in the person of Laval, is still determined to take advantage of the madness of the lord de Retz. Roger de Briqueville, and other friends of this house, are working strenuously upon the mind of their infatuated friend ; but the probability is, that all will be in vain, and that in a little while the fairest portion of his estates, St. Etienne de Malmont, will be in the grasp of John V. You will receive intelligence from me the moment this is decided upon ; which will justify *any* measures you may take, in the eyes of the whole country. I advise that it should be the signal for action.”

“Then we are still to rest upon our arms ?” said the German, sullenly, “you told me that at this meeting something was to be done as well as said.”

“I propose that the Damsel of Laval, who is now journeying to La Verrière, should be seized, and detained in all honour, as a hostage.”

"That, sir Knight," said Montrichard, "would be to commence the struggle at once."

"It would, if done by brute force: but my plan is this. I have friends within the fortress where she lodges to-night, who will open the wicket when I command. Fall suddenly upon the garrison before to-morrow's dawn, upon pretext of delivering the Damsel from the hands of those whom sure information leads you to know are her enemies. Her, in the meantime, will I persuade to take to flight in the midst of the bustle, and by an avenue only known to myself. You will charge her friends with the abduction; they will charge you; time will be lost in recriminations; and messengers must go and come between this and La Verrière. Before the true nature of the affair is discovered, the question will be decided, peace or war? and according to the answer, I shall cause the Damsel to be delivered up either to her father, or to him who may be looked upon as the chief of the insurgent nobles."

Had the ambushed knight been struck with less

amazement by the prodigious audacity of this proposal, he must have betrayed himself; but as it was, his faculties, both mental and corporeal, appeared to be paralyzed, and he stood breathless and motionless. Nor did the rest of the audience appear to be less capable of feeling the sublime of impudence; for the speech was followed by profound silence. At length some appeared to recollect themselves; and, withdrawing, as if unwillingly, from the speculations of individual advantage in which they were plunged, cried out—"He is a stranger! The plan is good—but what security have we that he will render up his prize?" They then began to talk eagerly to one another, separating into small committees.

The Black Knight, in the meantime, took advantage of the temporary confusion to glide from one to another; here interposing a word in the dispute, and there whispering something in the ear of an individual. The nature of these secret communications Douglas learnt from a broken sentence which he heard addressed to Mont-

richard, who happened at the moment to stand near his loop-hole.

“Support me, if you be not mad—the girl will be ostensibly in my hands, but really in yours—a word to the wise—hush !” By this time, our adventurer had determined, at any personal hazard, to burst into the midst of the conclave ; and he only waited for some still better opportunity of detecting and confounding the machinations of the Black Knight. The conspirators, secretly swayed by their own personal feelings or policy, had evidently reasoned one another into a general approval of the proposed plan ; although they continued to debate fiercely and tumultuously about the details :—willing, as it appeared, to throw the whole onus upon the Black Knight, yet anxious to repose in him as little confidence as possible.

But a new turn was given to the discussion by a speaker whose voice had not been heard before. This, as well as Douglas could discover in the imperfect light, was a young and handsome man, who even while raising his vizer like the others,

had continued to lean against the pillar, and to gaze in half listless, half haughty silence upon the throng.

“Gentlemen,” said he, in one of those low, quiet, distinct voices, which the ear turns from louder tones to listen to—“I at length gather something from your debate which is needful for me to understand. I hear on all sides, as the sole objection to the plan, as described by its proposer—‘He is a stranger in Brittany!’ Now if this means that a foreigner is not eligible to pretend to the hand of the Damsel of Laval—the *real* prize, notwithstanding all your attempts to conceal it, for which we contend—I, for one, shall have nothing to do with the enterprise. I have not seen the lady, it is true, but I like her dowry—a thing which does wonders in reconciling us in matters of taste; and I fancy a branch of the Beauchamps of England, transplanted into this soil, would hardly be overtopped by the fairest oaks of Brittany.”

“Methinks,” messire, “replied the Black

Knight, with a slight expression of impatience, "you are somewhat premature. The question before us is not how to match the damsel of Laval; but how to deliver her from the extravagant pride of her father, and thus place her, as the object of honourable contention, before you all."

"So far, so well," said the Englishman, we have all, therefore, an equal stake in the safety of the damsel, and her honourable treatment; and why her fate should be committed to the hands of one man, and that one man the least known of us all, I am at a loss to conceive. You appear to entertain a very friendly solicitude, that we should not commit ourselves before the proper time; and, doubtless, we are all very much beholden to you: but still, if we choose to take any portion of risk upon ourselves, you will naturally feel happy in being relieved from so heavy a responsibility. I propose accordingly, that the abduction—or deliverance, as you, Sir Black Knight, more happily phrase it—of the

Damsel of Laval, be conducted by a force, composed of an equal number of men contributed by all of us who desire it ; the said force to be under your command, with such restrictions as the wisdom of the present meeting may prescribe."

This proposal was received with a shout of approbation ; and when the Black Knight attempted, as before, to address himself to individuals, his voice was drowned in the general uproar. At length all was silent, and every face was directed towards him in expectation. When at length he spoke, and this was not for some time, it was in a cold, haughty, and indifferent tone.

"It was my desire to serve you," said he, "and, if the detention of the Damsel were essentially necessary to our ultimate success, I would do so still. Her being allowed, however, to fall once more into the hands of her father, will, at the worst, only render her deliverance more tedious and difficult ; and I decline submitting, in order to avoid this, to the new insult which the wisdom of the meeting has thought proper to offer me. In

furtherance of my own plans, notwithstanding, I shall still pursue the adventure as zealously as heretofore. It is myself I serve, not you ; and, for my own sake, not yours, will I give you due tidings of the event which must bring you to a decision either to submit or resist. In the meantime, only advising you to take no step whatever till you hear farther from me, I leave you in the holy keeping of your own wits," and so saying, the knight strode out of the room.

Douglas would instantly have withdrawn for the purpose of following his mysterious enemy ; although, even then, in some doubt as to the possibility of his seizing a man who appeared to have the faculty of vanishing like a spirit. He was detained for a moment, however, by some expressions he heard amidst the tumult occasioned by the haughty exit of the stranger, which raised powerfully his curiosity.

"Follow him not," said the more cautious personage, whose name had not transpired, "and take no heed of his disrespect. Draw near, and I will

tell you why. Closer, for I will not trust my voice to the echoes even of this deserted room." Douglas stretched his head forth out of the opening, and listened with soul and sense to the whisper of the old man, but without being able to catch an intelligible word. At the moment he fancied he heard something stir near him; and putting out his hand, he felt that a man in armour stood close by his side.

"Sir," whispered he, "you are here on espial as well as I: move not, or I drag you into the hall. When they are gone, you and I go hand and hand into the moonlight!" and seizing the hand beside him, he grasped it like one who would give earnest of his power to enforce any threat of the kind. The stranger, on his part, did not answer in words, but returned the pressure with such goodwill, that Douglas heard the steel splints of his gauntlet crackle, and felt the blood spring from beneath his finger nails. They stood in this cordial attitude for some minutes, without overhearing a syllable that could have been of interest to either; and at

length the meeting broke up without coming to any conclusion, and they saw the last of its members disappear at the door.

“And now, sir Black Knight,” said Douglas, “for I know you by instinct, even in the dark, you will either settle with me in the court beneath, certain accounts that have been long outstanding between us, or you will accompany me on the instant to yonder fortress, where lodge Orosmandel and the Damsel of Laval. Choose!”

“I should prefer the former alternative,” said the stranger, “if I did not perceive, by the hardness of your gripe, that it would take more minutes than I can well spare just at present to chastise your folly. We shall go, therefore, to the fortress, and the rather, that I have still more pressing business there than you.” Groping their way to the secret door, which was the readiest egress, they commenced their descent, still hand in hand; but the narrowness of the rude staircase making this attitude impossible longer, Douglas gave precedence to his enemy, keeping close be-

hind him, so that he might reach the bottom at the same moment.

He reached the bottom alone !

“ Who passed ? ” cried the knight, drawing his sword, “ tell me on your lives ! ”

“ Who passed ? ” repeated the seneschal, in evident surprise. “ Why, the twelve men, to be sure, not five minutes ago. And what makest thou, sir knight, by the secret stair, and head, instead of heels, foremost ? ”

“ It is glamour ! or I am in a dream ! and these be no living men, but shadows and phantasms ! Open the door, ye unholy shapes, and then sink in the ground and disappear ! ”

“ The thirteenth man ! ” mused the seneschal, as his valet slowly obeyed ; “ What thinkest thou of this, comrade ? ”

“ That we are even well rid of him ! ” replied old Raoul sulkily : “ New times are not like old times ; and a man now-a-days can laugh at his very doom. Death itself seems to be dead ; or, wherefore are you and I here ? Ah ! what a night

we should have made of it ! with old rhymes, and old stories, and the corpse-streaked east and west between us !”

Douglas escaped as quickly as he could from the ill-boding voices of the old men ; and when he had cleared the precincts of the castle, rushed, rather than ran, down the steep on which it stood. While passing the hut by the roadside he threw a glance at the door ; but all was still. Soon after, he reached the opening by which his friend and he had left the highway ; and in a few minutes more he stood by the side of David Armstrong, who was still fast asleep.

Although the dawn was not yet perceptible, Douglas knew, by the appearance of the sky, and the position of the moon, that it was no longer night ; and he laid himself quickly down, determined, in the midst of all his dilemmas, to snatch an hour's rest, before the daylight should call him to its business and adventure. Sleep came at his bidding, but not rest. Long he tumbled, and tossed, and groaned. He imagined at length that

he was actually laid out as a corpse, with the seneschal watching at his head, and old Raoul at his feet. The Black Knight presently entered upon the scene ; and stooping down, endeavoured to cut the fastenings of his helmet with his *miséricorde*. Unable to stir hand or foot, he felt those diabolical fingers fumbling at his throat ; and, overpowered with horror, the sleeper shrieked, and awoke.

His dream was partly true ; and he caught hold of the intruding hand with convulsive energy.

“Villain !” he cried, “let me up ! Give me a chance of life ; and let me die by fair fighting !”

“Get up, then, in the name of God !” said David. “It is that I have wanted this half hour ; and I have even now been fain to cut your helmet ties, lest you should be strangled.”

“O my friend, I have had such a dream !”

“You may well say so, Archibald ; for truly you have had a troubled night.”

“Why, what in heaven’s name do you know of my troubles?”

“More, perchance, than your waking lips could tell me. But the Black Knight has been busy with you since we lay down; and those two lean and wizard spectres, whose eldritch laugh you might well dread to hear.”

“David! Was it all a dream? Only convince me of that—but no—it is impossible.”

“You have truly passed a troubled night; and, indeed, as I may say, you might as well not have slept at all. But you men of war, whose minds are not so alert as they might be, are unable to struggle with dreams, which are in general a casualty depending upon the state of the body. With such, the stomach carries it over the brain; and your valiant knight lies groaning under the blows of an ideal victor, whom the poor scholar, disciplined by his watchings, and fastings, and meditations, would throw off like a cumbersome cloak. For mine own part, I awoke every now and then of express purpose to drive away a great black fly, which kept buzzing and buzzing around your head; and once, on raising my eyes, there was a damsel standing beside us—a young woman—”

“The Damsel of Laval !”

“No, the young woman Hagar ; and she told me that she was an Egyptian, and not a—hem !—but, behold ! this was a dream.”

“And so was not mine,” said Douglas, starting up, “Not a word ! Listen, and then speak ;” and he related in a succinct and coherent manner the adventures of the night. During the course of the recital, although David said nothing, he maintained for a considerable time his own private opinion, that it was all a dream ; but by degrees the conviction forced itself upon his mind, that the knight had not even been sleep-walking, but broad awake.

“In this country,” said he, after some moment’s meditation, “the great houses were formerly provided, not only with private passages, the doors of which appeared, both to the sight and touch, to form part of the wall, but also with subterranean avenues, extending far out into the country. This is already an antique fashion ; and the remains of such contrivances, if skilfully used, might give an appearance of the supernatural to feats of mere

dexterity and ingenuity. If the Black Knight be a creature of flesh and blood, you may be assured, that out of some such substantial materials arose the *glamour* of to-night. At all events, if I am not far mistaken, we shall become better acquainted with magic as we get on ; and so, let us up and away, for the sun is already high in the heavens. The time may soon come—*adsit modo dexter Apollo*—when we shall teach him, in turn, a few of the tricks of the north !”

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CHAPTER I.

THE conspiracy of the relations of Gilles de Retz, which disturbed the latter part of the reign of John V., was in all probability, as the English knight Beauchamp had hinted, entered into more from personal than public motives. Or rather, it may be considered as one of the last throes of a convulsion which had continued for numerous centuries. The patient had been bled and blistered almost *ad deliquium animi*, and the disease could

no longer pamper itself on the rebellious juices of the body ; but still, a sudden heave now and then demonstrated, that although subdued it was not yet expelled. Like the devils of Scripture, when adjured by a stronger power, it would rend the victim once more, before leaving him for ever.

However this may be, the conspirators who, during the night, had held grave debate on the question, as to whether they should seize and carry off a prisoner, the Damsel of Laval, vied with each other in the morning for the distinction of being the most respectful and devoted of her satellites. The air was cool, yet balmy ; their road lay among swelling hills, covered with vines and fruit-trees ; and, instead of the hazy moonlight which, but a few hours before, had wrapped the world, as if with a winding-sheet, a joyous sun looked down upon their line of march, and glittered along the course of the beautiful Loire, till it was lost in the distance.

In addition to the two hundred men-at-arms who escorted the Damsel, there were several of

the gentlemen whom Douglas had seen the night before in the ruined hall, with a body of their retainers corresponding to the rank of the individual. These armed retinues followed the main body, while their commanders rode in front near the litter of Mademoiselle de Laval; and as, one by one, on arriving at the avenues which led to their own châteaux, they detached themselves from the mass, it was not uninteresting to see the whole line halt during the ceremony of leave-taking, and to watch the glittering of their armour, and the dancing of their plumes, as they spurred haughtily along the wooded paths, and at length disappeared among the trees. Sometimes, when the château was near, its lord prevailed upon the principal travellers to ride up to the gate, and drink a cup of wine without dismounting, and on such occasions the ladies of the family came out to salute the Damsel as she passed. All these incidents contributed, and had done so from the first, to render the progress of the cavalcade extremely slow; for in reality, a vigorous traveller,

even without the assistance of his horse, might have performed the distance from Angers to Nantes in two days.

There was one thing, however, which gave a very peculiar character to the procession, as it might be called. This was the absence, even in well-peopled districts, of that noisy crowd which usually fawns upon the progress of the great. The peasants got out of the way altogether, or else stood still, either gazing on the show in absolute silence, or with their eyes fixed upon the ground. All, however, had their heads uncovered, and their bodies bent. Groups of meaner travellers, instead of attaching themselves, for protection, to the great body, melted away as it approached, and disappeared among the trees; and thus the procession, instead of uniting to itself, as usual, every body whom leisure permitted or business required to travel the same way, rolled silently along, the uniformity of its march only broken by such incidents as we have mentioned.

Among the chiefs who surrounded the litter, although at as great a distance as the breadth of the road permitted, the most conspicuous was Roger de Briqueville, a relation of the family of Laval, and in some sort, a dependant upon his kinsman, the lord de Retz. To him was intrusted, on this occasion, the command of the men-at-arms; but his ordinary office was that of captain of the body-guard of his master. He was low in stature, square-built, and long-armed; and his coarse, weather-beaten, pock-pitted face, without a single gleam of what is properly termed intellect, disclosed notwithstanding the keenness of a practised soldier, and the instinctive fidelity of a mastiff dog.

Close by the litter rode Orosmandel, a man whose extraordinary dignity of deportment awed the rude soldiers around him, as much as the benignity of his countenance interested them. To look at him behind, you would have supposed that he was some sovereign prince, of that by-gone time when the attributes of royalty were not merely its crown and sceptre, but grace, majesty,

personal strength, and beauty of manly form. In front, his beard, as white as the driven snow, his calm deep eyes, his pale face, moulded by habit into an expression of lofty contemplation, mingled both with sweetness and sadness, gave the idea at once of an apostle and a philosopher; and few travellers there were who looked upon him, who did not step aside out of his path, and hold their breath while he passed by.

His benign expression, however, had not the usual effect of leading on to familiarity and confidence. The persons on his side of the litter sat their horses with an air of constraint; they gave him, as the sailors say, a wide berth; and when they conversed at all with each other, it was in a whisper.

Behind the litter, was Hagar, mounted on a mule, her hood drawn over her face, and her whole form enveloped in her cloak. From time to time, she quickened her pace, to reply to the questions of the Damsel, who, in the absence of other female society, than that of her waiting-woman,

desired occasionally to converse with the stranger. Hitherto they had hardly exchanged words; except at the moment when the Jewess presented the note from Sir Archibald Douglas; but at this point of the journey, when they might be said to be almost in the heart of Gilles de Metz's personal domain, all the chiefs who had joined the procession on the route, had taken their leave, and mademoiselle de Laval had time to think of her protégée.

"Tell me, maiden," said she, "you whose dark eyes speak of warmer suns than ours, what is your parentage and country?"

"My father, lady, is a merchant from the east, who liveth by trafficking in goods and monies; and for me, I have no country, being as one born in the desert, and by the wayside."

"Poor girl! and you know not even the land wherein you saw the light! Speak, is your father wealthy?"

"Of a merchant it cannot be said, He is wealthy; for his substance is always in peril. Nevertheless

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the Lord hath dealt bountifully with our house,
and we have wherewithal to live.

“Is he in Paris?”

“Nay.”

“Then with whom didst thou part?” interposed Orosmandel, fixing his penetrating eye upon her. “I can read the signs of the human affections, and I know what belongeth to love, and what to kindred.”

Hagar stood silent, and interdicted; for she had not lied boldly, like one who would save her father at the expense of a harmless falsehood; but had cheated her conscience with the quibble contained in her words: for the Jew was not *in* Paris, but *under* it.

“To whom go you at Nantes?” demanded Pauline goodnaturedly, in order to screen the young woman’s confusion.

“To the kinsfolk of our house, who are also traffickers like my father.”

“And the knight,” added Pauline, in a lower tone, after glancing furtively at Orosmandel, who had relapsed into his usual abstraction, — “he

whose missive you delivered to me—how did you—” She coloured deeply while she spoke, and then added, with an effort at indifference, “Have you known him long?”

“I never saw him before that night,” replied Hagar.

“Indeed! And where did you see him then? You were, no doubt, strongly recommended.”

“I was—I met him at a *hostelrie* called the *Pomme-du-Pin*.” There was a peculiarity in Hagar’s voice while she spoke, which induced the Damsel to look up at her face, which was partly concealed by her hood; and she saw that her usually colourless complexion was suffused with a bright glow. Pauline was silent for some moments.

“Did you say by whom you were recommended?” said she at last carelessly.

“By an intimate friend and blood-relation of the knight.”

“Minion!” said the Damsel suddenly, and in a tone of haughty displeasure; “he has nor friend nor kinsman in the whole realm of France.”

"Of a surety, madam, I have spoken the truth; and the meeting was appointed by the knight himself." Having so spoken, Hagar suffered her mule to fall gradually behind; aware she had given offence, she could not conceive of what nature, to her powerful protectress; yet desirous of discontinuing, at all risks, a conversation which might tend to the discovery of more of her affairs than might be consistent with her father's safety.

The cavalcade at length reached a side path, which, diverging from the great highway to Nantes, led across the country to La Verrière, the residence of the lord de Retz. This was not their route, however, for it was intended to go straight on to the city; and Pauline, after pausing for a moment to gaze up the avenue, and to whisper a prayer before a crucifix which marked its entrance, directed her litter to proceed. But Orosmandel stood still; and she paused again out of respect. No one would presume to pass the philosopher, who appeared to be plunged in the deepest ab-

straction ; and thus a silent and unbidden halt took place along the whole line.

A peasant woman was kneeling at the foot of the crucifix, completely wrapped in her cloak, and apparently absorbed in religious meditation ; but the caution or timidity, whichever it might be, that had seemed to affect the whole of her class, was lost in curiosity when the procession stopped, and she turned her head to see what was the matter. She proved to be the same young woman who had given the warning to Sir Archibald Douglas ; and the Damsel, observing her, made a sign that she should approach when she had finished her devotions.

"How is it with you, Marie?" said she, in a low voice ; "Are you quite recovered?"

"Yes, madam : thanks to your ladyship, St. Julian, and the Holy Virgin."

"Where have you been?"

"To see a relation of my late uncle."

"And you are now going back to your village?"

"Yes, madam ; to be married, if you please."

"You met with no mishaps or adventures this time I hope," said the Damsel, smiling, as she put a piece of money into the girl's hand, and waved an adieu.

"Yes, madam," replied Marie, taking care that no one else should hear, yet avoiding any look or tone of significance ; "I fell in with a knight under unusual circumstances, with a bloody heart emblazoned on his coat of arms."

"Under what circumstances?" demanded Pauline quickly.

"A report had got abroad among the peasants that you were in danger. The knight perilled his life, on a desperate chance, to find out the truth ; and I have not seen or heard of him since."

At this moment, Orosmandel, awaking from his reverie, commanded De Briquerville to take the path to La Verrière.

"To La Verrière !" repeated the latter in surprise, but with submissive respect ; "to-morrow, my lord gives a mystery to the people at Nantes,

and I understood, from his own letters and your directions, that he would expect us at the hôtel de la Suze."

"He did—he does not," replied the sage mildly, "proceed."

Pauline de Laval, who was by this time much nigh tired of shows and cities, and too well accustomed to Orosmandel even to wonder at his apparently supernatural intelligence, consented readily to the change of route. She was, besides, desirous of obtaining more leisure than Nantes would afford for those metaphysical meditations which are so important to a girl of seventeen; and, desiring Marie to walk near the litter, so far as her village, the cavalcade was once more in motion.

Hagar, in the meantime, in whose mind the ideas of death and dishonour were inseparably connected with the abode of Prelati, was uncertain for a moment how to act. Her heart impelled her to thank mademoiselle de Laval for her protection, and take open leave; but she remem-

bered the offence she had unconsciously given, and the flash of haughty anger which had lightened for a moment in the Damsel's eyes ; and the habitual caution of the oppressed and persecuted—which the oppressors and persecutors term meanness of spirit—prevailed. Amidst the confusion of turning into so narrow a path, she suffered her mule to fall behind, edging herself gradually out of the mass, and hoping that, if once clear of the leaders of the cavalcade, the others would conclude that she had permission to pursue her own way.

In this manner she found herself at length completely extricated from the line ; and switching her mule with good will, she rode as quickly along the highway as she could venture to do without running a risk of exciting suspicion. Having gained a certain short distance, she could not resist a desire which beset her to look round ; and, turning her head, as if by fascination, she saw Sir Roger de Briqueville standing in his stirrups, and looking after her. The knight waved his

hand for her to return ; and she was near enough to observe a grim smile upon his countenance. Hagar at first, without stopping, merely pointed along the road, as if to say that Nantes was her destination ; but a more impatient gesture from Briqueville convinced her that he was in earnest, and with a quaking heart, she rode back.

“ Sir Knight,” said she, “ the term of my journey is not La Verrière, but the city Nantes ; and I pray thee humbly, that thou wilt accept of the thanks of thy handmaid, and convey them also to the Damsel of Laval, for the protection vouchsafed to me thus far.”

“ La Verrière is your road to Nantes,” replied the knight gruffly, “ come, come,” as he saw she hesitated, “ if you affect so much state, we must have a groom to lead your mule by the bridle.” Hagar instantly rode up to the litter.

“ Damsel,” said she, dismounting, “ I return thee my humble thanks for the protection thou hast vouchsafed to me thus far ; and I now crave permission to proceed direct, even to the city Nantes.”

“I have had occasion to question your veracity,” replied the Damsel, severely, but in a low tone; “Did you mean to prove it by absconding stealthily from my protection?”

“Madam,” said Hagar in desperation, “thou didst ask of my kindred and my country. Behold, I am a Jewess, even a dweller in the wilderness! Let me pass on in peace; for there can be no communion betwixt thee and me.”

“How! a Jewess! This is indeed surprising! A Jewess gives rendezvous to a man in a public tavern; and he—a kinsman of the princely house of Douglas, and a Christian knight—immediately upon making her acquaintance under these circumstances, craves my friendship in her behalf! Do you know her, De Briqueville?”

“I only know that she must go with us to La Verrière; and upon business more serious, I guess, than meeting a gallant in a winehouse, Jewess though she be.”

“I hate all mysteries, except those in a tale! Will you explain yours, maiden, or pass entirely from my hands? Choose.”

"I commit myself to the hands of the Most High!" said Hagar: and with a deep sigh she folded her hands upon her breast, and resumed her journey, following the litter as before. Pauline looked back more than once, as if hesitating; but between the stories of Hagar and Marie, such a conflict had been raised in her breast, that her reason had not fair play. She could not help suspecting her own conduct to be ungenerous; but she quieted her scruples by determining to redeem her word on the following day; and whether Hagar persisted or not in withholding an explanation, to have her delivered in safety and honour to her friends in Nantes.

As for the Jewess, notwithstanding all that had passed, she trusted so much to her skill in physiognomy, that she would cheerfully have confided her safety to the Damsel of Laval; had she not been aware—or at least, if she did not believe—that even her power, and that of her father to boot, would be as nothing against the immutable will of one who was in her judgment the most

talented and subtle villain on the face of the earth. She determined to escape, if escape was possible, before entering the inclosures of the château of La Verrière; and for this purpose she awaited with impatience till a halt should take place for refreshment.

At present, in fact, she knew herself to be out of her element; seated on the back of an animal to which she was a stranger, and which she could not manage, and exposed to the gaze of a crowd of men. She had no self-confidence; she felt powerless and awkward; and eagerly did she long for the moment when, placed on her own feet, she might exercise that art which the habits of her life had rendered easy—of “going and coming with no more noise than the shadow on the wall.” The thought did not present itself without associations. The art was not entirely born of persecution and mystery. It had also been cultivated as a means of surprising and interesting the young Scot; and that which at first was an amusement of her girlish fancy, had

become at length—though still unconsciously—the business of her woman's heart. Bitterly did she grieve for the selfish cruelty of her father in devoting David to a danger so imminent. "Well may the heathen despise us," said she in her heart; "the God of Jacob must first renew our spirit, before he buildeth up again the house of Israel."

The halt at length took place at the castle of Huguemont, the lord of which claimed kindred with the house of Laval. Thé Damsel was here under a well-known roof, and in the society of friends; and although the distance was now inconsiderable to La Verrière, as some unfavourable symptoms of a change of weather presented themselves in the sky, it was determined to remain there for the night.

Hagar crossed the drawbridge with a beating heart—which ceased to beat for some moments when she found herself in a court, surrounded by walls so lofty, that hope itself could not soar over them; and when soon after she knew by the clanking of the chains of the bridge, that the only

passage for human foot to the external world was withdrawn. De Briqueville looked at her with a sarcastic smile, as he saw her fairly caged ; but, controlling himself as it seemed, he said in a tone more respectful than the words,

“ We would receive you into the hall, were it possible ; but, being an unbeliever, you must eat either above, or with any of the servants who will suffer you.”

“ Not so, De Briqueville,” interposed Pauline de Laval, who overheard him, “ This young woman, be it known to you, is under my special protection. She will in the meantime eat with the peasant Marie, for whom I have ordered some refreshment, before she passes on to her village ; and ere retiring to rest, I shall see her myself, and give farther instructions respecting her.”

Hagar was now shown into a small low-roofed room, which, but for a window, might have seemed nothing more than a recess ; and there she remained for some time alone, her thoughts too deeply concentrated to be disturbed by the tumul-

tuous noise of hurrying steps and calling voices which filled the corridor, and, it might have seemed, the whole castle. Every chance of escape depended upon the character of Marie; and when at length this young woman entered the room, bearing the refreshments in her hand which the domestics were either too busy or too proud to serve, she gazed in her face with a look of such intense scrutiny as to excite the girl's surprise.

"Perhaps you wonder at my waiting upon a Jewess?" said Marie at last; "but the blessed St. Julian bestows upon travellers what company he pleases; and moreover, we do not find that the good Samaritan inquired into the belief of the wounded man before he relieved him. Eat and drink, therefore, you who are weary and desolate by the wayside, and stricken, God help us! even while yet a girl, by the troubles of the world."

"I knew it," said Hagar, almost aloud; "I saw it in her eye. She hath neither the stupid brutality of a peasant, nor the ignorant pride of a noble. The

God of our fathers be praised !” She then, after grateful thanks, “brake bread” with her, and, having fortified her trembling heart with a mouthful of wine, spoke thus :

“Thou hast truly said, that I am weary and desolate, and stricken with sorrow ! I am even as a bird, chased into the net of the fowler ; and I have no hope save in the great God of Jew and Gentile—and in thee ! Start not : although well-nurtured, and taught beyond thy rank, I know that thou art yet an unregarded peasant ; and for that very reason, thou canst save me.”

“From what, in the name of God ? And in what manner ? You are no prisoner ;” for Marie had not heard what was said by De Briquerville—“and the Damsel of Laval, with her own lips, gave me strict charge to treat you well. If you are oppressed, it is to her you must address yourself ; for she is mistress even here, where her father does not command.”

“Were it in the power of the Damsel of Laval to protect me, I would confide in her even as

in a good angel ; but, if once within the precincts of La Verrière, I am lost."

"You are indeed fair," said Marie, thinking that at last she understood her ; "you are passing fair ; but you will be under the charge of his own daughter ; and above all, you are a Jewess. Still it is said," and she sunk her voice to a whisper, "it is said, that Gilles de Retz is not scrupulous ; and wilder stories are told of the deeds in La Verrière than ever entered into the brain of a fablier."

"What stories ?" demanded Hagar.

"Fables, doubtless. Screams have been heard in the midnight wood ; and corpse-lights seen glimmering among the trees. Individuals belonging to the establishment at the castle have suddenly disappeared ; and the skiff of more than one fisherman, returning at night, has run against a corpse floating in the sluggish Erdre. The Damsel of Laval has not been there since she was a child ; and that is nothing to the credit of La Verrière."

After the girl had finished, Hagar sat looking

at her for some time, in silent dismay; her thoughts, however, not altogether occupied with her own danger. She at length took a purse from her girdle, and, putting it into Marie's hand, which she pressed convulsively within both hers:

"Wilt thou aid me to escape?" said she. The girl calmly rejected the bribe, and then moved her seat away; partly offended by the offer, and partly as feeling the degradation of having been touched so familiarly by a Jewess.

"I cannot," she replied, somewhat more coldly than before, "I dare not even hint at your danger, to the Damsel of Laval."

"I ask it not," said Hagar, eagerly, "but we are alike in stature; take thou my cloak, and give me thine, and I will go forth in thy semblance. Take also this under robe," for she saw the girl's eye glisten as if in admiration of its richness and elegance, "it will be a wedding garment—nay, let me throw it on thy shoulders. There; it becometh thee well, for it is only the free and the happy for whom such raiment is fitting. And it shall come

to pass, that when thou wearest it, thou shalt think of her whom thou didst preserve; and behold! thy face at that moment shall look more lovely in the eyes of thine husband, than if there were enwoven in the silk a talisman framed by the art of the magician!"

Marie was generous and high-minded; but she had a touch of woman's vanity as well as woman's pity, and it was with a sigh she rejected the robe.

"I consent to exchange cloaks," said she; "the Damsel will think me ungrateful, but the time may come when she will find out her mistake; and, if it never does, I shall know that she is mistaken myself." She would then have taken off the robe; but Hagar suddenly threw her cloak above it, and enveloped her in its voluminous folds. She then wrapped herself in the cloak of the peasant girl.

"Tell me," said she, "what is the risk which thou runnest?"

"The risk of appearing ungrateful. You will probably pass in this disguise; and I shall only

have to wait for a change of guard ; for as my face is known, I can pass in any dress."

" But if the damsel should call for me before a change of guard ?"

" Take no thought of that ; when my determination is taken, I can dare as well as you. Turn to the left when you pass the gate, and walk on with what speed you may, till nightfall. You will then, since you have money in your purse, find lodgings for the night, in the nearest cottage, and a guide to Nantes by daybreak. Adieu !" Hagar, who was but little accustomed to kindness, could not speak for the swelling of her heart. She stooped down, and kissed the peasant's hand. Marie hesitated for a moment ; but then, putting her arm round the waist of her protégée, she kissed the Jewess on the brow. And so they parted.

CHAPTER II.

HAGAR, unencumbered by her mule, and in the disguise of a peasant, had little difficulty in escaping from the castle; more especially as she found few of the guards completely sober, except the individual whose duty it was to turn the key. When she made her appearance at the postern, it had just been opened for the egress of several persons of her own apparent rank; and a hearty buffet which, in the surprise and terror of the moment, she presented to one of the soldiers who attempted to salute her, not only kept up the character she personated, but afforded her an excuse for gliding suddenly past the gate-keeper, without waiting for the usual examination.

"Who goes there?" cried the man in surprise: "Comrades, did you see any one pass?—if you are still capable of seeing."

"I saw a shadow," answered one, "gliding along the wall, and then vanishing."

"Shadow!" repeated a soldier, rubbing his ear, "It was flesh and blood—or rather absolute bone—I'll answer for it; and, by the same token, it had the hand and arm of Marie."

"It was the Jewess," said another, "—hiccup!—touching whom we were warned so severely. I knew her by the black eyes—hiccup!—for being seated on this bench—by reason—"

"By reason that you cannot stand."

"Hiccup!—I saw up under her hood. Thou wilt dangle, comrade, from the battlements to-morrow, as surely as these keys dangle to-night at thy girdle." The laugh of derision which followed this speech reached the ears of Hagar, and assured her that she was safe for the present.

She walked, or rather glided on with a rapidity which made her incapable of coherent thought,

and for a space of time which she could only guess at by the changes which took place in the sky. When she left the castle, it was a dull, lowering, threatening afternoon; and when she halted, for the first time, the shadows of evening were dissolving, like exorcised spirits, beneath a brilliant and beautiful moon. The Loire, with its massive coteaux and magnificent vistas, was far behind her; and she seemed to have entered another country—but still a land of enchantment, which the imagination disunites from the realities of life, to identify it with its own creations.

The horizon was everywhere bounded by low, wooded hills, swelling in wild confusion; yet smooth and unbroken, like the waves of the sea subsiding after a storm. In the middle, at the foot of the eminence on which she stood, but still at some distance, lay an immense oblong sheet of water resembling a lake, the waters of which, as tranquil as death, resembled a mass of molten silver, while their level banks were as black as night. A portentous stillness seemed to

brood in the air. Not a human habitation was visible. The night-wind, which cools the cheek everywhere else, was not admitted here. There was no motion perceptible in nature; except that of the distant shadows of twilight, sinking confusedly in the earth, or disappearing as they fled over the hills.

Hagar looked round in surprise, and growing alarm. But, lonely and outcast as she had been from her birth, it was not of solitude she was afraid, nor of the stillness of nature. There was no lake, she knew, in that part of the country—no waters of any extent, save those of the Erdre; and those dreary banks, dark, solemn, and mysterious, could be none other than the confines of this noiseless, and nearly motionless, river. Marie, in directing her to walk on till nightfall, had calculated her speed by that of other people; and, by this fatal mistake, she was now, no doubt, running straight into the jaws of that danger from which it was worth life and honour to escape.

As soon as this conviction flashed upon the

mind of the Jewess, she turned abruptly from the path ; and, measuring the country as well as she could with her eye, shaped her course in such a manner as to enable her to continue parallel with the river, without approaching it : the château of La Verrière, she knew, standing close to the water's edge. She found it a different thing, however, from gliding along a beaten path, to cut through seemingly interminable woods, and wind around hills and eminences ; and when at length she gained an elevated spot clear of trees, she saw that the Erdre was much nearer, and at least suspected a dark formless object on the bank to be the abode of Prelati. Again she made an effort to escape ; even retreating so directly from the river, as to leave behind her destination, Nantes, at the same time. All was in vain. A spell seemed to be around her ; and when she saw for the third time the stirless waters of the Erdre, she could perceive distinctly that they were dominated by a fortified building.

Hagar sat down upon a stone, quaking in every

limb, and looking towards this object without being able for some time to withdraw her eyes from its fascination. She was not much given to superstition; yet the feeling crept upon her mind that she was the victim of magical delusion, that she was at that moment upon enchanted ground! The spot where she rested was a conical eminence, so regular in form as to give the idea of an artificial mound. It was in some places covered with stunted trees and brushwood, with here and there large mossy stones, similar to the one on which she sat. As Hagar observed this, she got up hastily, and saw that she had been sitting on a tombstone.

She walked on a few steps in trepidation; and then paused abruptly.

"It is a sepulchre," said she, almost aloud, and as if debating with her own thick-coming fancies—"And what then? Is a grave-stone so unfit a resting-place for a daughter of the captivity? Will the dead refuse fellowship with one cut off from the living? And will the spirits of the dead

arise from their forgotten tombs to say unto me, 'Hence, outcast! begone from us!'" She sat down upon another stone, and burying her face in her hands, prayed silently.

On raising her head again, she was ashamed of the childish terrors which had beset her. Convinced that it was in vain to think of escape by the uncertain light of the moon, she looked about for some shelter which might preserve her from the keen night air; and, so far from disliking the locality to which chance, or fate, had guided her, she now thought that her best chance of safety was with the dead.

"The Christians affirm," said she, "that bad spirits dare not enter within the circle of their holy ground; and, in like manner, a deserted churchyard is no place for the midnight resort of bad men."

She had hitherto been in the moonlight; but on going down the shady side of the eminence, she saw, half hidden by trees, some ruined walls; but of what description the original building had been, it was impossible to tell. From the locality,

however, she guessed it to have been a chapel ; and this idea was confirmed when, on approaching nearer, she discovered an opening, arched with mouldering stones, and almost choked up with thorns and nettles, which was evidently the entrance to what had once been a burying vault. Here was shelter from the keenness of the night air. Here was refuge from her enemies. Why should she hesitate to take up her abode for a few hours upon such a spot ? Was not the whole earth a burying-ground ? And was this lonely, silent nook a worse resting-place for the living, because a hundred years ago, or more, it had been a resting-place for the dead ?

Hagar, unfastening her cloak, removed her hood from her head, and suffered it to fall back upon her shoulders, that she might stoop more easily ; and as her eye rested for a moment upon her bodice and gown thus disclosed, a sorrowful yet disdainful smile lighted up her features, as with a gleam of moonlight. The garments were highly fantastic in their fashion, and of a stuff so

prodigiously rich, that her father had insisted upon her wearing them under her cloak and upper robe (which she had given to Marie), as the most certain means of preserving them. Her figure at that moment—her strange dress, and the lofty expression of her beautiful, foreign-looking countenance, must have formed altogether a very remarkable picture; especially when taken in conjunction with the scene—a ruin of ruins—a decayed mansion of the dead.

As she stretched forth her hand to put aside the brambles, it may be that some lingering feeling of superstition assailed her; for she stepped hastily back, and retreated several paces. Her heart beat wildly. She stood for some time gazing at the cavern; till, at length, ashamed as well as alarmed, she endeavoured by a strong effort to banish the infantine fears which, by deluding and bewildering her imagination, threatened every moment to realize themselves. The thorns and brambles, in fact, which half concealed the vault, began to move. Hagar thought she was fainting,

and that this was a symptom, and caught at the ruins beside her for support. But the next moment a human figure appeared at the door of the house of mortality.

She did not scream ; she did not move ; she did not close her eyes ; yet her recollection was gone for some moments. The idea of Prelati filled her mind, and pressed upon her brain. This was all the consciousness she possessed. Everything else—place, time, circumstance—had vanished.

Even before her outward senses completely returned, her mind was busy preparing its energies to meet so fearful an emergency. She raised her figure to its full height ; and, passing her hand before her eyes, as if to drive away the film which obscured them, fixed a look of sedate and collected resolve upon his face. It was not the face of Prelati. A tall man, approaching to middle life, stood before her ; his figure concealed by the folds of his cloak, but his dark and lustrous eyes fixed upon hers, with an expression in which wonder struggled with veneration.

"Is it come at last?" said he, his voice quivering with emotion; "Speak! Art thou dust? Art thou a thing of mortal life? Answer, for I will not blench!"

"I am even as thou," replied the Jewess, drawing the hood of her cloak over her head. "Forgive, I pray thee, an intrusion which I could not intend, seeing that I am as one who hasteth on a journey;" and, with a humble reverence, she moved quickly away, yet with sufficient presence of mind to take the direction leading from the castle.

She had not raised her eyes to observe the effect of her words upon the stranger; but on leaving the spot, she had heard a deep expiration, as if of one whose breath had been pent up for some time. She glided on, however, with as much speed as she could exert, without appearing to fly. In that neighbourhood, she thought, all men were dangerous to her, for it was the property of Prelati to bend to his own will the soul of every one within his reach, and to make him an agent and

tool of his designs. After some minutes had elapsed, she began to breathe more freely ; the country seemed to open ; and from the glimpse occasionally afforded, she knew that she had at length broken the spell which confined her feet within the circle of La Verrière.

Her self-gratulations, however, were premature ; for by and by she heard the noise of footsteps behind her. She quickened her steps, till, on gaining an open space, she might have seemed to a spectator to skim along the sward ; but still her pursuer gained upon her ; and in a few minutes more he was by her side.

In vain she quickened, then slackened her pace, he still maintained the same relative position. In the moonlight, his tall shadow mingled with hers ; in the dusky grove she could hear him breathe close beside her, when she could hardly discern his figure. She was at length emboldened by her very terror to look up, and she saw with surprise that her companion was buried in a reverie, which appeared to render him wholly unconscious of her

presence. This odd and unexpected neglect contributed much to restore the Jewess's self-possession ; and at length, as they gained an eminence which suddenly disclosed a view of the public road, and a village close by, she stopped suddenly, and said in a resolute tone,

"Permit me to thank thee humbly for the escort with which thou hast honoured me—I am now almost at home." The stranger started from his reverie at her voice. He looked at her so long and earnestly—examining not only the general character of her face, but each individual feature—that her eyes at length sunk beneath his. There was nothing, however, which could offend her modesty in the gaze, for there was nothing in its expression which might not have been as applicable to a statue as to a living being.

"You wish me then to leave you?" said he, "What a strange fate is mine, that I should inspire distrust or hatred where I would fain seek confidence. Look at me. I am perhaps not an object of admiration, but neither am I calculated

to create loathing. Here are we, two denizens of the earth, having met by chance, or destiny, in a lonely spot, sacred to the dead; why should we fly from each other? Why not rather enter into the communings which relieve the heart of its feeling of solitude? We are not enemies by nature, but are of the same species, it may be of the same country. What curse is it that hangs upon the human race, turning them one against the other, as if by instinctive hostility, even when most closely connected by social and natural ties?"

The stranger's words were addressed to Hagar; yet they seemed to flow in soliloquy. She looked at him several times while he spoke; but her eyes sunk under the brightness of his. She saw enough, however, to ascertain that he was singularly handsome, and noble-looking, that his hair was blacker than the raven's wing, and his complexion startlingly pale.

"Why do you not answer?" continued he, after a pause; "I perceive that you understand me; why, then, do you not speak? Is it more

a crime to converse with the lips than with the soul?"

"The soul respondeth unconsciously," replied Hagar: "there are many things which place a seal upon the lips. Thou and I are not mere abstractions; and we cannot hold communion as such. Methinks, for a lover of society, and of the intercourse of his kind, yonder ruined vault was a strange resort!"

"I had business there," said the stranger.

"Business!"

"Yes," said he, as he drew from beneath his cloak an infant's skull. "Why start at the sight?" he continued; "Do you dislike to look upon the dead as well as the living? What is there in this to fear?"

"What is there in it to covet?" demanded she. "Why violate the sanctuary of the dead, to possess a thing at once so useless and so mournful?" A strange smile passed across his face.

"Mournful!" said he: "so is the vault in which it was found; so is the chapel of the

vault; so is the hill; so is the soil on which we tread: for all are ruins, and relics, and remembrances of what hath passed away. The earth itself is a vast burying-place; whose mould is composed of the generations it has buried. In a little while this skull will be earth! If it is more mournful now than then, it is only a proof that our soul is the slave of our senses."

"And its use?" said Hagar; wondering at her own desire to prolong so useless a conversation; yet fascinated, not only by the musical tone of the speaker's voice, but by what to her half-informed mind was the novelty of his ideas.

"It is a question that should be answered; and yet, which cannot be answered lightly or in a breath. The answer would involve a history of myself; a key to my most secret thoughts—to my most lofty aspirations. I think, however, I feel—I know that I should not be silent, if I knew you better. You seem to me as one for whom I have been long looking. There is a spirit, a meaning in your eye, of which you are perhaps yourself

unconscious, but which my soul, practised in the mysteries of nature, knows how to interpret. I feel as if we had known one another in some former state of existence, and half remembered it in this. Let us be friends; or, if the request be too much for one so recently known, let us become acquainted. I would fain relieve my mind of a load of knowledge which lies upon it like guilt. I have long sought, and sought in vain, the individual in whom the confidence is destined to be placed. If I am not deceived in an art known to few, you are that individual!"

Hagar was not unacquainted with the reveries of the astrologer, the alchemist, the physiognomist, and the other enthusiasts who, at that period, groped in the dark after knowledge; and, perhaps, if this discourse had been addressed to her in her father's laboratory, she would have listened without surprise. Here, however, the scene, the time, the person, threw over it an air of such extravagance, that she could have believed herself to be in a dream; and, for that very reason, it produced the more effect.

"Sir," said she, "a communion like that at which you so darkly hint, could only take place between two minds which had undergone the same preparation. I am not different from thee in kind; neither is the naked African: but my soul is not as thy soul; I have neither knowledge nor wisdom; and even in rank, we are so far asunder, that men would wonder to see us hold converse together." And she drew her peasant's cloak around her, forgetting that the stranger must have seen the gorgeous apparel beneath; and unconscious, that her language, and manner of thinking, were at least those of an instructed person.

"Your soul," said he, "I do not know, I only imagine it; for, although it is easy for such as I to guess at the depth from the surface, yet it is only an empirical philosophy which pretends to penetrate to the bottom at a single glance. If you are not she whom I seek, wherefore are you here? Why should we two have been sifted from the mass of mankind, and thrown together at an hour when the rest of the world is asleep, and on a lonely and

remote spot, filled with the bones of the forgotten dead ?

“As for rank,” and a scornful smile passed over his features, “can you tell me whether this was the skull of a royal infant, or a beggar’s brat ? What are those distinctions which last but for a few years, and then vanish like a dream ? They are as ‘nothing, less than nothing, and vanity.’ A prince without power and without fortune, is nothing better than a peasant. Were I, at this moment, to array you in the state of a queen—to rear a silken canopy over your head—to place your foot upon marble and gilding—to stretch under your sway a tract of country greater than the eye could measure—would you be anything less than a queen because you were born in a village ?

“It is in my power to do this—but this is nothing. Vanity has no desire, and pride no object, which is not attainable by us both. If you are she whom I seek, queens will be your handmaidens, and knights and bannerets your slaves. But enough for the present. You lodge, where ?”

The Jewess pointed at hazard to the only cottage in the village where there was still a light in the window.

“Do we meet again at the ruined chapel?”

“No—no—no.”

“It does not matter. Where?”

“Verily, I am but a passer by, I may not tarry by the wayside.”

“What of that?”

“I am journeying towards Nantes.”

“Be it so, were it towards Babylon. We meet next at Nantes.” And the stranger took her hand, and bowing his head upon it gravely, touched it with his lips; he then turned away without another word, and in a few moments, his graceful figure was lost among the neighbouring trees.*

Hagar was perplexed and astonished; but as we

* A scene similar to this occurs in the author's “Wanderings by the Loire;” to which work the reader is referred for a historical account of Gilles de Retz, and to the drawings by Turner it contains, for an idea of some of the localities of the present story.

have already hinted, not so much by the enthusiasm of the stranger, which was perfectly in consonance with the spirit of the age, as by the whole adventure, taken with its concomitant circumstances. This singular man was doubtless one of the learned and ingenious persons who occasionally sojourned at the almost regal court of La Verrière. Nay, such was his loftiness of manner and aspect, that she might have supposed him to be the famous Gilles de Retz himself, had she not been aware of the character of the latter. So far from being a contemner of the advantages of rank like the stranger, he was one of the proudest and most ostentatious men of his time. He aped the monarch in state; transacted his business by means of ambassadors; and never stirred out of doors, unless when attended by a body-guard of hundreds of men at arms.

Hagar walked slowly towards the village; and having reached the cottage distinguished by a light in the window, knocked gently at the door. She had heard voices within, and sounds, as if of

mirth ; but all became silent in an instant. She knocked again ; and, putting her ear to the key-hole, could hear whispered consultations as to the propriety of opening.

“Take care what you are about,” said one. “It is nearly midnight—and who knows what visitors this unlucky candle may have attracted !”

“But only think, Jehan, if it should be one from the castle—and you know they do not care about hours—”

“Bah ! nobody coming from the castle strikes so softly. That was no flesh and blood knock, you may depend upon it. Hush !”

“Good friends,” said Hagar, “I am a weary and benighted traveller ; and I can pay, in silver money, for a night’s lodging.”

“Ay, ay, a traveller, no doubt,” repeated Jehan, in his rough but frightened whisper, “going to and fro, as usual.”

“Yet it was a sweet, low voice.”

“To be sure. Does the wolf howl when he asks the sheep to open ? But your honest tra-

veller does not say, 'Open for a piece of silver,' but, 'Open for the love of the Holy Virgin, who hath sent you one!'"

"For all that, I will speak to our bride-cousin; for she can read and write as well as father Bonaventure himself. Hist! Marie!" and some one came apparently from an inner room. "Here is a knock, which Jehan says is not of flesh and blood; but to my thinking, the voice that accompanies it is as sweet as a lute; whereas the Evil One, you know better than we, is likened unto a roaring lion."

Hagar tried the magic of her voice once more, and the door was instantly thrown open.

"Are you come at last?" said the peasant Marie, grasping her hand; "I inquired for you at every house in the village; and, knowing that there was no other shelter, I had begun to dread the worst. Nevertheless, I contrived to persuade my cousin Jehan to sit up for a while, with his sister, on pretence of wishing to talk of some business-matters after my journey with—" A

hoarse chuckle from Jehan, and a laugh from the sister, interrupted her.

"What then?" said Marie, severely; "I am to be married the day after to-morrow, and where is the harm? But make haste, cousin, and give the traveller to eat and drink, for it is time we were all in bed."

"Tell me," said Hagar, "was the anger of her of Laval kindled against thee?"

"I did not see the Damsel—the watch was changed before she called for me. Yet I had some difficulty in passing the gate; an absurd story having got among the guard, that I had been already there, beat three of the soldiers black and blue, and rushed out without waiting to answer a question. And all because I can read and write! But come, eat, drink, and to bed. Jehan growls, but will not bite; and both he and his sister are ignorant that you are—not of us. In the morning we shall all go to Nantes together; as a party has been made up, to see a mystery given to the people by the great lord de Retz."

CHAPTER III.

AFTER taking some refreshment, Hagar lay down, without undressing, on a pallet spread in a recess, and speedily sunk into a long though troubled sleep. She was awakened by the beams of the sun striking painfully upon her eye-lids; and, on looking up, saw Marie standing by her couch, and gazing at her with a strong expression of wonder and admiration.

"You are a picture," said the latter, "for a limner to draw!—lying on that bed of leaves, in raiment of gold and silver, like a fairy princess—with your hair blacker than midnight, floating in dishevelled tresses over a cheek, which would be like a marble image, but for the dreams that pass

across it. Get up, lady, and say your matins (if such be the custom of your people), and make your toilet quickly ; for half the village is waiting for us." Hagar obeyed her humble friend at once ; and in less time than the latter would have taken to arrange a single curl of her hair, was ready for the journey. In saying her matins, she turned towards the region of the early sun—looking in vain for that Star which had risen above her head *while she slept*, and which shall never come again till the firmament itself has passed away. Marie stepped back unconsciously, and turned away her head ; crossing herself repeatedly, as the unhallowed prayers ascended to heaven.

She advised Hagar to draw her cloak completely round her, so as to conceal the singularity of her dress ; and, again bidding her remember that none of the other villagers knew that she was an unbeliever, conducted her out of the house.

"Do not be alarmed," she said, as they walked along, "at the rough speeches of my cousin Jehan ; for, although he thinks harm almost

always, he rarely does any. I can, at least, insure you a safe journey to Nantes. That is all you require?"

"All, my kindest friend. My kindred dwell in the city, under the protection of the duke, and I may look for my father every day. He will thank thee, both in words and deeds, for his daughter; and believe me, Marie, the old man's blessing will do thee good, and no evil, even though he be of a more ancient faith than thine."

They found about twenty individuals, men, women, boys, and girls, waiting for them at the end of the little village. Among the females there were two or three sufficiently agreeable faces; but Marie was incomparably superior to all both in beauty and manner. Her intended husband was a tall, handsome, good-humoured looking young man, with but little intellect in his countenance, and nothing about him which seemed "nobler than his fortune." In those days, and in that country, the barriers of rank were almost impassable; and the education which Marie had

accidentally received, served no other purpose than occasionally to make her discontented with her lot, and at all times to make her feel as if separate and alone. Her manner towards her betrothed might be termed affectionate; but it was the affection of a sister to a brother—to a younger brother, whom it was her pleasure as well as duty to love and take care of.

Jehan was a sturdy, surly-looking peasant, of some five-and-thirty years of age. His sister, a low-born lass of eighteen, inherited a modification both of the family physiognomy and temper. What was ill-humour in him, however, was in her, at the worst, only a transitory pettishness; and the straightforward coarseness of his mind became refined in the feminine, by the admixture of a little humour and sprightliness, to the sort of acidity usually termed sharpness, or shrewdness.

It was principally with Marie, however, that Hagar conversed, as they walked along; and the former seemed delighted at the opportunity both to speak and listen—for conversation was not the

forte of her betrothed. The Jewess endeavoured to extract from her some more tangible information than had been afforded by her hints concerning the doings at La Verrière; but she heard nothing that was pleasing; and indeed, little that was very intelligible. In the following portion of their dialogue is comprehended nearly all to which she possessed any clue.

“You must know,” said Marie, “that a certain number of years ago, there came to the castle a philosopher, as he was called, whose name was messire Jean of Poitou. What is the matter? Are you unwell?”

“It was a spasm—it hath passed away.”

“He was an unbeliever. He defied God, and worshipped the devil; and when he met the divine Host upon the road, he turned aside, and spat upon the ground. He occupied separate apartments in the castle, where a light was seen in the windows all night; for he possessed, among other wonderful faculties, that of living without sleep. Smoke, and sometimes flame, issued day

and night from the chimney; and noises were heard, sometimes as of the rush of waters, and sometimes as of men hammering on an anvil."

"He was, doubtless, an alchemist," said the Jewess.

"He was something worse, as you shall hear. The devil is a dangerous master to serve; and one day, messire Jean, by some error, either of omission or commission, fell, body and soul, into his power. You may be sure he begged hard for his temporal life; and at last he gained the boon. The condition was, that every two years he should furnish the fiend with a servant, ready trained and seduced; whom at the end of the term the Evil One was, if possible, to entrap and destroy. If the victim, however, should contrive to escape, from the horns of the altar, as I may say, messire Jean himself was to take his place, and without hope of further reprieve."

"And dost *thou* believe this wild tale?" said Hagar, scarcely able to repress her indignation.

"After a fashion," replied Marie,—“I do not

believe that beasts can speak and reason ; but I believe in the truth conveyed in the fables, which are the tales of philosophers. We of the ignorant have our fables, as well as the learned, although they be not invented from design ; and even in the wildest and most extravagant, there lurks some matter of fact at the bottom, if we could only obtain a clue to it."

"How was the compact fulfilled?" demanded Hagar, indignant no more, but in a low and faltering voice.

"Messire Jean left the castle, and in due time the first substitute came. I remember seeing him myself. He was a young man—tall, pale, and thin ; dark in complexion, and with long black hair falling down upon his shoulders. A bright, red spot burned on either cheek, and his eyes shone so wildly from their deep sockets, that they seemed to shed a preternatural glare over his face. At the end of the two years, he vanished."

"How?" asked the Jewess, in a scarcely audible whisper.

"Doubtless, in sulphureous flames!" replied Marie, smiling bitterly. "That night there was a cry heard in the wood—" She stopped in agitation.

"Was the spot searched? Did he pass away for ever, without leaving a trace—"

"Yea—save a handful of his long black hair upon the ground, dabbled in blood! The second victim—"

"Spare me!"

"You do not love horrors? But this one is soon told; and it finishes the history. He was a youth with light, silky hair, blue eyes that seemed to dance and swim, and a cheek as fair as a girl's—"

"Ismael! Ismael!"

"How! You knew him?"

"It is indeed the portrait," said the Jewess, unable to repress her tears, "of one with whom I played when a child. Go on; for the youth I loved, even as an elder brother, had no portion in the kingdom of darkness."

"At the end of two years he vanished ; but without cry, and without blood."

"Then there is hope," said Hagar eagerly, "that he was not—not—"

"There was, for a whole week. But one night the keel of a fisherman's boat struck against something floating on the Erdre. It was the body of the second victim. The third is expected to reach the castle to-morrow."

"How knowest thou that, in the name of God?"

"Because the precise time will then have elapsed which intervened between the disappearance of the first, and the coming of the second victim."

"Tell me—is there any chance of his escape? any possibility of saving him?"

"The lord de Retz might doubtless save him, if he would—but we touch on dangerous ground, and I shall speak no farther."

"Once more I entreat! If the Evil One hold not state, in bodily presence, at La Verrière, he must have some delegate—some viceroy—"

"Silence! Forbear! I have already said too much—I know not why—Not a word"—for Hagar still attempted to speak—"Not a syllable, or I will have you bound with cords, and carried to the castle."

"It would be the best thing you could do with her," said Jehan, overhearing her last words, "but too wise a thing for you to do, with all your learning. What business had you in the matter? If she was really wanted at La Verrière by those you wot of, it will be the destruction of our whole race."

This sudden and unexpected termination of Marie's disclosures left the Jewess completely bewildered. One thing was certain, however, that David was to be in reality the third victim, and offered up by her father! A thought of the stranger, and of their promised meeting at Nantes, crossed her mind like a gleam of hope. He had influence, doubtless, with the lord de Retz, and might not she contrive to acquire influence over him? "I will die the death," she mentally

exclaimed, "if it be needful ; but I will save *his* life, and I will save the soul of my father from a mortal sin !"

As the village party approached its destination, they could see the population of the whole surrounding country hurrying towards Nantes as to a common centre. All were dressed in their holiday apparel ; and even the sturdy peasant, in his suit of hodden grey, contributed to the picturesque of the scene, having strained the buckle of his belt, upon the same principle on which a beauty endangers her stay-laces, and polished the leaden image stuck in his hat, till it might have been likened to the helmet of a knight, intended at once for ornament and defence. His womankind, in the meantime, trudged after him, vieing with each other in the brilliance both of kerchiefs and complexions ; but sometimes the good dame was mounted on horseback, and kept her seat not the less majestically that she rode astride, like a man, as do her descendants of the present day.

Hagar had been but little accustomed to spec-

tacles of popular excitement; and, even in her present anxiety, as they neared the town, where the crowd and hurry redoubled, she felt her colour rise, and her naturally buoyant heart throb with expectation. Every where the people were shutting up their shops and houses; and all business was, for the time, at a stand. Even the itinerant venders of such luxuries as minister to the appetites of a crowd were contented, on this occasion, to assume the character of disinterested spectators; for Gilles de Retz, when he entertained the populace, would brook no interference whatever,—furnishing gratuitously, at his own cost, not only the show, but the refreshments.

They at length reached the grand square, where a temporary stage was erected, with galleries near it for the more distinguished spectators, similar to those that were erected for viewing a contest in the lists. At this place it was the purpose of Hagar to have withdrawn quietly from her companions, and, leaving the square by one of its numerous avenues, to have inquired her way to

her kinsman's house. Once fairly upon the scene of the spectacle, however, it was in vain to think of escape. In the midst of that crowd she was like a straw in a torrent ; and had it not been for the protection of the surly Jehan, she must have been trampled under foot. But even his efforts in her favour were so far unlucky, that they awakened the ire of several other peasants, who were alike zealously employed in piloting their womankind ; and a kind of scuffle ensued, in which Hagar lost her cloak.

No sooner had this metamorphosis been effected, in which the hooded peasant was converted into a "fairy princess," than a sudden reaction took place, both in the mind and manners of the crowd. Every one believed that, woman though she was, she had something to do in the coming spectacle, or at least that she was in some way connected with its master ; and all held back either in respect or terror. Hagar thus found herself at the extreme edge of the living mass, where it was dressed in line to allow the procession

of the actors to pass on to the stage; and there she stood, conspicuous and alone, in a wide semi-circle formed around her by the populace, her fears completely overpowered by shame and vexation.

A burst of music at length proclaimed that the procession had entered the square, and a shout of welcome arose from the multitude. When this was silent, Hagar, in the midst of all her embarrassment, felt her heart stirred at once with fear and delight by the sound of the clear-toned trumpets, mingling with the swell of numerous large organs. The latter instruments, blazing with gold and silver, were carried on men's shoulders, and belonged to the private chapel of the singular character who presided over the scene.

Immediately after, a company of valets made their appearance, clearing their way by means of batons, which they applied without ceremony to the shins of the crowd. Then came the band of music, and then the priests of the chapel; the latter marshalled by a troop of beautiful boys, walking

backwards, and flinging up golden censors, from which the incense came forth in wreaths of smoke. The banners, shrines, reliquaries, crucifixes, and sacred vessels of their religious establishment, were borne aloft by the ecclesiastics, who were all dressed in robes of cloth of gold; and perhaps there was not one of the rich abbeys of France which could have decked forth a pageant more sumptuous and imposing. The necks of the crowd were wearied with bowing, and their hands with making the sign of the cross, as one by one those holy things passed by; but when at length the banner of the patron saint of the house of Laval made its appearance, the whole multitude sunk upon their knees, at the same moment—all save one.

“Down with thee!” cried Marie. “Down, stranger, if you be not mad as well as impious!” The Jewess crossed her arms tightly upon her bosom, as if she would shrink within herself; but she remained standing erect.

“Is the king of Babylon,” said she to her own

quaking heart, "more terrible than the Most High? I put my trust in the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!"

Immediately after the priests came the body-guard, two and two, clad in complete steel, and mounted on superb war-horses. The line extended the whole length of the square; but, close by, a more than usual space intervened, in the midst of which rode a single knight. The crowd did not rise till he had passed by; and, indeed, the homage which they rendered him seemed to be even more devout than that accorded to the saint. Every lip moved with sounds of praise or admiration; but the words came forth muffled, as if they dreaded to offend even by flattery. "Noble—generous—bountiful!" were the whispers that met the ear of Hagar on one side, and "handsome—graceful—gallant!" on the other. At that moment her fears were lost in feminine curiosity; and, bending forward, she watched impatiently to obtain a full view of the famous Gilles de Retz.

The graceful and stately warrior sate with re-

laxed bridle, as if he left to the fancy of his horse the part they should both play in the procession ; and the animal, conscious of the honour, arched his neck with haughtiness, snorting, and tossing his head, while he stepped mincingly on, as if disdaining to touch the ground. The rider, in the meantime, looked occasionally to one side, to acknowledge, with a half-negligent, half-condescending bend, the homage of the people ; and it happened, that as he approached the place where Hagar stood, his face was turned away for this purpose. The Jewess felt more annoyed than she would have acknowledged to herself, when she saw him about to pass by before she had obtained a glimpse of his features ; but at the instant the bridle was tightened, the steed checked in his career, and the knight, turning full round, fixed his eyes with a brilliant, yet respectful smile of recognition upon her face, while he pulled off his jewelled bonnet, and bent his head even to the horse's mane.

Hagar was stunned. The scene fled from her

eyes ; and for a moment, the grand square of Nantes was filled with the lonely church-yard of the Erdre, and its sepulchral ruins. This was he of the burying-vault—the philosophical enthusiast—the contemner of rank and birth—the companion of her midnight wanderings ! She was aroused from her stupor by the voice of a page, announcing that the lord de Retz invited her to a seat in the gallery. She would have declined the honour ; but a line was already formed for her passage in front, and to retreat through the crowd behind was impossible. In another moment, the Jewess, wondering at all things, and at herself more than all, was seated in a gallery next to that of the family of Laval, and set apart for the magnates of the city.

The priests of the chapel of La Verrière were as expert in the histrionic art as the brothers of the Passion at Paris ; and no sooner had the mystery commenced, than the people forgot even the generous master of the spectacle, in enthusiasm and delight. There was one of the actors more espe-

cially, who seemed a well-known favourite of the audience. He was a strangely misshapen being, of dwarfish stature, but singularly agile. The features of his face, if taken individually, might have been reckoned even handsome ; but by some freaks of nature, or else some mischance which occurred in early childhood, every thing seemed out of place, and the jumble produced was at once ludicrous and horrible. His hands and fingers were strangely long and thin, and, but for their delicacy of colour, would have somewhat resembled those of an ape. His distorted arms and legs seemed to be of bone and muscle, without a particle of flesh ; and, cased as he was in the fur of a wild beast, his feet hidden by artificial hoofs, and two twisted horns rising from his ominous brow, no better representation could have been found among the sons of men of the goblin he mimicked.

His voice, although not so full and loud as that of David Armstrong, when he enacted Hashmodai, was capable of making itself heard still farther. Even when coming from a distance, its

shrill tones seemed to pierce the air, and quiver in the ear like an arrow. But his almost supernatural agility awakened in a yet higher degree the admiration of the crowd. He leaped about like a being altogether independent of the common laws of motion; vomiting himself up from the jaws of hell, as if he had been nothing more than a puff of sooty smoke, and vanishing again instantaneously therein, as if the cavity had possessed neither sides nor bottom.

All went on in dumb show while this strangely gifted actor was on the stage; for the crowd shouted till they were hoarse, and clapped their hands till their fingers ached. At length, in the very midst of one of his flights across the scene, in which he seemed to have intended to fly at one leap, from side to side, he stopped suddenly, as if transfixed with a lance. In this position, he remained so long, without the slightest living motion, that the voices of the people died away in wonder and expectation, and a profound silence succeeded to the uproar.

By degrees, the fixed eyes of the dwarf began to expand and glare; his nostrils dilated, his chest rose and fell convulsively; his limbs writhed and trembled; and at last, in a voice which made every heart leap, he shrieked, "Master, I come!" and sprang from the stage among the crowd. For some moments all was confusion and dismay; but the voice of Gilles de Retz, commanding him to return, was speedily heard above the cries of the affrighted peasants. The seeming goblin at first pursued his way, although more slowly; but finally he turned round, as if by compulsion, and climbing up the gallery of Laval like an ape, stood upon the cushioned edge, confronting its lord.

"Whither goest thou?" demanded the lord de Retz.

"Whither I am summoned," was the reply; and the dwarf writhed in agony while he spoke, and large drops of sweat coursed down his face.

"How knowest thou that thou art summoned?"

"By a power—by a sign. For mercy's sake allow me to depart!"

“What sign? Speak, and go.”

The dwarf turned up the sleeve of his dress, and pointed to his long fleshless arm, from which a stream of blood bubbled forth. He then sprung once more among the crowd, and in an instant disappeared.

From the commencement of the show, Hagar had debated within herself, whether or not she should embrace the opportunity, which would no doubt be offered her at its conclusion, of a conversation with the lord de Retz. This, it seemed, was the meeting to which he had referred on the preceding night; when it appeared a matter of indifference to him whether the scene was to be Nantes or Babylon! There was something so like fatality in the manner in which she had been compelled to keep the rendezvous, that she felt a kind of awe gather upon her mind as she looked upon him. There was nothing, however, in that noble countenance to excite fear; and when she reflected that he must have been as unconscious as herself of the mode in which they were to be

again thrown together, she at length resolved to give herself up to the current of circumstances, and leave the direction of her course to heaven.

But just as she had come to this conclusion, and began to arrange in her mind the terms in which it would be most proper to introduce the subject of David Armstrong, the scream of the dwarf broke upon her ear—"Master, I come!" Hagar, as much startled as the rest of the audience, watched what followed with even more interest than they; and the connexion which appeared to exist between the seeming goblin and Gilles de Retz shocked and alarmed her. The stories of Marie came back upon her recollection with new force; and she reflected that such horrors could not have taken place at La Verrière without the knowledge and permission of its lord. Although more than ever resolved to attempt all things, in order to save the *third victim*, she felt it to be her wisest course to parley with the powerful and mysterious baron when under the protection of her kinsmen; and, at the moment of

the greatest agitation, when a thunderbolt might have fallen among the multitude unnoticed, she glided out of the gallery, and plunged into the crowd.

"If our interview," said she mentally, as she threw a parting glance at Gilles de Retz, whose soul appeared to be absorbed in following the flight of the dwarf—"If our interview be to come of destiny, or enchantment, my efforts to postpone it will be alike harmless and unavailing"—and, assisted by the prestige which seemed to attach itself to her sumptuous apparel, she made her way through the crowd with less difficulty than might have been expected.

Her good fortune so far, however, was owing in part to the same assistance which she had enjoyed during her entrance ; for Jehan, whom she met in the middle of the press, had not yet recovered from his unwonted fit of gallantry.

"And now whither go you, fair mistress?" demanded he bluntly, when they were clear of the crowd.

"To the abode of Rabbi Solomon, if I can find it. If the place be unknown to thee, as being a man of the fields, I can scarcely do wrong in asking the guidance of the first person I meet; for the Rabbi Solomon, the son of Jacob, is a star in Israel with which the eyes even of the Gentiles are familiar."

"I know the man, and the place," said Jehan."

"Then hesitate not; but let us go swiftly, and a piece of coined money shall testify my gratitude." Jehan led the way, and Hagar followed him, for a time, with more lightness of heart than she had felt for years. Her perilous journey was accomplished. In a few minutes she would be in the midst of friends and kinsmen, powerful alike by their wealth and the favour of the duke. To that circle would be added, in a few days, by the blessing of Jehovah, her father; and from such vantage ground she might parley in safety even with Gilles de Retz. The pecuniary embarrassments of the lord of La Verrière, if these had been described truly by Prelati, would render him

still more accessible to her influence ; and David Armstrong, loosed from the horns of the altar, would owe his life to her. The dreams of the Jewess extended no farther. "He will be free," said she, "he will be safe, and I shall be—" The word 'happy,' which had risen to her lips, was lost in a deep sigh ; and when she raised her eyes to the face of Jehan—for he had stopped, there was in her expression so much of loneliness and desolateness of heart that the rude peasant was troubled.

"Why do you not knock ?" said he at last, in a forced gruffness of tone.

"Are we arrived ?"

"Yea." The building seemed to be of immense size ; but, as was frequently the case in the habitations of the persecuted Jews, the door was small, and entered from a mean and obscure street. Hagar knocked gently, and then turned round to her conductor.

"My friend," said she, "I this day did thee injustice in my thoughts, and I shall henceforth

be more distrustful of my own hasty impressions. Accept of this piece of gold as the external token of my thanks ; but imagine not that my heart will cease to recollect gratefully what thou hast done for one whom thou must have supposed to be a friendless outcast." Jehan looked greedily at the money for a moment, but he drew back without accepting it.

"I have done nothing," said he, "that I ought to repent. Nothing !—but yet, had I known that she would have so looked, and spoken, and offered gold, when at most I reckoned upon a small piece of silver—Hold !" for the door had opened, and Hagar was crossing the threshold—"Yet another word—I did mistake—" The Jewess threw the piece of money to him with a smile, thinking that he had repented his generosity. She then went in, and the door shut.

"This is not my doing," said Jehan, "after staring vacantly for some time at the closed door ; "I would have saved her, but she went in of her own free will ; and now the affair is between her

and the lord de Retz. Few there be who come out of the hôtel de la Suze as they went in ! But what is that to me ? Yet I will not touch her money ; no, not with my finger-end ! I have done my duty, and saved my family from the consequences of Marie's folly : that is reward enough. But is the gold to lie there, perhaps as a trap, and a snare, and a stumbling-block for the next passer by ? The saints forbid ! I shall carry it straightway to the Hôtel-Dieu, and give it to the poor ; or rather will I purchase an offering for our altar—Hum ! it may be better still to lay it up with my other savings in the green stocking, and wait the Virgin's pleasure for an opportunity of spending it in some holy purpose ! ”

CHAPTER IV.

LEAVING Hagar in the sumptuous city residence of the lord de Retz, called the Hôtel de La Suze, we now turn to certain other personages of our history.

When the Damsel of Laval set forth on that day, on the last short stage of her journey to La Verrière, it was with a spirit full of vague uneasiness. Soon after entering the château of Huguemont, the evening before, she had had time to reflect on her conduct in the matter of the forlorn Jewess, and perhaps formed a true judgment in setting it down both as unjust and ungenerous. That the exodus from Paris of one of the persecuted remnant should be involved in darkness

and mystery, was surely nothing more than natural ; and the part taken in it by Sir Archibald Douglas, though not yet fully explained, was obviously consistent with the generosity of his character. The blush of Hagar—the changing of her cheek from one colour to another—this was her sole pretext and justification !

Even giving the fullest possible weight to this phenomenon, what did it indicate ? That the knight was false ? or simply, that the thoughts of a young Hebrew girl, friendless, outcast, and alone, had dwelt somewhat too tenaciously on perhaps the only being upon earth who had ever shown her disinterested kindness ? As for the story of the young knight's " kinsman," of whom she had never heard, this, she thought, might have been a mere mistake ; or else it might have arisen from the ambition of some obscure foreigner in Paris to have it supposed that he was connected with the noble house of Douglas. Pauline could not disguise from herself that her momentary jealousy originated more in a mean pride than

womanly passion. Douglas, though noble, was a poor adventurer, while she was one of the richest heiresses in Europe. Does he love me for myself? was the barbed thought which had entered her soul, or am I merely the star of his ambition, while another is the mistress of his heart? She now blushed at the paltriness of such a suspicion when applied to her preux chevalier, and awaited with impatience the moment when the ceremonies of society would permit her to call the young Jewess to her presence.

Such was her frame of mind when she received tidings of the flight of Hagar.

"Let no one pursue, or molest her," said she, after a moment's pause. "I cannot know," she added, mentally, "how instant may be her business at Nantes; but be this as it may, to fly from injustice is no proof of guilt."

"Madam," remonstrated De Briqueville, "the night is clear, and she cannot be far distant. My commands to take her to La Verrière are urgent."

"I release you from all responsibility."

"Then let *him* hear that you do so," and he indicated the person to whom he alluded rather by the expression of his eye than by a look to where he stood. "In the concerns of any one else," added he, "I would peril my life to obey you; and you know, Damsel, I have done so before now." Pauline did not hesitate to grant the request of this faithful adherent of her family; and going up to the philosopher, she acquainted him with what had taken place, and with her desire that since the young woman had escaped, she should be permitted to take her own course. The sage paused for an instant.

"Be it so," said he, at length, with an indulgent smile. "It matters not whose course she takes, for all must inevitably tend to the same end. Inert matter must be acted upon by extraneous bodies; but men are the agents of their own destinies." But, notwithstanding this decision, Pauline set out on her journey, as we have said, in little tranquillity of mind. It was Sir Archibald's singleness and purity of heart which had

won her love ; or, in other words, it was the idea that he was wholly hers ; and the thought (which suggested itself in spite of her struggles) even of one of those transitory infidelities of the senses, rather than the soul, which were in general still less regarded in that age than in ours, was terrible to her imagination. Hagar was a Jewess, indeed, but still a woman ; and Pauline hardly exaggerated the truth, when she confessed that she was "fearful fair."

The scene, which the reader has viewed by moonlight, presented a somewhat different character when warmed and illumined by the beams of the morning sun. The same stillness, indeed, the same idea of loneliness and mystery prevailed, which to this day enwraps the Erdre ; but the air was cool and invigorating, the leaves glanced and stirred, and the human heart, as usual, bore sympathy with the joy of nature. Pauline herself was not long of yielding to the influences which seemed to rain down from heaven upon the earth.

"Look, father," said she—for by this name she

frequently addressed the philosopher,—“would you not think that these trees and shrubs, and yonder hills and waters, were things of life like ourselves? Do you not feel the breath of the flowers, and hear the whisper that runs through the grove? It seems to me as if I were at home; and that I feel, for the first time, as one belonging to the great family of nature!”

“It is a wholesome thought, my daughter,” replied Orosmandel, “and more true than thou dost imagine. We are all things of life, from the clod to the worm, from the worm to the angel. All matter is the body of spirit; and to the unequal distribution of the latter is owing the varieties presented by the universe. The flower hath more of spirit than the clod, on whose juices it doth live; the lamb hath more of spirit than the flower which it crops in passing along; and man hath more of spirit than beast, vegetable, or earth, which he changeth or devoureth for his own profit.”

“Alas! that nature should thus flourish upon

her own harm, and that we of the human race should be the most destructive of her children !”

“ Nature, my child, may change, and reproduce, but she destroyeth not. The juices of the clod still live in the body of the flower ; the perfume of the flower still sweetens the blood of the lamb ; and all things grow in the growth and strengthen in the strength of the general devourer, man.”

“ But man cannot devour spirit, else would the greatest eater be the greatest wit. Yet the spirit does not die ?”

“ Neither spirit nor matter dieth. If thou burn this tree to the ground, it is not destroyed, even in its corporeal part. Its substance is merely decomposed by the more subtle body of fire, and returns, in smoke and ashes, to the elements whence it arose. Its spirit, in like manner, is shed abroad over general nature ; and that which animated a tree still liveth in the body of the universe.”

“ But spirit, my father,” said Pauline, endeavouring to grasp the ideas which flitted indefinitely

through her half-cultivated mind, "has spirit, which is the nobler part, no power over matter? Would the tree, think you, if so animated, remain for ever fixed to the earth?"

"It is the distribution of spirit," replied the philosopher, "to which is owing the inequalities which exist in the scale of being. The meanest worm that crawls, hath more of spiritual essence than the proudest oak; and it is not till we ascend to man, that we find the quantity sufficient to operate a change upon his mortal destinies. Man is indeed lower than they that are called Spirits by way of excellence, and his soul is clogged by its earthly tabernacle; still, he hath that within him, which, if well and boldly used, will make even the demons tremble."

The cheek of the Damsel flushed, and her bosom throbbed, as these words awakened a train of glorious and daring thoughts.

"Would that I were as you," she exclaimed, "O Orosmandel! If to read and fast, and pray—if to outwatch the midnight lamp—if to give up

wealth, and health, and youth, and pleasure, and the world's applause, would make me other and higher than I am—cheerfully would the sacrifice be made !”

“ I know it,” replied the sage calmly ; “ Thou couldst not feel otherwise, if thou wouldst ; for such lofty, yet vague aspirations, are a portion of the gift of life bestowed upon thee by thy father. The watchings, and fastings, and studies, however, of the master, render the duties of the scholar less arduous. Knowledge may be acquired by communication as well as by search. But enough for the present. At another time we may talk farther.”

“ And why not now ? I fear you mistrust me because of my youth, and because I am a woman ; but in aught that Christian hands may dare—in aught that involves offence neither to God nor man”—Orosmandel smiled sarcastically, but observing that she paused, disconcerted by his look, he resumed his usual serious, and benignant expression.

“ I fear,” said he, “ that we should differ in our estimate of what doth constitute offence. Even

now thou didst blame the flower for drinking the juices of the sod, and the lamb for browsing on the flower, and man himself for decomposing the bodies, and shedding abroad the spirits of his fellow-beings of the earth !”

“Nay, my father, I was hardly serious in this ; for without such nourishment, the flower would wither, and man die, and thus a greater evil be produced than the marring of the meaner works of nature. But yet, is there not danger to weak intellects like mine in such a system ? If all things are beings gifted alike with life and spirit, where lies the line of distinction between those that are common and those that are sacred ?—between those that are given to man for the uses of his body, and those that are fenced round, even from his vengeance, by the interdict, Thou shalt not kill ! I have heard of plants which so nearly approach to animal life that they shriek when wounded, and of wild animals that are capable of being converted, by education, into men. To what scale of being does the dominion of man extend ? and where is the limit

thereof? Suppose him to overstep the bound, and well may he do so where the line is so indefinite, and slay from some motive, higher and nobler, we shall suppose, than that which arises from the wants of his body, an individual of his own kind and rank in creation—is not this *murder*?”

“It is the decomposing a more perfect form—the detaching from an individual part, and giving to the universe, a greater portion of divine essence.”

“How!” exclaimed the damsel, in indignant surprise.

“It is as I have said,” replied Orosmandel calmly, “A man taketh away vegetable life because he is hungry, and animal life to appease some fouler instinct of his nature. These are crimes, if committed without sufficient motive; for he shall not be held guiltless if he root up the produce of the soil, or slay the meaner animals, to no purpose. Reasoning from this analogy, I would say—as a looker-on, however, rather than an actor in the business of life—that a motive *may* exist sufficiently high and urgent to authorize

what in the vulgar language you have denominated 'murder.' "

"Great God ! and do I hear such doctrine from *your* lips ?"

"It is the doctrine," said he with a smile, "of all schools, and all ages ; although thou art as yet too little accustomed to such idle disputation to note the difference between words and things. Men seize upon their neighbours, and convert them into cattle ; and the world does not condemn because the skin of the slave is darker in hue than that of his master. The soldier slays his neighbours, and for no better reason than that his prince desires it ; the patriot slays his prince in order to avert a tax upon the country ; yet neither homicide is called a murderer. I say unto thee that a motive *may* exist which shall render the decomposing of the elemental form, and the shedding of the spirit, whether of man or beast, a work not only innocent but laudable and virtuous !"

Pauline was for some time silent in dismay. The speculations of Orosmandel were often dark and

mystical, and she had before now had occasion to wonder at the slight consideration in which he seemed to hold those words and things which blanch the cheek of other men : but till this day, although frequently tending towards it, he had never given her a general glimpse of the theory whence appeared to emanate all that to her was singular in his opinions. Being a woman, she could not hold her tongue for ever, when words had been spoken which sounded like blasphemies to her ear ; and too uninformed to expose his fallacies by reasoning, she had recourse, like other ignorant persons, to Scripture.

“ Your doctrine of spirits,” said she, “ I fear is not only dangerous but damnable : it is opposed to holy writ.”

“ On the contrary,” said Orosmandel, “ it is based upon Scripture. Every line of the sacred writings inculcates the connexion and integrity of the whole system of the universe ; and in the book of the Preacher we find express mention of the souls of beasts.”

“Be it so. Of this I know nothing; but can that doctrine be scriptural in which virtue is founded on mere expedience? Are the eternal and immutable laws of God to be broken at the pleasure, or according to the reason of so fallible a being as man?”

“The divine laws,” said Orosmandel, speaking carelessly, as if appearing to tire of controversy with so weak an antagonist, “are neither eternal nor immutable. They were promulgated for the benefit, not of God, but of man; and were therefore wisely adapted to the wants and uses of a being whose condition is subjected to perpetual and infinite change. Are they to be set aside, thou demandest, according to the fallible reason of a man? Why this is done every day by pope, cardinal, or bishop—nay by the meanest priest that ever heard confession and absolved the sinner from the consequences of transgression. But even setting aside the practice of the Christian church in our day, which some heretics conceive to be erroneous, we find in every page of Scrip-

ture unanswerable evidence of the adaptation of the laws of God to the mutability of human life. To take an extreme case, for the purpose of avoiding any cavilling with regard to the heinousness of the action, the world was peopled at first by the incestuous loves of its inhabitants. This was commanded—this was a law of God. A race, however, which is thus propagated, deteriorates in the course of a few generations, and would probably finish by sinking to the scale of the beasts. The law, therefore, which had been instituted for the good of mankind, was for the good of mankind not only repealed but reversed; and the means alluded to, after its *expedience* had ceased, was declared to be an enormous and deadly sin. But this talk is unprofitable. Thy mind must first be purged of prejudice before it can admit truth. Of this, however, rest assured, that no philosophy can be true which is irreconcilable with Scripture!" and with this wholesome dogma the sage concluded his lesson.

Pauline made no reply. The conversations

which she had held with the old man on her present journey had more confused than enlightened her; and she desired rather to arrange her thoughts, than to overburden her mind with new ones. She was glad when the philosopher ceased to speak; and in order to change the current of his ideas, she reminded him of a question she had put on their leaving Huguemont, as to whether she might expect to meet her father at La Verrière. Orosmandel started as she spoke, and his eyes flashed fire.

"I had forgotten," said he, and he added, between his teeth, in a scarcely audible mutter, "The lagging cur! if he do not howl for this!" and taking a small silver horn from beneath his cloak, he applied it to his lips. Pauline remembered that on asking her question, as they left Huguemont, he had sounded a low note upon this instrument, saying to her, "Anon," as if promising a speedy answer. The blast at present was hardly louder, and yet appeared to vibrate in the air at a great distance. He paused, and looked

in the direction of Nantes. Presently some object was seen crossing an open space with the speed of a hare; then the foliage moved nearer the road; and then an uncouth creature, apparently neither man nor beast, darted out of the wood, and sprang at one bound upon the sage's horse, where he sat upon the neck of the animal in the manner of an ape.

At this apparition, Pauline could not repress a scream, and a hoarser cry arose from more than one of the bold bosoms near her. The horses, however, appeared to be still more affected by the intrusion. Some took the bit in their mouths, and fled at full speed; while others, under more but not better command, plunged, and reared, as if they would have thrown their riders. Orosmandel alone looked fixedly at the strange figure before him; and his noble steed remained as motionless as if he had been cut out of stone.

"How now, sirrah?" said the philosopher sternly: "Must I call twice?"

"Forgive me, master," replied the dwarf, shaking with terror; "I was detained in answering the

questions of him whom thou didst command me to obey; but when once free, I came at thy bidding, even as an arrow cleaveth the air."

Pauline, as well as De Briqueville, and the others near him, had by this time recognized, through his goblin dress, a well-known slave—some said a *familiar*—of Orosmandel; and, although their surprise was undiminished, they were able to look without terror on one to whose imp-like form they had been reconciled by habit. The line was speedily redressed, and in utter silence; for none of the whispered intercommunications were heard, to which an unusual or terrifying circumstance gives birth. Each man locked up his thoughts in his own breast; and many would not trust them with freedom even there, but held them down with *aves* and *credos* for the rest of the journey.

Orosmandel, in the meantime, after having informed the damsel that she should find her father at La Verrière, continued his route unmoved, with the dwarf sitting behind him. Sometimes they

conversed, but it was in an unknown tongue. De Briqueville, who had been in the East, thought this language resembled Arabic; but he was never heard to make further remark on the subject, except in thanking God that he did not understand a word of it.

Nothing else worthy of observation occurred till they reached La Verrière. Of this place Pauline had a very indistinct recollection, never having been there since her childhood; and now she no longer wondered that her father should have chosen another domicile for her, or that he himself should have sunk, while inhabiting it, into the melancholy and abstractedness for which he was remarkable.

The château was a dark and sombre fortress seated on the brink of the lifeless Erdre. On the landward side, besides its walls and ditches, it was defended by dark woods and morasses, as intricate of passage as the stronghold of the Cretan monster. On the side of the river all access was cut off, except by a narrow and secret channel,

winding through the floating swamps that were called in the language of the district "plains." In summer these were covered with the richest vegetation, so tempting to the eye of cattle, that every year many a strong ox perilled and lost his life in order to gratify his appetite. The ground sunk under his feet while he rioted in the meal; and, in endeavouring to regain the firm earth, it usually happened that he plunged into some treacherous hole, deceived by the grass which coated its surface, and disappeared in a gulf,

"Where never fathom line could touch the ground!"

Pauline, acquainted though she was with Brittany, where at that time almost every gentleman's house was a regular fortress, shivered as she crossed the first drawbridge, and heard the rattle of the chains as it was raised behind her. She was still, however, it might have seemed, in the open country, for her way lay with many a turning and winding, through woods and jungles and morasses, where the earth trembled beneath their

feet. The second gate was, in like manner, passed, and almost the same scene still continued ; for the castle which they beheld at a distance, had vanished on their entering the precincts. At length she stood within the court-yard, and saw the heart of all this mystery, with feelings not greatly different from those of the unwilling visitors of the Minotaur after traversing the Labyrinth. It was a huge but low building, of prodigious strength, black with age, half hidden by the fortification termed a curtain, its few windows almost as narrow as loopholes, and the only visible doorway sunk in the earth, like the entrance to a subterranean habitation.

Up to this moment Pauline, who was only too happy to be permitted to see her father anywhere, had indulged in no speculations upon the cause of her present visit. She had received the summons as a boon, and looked forward with girlish delight to the freedom she would enjoy in roaming among the woods of La Verrière, and skimming in some fairy-like bark the placid waters of the Erdre.

She now recollected, however, with an uncomfortable but indefinite sensation, that the château, and all things pertaining thereto, had been a forbidden topic at the Hôtel de la Suze; and that her father, so far from giving her an invitation to his habitual country residence, had on more than one occasion silenced her with sternness, and almost violence of manner, when she hinted her desire to visit it.

“What can have produced so sudden a change?” she inquired mentally, as she stooped her head to enter the low vaulted door. “Why am I here at last? and how long am I to remain in a place that looks like a dungeon, and smells damp and faint like a burying-vault?”

CHAPTER V.

BEFORE conducting the reader into the interior of La Verrière, it is necessary that we bring up another group of the travellers, with whom we set out; for our narrative is like that of Sancho Panza, in which a certain number of sheep were to be ferried across a river one by one, and, if good count were not kept, the story was at an end.

Sir Archibald Douglas and David Armstrong, as we have seen, followed close upon the processional march of the Damsel of Laval; both interested in its progress, in the same manner, and in pretty nearly the same degree. The knight, however, had the advantage of his friend, inasmuch as he could talk boldly and openly of his hopes and

his love ; while our unfortunate scholar shut up his secret in the depths of his own bosom, where its stirrings were even as those of the sons of Titan. The knight, in fact, in spite of David's natural shrewdness, was at times inclined to suspect him of being not altogether composed in his intellects ; and he did not scruple to attribute whatever damage he might have sustained therein to the vain studies in which he had found him engaged, and above all, to the doctrines of that pernicious heathen, Nigidius Figulus.

When the Damsel and her party were encamped for the night at Huguemont, the two friends were prowling about the neighbourhood, and circling round the château like birds of prey. David, indeed, perhaps saw with his own eyes the wandering Jewess skimming along the path ; but if so, the sympathy which should have revealed her to him, even through the guise of a peasant, must have been rendered powerless by the unhallowed nature of his passion. He knew her not, and she passed on her way.

"Tell me, Archibald," said he, when they awoke in the morning, "have you again been taking advantage of my eyes being shut, to get up and stravage about like an evil-doer in the night?"

"On the contrary, I never slept more soundly in my life."

"That is well; for something tells me we are anon to have need of a stout arm. As for me, I am a man accustomed all my life to the study of humane learning, and to lie dreaming, from morn till night, under the peaceful trees of Academia. Even this sword is strange to my hand; it being *fustes*, called in the vernacular cudgels, that we more affected at the university, as instruments better adapted to scholastic humility, and the meekness of demeanour which befitteth Christian priests. However, I must do as I may. We do not excel in all things alike; and of few it can be said, '*Nec in armis præstantia quam in toga.*'" Notwithstanding this humility, however, as David bared his arm to the shoulder, to prepare for his morning ablutions, his eye rested with some com-

placency upon a set of muscles, which would have done honour to a gladiator, or professional player with the sword.

“It is an indifferently good arm for a clerk,” remarked the knight. “These muscles, moving under your skin like twisted steel, were no doubt nourished to their present growth by the exercise of turning over the leaves of your a, b, c! But whence is your presentiment of evil?”

“Of the devil, for aught I know. But be this as it may, the temple of Jupiter Patuleius is assuredly open, and the sooner you loosen your sword in its scabbard the better. The house of Mars last night entertained a visiter who rarely enters there for nothing; and I never dream as I have just now done, without awaking to strife in the morning.”

“As for that same temple,” said the knight, “they are all of them open in Paris every day in the year, morning, noon, and night; and it is better to awake to strife than be awakened by it; which I take to have been your case, David, in

what you call your peaceful Academia, seven times a week. But come, what was your dream? Expound, as we amble along; for yonder we shall meet a group of peasants who have doubtless passed the procession."

"My dream," answered David, "was not of actions, but of feelings; not of places, but of void and vacancy. There was darkness around me, and clouds, and shadows. I was neither in the air, nor on the earth, nor in the waters. I sought, and could not find; I opened my eyes till they ached, and could see nothing; I stretched forth my hands, and emptiness was in my grasp. My life was disappointment. I was alone; and that was misery and agony, and terror—alone in eternal night—alone in illimitable space! Methought hell itself would have been a welcome refuge from such a doom."

"Mother of God!" cried the knight, "but that was a dream! Had I been you, I would have shouted to every saint in the calendar."

"All would have been in vain. I knew that

the saints would spurn, and the demons laugh at my prayers. The anathema had gone forth, and I was a banished man alike from heaven and earth."

"I fear me, David," said the knight after a pause, and laying his hand affectionately upon his friend's shoulder, as they rode side by side—"I fear me, you have something worse on your conscience than the breaking even of tonsured crowns. If so, take heart of grace, and lay the matter before the Holy Mother; or if you be ashamed exceedingly, begin with Saint Bride, and she will help you on. If I myself may aid in your penance, either in person or purse, I am ready at a word; for well I wot, that however great be your sin, it is the sin of a Scot and a gentleman. Yet take heed, that no penance can avail without repentance. Take hold of this secret enemy of your soul, and cast it forth, even if it cling to your heart-strings: tear it away, even if blood and tears gush after it like water. Remember, O my friend! that the earth is but for a time; that our

most darling vices are but as flowers that pass away ; and give not up heaven for a perfume, and eternity for an hour ! ” Sir Archibald spoke with unction ; and even at that moment, David could not help turning an admiring eye upon him, as he rode proudly and loftily on, with the air of a Christian knight who disdained to choose but between victory and martyrdom.

“ I will repent first,” said the scholar, “ and confess afterwards. Yes,” continued he, catching the enthusiasm of his companion, “ out it shall come, that poison-flower whose roots are the life-strings of my heart ! The idolatrous image shall be broken, and its fragments cast forth. I promise, Archibald—and when I promise not hell itself shall turn me back—I promise that within four-and-twenty hours—”

“ Hush ! we shall be presently overheard. Saint Bride understands what you would promise, and that is enough.”

“ I promise,” continued David to himself, as the group of peasants came up, that the image of

Hagar shall forth from my breast, if I dig it out with my poinard ! that is, after—after I learn that she has reached the homes of her unbelieving clan and is there in safety—and peace—and honour!”

After Sir Archibald had asked his usual questions, and ascertained from the answers that Mademoiselle de Laval was in health and safety, and within very few hours' journey of her father's abode, David lingered to extract, if possible, without making a plain demand, the information most interesting to him.

“Does the Damsel journey alone,” said he, “excepting her escort?”

“Alone.”

“The wretched cattle!” (aside) “they count *her* for nobody!—That is, my worthy people, you would say, in some sort alone, as qualifying the expression. For instance, there be her maidens, her two maidens, “to kame her yellow hair,” as the song goes—and if I said three, perhaps I should not be far mistaken. Is it two of the feminine, or three, that follow the litter?”

“Two.”

“Then one of the bower-lasses must have been taken sick at Huguemont; for those queans have dainty stomachs, that will not sit easy under any gallimaufry that may be going on the road.” But the peasants assured him that the two they had seen were veritable bower-maidens, and that the damsel had had no other personal attendance from the first.

“And ye dare to tell me,” said David, almost with a shout, yet growing pale at the same time, “that the Damsel and her two menials are the only feminine in the procession?”

“What advantage should we gain by telling a lie?” replied the peasants. “There is no other woman among them, gentle or simple; although we indeed heard some idle story of one who glided through the barred gate of Huguemont, and flashing along the road like an evil spirit, disappeared among the woods of La Verrière.”

“It is no idle story,” said another, “for I saw her with my own eyes. She was dressed in a

cloak like one of ourselves ; but beneath, I could see raiment of gold and silver, and wings upon her shoulders. She passed along quicker than the wind, yet without bending the grass ; and her foot made no sound when it touched the earth."

"What is the matter, David?" cried the knight, "Are you clean distraught? or do you glare in that fashion to frighten the good people with the countenance of Hashmodai?"

"Silence, Archibald! In another moment I shall be able to think—and then act."

"Is it even so? Alas, I now see it all! Yet why this mystery with one who would trust his very soul to you? You love yonder damsel, whom I recommended to the protection of Mademoiselle de Laval; and although so noble-looking, she is perhaps the daughter of some mesalliance, and so your heart is torn asunder between pride and passion. But, courage! There is that in you which, with the aid of God and good fortune, would shed nobility upon a peasant's brow."

"O that she *were* a peasant! O that her father

were a bondman, and her brothers and sisters the meanest of the slaves of the soil!"

"And even then you would love her—woo her—marry her?"

"I would kneel at her feet before the assembled world. I would sink myself to her station—or rather raise her to mine—ay, to loftier than mine. I would clear a way for her either with my wit, or my sword, till high-born dames should envy the fortune of my gracious bride! But come, let us spur on, for this is idle talk. If she is indeed at La Verrière, she is in the clutches of one who, if her own knowledge be correct, has neither fear nor mercy." They accordingly put their horses to their mettle, and rode on in silence; the knight more than ever perplexed with regard to David.

If it is not ignoble birth, thought he, which is the stumbling-block of my friend, what can it be? She is too young to have imbibed those heretical opinions which would be a just bar to their union; and David's mind is not of that substance which would become the thrall of mere beauty, unattended by worth. Is she already a bride,

or the betrothed, of another? God forbid! that were worse than all! Or, has sin shed its withering influence on their love—and does the betrayer shrink from restoring peace to the bosom he has robbed of virtue?

The last supposition, although the most dishonourable to his friend, appeared, under all circumstances, the most probable; and Sir Archibald, after musing upon the subject for some hours, in the course of which he sighed heavily and often shook his head, at length caught hold of his companion's bridle, and bringing both horses to a sudden halt, planted himself before him, face to face.

"It is now time," said he, fixing a severe look upon the culprit, "before accepting the assistance you have offered me, to know whether I can honourably render you assistance in return. Answer me, yea or nay, and as plainly as I ask the question: Is it your purpose, after delivering this damsel from the hands of her enemies, to marry her according to the forms of holy church?"

"Now God forbid!" cried David, starting

back; "and may the saints forgive you for putting such a thought into my head!"

"You love her," continued the knight, elevating himself on his saddle, till he sat as stiffly as his lance; "and many things that escaped my apprehension at the time convince me now that you love not in vain. The parting glance which she gave you in the Pomme du Pin I read only as touching the awkwardness of her then situation; but there was in it, nevertheless, fear, sorrow, regret, warning, supplication, secret understanding, shame! Nay, hearken, for I will not be silent. If you have fallen into the snares of sin, it is no reason why you should plunge deeper at every step. The seducer is himself seduced by a more potent spirit of evil than his own; and so his fault may in some sort be reckoned rather weakness than crime. But if, after the hour of intoxication is over, he refuse to repair the mischief he has done—to give back the peace of which he has robbed his victim—to build up anew the honour he has cast down—he must be accounted

an outlaw of nature, a wilful and purposed felon ; and must live henceforth a man forbid, excommunicated as it were, from all offices of friendship and affection. That man, were he now before me, I would try, as a christian, to recall to the paths of honour ; and, if my appeal were unsuccessful, it would become my bounden duty, as a knight and a gentleman, to renounce him for ever ! Speak ! Am I mistaken ? But no—thou art the man !”

David, after in vain endeavouring to stop the torrent of the knight’s eloquence, had listened to this speech with varying emotions of shame and indignation. At its conclusion he became deadly pale.

“Sir Knight,” said he, “however heavily your accusation might bear against me in a moral and religious sense, it but lightly affects my character, according to the standard of honour recognized in our present world ; and, for the sake of old friendship, I gladly make use of the pretext for forgiving you, so far as your remarks apply to me individu-

ally. With regard to her, however, whom I was so foolish and so unhappy as to intrust to the safeguard of your recommendation, I have another duty to perform. Anent her—who is as pure as any virgin of your house—you have most foully lied in your thought; and in her behalf, Sir Archibald Douglas, called of the Braes, I hereby deliver to you my mortal defiance, in the name of God, St. Michael, and St. George!" and David backed his horse several paces, and drew his sword.

The knight was inwardly pleased that his suspicions had proved to be unfounded, although not a little chafed by the uncourteous terms in which his companion had replied.

"If this is a feud," said he, after a moment's hesitation, "which may be prevented by acknowledgment of error on one side, and the retraction of dishonourable words on the other, I say, for the sake of old times, let there be peace between us. But if not—" and he slung his shield behind him, and fixed his lance upright, that he might have no advantage over his opponent—"the Douglas sword

must not remain in sheath when its master is defied."

"Bare not your blade," cried David suddenly, "for my spirit is vexed within me, and the sight of a naked sword may be more than the placability of my nature can withstand. I say not with you, Let there be peace between thee and me; but only, let there be a truce for a while. I am weary of mystery; and I postpone my challenge, till I can repeat it with an uncovered face." They were yet in a belligerent attitude, Sir Archibald delaying to remove his hand from the hilt of his weapon, till David had first returned his into the scabbard—when a peasant girl rushed in between them.

"For shame, messires," she cried, "do you prove your love for your lady by seeking each to deprive her of a friend at a time when she is more than ever in need of friendship? She for whom you would fight is now safe at La Verrère; although safe for how long no one can tell."

"Then it is even true," cried David, "and she

fled, like an unconscious dove, into the snare !
Tell me not of safety at La Verrière. Its very
atmosphere is poison ; and I will away to adminis-
ter the antidote, or die with her."

" It is of the Damsel of Laval she speaks,"
said Sir Archibald—" this is she who gave me the
midnight warning."

" Are you for La Verrière ?" demanded Marie,
turning from her quondam acquaintance, and
looking at the student with strong interest and
curiosity—" Are you bidden ? are you summoned ?
are you sent ?"

" I am."

" You come from messire Jean of Poitou ?"
continued she, sinking her voice to a whisper, half
of terror, half of pity.

David nodded.

" And this is he !—the Third !" she glided up
close to his horse's side—" Will you be warned ?"
said she, speaking rapidly, " will you turn back ?
or are you driven on by inevitable destiny ? *Death*
awaits you there—a cruel, bloody, and secret

death ! This is true as if an angel from God had spoken it. Will you still go ?”

“ I will.”

“ Then all is true ! Do you know that there were two before you ?”

“ Yes.”

“ God help us ! but this is a strange and awful doom. So young—so handsome—so brave !”

“ I tell you, David,” interposed Sir Archibald ; “ she spoke of the Damsel of Laval. Your hooded maiden, who is so nimble and noiseless of foot, may have escaped to Nantes, since it seems there is something for her to dread at La Verrière.”

“ It is of the damsel I spoke,” said Marie. “ As for the other, she is a living mystery, and never walks abroad but in a cloud. God knows it grieves me to think ill of one so fair and so pure-looking ; but appearances are woefully against her.” She then described her meeting with Hagar, and the escape of the latter, and went on thus :

"And now, messires, she was at length fairly at Nantes, in open day, and in the midst of a crowd where no harm could befall her. The dread she had had of La Verrière was natural enough :—it is a dread that even I should feel, humble as I am, and no more to be compared to her in beauty than the weed is to the flower—had I not been, from my earliest girlhood, under the special protection of the Damsel of Laval. She had fled from this supposed danger,—in a word, from the lord de Retz—whom, as she assured me, with all the apparent truth and innocence of an angel, she had never *seen*."

"No more she had!" interrupted David, "never even with the unconscious eyes of infancy."

"Their recognition, then, of each other was a miracle! When the procession of the mystery was passing by, she stood up, when everybody else knelt, straining her eyes to catch a glimpse of the baron. He at length turned round when he was just beside her, and they smiled, and bowed, as if they had been prince and princess!"

"Woman," said David, sternly, "however gentle your tongue may be, you have yet but a peasant's apprehension. The bow of the lord de Retz was a homage which the libertine pays to beauty: hers was the habitual and almost unconscious obeisance of one who is so noticed by a superior."

"But she was noticed still more condescendingly. She was invited to a seat in one of the principal galleries; and she who had fled from La Verrière in such haste accepted its master's offer without a moment's hesitation."

"Hesitation would have been impolitic and unavailing; and she is one whose thought flies like lightning to the mark. Had she been called, under such circumstances, to the scaffold, she would have mounted with a step just as ready and composed."

"I am not her accuser," said Marie mildly, "I would a thousand times rather be her advocate; but as soon as the mystery was over, she descended from the gallery, inquired her way of

those she saw in the street, and walked straight to the hôtel de la Suze, the mansion of the lord de Retz !”

David looked as if he had been struck dead in his saddle ; but the next moment, starting into life, he bent forward, caught hold of the girl with one nervous arm, and, stripping off her hood with the other, held up her face. It was a pale, fair face, rendered beautiful by the blush which his earnest scrutiny brought into her cheeks. The head might have sate without question upon the shoulders of a baroness, for it exhibited none of the peculiarities of her condition. It was a portrait of woman ; in which mercy, gentleness, and truth were rendered still more apparent by the gleams of intellect which shot from her eyes. David released her with a deep sigh.

“Forgive me,” said he, “you have spoken the truth as you understand it. Yet will I rather believe it to be all a magical illusion than distrust her. Her enemy was not the lord de Retz—she was not even fully aware of the libertinism of his

character. I pray you forgive me, and tell me, if you can, where she now is."

"That I do not know ; but the baron is expected at La Verrière this evening, and I have no doubt that she will be with him, either by force or goodwill."

"Farewell then, Archibald ; let us part as friends, however we may meet."

"Stay, messire, you cannot possibly be there before sunset, and after that hour no one may pass even the first drawbridge without being able to give the word. Besides, it is not your time. Why attempt to hasten the doom that is upon you, even by a single night? Stay with us at our village, which is close by ; and where, in the morning, a ceremony is to take place, not worth your seeing indeed, but which will help to pass the time till the lord de Retz can be spoken with."

"Be it so," said David. "Come, Archibald," and he rode on, forgetting in his preoccupation of mind, that he left her who was to have been his conductress behind.

"Tell me," said the knight, in a whisper, as he prepared to follow, "tell me, for the love either of courtesy or of a broad piece of silver, what is the name of yonder damsel errant of whom you spoke?"

"I cannot tell," replied Marie, "for I do not know."

"Her country?"

"She has no country."

"How!"

"She is a **JEWESS**."

"Sacred heaven! my worst guesses were as nothing to this!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE scholar's presentiment of strife must be held to have been realized by his quarrel with Sir Archibald; for nothing else occurred that day, tending in any measure to the hostile display even of *fustes*. At the village, all was peace or good-humoured merriment; and even Lisette, the sister of Jehan, who was supposed to have formerly had some notion of appropriating the bridegroom's affections to herself, seemed to bear her disappointment with great equanimity. The hero of the night was as joyous as a very tolerable dose of wine could be expected to render a man looking forward to so serious a ceremony in the morning; although it must be confessed that he checked

himself occasionally in his mirth, and looked inquiringly at Marie, with somewhat of the expression of a noisy boy, who doubts whether his elder sister will not think him a little too obstreperous. If any one demands how this union came about, we answer, that it came about in the natural course of things. The bride, both in regard of beauty and sense, was a fair mark for a villager's ambition; and when Victoire proposed, Marie, although not in love, thought he would do for a husband a little better than any one else she knew, in the degree to which her choice was limited. The *necessity* of a husband at all, might be another question, if Marie had been thirty or forty years older.

The more David reflected upon the adventures of Hagar, the less gloomily he was disposed to view the subject. A pang of doubt had indeed shot across his mind at the moment when Marie mentioned that she had entered of her own accord the house of the lord de Retz, but this was speedily dismissed, as unworthy both of him and her. He

felt that the risk had been run for *his sake*, and the idea would have been productive of as much pain as pleasure, had he not also believed her to be too wise and clear-sighted, to have gone into the lion's den without knowing well how to get out again. Hagar was, by this time, he had little doubt, in safety with her friends at Nantes; and to-morrow he could begin with an untroubled mind—here David sighed heavily—his singular and dangerous apprenticeship.

By this time, he, as well as Sir Archibald, had spoken more fully with Marie, whose frankness was increased by the impunity with which she had hitherto touched upon the forbidden subject; and, although the mystery which enveloped La Verrière was as opaque as ever, he now saw, with tolerable distinctness, the fate threatened to himself. His unbelieving master had, no doubt, good cause for the horror with which he regarded Prelati; for his two disciples had indeed been murdered. David, from the conversation he had overheard between the Jew and this person, could easily trace the

esoteric meaning of the popular legend recited by Marie. Messire Jean, it was justly said, had fallen into the power of the Evil One, for he had been detected by Prelati in the commission of a crime which placed him for ever more at his mercy. Prelati, besides, knew of his abode at Paris, in contravention of the savage edict against the Jews; and thus he had been able to say, and say truly, "What more have I to do than name your name, or even point with my finger, to have you and your daughter torn to pieces, the fragments burnt with fire, and their ashes scattered upon the winds of heaven?"

Since the fatal day when the Alchemist had fallen into the power of this man, he had bought his safety it appeared, sometimes with gold, sometimes with human blood. This was the mystery. If Prelati was not the Fiend himself, in carnal form, what was the meaning of these horrible sacrifices? Was he really engaged in some such high researches as he had hinted at to the alchemist? and was the blood of his assistants to flow upon the altar of the infernal deities? or, what was still more proba-

ble, were their lives to become forfeit at the moment when their progress in the science had rendered them rivals of their master.

Who was this Prelati, whom he had seen alive with his own eyes, yet who was believed even in the neighbourhood of La Verrière to have perished at sea? It was surely impossible that Orosmandel could have any connexion with such atrocities; yet was it not equally so that they could be carried on without the philosopher's knowledge? What, in fine, was the relative position of Gilles de Retz himself between these two men, each so different, each so extraordinary, each so mysterious? It was in vain to puzzle himself with such inquiries. Everything around him was as incoherent as the wildest dream that had ever flitted before his imagination. Nothing was certain but the danger which threatened himself.

It will easily be conceived by those who are still in the heyday of youth, and also by those who are able to remember that era distinctly, that there must have been something still more attrac-

tive than terrifying to David Armstrong in the idea of exploring the depths of such a mystery. This feeling of the young and the bold, although perhaps nothing more than an elevated species of curiosity, is the grand material of the old romancers. It is this which is personified in the chivalrous adventurer who plunges into the gloom of primeval forests, and sounds the horn at the gate of enchanted castles. But as for David, who belonged to a people who were, at the epoch, as individuals, the most adventurous in Europe, he, no doubt, felt strongly enough the spirit of enterprise: yet in him this was controlled by a certain degree of judgment, or forethought—still better developed among his countrymen in modern times—and if honour permitted, he would, in vulgar phrase, have “jouked and let the jaw go by” with any canny Scot in the realm.

His motives, therefore, were of a mixed character. Curiosity, or youthful daring, may have led the van; but selfish speculation came immediately after. Gilles de Retz he thought, as has

been mentioned before, was the dupe of Prelati, and in saving one of the greatest and most influential lords of the time from ruin, the young Scot thought he could not miss making his own fortune. Next came friendship; for, in spite of their frequent quarrels, David would at any time have perilled his life in order to advance the prospects of Sir Archibald; and gliding in among them all, appeared the veiled and shadowy form of Hagar, the interests and the very being of whose house appeared so closely inwoven with the mysteries of La Verrière, that he could hardly separate them in imagination.

After passing all the details of the subject in review before him, David came to the same conclusion with which he had set out. In the first place, even if his indefinite projects should fail, the danger that threatened him, judging by the history of the two former victims, could not be immediate; in the second place, he had a quick eye to see it afar off when actually on its way; and lastly, his nerves were good, and his arm

strong and ready for self-defence—while, if the odds were too strong against him, he could show as light a pair of heels as any lad on the Borders, from sea to sea.

The meditations of Sir Archibald were employed upon the same subject, and their result will appear in the following conversation which he held with his friend in the morning.

“David,” said he, “after due consideration, I have now to demand your pardon for my unworthy suspicions, and to grant you mine, even before you ask it, for a hasty word, drawn from a heart which at the moment must have been filled with bitterness and confusion. I will not ask in what manner you became connected with the family—for they are father and daughter I will be sworn—of the individual who is called, no doubt by way of a *nom de guerre*, *messire Jean of Poitou*; for well I wot you must have fallen through ignorance into the snare laid for you by the enemy of mankind. Neither will I speculate on the manner in which this history is to end. Your heart, my

friend, is not one that will give up so easily as even you yourself may imagine, an object it has once taken into its very being; and rather than see your young life pass away like a shadow, I would build upon the goodness of the ever-Virgin in vouchsafing to change the spirit—”

“Then would you build in vain,” interrupted David gloomily, “for Hagar will be faithful alike in good and bad.”

“Let me pass on, then, to what I have to say, leaving the rest to the mercy of Providence. It appears, from all we have been able to gather, that you have been trepanned into this appointment at La Verrière by messire Jean; that you have been sold, as it were, to the Adversary; and that, after a certain time, you will be offered up to him as a blood-sacrifice. If this be true, the arm of the flesh will avail nothing. But Satan, for all his cunning, may be cheated. I, for instance, am a Christian knight; my soul is unsoiled by such devilries as the transmutation of metals, or other profane and unlawful delusions; and I thank God

I own another master than Nigulus Figulus. Let me take your place, since there must needs be the likeness of a third victim; the only eye I shall have to avoid will be that of Orosmandel; and if you will instruct me in what I have to do and to say, I have no doubt that by the blessing of St. Bride, to whom I commit my protection, I shall bring the adventure to a happy issue."

"Had you listened," replied David, "to the explication I offered of the synodal statute *De Sortilegiis*, an imperfect knowledge of which seems to have clouded your understanding—"

"I declare before heaven I have no knowledge of it whatever!"

"Well, well; you would at least have learnt that alchemy cannot justly be reckoned among either the profane or unlawful sciences. The miraculous stone is not a delusion, but a reality; and to question the possibility of the Elixir Vitæ is to assign limits to the power and goodness of God. But with all this unbelief,"—and David's solemnity of visage relaxed into a broad grin—

"methinks you conjoin a very extraordinary degree of credulity. I am sold, it seems, by a magician ! I am to be offered up as a blood-sacrifice to the devil ! Diabolum ludificare ! — I should indeed make a precious bargain. My poor friend, this is all very well for a soldier, but a scholar is not so easy of faith. Trust me, the affair in hand will be decided, not by spells and cauldrons, but by the arm of the flesh, and the wit of the spirit."

"Be it so," said the knight; "and then the question comes to be, which of us two is the fitter man for the adventure : I, who, as a soldier, must perforce know some little matter of defences and onslaughts, ay, and ruses and ambushes ; or you, who, at the best, have but led on Bauldy, and Nigel, and Andrew at the university, to the breaking of a few paws, bare even of the hair which nature gave them for a defence ? Besides, David, I would fain see you take your vows in right earnest, and rise, before you die, to be at least a cardinal ; while as for me, if I do fall in the attempt, it is but the casualty of a knight-adven-

turer in the way of his business—and the greater luck would be his, to die within the very walls that hold the lady of his love!”

“Archibald, my man,” said David, taking his friend’s hand, and clearing his throat of a kind of huskiness which had beset it; “you are about as fine a fellow as ever poised a lance since the days of St. George! But it may not be. You have a career before you worthy of your ambition; and the very difficulties in the way of your love should only be a greater excitement to a Douglas bosom. As for me, I must follow out my fate; and, if the worst befall, it is but a poor scholar the less, and a single ray of science extinct.”

The knight saw that it would be in vain to press farther his generous offer; and the two friends passed the remainder of the time in arranging the manner in which David, while at the château, might act most beneficially for his ally.

They were called up in the morning by those musical sounds which usually usher in a bridal day; and which, in the case of the sons and

daughters of poverty (as well as in a few other cases), may be said to resemble the clear, loud, last twang of a harp-string when it is breaking. The whole village was already astir; and a smile was on every face they saw, except one. The bride could not be said to be either happy or otherwise. She was quiet and sedate as usual, and would have been the very last person whom a stranger would have taken for the heroine of the day.

"She looks," whispered the knight, "as if she thought a little of this merriment might be spared."

"I warrant," replied David, "the verguncula is busy with the future. She is thinking what else than the fountains of her own bosom she will have to offer the knave-bairns when they come. Alas! in that day there will be no mirth; and, I fear me, but little love. Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus: an adagium, Archibald, which means, that connubial affection dwindles down with the meal-poke. But I must now away. Marie, I thank you heartily for your hospitality—

and for more than that, which I may one day be able to repay. I wish you all manner of happiness, and especially the gift of patient endurance ; in token whereof I beg you will permit me, in the room of a more eloquent valediction, to touch your cheek with my lips, ere yet its virgin-flowers are gathered."

"I thank you, messire," replied Marie, "for your good wishes, and not the less, that they suit the time so closely. As for my cheek, since its wild flowers—for such is the name which our fabliers give to weeds—are still my own, I shall accept humbly the honour you intend them ; but on condition that you tarry with us yet a little while. There is the bride-song now to be sung, a custom preserved in Brittany from the old time ; and, although I never heard it myself, yet my cousin Lisette has a sweet voice, and that will make it worth the hearing. Will you still go?" continued Marie, sinking her voice to a whisper ; "Will you not be warned?"

"I will first hear the bride-song," answered David, gently ; and Marie, glad even of the brief

respite she had gained for the third victim, turned away to take her place in the ceremony.

She was crowned with flowers, and seated on a chair in the middle of a wide circle formed by the wedding guests. Her betrothed stood near her; and Lisette, the sister of Jehan, tripping out from the crowd, and planting herself directly opposite the bride, fixed earnestly her keen bright eyes upon her face, and commenced a song, which is to this day sung on such occasions in the valleys of Brittany.

“ List, Marie, list the nightingale,
The singer of our native vale !
Alas ! a dearer voice, they say,
Hath drowned the burden of his lay,
Which tells, in warning notes, the pain,
The weight of an eternal chain.
Yet, Marie, list the nightingale,
The sweet, wise singer of the vale !

“ List, Marie, list—that lovely strain
Shall never reach thy heart again !
Another voice thou soon wilt hear,
Another music fill thine ear—

Not *always* like the gentle tale
Of the sweet singer of the vale!
List, Marie, list the nightingale,
The sweet, kind singer of the vale!"

Here the emphasis of the bridemaid made some of the listeners laugh ; and Marie, who had doubtless expected quite another kind of wedding lay, opened her eyes upon her friend in grave surprise. Lisette, however, went on with new earnestness, fixing a look upon the bride's face, which David remarked to his companion might have "peeled off the skin."

Hark ! yet another voice doth come
To swell the discord of sweet home—
The cry, long, peevish, and forlorn,
Of thy young babe, thy earliest born !
Mingle the wife's, the mother's wail,
No more she hears the nightingale.
List, Marie, list the nightingale,
The sweet, blithe singer of the vale !

"Swiftly love's honeymoon hath past,
Then coldness comes—scorn—ire at last :

Slowly goes by the cheerless day,
More slowly creeps the night away.
Perching the neighbour trees among,
The owl doth join her cradle song.

 List, Marie, list the nightingale,
 The sweet, gay singer of the vale !”

Marie darted a look of indignation upon the impertinent monitress, and turned away her chair ; but Lisette moved round at the same moment, and, confronting her as before, fixed anew her eyes on her face, and continued the nuptial song.

“ Go then, devoted girl, and give,
For love that but a moon doth live,
The love of years ; the village green
For the lone housewife’s silent scene ;
The music of the nightingale
For the owl’s harsh and boding tale !
 Thou wilt not hear the nightingale,
 The singer of our native vale.

“ Love, man’s good angel, doth depart,
And demons seize the vacant heart.
The goblet flows ; rude jest and song,
Till dawn the wild debauch prolong :

Meantime the wife, by taper dim,
Sings, with the owl, her cradle hymn.
List, Marie, list the nightingale,
The singer of our native vale !

“ Wine leads to folly—madness—crime—”

Marie started up, her eyes flashing with anger, and her bosom heaving like the vexed wave ; but, recollecting herself, she sat down again, sweeping round her chair, however, till her back was turned to the singer. Lisette tripped round in the same instant ; and, fastening her eyes earnestly upon her face, resumed the interrupted song.

“ Wine leads to folly—madness—crime ;
The rattling dice harmonious chime
To his hoarse laugh ; till, one by one,
Fields, flocks, and house, and home are gone !
He then returns by morning's sun
To her he dares not look upon.
List, Marie, list the nightingale,
The sweet, wise singer of the vale !

“ Bed—cradle—distaff—all are gone.
Hence, wanderer !—but not hence alone :

Take thy young baby on thy back,
And follow in thy husband's track,
Lonely and haggard, mute and pale,
Away from thy dear native vale !

No more thou'lt hear the nightingale,
No more thou'lt see our native vale !"

The bride's courage could hold no longer. She turned away from her betrothed, who stood trying to smile with all his might ; and throwing herself upon the neck of her nearest companion, burst into tears.* David took advantage of the confusion, mingled with jeers and laughter, which this incident occasioned ; and gripping his friend's hand for a moment, almost as fiercely as the operation had been performed by the Black Knight, he glided swiftly away in the direction of La Verrière.

The scholar pursued his way, according to the

* The above is a close translation of a very spirited French song, purporting to be one usually sung at the nuptials of the Breton villagers. The translator regrets that he cannot call to mind where he found the original.

directions he had previously received ; and at length reached a spot which commanded a view of the château of La Verrière. It was an object far less formidable than he had expected ; for the buildings, though extensive, were low, and possessed nothing of the imposing grandeur with which his imagination had invested the place. Their black colour, however, the strange lifelessness of the Erdre, and the unnatural stillness which seemed to brood over the whole scene, impressed him with a feeling approaching to awe ; and a thought of the village he had just left, its smiling faces, and even the mirthful malice of Lisette's song, came back upon him like a regret.

He went on, however, without looking back, till he imagined that he must be in the immediate neighbourhood of the château ; but this landmark had now entirely disappeared, and the adventurer, bewildered by the number of low eminences swelling around him in inextricable confusion, each exactly resembling the others, and all covered with trees, stopped short to inquire whether he

had not committed some mistake. He had set out on a well-beaten path ; but this had no sooner conducted him into the wilderness, than it shot out into so many branches, that it could no longer serve for a guide. The multiplicity of paths, in fact, was in itself a very remarkable circumstance ; and he observed that they rarely proceeded far without sweeping into a curve, the termination of which was lost among the trees. Sometimes this could be accounted for by the intervention of a wooded eminence, or a swamp ; but, even when these obstacles were not in the way, the same eccentric course was observed.

David was unwilling to proceed farther in uncertainty, and climbed a tree in order to discover his bearings. He found that his progress, though slow, had been in the proper direction. The turrets of the château were visible above an intervening wood, at no great distance ; and the smooth bosom of the Erdre, shone on by the sun, was almost too bright to be looked on. In his descent, he had gained the lowest branch of the

tree, and was just about to spring to the ground, when the appearance of a female figure within fifty yards of the spot made him pause. David rubbed his eyes, to make sure that he was awake ; for it was the village-bride he saw, in her bridal dress, and with the chaplet of flowers still on her head !

Marie passed on her way, in her usual composed manner, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and pursued her path into a thick grove, where she disappeared from his eyes. His first impulse was to call out her name ; but checking this, he hardly knew from what motive, he leaped down, and sprang after her as lightly as a greyhound. In the grove the path divided into two branches, and in all probability he took the wrong one ; for, on emerging from the gloom of the trees, he found no trace of her whom he sought. It was impossible, however, that she could be far distant—certainly not a great number of yards ; and he put his hand to his mouth to give a hollo, which, if she recognised his voice, would probably produce an answer.

At the moment his elbow was touched by some one behind ; and David, when he had turned round, good as he had boasted his nerves to be, started back several feet, and clapped his hand to his sword.

“Holy mother of God !” cried he, “what art thou ? Answer, if thou hast the gift of speech !”

“I am my master’s man,” replied the dwarf, “and thou art no better !”

“Then is your master Beelzebub, you misbegotten imp ! Holy Mary ! that my heart should have leaped into my mouth for a jackanapes ! Speak. Why come you ? What is your business ?”

“I come because I am sent ; and my business is to welcome thee to La Verrière.”

“I am much beholden to you ; in troth I thank you heartily, and there is an end. Let us now part in God’s name ; for I promise you I would rather have a man of six feet, in full armour, rise up before me out of the sod, than a shape like that—larvalis habitus, as we say—drop down upon

my traces in the midst of a wood, like an acorn from a tree."

"I know it, David," replied the dwarf, with a grin, "but for all that we must be better acquainted. Wert thou as nice of vision as any girl of fifteen, thou wilt soon get accustomed to me, and we shall be good comrades. What, shall we not be brothers? If we must labour with our necks in the same yoke, shall we not also take our diversion? I will show thee a way through the swamp where the ground is thinnest, and when the nights are darkest; I will teach thee to follow the corpse-lights into the thick of the fen; sometimes we shall hunt the grey bat with bow and arrow, or mock the owl—which is rarer sport—when he singeth to the moon; and sometimes, for the sake of variety, we shall spear the snake as he rustles homeward through the grass, or fish toads in the ditches of the château. Toads! these be capital sport! Your toads of La Verrière are three times the ordinary size; they carry poison enough under their tongue to fill you a

phial: and then to see them goggling and gasping when they come up—ho! ho! ho! it is excellent, I promise thee!”

While the dwarf was speaking, David examined him attentively from head to foot, and before he had done, was sorry for the disrespect with which he had treated Sir Archibald's superstition. The creature before his eyes had nothing about him but the outward form; and that was imitated so miserably, that the beholder could only have been prevented from laughing by horror. This *lusus naturæ*, however, this goblin, whichever he might chance to be, was to be his comrade at La Verrière. Of what nature, in the name of God, could be their duty, since for recreation they were to follow the *ignis fatuus* over bogs—turn the bird of Minerva into ridicule—fish reptiles for trouts—and bottle poison? The scholar began to ask himself what pressing business he had there at all. Hagar was off his hands; and even her father could not suffer blame, if his apprentice did not choose to be indented to Satan. At all

events, concluded he, go with a guide like this I will not. I shall return forthwith to the village, and take a human conductor thence to the château to-morrow morning. Thus the enchantment will be broken which the wench Marie would persuade me I am under ; the appointed day will be past and gone ; and I shall make my appearance at the gate a free man, and not like a jongleur taken prisoner, and led in by his own jackanapes.

“ Hark ye, friend,” said he ; “ I was brought up to spear salmon in the river, and strike deer in the forest ; and my stomach would ill brook the grewsome sports you intimate. But ‘trahit suam quemque voluptas ;’ which is equivalent to the expression made use of by the old woman who kissed her cow. I do not accuse your tastes, but I follow my own. For my part, I had ever an horror of toads and serpents ; and I pray you to notice, that I will in nowise be art or part in such unseemly pastimes. And now stand out of my way, that I may return whence I came, seeing that my morning’s walk is at an end.”

"Thy morning's walk!" repeated the dwarf, opening his goggle eyes; "and dost thou absolutely fancy that it is *thy* walk thou art taking—that thou art here on thy own business or pleasure—that, in fact, thou still belongest to thyself?"

"That is decidedly my belief and opinion," replied the scholar. "It is true I may be said to have bargained to take on service for a time in the laboratory of him at La Verrière; since the very habiliments I now wear, as well as a horse which I left at the village, may be looked upon as the *arrha*, or earnest money. Thus much I freely concede; saying nothing of an epitogium or graduate's cloak of my own (on account of its being somewhat the worse for wear) which I ceded up at the same time. Still, no precise day of entrance was mentioned, and for that matter, no precise period of service; and I accordingly hold myself my own master, while I remain on this side the threshold of the château."

"Admirably argued," exclaimed the dwarf, and he broke into a laugh so shrill and wild, that the whole grove rung with it.

“Stand out of my way, you hellicate imp!” cried the startled scholar, “were it not shame to offer violence to such a pigmy—that is, supposing you to be anything else than a phantasma—I would send you to fish for toads in yonder quagmire. Away, you misbegotten knave!” and threatening him with his sheathed sword, he turned back by the path by which he had come; the dwarf stood his ground till the enemy began to move; but he then made instantaneous way for him, by leaping to a surprising distance out of the path, and disappeared among the trees with screams of laughter, like an evil spirit.

David pursued his route in not a little confusion of mind; and yet, by no means, feeling confident that he had acted a part worthy of his sires and country, in postponing an enterprise he had undertaken, for no better reason than that he had met a misshapen dwarf upon the road. This personage was now richly dressed, in a kind of eastern costume, covered with hieroglyphics, and letters apparently of an unknown language. He might

have seemed to be the page of some great lord, thus decked out at his master's capricious fancy ; and his strange discourse might have been nothing more than the dictates of an intellect, sometimes as weak and crooked, in persons of this unhappy class, as their bodies.

The adventurer walked on, plunged in meditation, till at length he began to be somewhat surprised that he had not already reached the village. The same character of scenery prevailed, the same confusion of woods and eminences ; and he was under the necessity of again having recourse to the expedient of climbing a tree. It may be conceived with what astonishment he found on reaching the top, that, instead of having progressed towards the village, he was much nearer the château than before ! At the moment he made this discovery, the shrill laugh of the dwarf smote upon his ear ; and he descended both in anger and perturbation of mind.

He now walked on with less confidence. He saw clearly that the paths were meant less to guide

than to bewilder ; and, although but little versed in mathematics, the idea occurred to him, as just possible, that they might have been constructed for the very purpose of preventing escape from La Verrière. A still greater work of art, thought he, must have been the Cretan labyrinth, (to say nothing of the greater prodigy of Egypt, and the lesser ones of Lemnos and Italy ;) and for all that, Dædalus, though a cunning man of artifice, was no magician. While comforting himself, however, with this idea, he could not resist a growing conviction, that in the whole of this affair he had been the subject of a species of fatality ; and when at length he saw at a short distance through the trees a portion of mason-work, it was with but little confidence he exclaimed, "There is the village." It was the château of La Verrière.

Again, the same eldritch laugh met his ear ; but the sound was now close by, and the dwarf, dropping down from the bough of a tree, stood beside him.

"Thou hast thought better of it, David," said he, "and we are to be comrades after all ! Since thou art thy own master, thou must be here of thy own purpose ; and accepting the token as a testimony of good will to me, thy fellow-servant, I shall now conduct thee to the gate, if so be thy pleasure."

"Lead on," replied David, "for I will follow." They now emerged altogether from the trees ; and a fair view of the fortress was no sooner obtained, than the student forgot his personal feelings in the admiration which it inspired.

The ditch was an immense canal, in which a modern frigate might have swam, and its border was thickly planted with sharp iron spikes. Beyond this, the ramparts, constructed of earth, rose like a chain of hills. They were battlemented at the top, girded by a chemise of solid stone, and defended from distance to distance by half-moons. Above the gate towered a lofty corps de garde, which was bristled with the lances of sentinels ; and on the ramparts, at either side, the muzzle

was presented of an enormous iron culverine, each twenty-four feet long, and so solid, that it must have been moved with difficulty by fifty horses. A pile of balls, of corresponding magnitude, lay near these gigantic pieces of artillery, some of stone, and some of lead.

The visitor had never seen the like, except in fortified towns of the first class; although even these monstrous dimensions were a reduction lately introduced. The earlier cannon had been found by experience to be somewhat unmanageable, being from fifty to sixty feet long, with balls of five or six hundred pounds' weight!

David expected to be closely questioned at the gate, but at the sight of his conductor he was allowed to pass without remark, and he found himself fairly within the walls of La Verrière. Winding their way through jungles and morasses, where they might have imagined themselves to be still in the open country, they at length arrived at the second, and then at the third inclosure; and when about to cross the last drawbridge, it was

not without some secret emotion that the scholar saw pointed at him from the wall, one at either side of the gate, two hand culverines, which one man poised on his shoulder, while another behind, directing its aim, held a lighted match in his hand, ready to fire.

He entered, however, as before, without question; and crossing the square or court, was introduced into the low, black building, guarded so jealously. Here he was left alone for some time in the dimly-lighted hall; and we shall take the opportunity of opening to the reader the door of the chamber to which he was about to be summoned. But this demands a new chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

THE principal buildings of the château were not in the middle of the court, as was usual with the donjon. They stood in an angle, on a base of rocks overhanging the Erdre; and were closely girded, towards the river, by the ramparts. This disposition, however, did not render the fortress less secure; for an assault by water was all but impossible. The "plains," as they were called, or floating swamps, which we have already noticed, extending far out into the stream, formed a natural barrier against any hostile approach; while the channel through them, besides being too narrow to admit more than one small boat at a time, was cut by art into a kind of labyrinth. So

secure was the castle deemed on this side by the engineers of the age, that even the usual barbican had not been erected on the opposite bank. Nothing more was required to collect the dues, which every river-side baron of the time thought he had a right to exact, than a skiff lying at anchor without the swamps ; for the country barges, sailing by to the Nantese market, required no farther persuasion to induce them to bring to, than a glance at the old black building behind, and the name of its redoubted master, the lord de Retz.

The reader who has visited the banks of the Erdre must bear in mind that the river has shrunk considerably since the period we refer to. The ruins of the castle now stand at some distance from the brink ; but four centuries ago, the stream washed the base of the ramparts, and a portion of its waters, flowing into the outermost ditch, inclosed the whole fortification in an island. This process of change is supposed to have been going on for a much longer period.

"We never see on these shores," says a Nantese author, "the ridges of sand which, in almost all other rivers, are the debateable lines between the empire of the water, and that of vegetation. The green turf approaches with confidence to the very edge of the borders, as if aware that these are never undermined by the rebellions of the waves which it is their province to confine. At the same time, if the geologist will remark the inclination of the two banks, and the interval between them, his thoughts will be carried back to a period earlier than history, in which the whole bason was filled by the water which now only covers its bottom." *

The portion of the buildings which we have described as overhanging the river, was strengthened by a thick, and comparatively lofty tower; which, although intended for defence, was at present the temple of science, the abode of the

* Voyage dans le departement de la Loire Inferieure, par M. E. Richer.

Arabian philosopher, Orosmandel. No one presumed to enter this tower uninvited, or indeed found it possible to do so without the permission of its tenant. Even the proud baron himself was constrained to ask leave before paying a visit.

The place had been fitted up by foreign artificers employed by the sage ; and from the circumstance of their vanishing utterly from the neighbourhood as soon as the job was finished, it was naturally enough concluded by the peasants that they were no other than a troop of demons who had been summoned by enchantment. But little, however, was seen of their handiwork. From the draperies and other costly articles which had been used, it was presumed that Orosmandel lived surrounded by the luxuries of a person of rank, such as he appeared to be ; but nothing was known with certainty on the subject. That he had company occasionally was not doubted ; for once the sound of laughter had been heard proceeding from the tower at night, and more than once a wild scream

from the same quarter broke the enchanted slumber of the Erdre. With the exception of his former assistants, however, his dwarf-page, and a deaf and dumb slave, no one was ever known to have entered the place ; and such sounds therefore were heard without creating any disposition on the part of the listener to inquire into their source.

Besides the interior communication with the rest of the building, a small door opened on the ramparts, for the accommodation of the sage when he wished to take the air without mixing with the household ; and this portion of the ramparts was in some sort considered to be his own private property. All the lower part of the tower, however, was an impenetrable mystery ; the middle was supposed to be occupied by his private apartments ; and at the top was his study, or observatory, where alone visitors were admitted—and which is the room we have promised to open to the reader.

On ascending the narrow stair which led to it,

and entering the door, the first sensation produced on the unaccustomed visitor was faintness, occasioned by a sweet, yet peculiar smell, diffused probably from a lamp burning dimly near the farther end. This solitary lamp seemed to be the only means by which the apartment was lighted, even at noon-day ; for no window, no opening of any kind, appeared either in the walls or roof. A large circular painting, however, exhibiting a plan of the heavens, rendered almost unintelligible by the number of numerals and hieroglyphics, occupied nearly the whole of the wall opposite the door ; and, by its half luminous appearance, indicated that there was a corresponding aperture beyond for the admission of light, perhaps resembling the rose-window of a cathedral.

Little, however, could be observed distinctly ; and nothing at all except the lamp, till the eyes of the visitor became accustomed to the gloom. When this was the case, various strange and indefinite objects came gradually out from the shadow which filled the apartment. Before the painting

there was a table, covered with a white cloth, on which were placed a large book, with several small vases, and a few papers, and mathematical instruments. At this place the floor was more elevated than elsewhere, and the painting itself was arranged behind somewhat like a modern drop-scene, with ample drapery at the sides; but, from the convergence of the floor, sides, and roof, as in the Roman theatres—and particularly in Palladio's imitation of one at Verona—it seemed to be much farther off than it was in reality. The idea of distance, indeed, was so admirably given, that the room appeared to be at least twice its actual size.

The table, or altar, was surrounded by a circle of variously shaped objects, arranged on the floor, but so small that the eye in vain endeavoured to ascertain what they were. Immediately without this circle hung the lamp, suspended from the roof by an iron chain. The sides of the apartment were hung with black cloth, protruding here and there, as if different objects were behind, and in

two or three places giving in this manner the resemblance of a human figure. The roof also was of some dark colour ; but studded with specks of crystal, or bright metal, which, when the flame of the lamp flickered in the wind, on the opening of the door, gleamed like so many faint and distant stars.

On the present occasion, two men stood in the middle of the floor ; and the tiny flame playing fitfully on their figure and countenance, showed that they were Orosmandel, and the lord de Retz. The former maintained his usual deportment, calm, lofty, collected, as well as the remarkable expression of his face ; in which the pitying smile of a superior being seemed to mingle with scorn of the small miseries of human nature. The baron, on the other hand, was strongly agitated, his countenance was flushed, and his whole manner exhibited at once resentment and disdain.

“What think you of it, my father,” said he, “an ambassador of the noblest blood in the land ! and gifts that a crowned monarch might well have

grudged! By my holy patroness, I could go express to Rome, and pluck the dotard by the beard—Heaven and the saints forgive me for the thought, and the holy father himself, for he hath the power to bind and to loose! Yet, is it not enough to make a man forget himself? A mitre! It was all I asked; and for my almoner, from the disservant of my own chapel! Mine! Where, out of Rome itself, and the high cathedrals, is service performed more duly, or with more splendour? Do not my votive offerings blaze on every altar in Europe? Do I not give away in alms a revenue that would feed an army? And is there a sinner, a miserable, wretched sinner,—Holy Mother, *ora pro mihi!*—who does more to atone for his manifold transgressions?"

"My son," replied Orosmandel, "the pope hath done thee wrong; but even if the bauble which thou art refused had been worth the seeking, methinks a moment so critical as this should leave thee no time to regret it."

"A bauble! not worth the seeking! Why,

what is a crown but a bauble? What is a sceptre but a metal rod? You surely do not think that I covet the bit of lace which decks the mitre of a bishop? These things are but the outward symbols of grandeur and dominion, the trappings which address themselves to the imaginations of the multitude, and make them fall down and worship. A king without subjects to acknowledge his sovereignty, is nothing; and, in like manner, if I attained to the power of moving this terrestrial globe, even as a football, I should feel all to be in vain, unless the worms who inhabit it crouched down before me in wonder and admiration. You call it philosophy to despise the incense of the ignorant; and if it be so, I am some half way a philosopher myself: for I too scorn it, even while acknowledging its necessity to my very existence! A man is not born to live within himself. Every feeling to which he is subject, has some reference to the crowd of fellow-beings by whom he is surrounded, and amidst whom he lives as in an atmosphere. The very

planets move in subjection to the systems of which they form a part."

"Man is not born free," said Orosmandel, "and the planets are not spirit, but merely the bodies of spirit. There is a power notwithstanding, in human nature, to elevate itself above its own instincts; a power, however, which is by no means identical with mere reason, or what is vulgarly called philosophy. Man is only an intermediate link in the universe; but he hath enough within him of divine essence to raise him far beyond his apparent grade in creation. This motability is visible in all nature. The flower, by culture, may be amended in beauty and perfume, and changed even in form; the wild beast may be educated into almost human civilization; and man himself, though always clogged by the matter of which his outward form is composed, may, by a still loftier instruction, attain, in all respects of power and knowledge, to a class of being infinitely more elevated than his own. Thou, even thou, weighed down as thou art by prejudice, and mingled as are thy noblest aspi-

rations with the vapours of the earth, thou soarest as high above the mass of thy fellows as thou art lower than the demons.*

“My father,” replied the baron, in an altered tone, “I bow to your correction; and, reasoning by what I feel within myself, I acknowledge the wisdom of your admonitions. If I am not superior to the sluggish nature by which I am clogged, whence is this longing, and craving, and hungering, and thirsting of my soul? Why have I turned aside from the paths of other men?—from the pride of rank, the excitement of ambition, the glories of war? Born among the noblest of the noble, fortune fell upon me, unsought, in a golden shower; successful in love, a dowry equal to the apanage of a princess was laid at my feet; triumphant alike in the council and on the field, I was overwhelmed with honour and dignities by the

* This word is used throughout in its original sense, *spirits* or *angels*, whether good or bad; and not in the restricted meaning given to it by Christian writers.

gratitude of a king. Were not these enough? Why did I turn away from the banquet spread before me, sick with disappointment, faint with the hunger of the soul?—”

“Because these things,” went on Orosmandel, catching the word, while the impetuous baron drew breath, “because all these are but the aims and attainments of human nature. Thy spirit demanded something higher. Thou didst feel, without comprehending, that there was a yet loftier field for ambition. Thou didst grope in the dark, lamenting and crying out, even like a man who knoweth there is light somewhere, if he can but find it. Knowledge was to thee like a dream which thou hadst forgotten; even like the dream of the Babylonian of old, whose spirit was vexed unto madness, in seeking to lay hold of that which had fled. Then, like unto that heathen prince, didst thou ask of all nature, what was thy vision. Thou didst question the sea, and the wind, and demand revelations from the stars. Thou didst send forth to summon around thee the wise men—

the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, the Chaldeans of our time. And, behold ! there came at length One—”

“ Orosmandel !—my friend, my father, bear with me ! Your voice was like a voice from heaven to my spirit ; and the energies which before were wasted in vague endeavours, became at once concentrated in the pursuit of a single glorious aim. Still I am not as you. My soul is yet enthralled by my human nature. Bear with me a little longer. Bear with me, even now, while I ask, Whether the gratification of the passions be as adverse to our advancement in occult knowledge, as it is contrary to the dictates of religion ? ”

“ The gratification of the passions,” replied the philosopher, with a benignant and pitying smile, “ is in itself a matter of small moment ; for these have reference only to the body. In so far, however, as it interferes with the task of the mind, it is injurious. If, for instance, thou lavish on ostentatious grandeur the means that are requisite for thy advancement in science, thou sinnest against

the spirit. If, in the pursuit of power, or honour, or beauty, thou spend the time which should be devoted to study, thou art a robber of thyself. For mine own part, the human passions have long been dead within me: still, for such as thou, I hold, with more than one heathen philosopher, that, under the restrictions I have alluded to, the gratification of the body is conducive to the tranquillity of the soul."

"It is well!" said the baron. "And for religion—" but this he muttered in soliloquy—"if alms, if prayers, if vows for the future—" and his voice died away in a deep sigh. He paced through the room in silence for some time, and then turned again to Orosmandel.

"You have observed," said he, "that a moment so critical as this should leave no-time for vain regrets. The moment is still more critical than, perhaps, you imagine. The Duke has refused to make the farther purchase I proposed."

"And thou hast tempted him by more favourable terms. This I know, and I know also that

of which thou art ignorant. The vague rumours which have reached thine ear, touching hostile cabals among thy kindred, are true. The conspirators await only the completion of this pending sale ; when the storm will burst in thunder on thy head."

"Let it burst—I fear it not. Leagued with the Duke, I may defy Brittany. But who are they who forge these perilous bolts?"

"The chief nobles of the land: but Claude Montrichard and his neighbour, assisted by the German cut-throat, and the English adventurer Beauchamp, have already one foot in the stirrup."

"Let them mount. This, then, is not a mere rumour?"

"The meeting was witnessed by one on whose wisdom and courage thou mayest implicitly rely."

"And the new liveries? What says Houperlande? Does the slave hesitate?"

"He *did* hesitate," replied Orosmandel, in a tone approaching to contempt, but whether of the baron or the tailor it was impossible to determine;

"my agent, however, succeeded in overcoming his scruples, and he will bring the merchandise hither himself."

"That is well. All goes as I could wish. The duke will buy; the rebellion will burst forth; and we shall take the field, with a splendour that will be eclipsed only by our victory. Never has my good fortune failed me in war. The spoils of battle with which I shall return, will enable me to do all you command; and the moment will at length arrive, when my long, long dream shall become a reality."

"But, if the Duke do not buy? If thou be worsted in the fight?"

"Do you think I shall retract? I, who have lost fortune, fame, peace, occupation, perhaps salvation, on the hazard? By heaven and hell, I will not blench! My soul is already seared with sin; these hands are stained with murder. Whither should I return, and for what purpose? I tell you, I will sign the bond! But, remember—" and the baron wiped the perspiration from his brow,

"remember—all, all—honour, obedience, service—I will give all, save that which is myself—my soul ! I *will* have some ray of hope to look to—some hair to grasp at, as I hang shrieking over the abyss. I know you do not believe as I ; but you admit that there are mysteries hidden even from the demons. To this one will I cling. I could not die without it ; I could not fling myself into eternity without a hope. You hear my covenant : enough." Gilles de Retz looked round mechanically for a seat, and finding none, walked tottering to the wall of the mystic chamber, and leant against it.

Orosmandel continued to gaze at him for some moments ; and then replied in his usual tone of voice.

"I have already looked to this ; and, although I do not believe as thou, for such was not the creed of my time and country, I freely concede that it is at least possible thou mayst be right. I pretend not to know more than the angels. The clause, I feel confident, will be admitted. Now, tell me, art thou equally resolved as to the manner of completing the bond ? Thy daughter ?"

"I am resolved that the bond shall be completed."

"And thy daughter?"

"Talk not of her," said the baron, hastily, "I have as yet, it is true, failed in obtaining a substitute; but there is hope even till the twelfth hour. It must be done willingly?"

"Willingly."

"And by a pure and spotless virgin?"

"Thou say'st it."

"Such is Pauline; and as she resembles me in the better points of my character, and even in those that touch most closely upon what is evil, there is hope, nay, there is certainty of her being brought to consent."

"Then why not at once conclude?"

"Because, in the first place, there is no immediate necessity; and because, in the second place, I am her father. I have already pleaded guilty to some lingering prejudices, if prejudices they be, of human nature; and this is one of them. She was a child of love, not of sensual passion; and

I often think that her mother is in heaven, interceding with the blessed saints in my behalf. She promised this on her death-bed. Pauline lay upon her bosom—Bah! The lamp smells so sickly. What is that? Away! Do not come to me *here*—Catherine, I will not do it, your child shall meet you in heaven!”

A brief pause again ensued; and Orosmandel recommenced the conference.

“I will not upbraid thee,” said he, “with what is evidently more physical weakness than mental relapse. The perfume of this place, and the gloom, in which we appear to each other’s eyes like spectres, have affected thy nerves. Tell me, however, for the time presseth, hast thou yet hope of a substitute?”

“I have. Why else has this Jewish damsel been forced upon me, as it were, in a manner wonderful, nay, awful, both to her and to me. We met at the dead of night, among tombs and ruins, at the moment when I was despoiling of a portion of its dust a forgotten grave, and when she was

flying from me (who had never heard of her) with the speed of a hunted deer! Had I not come forth at the sound of her breathing, for the place was as still as death, she would have entered the vault the next instant, and taken refuge from myself—in my arms! At Nantes, too, whither I suffered her to go, in confidence that we were destined to meet again, she was flung in my way by an unconscious crowd. Again she took to flight; again she escaped; and yet, by a fatality which it seems impossible to explain, she was the first person I saw on entering my private apartments in the hôtel de la Suze!"

"Hast thou spoken with her?" inquired the philosopher, with interest. "Doth she listen with understanding?"

"She is neither startled by the truths of science, nor affrighted by the consequences of error: nevertheless, I have not as yet ventured upon full explanation. She is daring, high-minded, even enthusiastic; yet, she has a way of trying even the sublimest speculations by the

common analogies of life, which cripples her progress down to the snail-pace of vulgar minds."

"Is she here of her own free will?" demanded Orosmandel.

"She is;" replied the baron; "but, as it seems to me, not so much out of love of science, as from some principle of honour, or filial piety. She would prevent her father—you understand me—from being an accomplice in what she conceives to be a *third* mortal sin. She expected to be here under the protection of my daughter; and to be able to save from danger the young man you have obtained from the Jew. It is in vain, however, to expect anything from constraint. She must return to Nantes, to the house of her kindred; and our intercommunication must go on in the natural course."

"That may not be," said Orosmandel, quickly. "She must remain in your hands, a hostage at once for her father, and lover—for such is the young man she designs to save. Let her be transferred to my private apartments."

"How !"

"Where the foot of woman hath never trod before. There may be some meaning in the apparent coincidences thou describest ; and, till I have leisure to seek counsel thereon, as unerring as mere human reason is fallible, it were unwise to permit her departure."

The baron still hesitated.

"You do not yet know her," said he. "To detain her by violence would frustrate my purpose at once ; for she would distrust the reasonings of an archangel, if she listened to it under compulsion. She has, indeed, become already suspicious, since she has seen nothing of Pauline."

"And why not admit her into the Damsel's society ? The same instruction would serve for both."

"She is a Jewess," replied the baron, "and Pauline at least shall hold no communion with the accursed race."

"Truly a conscientious scruple ! Your fountain of Diana is so pure that it will not mingle with

wine, yet would you consent to incarnadine its waters with—”

“Hush! hush! that shall not be! We shall obtain treasure enough for all that is necessary—and even if we fail, there is yet time for other means. If Hagar will not consent to peril her soul for me, her body at least shall be mine; and that is something, for she is passing fair. If she prefer the lighter risk, be it so: there is yet another whom I have thought of again and again. Indeed, had she not been a kind of protégée of my daughter, peasant though she be, I should have made the attempt before now.”

“Behold her!” said Orosmandel suddenly; and at the instant, a portion of the drapery which covered the wall of the chamber opened like a curtain; and the peasant Marie was seen traversing a narrow passage beyond. The girl paused, and looked steadily into the room for an instant. She then crossed her bosom, and passed on.

“I foresaw,” said Orosmandel, before Gilles de

Retz had recovered from his surprise : " I foresaw that it would come to this ; and therefore is she here. She is in a bridal dress, thou seest, but is still a virgin, and no wife. Her education has been good, and her natural understanding is better ; but the circumstances of her condition will render temptation more easy, and she will listen the more readily that communication with such as thou will be reckoned an honour. Leave Hagar to me, as the more difficult of persuasion."

" Well, it shall be as you counsel ; but not till I despair of success myself. Yet remember, if she will not be the abettor of my spirit in its exalted aspirations, she shall be the ally of my senses in their lowly pleasures. When your task becomes hopeless, return her to my charge. For the present, farewell ;" and the baron, making a low reverence to Orosmandel, who slightly bent his head in return, left the apartment by the opening in the hangings which Marie had passed.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was at the moment when the above conversation ended, that David Armstrong was summoned by the dwarf to the study of his new master. He followed his conductor in silence, marvelling as he went at the grotesque agility with which the elf-like shape sprang up the steep stair; and not a little startled by the grin, half of exultation, half of mockery, with which he turned round every now and then to regard him. When they gained the landing-place, however, the equivocal creature paused suddenly, and crept towards the door, as if in terror. When David reached him, he saw that he shook, as in an ague fit; and his voice was scarcely intelligible, when he said

in a whisper, pointing with an expression of solemn meaning to the entrance, "He is there. In with thee, for thou canst not choose. Behold, it is written!"

David went in as he was bidden, treading softly in unconscious imitation; and he felt that the door closed itself, behind him, as noiselessly as snow falls upon the ground. Startled by the sudden and mysterious gloom, by the solitary light, gleaming like a lamp in a burying vault, and by the strange objects it disclosed with the indistinctness of a dream, he hung back; but almost at the instant of his entrance, the curtain unclosed, and he saw a figure at once elegant and soldier-like enter the apartment.

"Pardon me, my father," said the lord de Retz, "one other word,"—and the speaker paused abruptly, and stood still. David now observed the tall, dim form of Orosmandel, erect and motionless, within the circle which surrounded the table. His back was turned to his visitors, and his eyes fixed, as it appeared from his attitude,

upon the half luminous plan of the heavens. A deep silence prevailed for some minutes ; during which the scholar, standing against the black wall and beyond the reach of the feeble rays of the lamp, had opportunity to see without being seen, and to accustom his eyes to the spectral gloom of the place. Gilles de Retz, in the meantime, with his hands crossed upon his bosom, and his head bent, remained without motion, watching the moment of his preceptor's return to sublunary things.

At length it appeared as if a shadow passed across the picture, or that the paintings themselves moved upon its surface ; a sudden stream of air entered the apartment ; the flame of the lamp flashed, and flickered ; the dark hangings of the walls moved ; and a hollow sound, articulate like a human voice, though unintelligible, was heard sounding at an immense distance, yet seeming to stir with its breath the whole atmosphere of the room. Then all was silent as before. Orosmandel turned round.

"Baron de Retz," said he, coming forward, but in a tone of more solemnity than sternness, "I warn thee that I will brook no intrusion. Look to it."

"I crave your pardon most humbly," said the baron, "but I had hardly reached the end of the corridor, when I bethought me of something I had forgotten; and conceiving that you had not had time to forsake the thoughts of the world—"

"Enough. Say on."

"It was of your relation, or protogé, I would have spoken; he whom you banished from your presence, and who sailed away upon unknown seas, and there perished. Pauline avers, and holds to it obstinately, that she saw him, either in body or spirit, in Paris."

"Not alive!"

"Moving and breathing like another man. But what is stranger still—for this I should else have set down as a young maid's fancy—the same idea has possessed itself of the cooler if not stronger mind of Hagar." At this name David's heart

leaped within him ; but, repressing his emotion, he scarcely permitted himself to breathe.

“ Even casual resemblances,” replied the sage, after a pause, “ are deceitful ; but there be also those that are produced of purpose. I shall inquire into this ; and on some early night, which I shall hereafter name, if the Damsel will honour me with a visit at the mid hour, she shall know all—even to the number of fathoms of salt-water which cover the bones of Prelati.”

“ Are you certain of his death ?”

“ Certain : yet will I furnish proof to her.”

“ It is well. In the matter of Hagar, on farther thought, your counsel is wise. It is not unlikely that we may require a yet farther supply from the Jew ; and with her in our possession it will be all the easier to come to terms. Yet, be as watchful over her, father, if she do not league herself with us, as if she do : for mine she shall be in either case. As a Jewess, she has already as much uncleanness as my soul can brook : take care, I beseech you, that in your hands she receive no

contamination as a woman. As for this young man you mention, if I find that he so much as lifts his eyes to her unbelieving face—St. Mary! he shall scarcely run even the brief course of his predecessors. And now, father, once more adieu.”

“Have no fear for Hagar,” said Orosmandel, following him; “and as for the young man, though in general I permit no interference with my servants, thou mayst deal with him as thou thinkest fit. He is too shrewd, and too forward, as I am given to understand, for his calling; and even yonder holy book, if not protected by a circle which he durst not pass, would be no more secure from his gaze than the fair face of a Hebrew maiden. In the pupil of the alchemist, I expected nothing more than a wild, yet simple enthusiast, who would do what he was bidden, with the understanding of one familiar with science.”

“Then why not, since it is his nature to pry into what does not concern him—why not send him at once to fathom the secrets of the Erdre? You know that I am already doubted; that men

look grave when my name is mentioned, even at the feast ; that the church begins to stir ; that in fine, this infernal mitre—may the saints forgive me ! has been refused, not to Gilles de Retz, but to the suspected pupil of occult science. Why run any risk ?”

“We run none. He cannot deceive *me* ; and a single thought of the heart, not to say a word, or a look, would be his death warrant. I foresee, however, that another loan which thou dost contemplate as a possibility, will be absolutely necessary ; and this young man—whose services are at any rate necessary to me at this moment—from the entanglement of his affections, will use all the talents he is said to possess to unlock the treasure-chest of the Jew. But hearken, father,”—Here they passed out of hearing, Orosmandel following the lord de Retz along the narrow corridor.

When David Armstrong was left alone in the mystic chamber, he did not waste the precious moments in endeavouring to arrange his ideas.

To gain some knowledge of the localities of the place, and of its real nature—this was the object which his quick mind saw should be paramount. The book—the altar—the mysterious circle—these occurred to him as being of the most importance. If it be daring alone, thought he, that is wanting, I dare pass, even if the protecting line should be of toads and serpents—and that is something to boast of: if it be of anything as abhorrent to God as these are to the nature of man, I put my trust in the ever-Virgin, and in the most holy St. Bride! And so thinking, he sprang lightly across the floor; and although, on coming nearer, he saw that the circle was composed of skulls and other bones of men and animals, he took with a good heart a leap which should have carried him to the side of the altar. In crossing that ill-omened barrier, however, he received a blow upon his breast, as if with the blunted edge of a sword; and he staggered back several paces, half fainting with the sharpness of the stroke, as well as with the surprise and terror of the moment.

He had attempted to cross the circle in the very middle of the room, at the spot where he had seen Orosmandel pass freely. There was no form of man, beast, or fiend, within sight; and, from the distance to either wall, it would have been impossible even for a giant to have wielded a weapon so long as would have been requisite, or, if he did, to have struck such a blow with it. David's mind wavered for an instant. Prelati and the Black Knight were identified with each other; and both were agents of Orosmandel. The old man, therefore, gentle and high-minded as he appeared, must be engaged in some scheme of systematic and tremendous villainy. Was his game the *soul* of the lord de Retz; whose dishonourable passions he seemed willing to indulge rather than repress? Was he, indeed, one of those men—whose existence David had always doubted—who were at once slaves and masters of the fiends, repaying service for service? At this moment the object of his meditations entered the room.

"Who art thou?" demanded Orosmandel, sternly.

"My name is David Armstrong; and I come from messire Jean of Poitou."

"Methinks your place should have been the door, till commanded to enter."

"I *was* commanded to enter," said David, determined to lose at least one part of the character he had obtained; "but finding no one here, I would have gone towards yonder painting, where the room is lightest."

"And didst thou dare?"

"I did dare, an it like you; but I was punished for my presumption by a blow upon the breast, which would assuredly have cut me in twain, had the weapon been as sharp as it was well wielded."

"It is well it is no worse," said Orosmandel, resuming the sweetness of tone which was natural or habitual to him: "Thou art yet a stranger here, my poor boy, and we must not deal too hardly with thee. The ways of science, however, are steep and arduous; and, if thou

wouldst climb, thou must be bold, determined, and unwearied; but above all, obedient to him, who is thy guide. Another time we will confer together on thy progress in high chemical studies; and yet another time, I will explain to thee yonder painting, which is the object of thy curiosity, and unfold its uses in astrological science. For the present I have a word for thine ear, which must serve as an introduction to thy apprenticeship. Say, is thy soul open? Canst thou listen with thy two ears? or art thou yet stunned with the blow thou hast received?"

"I am never stunned long at one time," replied David; "and at present, I could hear a mouse cheep at forty yards?"

"Listen then to my words, and treasure them in thy heart. Alas! they might already have saved blood as young and bold as thine. Beware," continued Orosmandel, advancing close to the student, and speaking in a distinct whisper into his ear: "Beware of the master of this house! beware, I say unto thee, of Gilles de Retz!"

David could not help manifesting, by a sudden movement, the surprise with which he heard an admonition so different from what he had expected.

"Receive this hint," went on Orosmandel, "as a text for meditation. Confide in me, who will be thy friend, so long as thou art a friend to thyself. With all others dissemble, as thou wouldst live. Even I, for mine own purposes, sometimes hide my face behind a mask: but, observing this, thou shalt not doubt of me, knowing me as I am. For the present, farewell."

The sage turned away as he spoke; and the curtain opening at the same moment, David saw the dwarf in an attitude of grotesque beckoning, yet his face expressive of profound awe. The scholar made a deep reverence to his new master; and left the study in as much doubt as ever as to his real character.

He took care not to permit his eyes to be diverted from more important occupation by the antics of his conductor. The information which

these organs collected enabled him to form an accurate idea of the localities of this part of the tower. The study of Orosmandel was not bounded at the sides by the wall of the tower, but by a wall of its own; the narrow space which intervened forming a passage or corridor. This passage had two outlets; one to the private apartments of the lord de Retz, and one, farther on, to the narrow staircase by which he had himself ascended from the public part of the house. The aperture, by which he had just quitted the study, was not defended merely by a curtain, as might have been conjectured by a person in the interior, but also by a strong door, which was left open or shut, according to the pleasure of the mysterious guest. How access was obtained by Orosmandel to his private apartments below, was not apparent.

As for David's own lodgings, they were not so handsome as might have been desirable; and yet, in truth, they could scarcely have appeared altogether destitute of dignity to an inhabitant of the Scottish college. They were situated in the conical

roof of the tower, and access was gained to them by nothing more than a moveable ladder. While his conductor was gambolling up the steps, grimacing and chattering like an ape, the scholar was measuring with his eye the height of the aperture above from the ground.

"They are mistaken," said he within himself, "if they think that by their merely taking away the ladder, I am to be caught like a fox in a trap!" When he had entered the apartment, however, the audacity of his glance was somewhat blanked. The roof was so low, that he could only stand upright in the middle of the floor; and the only light was derived from a window opening upon the sky. The furniture consisted of a truckle-bed, a chair, and a table; and several old books, a small broken mirror, the fragment of a comb, and other articles lay in a corner, like memories of the former inhabitant. It was, upon the whole, the true chamber for a hard student; with just light enough to study, a view of the heavens to elevate the soul, and nothing at all to seduce the senses.

"Art thou content with thy lodgings?" demanded the dwarf, with a grin.

"The air doubtless is good," replied David composedly, as he pushed open the skylight, "and the view is as extensive as the eye can well master. Here are books for study or amusement; a chair to sit, a bed to sleep upon: what more is requisite for one whose life is destined to pass away in meditation?"

"What more indeed!"

"One thing more. If this table were furnished with a platter of something comfortable to the carnal man, and a leathern bottle of wine, not overly thin in the brewing, the accommodation would be complete. You perhaps think that a man does not come away from a bridal with an empty stomach, and you are indeed so far in the right. Still my morning meal was taken shortly after sunrise, and it is now well on in the afternoon. The walk, besides, in the open air—an occurrence which is rare with me—has not been without its stimulating effects; and, in fine, it is

on this I must lay the blame, if there seem to be anything of over-greediness in the craving which has beset me."

"Your students are always hungry, I think," said the dwarf. "For my part, I run or ride, as I am bidden, morning, noon, and night; and I desire neither bread nor wine for my pains."

"And on what, in God's name, do you live, my mannikin?"

"On thought—the food of the wise."

"It is excellent food for the mind," said the scholar, "and indeed, since you possess so little of the carnal part, perhaps it should not be considered very extraordinary that you forget it altogether. But to lay this aside, my homulus—if you be indeed '*homulus ex argilla et luto factus*' (to make free with the words of the great master of Latin eloquence) I would pray you in plain terms to send me something to eat and drink, if it should be but a crust of bread, and a pitcher of water."

"Truly, thou art ill to please, if thou must even stipulate for the things which thine appetite

chanceth to affect. I know nothing of hunger myself, but if people must eat, methinks they should be satisfied with what they get."

"Give me, then, you toad-fisher, and I will be satisfied! But before you gibe at me farther, call to mind, I pray you, the adagium, which is as old as Terentius, and older, '*Fames et mora bilem in nasum consciunt*;'—hunger and delay breed wrath! David, as he pronounced these words, started up indignantly from the chair, where he had seated himself; but before he was fairly on his legs, the dwarf had dived down the ladder and disappeared.

The student was just at that epoch of life when the delay of a meal, for five or six hours, is felt as a heavy grievance; and although the short commons of the University had inured him while in Paris to the most philosophical abstinence, the air and exercise of the last few days had completely restored its original tone to his stomach. It was therefore with no small anxiety he waited for news from the larder, and with a degree of satisfaction, ill becoming his character, either as an

embryo priest or a scholar, that he at length saw the deaf and dumb slave make his appearance, carrying a basket covered with a white cloth.

The sinister countenance of the slave, however, alarmed him.

“What, if the imp has put a trick upon me?” said he, “and if this savory steam arises from a toad-stew?” All his fears vanished, however, at the sight of a roasted capon, which would have done honour, as he averred, to the table of Apicius. Bread, as white as snow, formed no unworthy auxiliary; and a very large bottle of excellent wine, with a vessel of water of corresponding magnitude, completed the meal. By the time David had finished his demonstrations in comparative anatomy, he would willingly have agreed to receive the maxim of Orosmandel as true philosophy; “that the gratification of the carnal part conduceth to the tranquillity of the soul.”

Of the wine, however, he drank little, diluting plentifully what he did take, with water; affirming at the same time, that the fellow Staphylus,

who, according to Pliny, was the inventor of the practice, deserved more credit for his ingenious contrivance than he usually received. The cravings of nature being appeased, David then began to ponder over the events of the day, his present situation, and future prospects.

The Black Knight and Prelati, it appeared; were one and the same individual; and this individual was the confidential agent of Orosmandel. The question, then, came to be, what was the real character of the former mysterious person? He had attempted, it was true, the forcible abduction of the Damsel of Laval; but in the eyes of the young Scot, living as he did in those wild and lawless times, this was by no means sufficient for his utter condemnation. His repeated and successful attempts to despoil the Jew were, in like manner, in the opinion of that age, a point of still more doubtful culpability; and, therefore, notwithstanding the prejudices, if prejudices they were, of Hagar and her father, the only deeply important part of the inquiry was, his share in the murder of David's two predecessors.

Orosmandel had hinted, and more than hinted, that the lord de Retz was the author of these horrible crimes ; and the slight manner in which the baron had spoken of sending *him* to fathom the secrets of the Erdre, seemed to the scholar something almost approaching to a confirmation of the fact. If relieved from this accusation, what was the position of Prelati ? The agent of Orosmandel, retained for the service of the lord de Retz, he had effected, in the terms no doubt of his instructions, a successful negotiation with messire Jean and Houpelande ; the latter of whom, it appeared, was an important creditor. He had penetrated, at no small personal hazard, into the midnight counsels of the baron's enemies ; and when a project was agitated for carrying off the Damsel of Laval, he had insisted, whether in the view of private advantage or not, upon his retaining her in his own possession.

With regard to Orosmandel himself, the case was more equivocal. If he was really a magician, what was the need for his wearing a mask ?

Could he not have prevented the murders? Nay, did not his expression, that "he did not *in general* permit interference with his servants," prove that he had at least done so on these occasions? Was not the *carte blanche* he offered to the lord de Retz, with regard to David himself, a "permission" of a similar kind? But, whether magician or not, his whole conduct to his noble friend, pupil, and patron, was a tissue of systematic deceit. He persuaded him that Prelati was dead, when he knew him to be alive; he even cautioned his own personal assistants against their common employer, hinting a charge against him amounting to blood itself!

Yet, on the other hand, if the hinted charge was true, was it not his bounden duty to make it? Was it a crime of extraordinary magnitude to retain a faithful agent, necessary perhaps for his own designs, even at the expense of a falsehood? Might he not have been placed in circumstances impossible for a stranger to estimate, in which the law of self-preservation might have authorized him

to give way to the headstrong passions of Gilles de Retz; when these led on to assassination? As for the question of magic, David was so much puzzled by all he had seen and felt, that he rather eschewed it in his present inquiry.

Upon the whole, Prelati, he was inclined to think, was comparatively innocent; and, at any rate, it was mainly impossible that under his present cloud he could obtain access to the château. Hagar was therefore safe as regarded him.

Orosmandel was in a doubtful position. In David's estimation, he hung like Mahomet's coffin, suspended between heaven and earth; but still his age placed criminal designs of the kind he dreaded out of the question; and Hagar, therefore, was safe also as regarded him.

The lord de Retz, then, whose character, in at least one point, was manifest enough, was the only enemy from whom immediate and pressing danger was to be expected; and, in conclusion, our scholar, while determining to watch cautiously

the turn of events, was not the less resolved, if circumstances called for desperate interference, to preserve Hagar, and avenge the victims, number one and two, by plunging the dagger, with which he had been provided by the Jew, into his breast.

His own situation did not claim in a less degree the consideration of the ex-student: but here his task, if not more satisfactory, was less complicated. His private apartment had, indeed, the air of a kind of a prison; but this was of no consequence. Even in the very middle of the court, he would still be as little at liberty, as a toad pent up in the heart of a stone. He would be confined by three walls, and three ditches, on one side, and by the ramparts and the Erdre on the other; all well-guarded by night and day, and defended not only in the usual manner, but also by culverines, serpentines, and the other vehicles of earth-born thunder, whose general name was "cannon."

Here he was, in fact, like his namesake, in the lion's den; but with this difference, that the beasts around him were not at all likely to be operated

upon by sentiments either of piety or mercy: He could not expect a miracle to be wrought in his favour; and if he was really intended for the third victim, whether of men or demons, that victim he must be. In a case like this, where he could stir neither hand nor foot in his own behalf, but must wait the turn of events, like a thing without life or sense, his thoughts received employment, and his mind derived even a species of comfort, from the interest they took in the fate of another.

He forgot that Hagar was a Jewess. He only remembered that she was a woman; and the only one of her sex with whom he had exchanged even the commonest charities of life since his boyhood. The religious scruples which had fenced her round, almost from his imagination, disappeared; his heart drew near to her, without shame or confusion, in that moment of common danger; and the passion which might otherwise have served only as an episode in his life, now became an inseparable portion of its history. She was within those fatal walls, he firmly believed, *for*

his sake. Here she was, in the first instance, to be tempted to "league herself" with murderers and sorcerers; and if her soul was proof against the enchantments whether natural or preternatural that might be used for her seduction, she was to be delivered over a prey to the infamous lusts of Gilles de Retz.

The student remained for a long time immersed in these painful meditations. He saw at length, that although his little apartment became darker and darker, it was a brilliant and beautiful evening out of doors. No one came near him, either to remove the fragments of his meal, or to bring him a light. Was he really to consider himself a prisoner, or was he at liberty, like any other inhabitant of the house, to walk about at his pleasure? He resolved to put the matter to the test; and descending the ladder, without however making more noise than was necessary, he groped his way gently, yet not stealthily, along the corridor.

The curtain-door of the study was shut, and proved, by the touch, to be a solid piece of wood,

and as firm as any other part of the wall. The almost utter darkness of the passage was caused by the loop-holes, which had served as windows, being now closed up, in what manner he could not ascertain; and the only rays of light which the place received at all, were borrowed from his own apartment, the trap-door of which gleamed above his head like the moon behind a thick haze.

The door leading to the baron's private apartments were also shut; and David could feel that the fastenings were on his side, and therefore not at the disposal of the lord de Retz, but of Orosmandel. Farther on, he reached the staircase by which he had ascended from the hall; but, to his great disappointment, the access was now closed by a gate composed of thick iron bars. He was a prisoner, then, to all intents and purposes; a victim fatted up for the sacrifice—stuffed in the dark, like a turkey for the spit!

The gate was at least twelve feet high; but it was impossible to ascertain from below whether it exactly met the roof or not. If not, thought

David, it is no such impassable barrier as they think ; and I will show them that at least I am not consenting to my own captivity. Why, the very owls go forth in the evening from the tower where they roost all day !—else yonder mannikin-elf would want somewhat of the variety of which he boasts in his pastimes.

To climb to the top of the gate was a matter of little difficulty ; but here it met an arch of the roof with such nicety, that a man's hand could scarcely be inserted between the iron and stone. David, as is usual in such cases, felt his inclination to surmount the obstacle increase in the ratio of the trouble he had taken ; and out of pure vexation, rather than with any hope of moving them, he began to tug at the large rough stones of the arch, from the interstices of which the mortar had long since crumbled away.

One of the largest of them, to his surprise, and almost alarm, moved under his hand, with hardly an effort, and he found that he could wheel it round with perfect ease, so as to leave an aperture

between the gate and the roof just large enough to admit his body. His first difficulty was what to do with the stone, how to poise it to prevent its falling: but the idea he at once dismissed as absurd. No human arm could have drawn, with such facility, a mass like this from its bed, had it not been so constructed on purpose; and accordingly he found, on examination, that the stone moved upon hinges, and was intended to serve as a concealed door.

"This then," thought he, "is the hole by which our homulus pops in and out, when he would take his midnight recreation. By the mass! I wish he may be at no worse sport than even enticing toads in the ditches, and hunting corpse-candles over the swamps." He then swung himself through the aperture with the agility of a squirrel; and descended upon the stair on the other side of the gate.

His appearance in the hall, issuing suddenly as he did, and probably at an unaccustomed hour, from this mystic staircase, was the signal of

general commotion among the persons therein assembled ; who consisted of soldiers, domestic servants, and women. Not a few of the more timid sex screamed outright, and all of them retired hastily by the door nearest at hand. The men rose up at his entrance, looking surprised and uneasy, yet respectful ; but on one pretence or another, took themselves off without delay.

“ Give you good even, friend,” said David to one in a military dress, as he was moving away ; “ Don’t let me disturb you.”

“ No I wont,” replied the man—“ if I can help it ;” and he marched out in double quick time.

“ Hollo, you, sirrah !” cried the student, becoming indignant, and addressing a valet who was in the act of vanishing ; “ What kind of night is it out of doors ? ”

“ Tell you in a moment, sir,” replied the fellow, with the readiness of his profession, as he darted out of the house.

“ By Mary’s might !” cried the adventurer, in astonishment ; “ one would think that my father

was Phornus, who begat the Gorgons!" He went out into the court; but everywhere met with the same reception. He was, in fact, sent to Coventry by the whole establishment: and at length, wearied and disheartened, he gave up the attempt to hold communion with his own kind; crept back through his hole; and replacing the stone in its bed, betook himself once more to his solitary roost.

Here, for want of other employment, he set himself to rummage, by the little light which remained, among the relics of the former tenant of the place. The books were chiefly treatises on astrology, with one or two religious homilies, and a copy of the Offices of Cicero. The last mentioned work was fairly written out; for as yet, although near at hand, the accomplishment of its glorious destiny—as the first literary work PRINTED in Europe—was not arrived.

But it was not merely from the circumstance of its being the only classic in the collection, that it attracted more especially the attention of David.

In the cover there was a pouch, similar to those in our pocket-books, which contained some scraps of verses, written, doubtless, with more feeling than taste, yet rendered interesting by their being wrapped round a lock of golden hair, to the owner of which they seemed to refer. David was affected even to tears, as he looked upon these memorials of a passion, for which the poor youth, to whom they had belonged, amidst all his cares, studies, and dangers, seemed to have preserved some nestling-place in his heart. He conned over the rude verses more than once; and then, placing his hands upon his eyes, sunk into a reverie, from which he did not awake till the moon was high in the heavens.

He now resolved to put into execution a plan which had suggested itself almost on his first entrance into the room; and the object of which was, to obtain some precise notion of the local situation of the château. The roof of the tower in which he lodged was conical, as has been already said, and was covered with large tiles;

and his idea was, that by getting out by the skylight, placing his feet upon the ledge of the little window, and leaning back towards the apex of the roof, he might be able, without much risk of falling, to command the view he desired. The exploit, owing to the steepness of the roof, and the decayed state of the work which covered it, was not without its difficulty; but David knew that he was at any rate engaged in a desperate game, and he resolved to trust, as he had often done before, to the steadiness of his brain, and the strength of his limbs. The attempt was successful; and in a few minutes he found himself lying on his side, upon the summit of the tower, the apex of which (a grotesque head, carved in wood) he encircled with one arm, while his feet rested upon the window below

He was now on the loftiest point of the edifice; for the tower, which projected into the ramparts from the body of the building, dominated the whole. He could here trace minutely the successive lines of fortification, including the Erdre,

the strongest and most important of all ; and the sight caused him to forget for a while his own situation, in emotions of surprise and delight. David had been little used at home to such spectacles. The border strongholds, to which he had been most accustomed, were in general nothing more than a single square tower, with walls of enormous thickness, and defended by a ditch. They had been the scene of deeds, rarely paralleled, perhaps, in the annals of human daring, yet executed only by a handful of men, and in some private feud, or for the sake of some pitiful plunder. La Verrière, on the contrary, although the old black building was only the habitation of an individual noble, looked like a spot where the cause of a nation might be upheld, and the quarrels of kings decided.

David's eye, after following the fortified lines, was attracted towards those singular natural defences of the place, the floating swamps of the Erdre. They extended so far round the river-ward side, that at first sight the castle might have been

supposed to stand at some distance from the water ; but on closer examination, the pools which gleamed here and there, amidst the intense green of the vegetation that covered them, raised a suspicion on the part of the spectator, that it was not terra firma he beheld. If even a bird of tolerable size happened to alight on the questionable spot, a tremulous motion was perceived to run through nearly the whole mass ; but if a heavier animal (as in the case of oxen already mentioned) ventured into these treacherous meadows — as tempting as the gardens of the daughters of Hesperus—his fate was certain. He might, indeed, go on for a short space, rioting on the beautiful verdure as he passed ; but speedily he was intercepted by a channel so narrow, as to be invisible till close at hand. Retreat then became almost impracticable ; and to proceed, entirely so. Even if by a furious effort he succeeded in escaping from the brink of the channel, before the ground sunk, he found it impossible, in the surprise and terror of the moment, increased by the shaking

and shifting of the floating mass, and the bubbling, hissing, and spouting of the black water, to find the way back. A new channel gave the desperate creature pause ; a new retreat was attempted ; and, after convulsing the whole swamp by his maddening efforts, he plunged into the abyss, and disappeared from the surface of the earth for ever.

David fancied, at the moment, that he beheld the commencement of some such scene, although in the person of a much smaller animal than an ox. Some dark object appeared at the edge of the swamp, at a little distance beyond the outermost ditch. It glided out so far, that he fancied it to be some aquatic animal, which intended to swim the river ; but suddenly changing its course, it approached the castle with all the velocity, as well as with all the turnings and windings of a hunted fox. David's interest and curiosity had been raised to a very high pitch ; when the moon, suddenly entering a cloud, his eye was hardly able to follow the little, and either reckless or

stupid creature, careering over the swamp, like a small patch of shadow.

When the moon emerged again from her prison-house, the object of his attention was at an inconsiderable distance from the ramparts; and the sensation he experienced may be conceived, when he saw that it was no other than his intended comrade, the dwarf!

“Holy Mary!” cried the student, “It is he himself!—there he is indeed, taking his nightly pastimes! Rather would I drop from this tower, and plunge head foremost into the ramparts, than thread with him that trembling bog. Toads and serpents! Were there no other game in the world, I would forswear hook and spear. Your water-death I abhor—especially in element as black and thick as that. Nay, I could not let forth my spirit in the water; but should continue gasping and choking till the day of judgment!” By this time the unworld-like creature, whose motions he had followed in surprise and consternation, had climbed up the ramparts, he knew

not by what means, and disappeared from his view.

The student crept back into his hole, as little satisfied as ever with his situation ; and, shutting the window, he lay down upon his bed, but without undressing. Notwithstanding all his troubles, however, youth, exercise, and a good constitution triumphed, and he speedily fell asleep. But his mind was still vexed. Dreams took the place of waking thoughts ; and before midnight he awoke, and sat up suddenly in his bed.

“ I will not die in bogwater,” said he, “ on that I am resolved ! They may shoot me with their culverines and serpentines, if they will, for I cannot prevent it ; but, if it comes to fair stabbing, by St. Bride, it is a game that may be played at by more than one ! ” And so saying, the scholar felt that the loop by which he had fastened his dagger to his right hand was secure, and, laying his head again upon the pillow, fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER IX.

SIR Archibald Douglas, when his friend left the village to go on to La Verrière, stood looking after him for some time. When David's athletic, yet graceful form had at length disappeared among the trees, he turned away with a sigh, burdened with many evil forebodings, and followed the bride, and some of her party, back into the house.

It was not yet time to proceed to the church, and many other rustic ceremonies were still to be gone through; but Marie had been so much disconcerted by her cousin's ill-omened song, that she demanded a little while to recollect herself. When her companions sat down in the humble parlour,

she wandered out into the garden behind the house ; and such was her character for firmness and superiority of mind, that even the busiest of the gossips thought it best to leave her alone for the brief space which could be afforded to her own reflections.

The moment at length arrived when the bride could no longer be wanted, and she was called from the lattice. There was no answer. The bride-maidens then went out to seek her. They traversed the garden ; they entered a small shrubbery beyond ; they made the whole country side ring with her name. Victoire then began the search, followed by the other men of the party. All was in vain. The village bride had vanished as suddenly and completely as Genevra herself.

This extraordinary occurrence, it may be supposed, was not less perplexing to Sir Archibald than to any of the rest ; but it was attended by some vexatious circumstances which applied to him alone.

It was recollected that David, Marie, and

himself had been engaged in divers private confabulations; and that the bride had whispered his friend just before she had sat down to be sung at by her cousin. The moment the song was ended, the scholar had taken himself off without a word of good-bye to anybody; and immediately after, as if following on his heels, the ill-advised girl had made her escape through the garden. This damning proof was rendered still fuller by the fact, that the strangers, even on their first arrival at the village, were evidently no strangers to Marie.

The young knight could not conceive what was the meaning of the altered looks with which he was regarded, and the committee work that was going on. He more than half suspected, it is true, that the interest so evidently taken by Marie in his friend arose from a blind and misplaced passion; and that the poor girl, startled by the bridal-song, and terrified at the thought of marrying a man whom she did not love, had fled, even at the twelfth hour, to follow the footsteps of

the third victim. But what had he to do with this? He had not shared in the transaction, even with the unconsciousness of David; but was, to all intents and purposes, as mere a looker-on as any one there.

The black looks of his hosts, however, although certainly disagreeable, were not a matter of much moment. He had arranged to remain at the village for a few days, in expectation of tidings from La Verrière; and had even paid Jehan in advance (supposing the money at a moment of festivity like the present would be more welcome than at another time) the sum which he meant to exchange for his hospitality. He was, therefore, under no obligation; and in those days, the prestige which surrounded a knight rendered him well able to return only smiles of contempt for the hostile glances of a hundred peasants. Douglas, therefore, resolved to take no account of the sullenness of the villagers, but to remain among them till the expiration of the appointed days, and to keep the adventurer's horse with him,

lest David should come suddenly, with the cry upon his lips—which was by no means unlikely—
“Sauve qui peut !”

No incident worth relating occurred during this period, till one night, after having retired to rest, Sir Archibald heard a tap upon his window ; and on springing up, instead of his friend, whom he expected to see, he beheld the rather pretty face of Lisette. The knight was not a little scandalised at this adventure ; for in his romantic ideas, which, by the way, were not less uncommon in that age than in ours, infidelity in love took rank with heresy in religion.

“What is the matter, girl ?” said he, opening a chink of the lattice, and speaking in a tone of austerity which would have become an anchorite.

“O dont you be alarmed, sir knight,” replied Lisette, tossing her head, “I have no evil designs upon you. My brother Jehan, however, has just returned from La Verrière, whither he went in the morning to search for Marie ; and, being somewhat in his cups, I can gather as much from him as would seem to make it well worth your while to

ride at the earliest peep of day to some safer shelter than our village."

"Tell me first, what are the tidings of Marie? Has the lost bride been found?"

"Meddle, messire, with what concerns you. I trow you will have enough ado to save your helmet strings from the misericorde that is even now sharpening for them. I give you this warning, partly because I suspect it is Jehan himself who has been the means of getting you into the business; and partly, because I know that Marie, God help her! has but too little to do with that kindly, good-humoured, well-favoured friend of yours, who had the civility to offer her a kiss, if she had had the sense to accept of it."

"I thank you sincerely," said the knight, "for your information, to whatever motive I may be indebted for it. Will you add to the favour, by letting me know at whose hands I may look for the compliment you hint at?"

"At the hands of half-a-dozen men, armed to the teeth, and better mounted than you. Ride if you be wise, ride early, and ride hard!" and

with this injunction, delivered in a tone of too serious warning to be neglected, Lisette disappeared as suddenly as she had come.

The knight was sufficiently well acquainted with war to know that retreat may, on some occasions, be as becoming in a brave soldier, as advance. Under present circumstances, to think of opposing, single-handed, the power of the Black Knight, on ground where he, no doubt, was all-powerful, would be to abandon the cause he had undertaken, and surrender Pauline de Laval into the hands of her enemy. It had been his intention, as soon as he had given up all hopes of hearing from David, to ride openly to La Verrière, and state to its lord the conduct, from first to last, so far as he was acquainted with it, of the mysterious person in question, as well as the fact of his being alive, if that was indeed unknown to the baron. Gilles de Retz, he knew, was by no means a man to refuse him permission to offer the mortal defiance, which would follow as a matter of course; and, thus the arrangement of the affair would be left

to his own prowess in the field, of which the result would doubtless be the destruction of Prelati, and the deliverance of David from the fate which, by that time, it would be plain enough, was intended for him.

It was in meditating upon this plan, gazing from the neighbouring heights upon the towers which contained the lady of his love, and weaving together those gossamer visions which float in the fancy of the young and the brave, that he had hitherto been able to preserve in some degree the tranquillity of his spirit. Nor, we confess, was he less pleased with the idea—for Douglas, although a preux chevalier, was yet a man—that the result of his enterprise would prove to David, that the lance of the knight was *sometimes* as good a weapon as the wit of the scholar; or, as his friend would have said himself, that it was idle to waste time in unloosing the knot of the Phrygian husbandman, when it might be cut in twain by the stroke of a sword.

Sir Archibald, with a heavy sigh, gave these

golden dreams to the wind, at least for the present; and at the appearance of the first streak of the dawn, took his horse out of the stable, and rode briskly towards Nantes. From this city, it was his intention to send a herald to La Verrière, with the cause and terms of his cartel; and even if Gilles de Retz had forgotten the usages of chivalry in the extraordinary studies to which he was said to be abandoned, he did not doubt that his own name would procure him a sufficient number of friends among the Breton nobles to insure him the chances of an honourable field.

It was already full day when, on gaining the top of a hill he came within sight of the place where the by-road on which he travelled joined the great highway from Angers to Nantes; and he could see two large wagons at the bottom of the declivity preparing to re-commence their journey to the latter city. Some men were engaged in yoking the oxen by which they were to be drawn, amounting probably to not less than thirty for each carriage; and from the small number of these persons, and their lazy motions, it appeared

that the caravan was only just astir, and that the greater part of the travellers were yet in the wayside *hostelrie*, girding up their loins for the fatigues of the day.

Just at this moment a sound from behind made Douglas turn his head, to reconnoitre the opposite direction; and it was not without some quicker pulsation of the heart that he saw six men, armed *cap-à-pied*, riding at full gallop after him. These were no doubt the assassins against whom he had been warned by Lisette—the Black Knight and his companions.

To encounter them alone would be certain death; and this, therefore, must be avoided if possible. The great highway afforded some chance of succour; and even the caravan, although apparently of a mercantile description, might include some persons brave or generous enough to take his part. These thoughts flashed quicker than lightning through the brain of the knight; and putting spurs to his horse, he galloped down the hill at full speed.

This phenomenon was not unobserved by the tra-

vellers ; for in an instant several other figures, in a greater or less state of readiness for the road protruded themselves at the door. Little, however, was to be expected from their aid ; for two among them were evidently using persuasions, and even some degree of force, to restrain the curiosity of their companions ; and the pursuers had no sooner come in view, in full strength, than the whole of them went in, and the road, for miles round, was entirely deserted except by the flying knight, and his six enemies, thundering down the hill after him.

When Douglas reached the hostelrie, he struck hastily against the door, which was shut, with the pummel of his sword.

“ Pass on,” cried a voice from within, “ pass on, sir knight ; you will find neither rescue nor harbour here, I’ll warrant you, if such be your enemies !”

“ Yea, verily, pass on thy way,” said another, in a thin eager voice, “ for we be men of peace, and old men ; and the Lord also hath sent faintness into our hearts in a strange land.”

"I speak neither to old men, nor to cowards," replied Douglas, in a loud voice; "but if there be here who will strike on my side, either for the sake of chivalry, or in honour of the lady they love, they will serve a good cause. And so, God defend the right!" He then wheeled round his horse; and, planting himself in the middle of the road, in the manner of a knight who justed against all comers, he drew his sword, and prepared, with a courage not less high than it was hopeless, to meet the shock of his assassins.

The six horsemen, in the meantime, came galloping down the hill in regular file, as if they had been trained soldiers; and, when they saw that Sir Archibald stood still to receive them, they slackened their pace, drew their swords, and advanced upon him coolly, though still at a brisk trot, like men too much accustomed to such business to transact it with more hurry or effort than was necessary.

"Halt!" cried the Scottish knight, when they were within hearing; "and if it be indeed me whom you seek, show what is your quarrel; or

at least give me a fair field with one enemy at a time, beginning with the best and boldest among you!" The six, however, took no notice of the appeal, but came spurring on in silence; and their leader had just raised his sword to commence the attack upon their victim, when the door of the hostelrie was burst open, and two men sprang across the road. They were both young, and they wore little defensive armour except a steel cap; but they had swords in their hands of formidable dimensions, which they wielded as easily as if they had been willow wands.

"Hold, messires!" cried the taller of the two, stepping in between the belligerent parties, and addressing the six; "do not your honour such foul wrong as to fall thus upon a single man! If it be fighting you want, if you will only descend, in equal numbers, from your horses, my comrades and I will blithely take a part, giving you all the advantage of your defensive arms."

"Back, vassal!" exclaimed the leader of the six, whose voice Sir Archibald recognized at once

as that of the Black Knight, although he was differently accoutred—"Back, peasant! or I will strike thee to the earth!" and almost at the same instant, he swept his heavy sword down with such force, that if it had entered the shoulder at which it was aimed, it must have cleft the intruder to the waist. The blow, however, was received obliquely, on a weapon of equal weight; the two blades struck fire as they clashed; and the next moment, that of the tall stranger was deep in the bowels of his antagonist's horse.

"Hurra, my mates!" cried he, as the wounded animal reared, and fell,—the toga to the rescue! Strike for bonny Scotland! Strike for the Bleeding Heart!" Several of the six sprang from their steeds to rescue their leader, when he fell; and the Scottish knight, darting into the *melée*, crying his family name, "Douglas! Douglas!" unhorsed another at the same instant.

A shower of large stones, too, from behind a wall, proved that in numbers at least the assassins were not the stronger party: but in a very

few minutes it was clearly seen that all was un-availing. Half that time was sufficient to re-establish the six in their saddles, two of the men bestriding one horse; the stones rattled and smashed against their armour, and that of their steeds, without doing the smallest injury; and forming into a compact body, rather from the habits of war, than from an idea that such precaution was necessary, they pressed upon the knight and his generous defenders, who were only two in number, evidently with the purpose, and with the power, of cutting them to pieces.

“Andrew, ye villain!” shouted the tall young man, at the extent of his voice, as his party were thus forced back towards the wagons—“Will you not strike in for Bauldy and me, even if you will not stir for honour or country? But he was ever at the hinder end—even in a retreat, where he was sure to get all the blows.”

“I am here, Nigel,” cried Andrew, at the instant, from the back of the nearest wagon; the canvass cover of which he had drawn aside like

a curtain: "Stand out of the way, Bauldy, and you, Sir Knight!"—and he had no need to repeat the injunction, when he was seen, with a lighted match in his hand, coolly taking aim with a culverine, resembling those that were usually carried on men's shoulders, but which in this instance was fixed to the wagon on a swivel.

At this unexpected sight, which in the early period of the invention, was more terrible, even to trained warriors, than it would be in ours to an unarmed rabble,—the six horsemen, including the chief himself, wheeled round on the instant, and took to flight, scattering in all directions.

"Recreant and coward!" shouted Douglas; "this is the third time I have seen you fly like a beaten hound!" The Black Knight raised his clenched hand above his head, as he rode, but made no other reply.

Sir Archibald was too much engaged for some time in exchanging greetings with "Bauldy, and Nigel, and Andrew," David's old comrades of the University, to inquire by what unlooked-for

chance he had met them in Brittany. At length, however, when more than one round of handshakings had been gone through, he found opportunity to put the question.

"As for me," said Nigel; "being tired of the humanities after David jumped the window yon morning—and, to say God's truth, some while before—I even took on with a certain ancient doctor to whom he recommended me; although I cannot precisely say in what capacity. I fancy, however, that I may be considered what David calls an '*omnium horarum homo*,' a *factotum*, as it were, or doer of all work. The doctor is a useless body; and, to say nothing of the trouble we were in before leaving Paris, unless I had ruffled it for him a little on the road, we should scarcely have got on so far as this before the Greek calends."

"And, as for Andrew and me," said Bauldy, "did it behove us to stay behind, when the two men of most mark in the class had departed—that is, the longest head, and the longest body?"

We were as dull as howlets, and out of absolute grief, so choked with thirst, that study was out of the question. At last one evening, at the Pomme du Pin, discoursing of our trials with Jacquin Houpelande—a respectable man, Sir Archibald, none more so, an echevin of the city, and by trade, I may say profession, a—a—a sartor—”

“A what?”

“That is, a vestiarius, a maker of garments, as it were. He is a man well to do, being the very first fashioner and contriver in Paris; and I assure you, he is not anxious to deal with any one under a graduate.”

“Unless the money be paid in advance, ha? I know him well: he is the first acquaintance I made in Paris; and I have myself drank wine of Bordeaux at his cost; a circumstance which I the rather remember, that David would fain have flooded our cups at the same time with Latin verses, made by one Decimus Magnus.”

“Ausonius,” assisted Bauldy. “Well, Sir Archibald,” continued he, rubbing his hands like

one whose mind had been relieved from some apprehension; "our friend Houpelande, who, as you say, is a man of the very highest respectability, and company for an earl; and who, moreover, has a daughter, with cheeks like a fresh rose—but that is beside the question—Houpelande, I say, seeing that we were just in the mood to fly down the wind, whichever way it blew, invited us, for the sake of our assistance and protection, to accompany him, and the aforésaid young lady, to Nantes, with a wagon load of liveries worth a king's ransom. You may be sure we were not slow of accepting a proposal which should re-unite the disbanded class; and in fact, on the very first day of our journey we overtook Nigel and *his* wagon."

"And you, Andrew, to whom we all three owe our lives this morning, how came you to think of defending your wagon in that fashion, as if it had been a castle?"

"Faith," replied Andrew, "I can hardly tell you that; but peradventure my being always at

the hinder end, as Nigel says, may be owing to my dividing my time, share and share alike, between thought and action: whereas, it is the common idea, that only the body requires time, and that the mind, being spirit, is able to do without it. Now, all the while that Bauldy was packing up the bit clouts of Jacquin Houperlande's daughter, as if they had been made of gossamer, and every thread spun by the Parcæ, I was contriving in my own mind, how to turn to account an old culverine which lay in the warehouse. You see what I have made of it. On that swivel it is more obedient to the hand, and surer to the mark, than if it lay on a man's shoulder; and I thought that, in case of our meeting any fractiousness on the road, while Nigel and Bauldy were laying on like gladiators, I might myself be pointing it leisurely at the enemy."

"But how, in God's name," demanded Nigel, "came you by the powder and balls, when even Jacquin himself was ignorant of what was going on?"

“ Oh, as for that, I will not just undertake to say that the creature is loaded. Powder and balls, let me tell you, do more harm than good. If even now, for instance, I had shot one of these six cavaliers, there would have been an end at once of my utility; and we should all have had our throats cut, without fail, by the remaining five. As it was, I'll warrant you, there was not one of the half-dozen but thought we were aiming at his own peculiar self, and saw in imagination, as he fled, our muzzle pointed at his hinder end. The idea, my friends, of defending a wagon with a culverine is obvious enough; but an unthinking person, such as Nigel, would have loaded it, and so have spoiled all.”

This explanation was received with a shout of laughter, which had the effect of drawing Jacquin Houpelande out of the hostelry; where he had been standing at the window, listening to the conversation of the young men, and turning ever and anon a glance up the hill. His face was pale, and his manner somewhat flurried; but he saluted the

knight with great cordiality, apologizing for not having come out to his assistance, on the plea of having had to attend to his daughter, who would needs faint when she saw him catching up his sword.

"After all," said he, "I could have been of little use, as the cloth was cut; for the prisoners I should have employed myself in taking (after the instinct of a magistrate) would have been of more burden than profit. However, Andrew certainly deserves credit for his courage and forethought. That culverine, you must know, I provided for the defence of mine own house, during the English troubles, intrusting it to the management of the foreman of my business: but could you conceive it?—the senseless beast had the folly to put powder and ball into its mouth, and the consequence was, that when it went off it alarmed the whole street. For my own part, I am not easily moved; but such was the diabolical report, that I did not cut even for a twelvemonth after. However, Andrew, there is no need for

over-hardiness ; and now that you have scattered your enemies upon the four winds of heaven, I would recommend you just to come quietly down—and the quieter the better—and leave the ugly monster, since it is there, to itself. I assure you, for all the noise it made, I will not undertake to say that it went off entirely.”

“ Be not alarmed for me,” said Andrew, “ for I am now in some sort acquainted with the creature ; and when time serves, I would willingly hold a discourse with Sir Archibald, who is a man of war, touching such matters. I must say, however, that it is not so much to me he is beholden, on the present occasion, as to Nigel ; for if he had not brought yonder horse to the ground, and his rider with him, the battle would have been finished before I had time to light my match.”

“ It is just on that subject,” said the knight, “ that I meant to have craved a moment’s hearing from Nigel ; but it was my purpose to have spoken with him in private, lest what I should find it my duty to say might have more the air of reproof

than would be palatable in company. The blow, Nigel, to make my admonition the shorter, since we are not alone, was foul; and I beg of you earnestly to remember for the future, that you are ever to strike at the rider, and not at the steed."

"Holy Mary!" cried Nigel, "heard ever being the like of that! Why I might as well hammer upon an anvil all day, as strike at a man clothed in steel from top to toe! And suppose I had taken your advice in the present fray, pray where would you have been now, sir knight, with six such horsemen against us three?"

"The excuse," said the knight, mildly, "is a bad one. Your true defence, Nigel, consists in your want of experience in arms. What signifies it, where you or I are at the end of a combat, or whether the odds were for or against us? The laws of honour must be upheld, whatever becomes of the individual; and these strictly forbid any interference with the enemy's horse. In a duel fought on equal terms, you must only strike within

the four members ; but in such sudden encounters as the present, where odds are not reckoned, it may be that some relaxation of the rule might be permitted,—though certainly not so far as you have unadvisedly carried it. I beseech you, Nigel, for the future, touch not the horse !”

While thus conversing, the attendants having left off their stone battle, had made ready the wagons for starting ; and Houpelande’s pretty daughter came forth in a riding-dress that would have done no dishonour to a woman of quality. She did not travel on horseback, however, but in front of the wagon ; to which Bauldy lifted her with devout assiduity, only taking a longer time in the transit than might have been expected from a youth of his agility. The fortified wagon now only waited for the other, which was before it, to clear the way ; and its owner at length came forth, in the person of a little, sallow, withered old man, wrapped up from head to foot in a dark cloak, with his hat slouching over his brow in the fashion of a modern Spanish bravo. He was pre-

sented to Douglas in due form by Nigel, as his worthy employer, Messire Jean—”

“Of Poitou?” exclaimed the knight. Messire Jean started suddenly back at the emphasis, and his face grew even paler than usual.

“Who asketh?” said he. “Friend, I am not the man thou seekest—as the Lord liveth, my mother knew not the name.”

“That is likely enough,” returned the knight. “Even if you be he whom I seek, I trust your mother, honest woman, was spared seeing that day whereon you exchanged the name of your father, for that of a contriver of cantrips, and unlawful spells. Tell me, know you aught of one David Armstrong?”

“I do,” said the old man, reluctantly, “he was some while my apprentice in science; but alas! my poor and humble dwelling became too small to hold his ambition, and he forsook me in my age and poverty.”

“Know you where he is now?”

“He is in the family of him who is called the

lord de Retz ; but, I pray thee, good youth, let me alone ; for I am old man, and I must make haste on my journey e'er my strength fail."

"Old man, though you be," said the knight, with sternness, "unless you answer my question distinctly, your journey shall have a different termination from what you expect. There is not one of us four but would lay down his life in the quarrel of that David Armstrong, whom I fear me you have betrayed into the snares of hell. What say you, Nigel?"

"I say," answered Nigel, moodily, "that he shall go without skaith or scorn to Nantes while I have tongue or sword to protect him."

"How ! Even if I prove that he has delivered up David to the death?"

"That is a consideration which must and shall come on afterwards. In the meantime, I am under bond of fidelity to convey messire Jean in safety to yonder city. It is a point of honour, Sir Archibald, more important than slaying a horse in defence of my own and my neighbour's lives."

"It is, Nigel," said the knight, candidly, as he held out his hand to him—"or at least, it is of equal importance: for a man's honour, look you, is like a woman's chastity, of which the least infringement is fatal. Let us proceed then, in the meantime; but I warn you, old man, that you are on the eve of rendering a fearful account of your iniquity!"

"As God shall judge me," replied messire Jean, relieved from his apprehensions, "I keep honest accounts both with Jew and Christian. As for the matter of the young man, David, I loved the lad, as if he had been my own son. Could I help it, if he would go? Was it I who turned him out of his college? Did I not even warn him of the danger he would run? yea, and gird him with a weapon wherewith to defend himself? If my intentions had been evil towards him, is it likely that I should have intrusted to his care mine own daughter—my only child—the promise of my house—the stay and hope of my years—the only link that remaineth of those which fastened me to the earth?"

"Hearken, Jew," said the knight, solemnly,—
"If your intentions with regard to our friend
were good—if you indeed did not betray him, as
men say you did, into the snare—then shall you
find Hagar in safety with your kinsmen at Nantes.
If, on the other hand, you be the agent of Satan,
and his minister Prelati—ay, start, and shrink,
and shiver at the name!—if, after two previous
blood-offerings, you have bound our David upon
the altar as the Third Victim—then no daughter's
smiles shall welcome your arrival; but where you
look for comfort and joy, there shall you find only
darkness and desolation! And now, comrades, let
us on; and while we journey, I shall unfold a
tale to you, so far as I know it, as wild as ever
minstrel or fablier imagined."

CHAPTER X.

THE travellers arrived without farther adventure at Nantes ; but in a very different mood of mind from that in which they had quitted Paris.

Jacquín Houpelande, not only daunted by the actual perils of the journey, but his faith shaken by the strange stories he had heard of La Verrière, in more than one road-side *hostelrie*, was no longer the brisk, pompous *echevin*, who dreamt of the sovereignty of the tailors, and who conceived that the professional risk he might incur would be amply compensated for by the homage of his brother dignitaries of Nantes, and by his daughter enjoying the condescending smiles of the Damsel of Laval. In fact, after the sort of "fractious-

ness," as Andrew called it, which they had witnessed on the part of the six horsemen, Jacquin would have turned his bullocks' heads without ceremony, and made his way back to France, had he not been assured that in that case his Scottish allies would have deserted him. As it was, when he found himself fairly within the gates of Nantes, it was with a kind of desperate calmness, a tragedy-tranquillity, that he took leave of all his comrades of the journey, except Bauldy and Andrew, and commanded the wagons to drive to the hôtel de la Suze.

A change, also, had come over the dream of his daughter Felicité. The vague shadows that flit across the imagination of a maid of eighteen had resolved into a definite and tangible form. The attentions of Bauldy had been such as she had never before received, and had never before been in circumstances to receive, from mortal man; and, at an age when a girl's heart is in search of something to love, it is not surprising that hers should have bestowed itself upon the young Scot, even

before she was herself aware. That this was productive of unhappiness, could not be said ; but still her happiness was of so serious a complexion, that it might have been easily mistaken for something directly the reverse. She smiled more rarely, and laughed never. The future was no longer her amusement, but her business ; and ever and anon the roses fled from her rich cheek, as some sudden thought crossed, like a cloud, the horizon of her fancy.

The three young men—"Bauldy, and Nigel, and Andrew," according to David's classification—slumbering no more under the shadow of their Alma Mater, like dogs sleeping in the sun, to be awakened, every now and then, by a kick, or a buffet, or the pinch of hunger, had now fairly opened their eyes upon the world. They felt, at length, that they had duties to perform, and dangers to dread or to dare. Their first anxiety, their first determination, was to deliver their comrade from what they believed to be his forcible incarceration at La Verrière ; and for this purpose,

they resolved to put shoulder to shoulder, with the young knight for their point d'appui. But, independently of the shade of serious thought which David's peril had cast upon their brow, their own ulterior destiny was before their eyes like an apparition. They could not return to the university. They were fairly launched upon the wide ocean; and now, instead of breaking heads out of pure pastime, they had to keep a sharp and stern look out for the casualties of the weather, spreading their sails to catch the wind, or trimming them to meet the gale.

The Jew had left Paris in an agony of terror, trembling at once for his gold and his life; but, on entering the territory of Brittany, where his nation was tolerated, his mind, relieved from at least one species of apprehension, had room for other and scarcely less harassing thoughts. Upon the whole, however, he felt satisfied with the change which had taken place in his situation. He was still rich, and might establish a laboratory at Nantes equal to the one he had forsaken.

Forgiven by the lord de Retz—even if the money he had *lent* should be the price of forgiveness—and surrounded by his wealthy kinsmen, all under the protection of the Duke, he might, at least, avoid the persecutions of Prelati, though he dared not defy him. For his daughter's safety he had little fear. For some years past, he had been himself accustomed to lean for support upon the strength of her mind—to look up to her as an adviser and a protectress; and there was therefore mingled with his speculations concerning her fate, little or nothing of that alarm with which the eye of a parent follows the exodus of a child—more especially of a young, innocent, and beautiful girl—into the world.

The combat on the road, however, had terrified him, chiefly because the horsemen, as he was informed by the people of the house, wore the liveries of the lord de Retz; and following this, the sudden and emphatic manner in which his assumed name was pronounced by a stranger, deprived him of all self-possession. The solemn denunciation of the

knight, therefore, sounded in his ears like a prophecy. He felt like a man who was under a curse. In vain his old expedient of alms and supplications occurred to him. He could not pray. He moved along the road as if he was walking in his sleep.

When the two wagons stopped for a moment till Nigel should take leave of his comrades, messire Jean looked on with feverish impatience, yet without daring to make a remark. His white lips moved in reply to their stern salutation, but no sound came; and when at length he turned round, and walked away stricken in heart, shrinking into himself, and bowed down both in body and spirit, he presented such a picture of meanness, feebleness, and cowardice, combined with guilt, that the indignation of the young men was overpowered by their disdain.

"To-morrow," said the knight, in parting with his comrades, and appointing a rendezvous for the same evening, "to-morrow we will wring out of him such information as may be needful; but God

forbid that we should twist such a neck as that further than just to make him speak ! ”

That evening Douglas was visited in his lodgings by the three students, and grave debate was held among them as to the steps proper to be taken in David's behalf. On the plan of the challenge being mentioned, Nigel entered his protest on the score of its uncertainty. He said that the cavalier he had accidentally overthrown, by wounding his horse, was a match for any knight in Europe; that he had the air of a man who had lived in his saddle from the days of boyhood; and that such had been the force of his blow, that if the blade on which it was received had not been held obliquely, it must either have been broken, or forced into the wearer's (Nigel) body, who would thus have been slain with his own sword.

He did not doubt either the skill, or the valour, of Sir Archibald. He knew that he was both a Scot and a Douglas; whereas the other had perhaps never in his life seen a border foray, and

if he was indeed called Prelati, it was but the name of an Italian, who was no more to be compared to his ancestor the old Roman, than a Southron could be to a Norlander. Still he was a man of middle age, with the bone and muscle of Hercules in the form of Apollo; and he must, therefore, have the advantage of experience, weight, and strength over Sir Archibald, who was yet in his adolescence.

“If you mean that I am a boy,” said the young knight, colouring—

“Pardon me,” interrupted Nigel, “I mean simply that you have not yet arrived at the full weight and strength of your manhood. As for the word *adolescentia*, it is used by Latin writers when speaking of people even of forty years of age; and David, poor man, if he was here among us, would give you book and chapter for the fact.”

Bauldy, on the other hand, was for trusting to the prowess of his countryman, provided he would only abate some jot of his military honour—which

in his (Bauldy's) opinion should only be strictly adhered to in combats for state and show—and strike where and when he could, without considering any other end save the downfall of his enemy. This condition, however, the knight refused point blank to agree to; and, in fact, he began to consider within himself, in some dudgeon, whether he ought to prolong a counsel in which the advisers were such singularly incapable persons.

The opinion of Andrew, however, was more sensible; and it was just this: that till further information was obtained, no opinion should be formed at all.

“What we have as yet learned,” said he, “is from hearsay, and surmise, and old wives’ stories: and, in truth, we are not at this moment in absolute certainty that David, poor fellow, is at La Verrière at all. Now, if one of us were to go to the château, say in the character of an ambassador from Jacquin Houpelande, to announce the arrival of his goods, I am thinking that, provided

he took the precaution of carrying his eyes and ears with him, he would be likely to come back somewhat wiser than he went."

"Excellent," said the knight—"that is as good as the culverine !"

"And better loaded," observed the other two.

"Then the question is, which of us four would make the best spy."

"I claim as mine," said Douglas, "whatever risk may be going in this adventure. As a soldier, besides, I may be expected to know something of ruses and ambushes, as well as of defences, and onslaughts ; and I am, therefore, better qualified for the task than men of peace like you."

"It may be so, sir Archibald ; and yet I fear me, the idea of being the envoy of a tailor—for that is the plain Scottish of *sartor* and *vestiarius*—would sit upon your Douglas stomach like uncanny and unnatural food. Your knightly honour, besides, would be woefully in the way of your duty ; and I even doubt whether you could play

the spy, without saying as you peeped, 'by your leave, messire!'"

"Then I am your man," said Nigel: "for I am already guilty of a horse; and God knows, I am as ignorant of punctilio as if I ran upon four legs myself."

"Nigel, you are too long. Instead of spying, you would be spied by the whole castle, man, woman, and child. In five minutes you would be as well known, and as much thronged with company, as the postern gate; against the roof of which, by the same token, you would knock your head sorely, both in going in and coming out."

"Then it is I after all," said Bauldy, "for whom the adventure is reserved: seeing that I am neither a knight, nor a giant."

"But you are worse than both, my man, for you are in love. A prisoner yourself, how should you know to break the chains of another? Depend upon it you would see nothing at La Verrière but Jacquin Houpelande's daughter, and when it behoved you to put your mouth to a keyhole, and

whisper 'David!' you would cry, in a caterwaul that would draw the sentry's bowstring to his ear in a crack—'Felicite!' After all, I am thinking it must be just Andrew himself."

This conclusion had been privately come to by the other two students, from the very first; for Andrew enjoyed the reputation of being the second wisest in the class. Indeed, Nigel had said of him on a former occasion, that he wanted only a little more quickness, both in thought and action, to be nearly as good a man as daddy David himself. Before any resolution was taken, however, the matter of the Jew was thoroughly canvassed, and the mode in which they were to attempt to extract from him such information as they supposed he could give.

The knight again went over the details he had more loosely given on the road; and it must be said, that even the wildest part of the narrative was received without ridicule by his present audience. They remarked (what was indeed the fact) that David had in all probability repented of

his scepticism before now; and Andrew even ventured to blame generally the master-student for jumping too hastily to conclusions that were against the sense both of scripture and oral tradition.

To say nothing of the magicians of Egypt, who could turn a rod into a serpent, and water into blood, in the twinkling of an eye, were there not as certain traces of this abominable art in comparatively modern times—even in the reigns of the later kings of Judah? Under Hoshea, we know that human sacrifices were offered up to the infernal deities—that enchantment was used—and that men sold themselves to the enemy. Still later, the same enormities were committed by Manasseh; who is also said to have “observed times,” that is to say, to have practised judicial astrology, and to have dealt with familiar spirits and wizards. Nay, in the time of the apostles themselves, when St. Philip walked, in the body, through the streets of Samaria, was there not a sneek-drawer called Simon, who had thrown his

cautrips over the city for some years past, and “bewitched the inhabitants with his sorceries?”

The instance of Simon, as Andrew went on to remark, together with that of the divining spirit of the Philippian damsel cast forth by St. Paul, occurred *after* the crucifixion; and were sufficient of themselves (to say nothing of the traditions of the church) to overturn the opinions of certain speculators, who hold that the visible kingdom of darkness on the earth was overthrown at the same moment when the veil of the temple was rent in twain. He, therefore, had no hesitation in taking upon himself to blame severely the overhastiness of those who, for no other reason than that it surpassed their human reason, presumed to doubt of the existence of the art magic—of an art described, as aforesaid, by Moses fifteen hundred years before the Christian era; and mentioned, with more or less circumstantiality, by various succeeding authorities in holy writ, down to the days of the apostles.

The knight listened earnestly to this ratiocina-

tion, and regretted, perhaps for the first time, that he was not a scholar himself. The evidence of the Jew, however, was the true subject before them; for without it, there would be no possibility of telling whether or not David was really as one intended to pass through the fire to Moloch. In order to extract this evidence, a system of intimidation was considered the only one likely to succeed; and in case of failure, they determined without scruple to realize the fears of the unbelieving dog, and put him to the actual torture. How to get him again into their hands, however, was the question, now that Nigel's point of honour had been disposed of; and they were hotly engaged in discussing this momentous topic, when the door opened, and messire Jean walked into the room.

"Lupus in fabula!" cried the students in a breath.

"By Mary's[might," exclaimed Douglas, "he comes in good time!" and all four sprang upon their feet. The Jew turned round calmly, and bolted the door.

"What would ye?" said he, advancing to the table. "Lo! I am here, Caleb, the son of Benjamin, of the broken tribes of Israel. Speak, for I will answer you again!"

"That you *shall* do," replied Douglas, "but it suits our purpose that you should answer calmly and collectedly, taking heed that, if one word of falsehood pass your lips, you shall never leave this room alive. Sit down then, old man, and ease your weak limbs, that you may have more leisure to bethink you of your perilous situation."

"Speak not to me of peril! Speak not to me of ease! Behold! the staff is in my hand, and my bones shall not have any rest, neither shall my steps turn back, were there a dragon in the path!"

"Answer, then: Are you he who delivered up to slaughter the two young men who perished by assassination, at La Verrière?"

"I am the man."

"Are you he who devoted to the Evil One our comrade, David Armstrong?"

"Thou sayest it."

"Wretch! What fate may we expect for our friend?"

"Death—cruel, bloody, and secret!"

"And have you left a spare life at home," burst in Nigel, "that you come thus within our grasp?"

"Speak not to me of life! Speak not to me of home! Silence, young men, for I laugh at your threats, and defy your power! It is true, that but a little while ago I should have knelt at your feet, and implored your pity for my grey hairs. I should have hidden mine iniquity from you, as with a cloak, and have fenced it round about with lies, and with oaths. I should have trembled at your voice; and when your eyes saw me, my marrow would have melted within my bones, and my blood would have become as water. I should have withered away before your face, and shrunk aside out of your path, creeping on my belly like a worm. In a word, I should have been, and seemed, that abject thing into which the laws of the ignorant and brutal Christians have converted the sacred people. And why? Because, even

in the midst of obloquy and contempt, I had still something to live for—some secret hope—some lonely consolation—some object for which to strive—to dare—to suffer—to lie—to deceive—to lose earth—and to hazard heaven. I am now free. My gold is as dross in my eyes, for I have no child to inherit it. The savour of my life is gone, and I fear not death. I am a Jew no longer. Behold, I am a man !”

As Caleb spoke, his swarthy features seemed to be lighted up by the supernatural glare which shot from his eyes ; his insignificant figure appeared to expand ; and his action, open, bold, and picturesque, was invested with the wild dignity of despair. The knight and his comrades gazed in silence at this phenomenon ; and it was not till the old man had finished, and a sinking of the chest given token that his physical energies were not equal to those of his spirit, that they turned eyes of inquiry and astonishment upon one another. Douglas, however, had a clue to the emotions of the Jew, which the others did not possess.

"I could pity you," said he, "but that you have no touch of pity yourself. Even natural affection, which in all other men is so lovely, in you is nothing more than the meanest and most contracted selfishness. The whole world seems to pass away from your eyes with your own lost child—yet it does not cost you a shudder to give up to the assassin's knife the child of another!"

"Go to," said Caleb, hoarsely, "thy talk is foolishness; for thou talkest like a Gentile, forgetting that I am a Jew. Natural affection is the gift of Jehovah; and nowhere is the good seed more largely scattered than among the remnant of Israel. Pity! Is it of me thou demandest pity, whose life has been hunted like that of a wild beast, from his earliest hour? whose blood has been scented after like a sweet smell, even from the womb? Ye drive us away with blows and curses, from all honourable employment, to trade in monies; and if, peradventure, a lust of gold arise in our hearts, ye cry, 'Avarice is the nature

of the Jew !' Ye rob, beat, and insult us ; ye tear the flesh from off our bones ; ye burn us with fire ; ye rend our children from our arms ; and if in self-defence, or in vengeance, we shed but one drop of Christian blood, ' Behold !' ye cry, ' the Jew is a murderer from his mother's belly !' Away ! thy words are emptiness. Can a man satisfy his hunger with the east wind ?"

" It is idle arguing," interposed Andrew ; for the knight looked somewhat blank at a view of the case which was new in his day. " He knows not, and will not know, that in persecuting his people we do what is appointed, even unconsciously, to ourselves. But tell me, Jew, you who defend all things by the *lex talionis*, do you come hither to preach the doctrine to us, of express purpose that we may avenge the blood of our friend, by taking away from you a life which has now it seems become worthless in your eyes ?"

" I come with no such purpose ; but if ye demand, shall I not answer ? If ye accuse, shall I not defend myself ? And, my life having lost its

savour, are ye surprised that I speak as one who hath no fear? Now, hearken, for I will show ye wherefore I am come. My daughter, whom I intrusted to the care of your comrade, never reached the homes of her kin. She is now—she—Hagar—my child—she is now—there !” and his voice sank to a whisper of inexpressible horror, while he pointed with his arm, as if unable to name the place.

“She has no concern,” said Douglas, hastily, “in the danger of our comrade. Gilles de Retz, voluptuary though he be, will not defile himself with a Jewess ; and Orosmandel is far more likely to protect than to injure her.”

“Tell me not of Gilles de Retz—tell me not of Orosmandel—for there is one mightier than they at La Verrière! Never did he own superior on the earth. The great ones of the world are his servants, and the wise ones his tools. Where he is, there is he alone ; moving and swaying all things by the power of the prince of hell, and doing diligently the work of that invisible spirit,

of whom he is the agent and representative in the flesh. Now hearken : my daughter is in the power of that man, in the possession of that devil. Peradventure, ye think, because I am an Hebrew"—and a ghastly smile spread over the old man's face—"that it is my business now to save the golden casket, after the jewel hath been stolen? I say unto you, nevertheless, that I care no more for my daughter's life than for my own! Mine shall be the vengeance of Shechem, and of Absalom; and by this blade"—drawing as he spoke a long, straight knife from beneath his cloak—"shall Hagar be avenged, and David set free!"

The Jew paused for some moments; during which he looked eagerly into the eyes of the three young men, one after the other.

"Now tell me," continued he, "what will ye dare for the sake of your comrade? What will ye hazard for his life? A piece of gold, or an ounce of blood? How many hours, how many days, will ye sacrifice to his need?"

"We have but little gold," replied Douglas,

"and we weigh not our blood by the ounce ; yet have we a life a-piece of our own, which we will gladly put in jeopardy for David. As for time, that belongs to life, and must therefore go into the bargain."

"It is well—excellently well. Now, this will ye do for the sake of your comrade. As for the Hebrew woman, I know that she is even as a scorn and a laughter in your eyes ; yet, nevertheless, she must not dwell abroad in the world, to be a reproach to her mother's womb. Ye must also swear unto me, that ye will surely bring her forth with David, and deliver her into the hands of Rabbi Solomon, the son of Jacob, of this city."

"For what purpose?" demanded Douglas, with interest.

"It concerneth thee not. Yet will I answer, that in his house will Hagar sit down for the rest of her years, with her garments rent, and with dust upon her head."

"It may not be as you fear. I will not—dare not believe it." The old man shook his head ; his

face being yet paler than before; and notwithstanding the efforts of his spirit, he appeared ready to faint.

"Sit down," said Nigel, pressing him down upon a bench by main force, "and tell us, when you take breath, what is your plan, and how we are to assist in it."

"Fear not for my weakness," replied Caleb; "I know of a drug which, when the time cometh, will give me the strength of a lion, for the brief space I shall require it. One of you, the boldest and wisest, must enter within the walls of La Verrière, and hold communication with David of the nature I shall show. He must bring back unto me certain answers to my message; and on receiving these answers, he shall deliver unto the young man a paper which will teach him how to escape when a fitting moment arriveth. The rest of my plan I shall declare after the return of the envoy."

"Till we hear that plan," said Douglas, "we shall enter into no compact. So far as you have

now required, however, you may depend upon our assistance ; for it was already determined that one of us should go to the château upon espial. For myself, I still think, as I have told my friends, that the question should be brought to the arbitrement of arms ; and unless circumstances of extreme emergence occur, I shall require of you to defer your attempt till I have first tried my fortune with Prelati in the field." The Jew rose up in astonishment.

"Art thou mad?" said he—"Didst thou ever feel the weight of that arm thou wouldst challenge to open war?"

"I can only answer for the fingers," said Douglas ; "but they are every whit as good as my own."

"Young man ! young man ! If thou hast aught to bind thee to the world—if thou hast any comfort left, even in the midst of poverty and terror—if thy glory hath not been turned into shame, thy hope into despair—if thy only child hath not been reft away from thee, and cast forth into re-

proach and dishonour—strive not, as man striveth against man, with Prelati ! ”

“ If he is man,” said Douglas, “ he may be conquered by the arm of a man : if he is devil, he may be subdued by the aid of the Holy Spirit. But in the meantime, this is unprofitable talk. Andrew will visit you to-morrow morning, and then set forth on his mission of espial ; and on his return we five shall meet again.”

On this understanding they parted.

CHAPTER XI.

DAVID, in the meantime, unconscious of the exertions that were to be made in his behalf, felt himself dependant on his own energies, which he accordingly called up with proportionate force.

During the day-time he was busily engaged in preparing, under the directions of Orosmandel, certain chemical combinations, with the nature and powers of which he was unacquainted. Among other things he concocted a drug, in a fluid state, chiefly composed of the expressed juice of two Indian plants, which he had seen before, the *potamantis*, and the *gelatophyllis*. Their properties, he remembered, were mentioned by Pliny; but he knew that, when united, their

operation was somewhat similar to that of the *nepenthes* of Homer, given by Helen to Telemachus.

When the student, however, was directed to mingle among other things, with the sap of the latter plant, a liquid extracted from the grains of the *datura*, (used in the last century, if not in the present, for infamous purposes, by the Portuguese of Goa), he substituted, unobserved, a less equivocal article. He was aware, even while he did so, that the composition might be beneficial, although some of the parts individually were dangerous to virtue ; but Orosmandel was waiting at the moment to receive the mixture in a small golden phial, and he had no time for reflection. Some other drinks received so considerable an admixture of myrrh, that David, who possessed a general knowledge of the common drugs, was convinced that they must produce a certain degree of stupefaction.

“It was out of compassion,” said he, “that they offered our Lord wine mingled with myrrh,

when he was expiring in the torments of the cross. I pray Heaven that these brewings may be intended for as good a purpose !”

Besides potions of various kinds, valuable as it appeared from the minuteness of the quantity, there were other compositions on a greater scale, the component parts of which were almost all of a mineral nature. Some of them were phosphoric substances ; and some partook so decidedly of the character of gunpowder, and were produced in such large quantities, that David concluded the supply for the defence of the castle to be manufactured by Orosmandel.

It was in vain, however, to reason on the uses of these things ; for as yet he was treated merely as a subordinate drudge, whose knowledge of chemical manipulation enabled him to obey as skilfully, though as blindly, as a machine. He knew that physical agents were used in the invocation of fiends, and other purposes, by the professors of magic, from the days of Pharaoh ; and he knew that even the drugs, which were

said to work by enchantment, did not depend entirely for their virtue upon sorcery, but were composed, at least, in the natural vehicle, of juices extracted from plants or minerals. If Orosmandel, then, was a magician, his present studies could be easily accounted for, without supposing that the preparations were to be turned to any unlawful account, except as regarded his own soul.

David, however, who had naturally a taste for occult studies, had reasoned himself into the idea—now, it must be said, somewhat shaken—that magic, although in reality the highest branch of physics, was nothing more; and that its supernatural achievements were only delusions practised by knowledge upon ignorance. The struggles of Moses, for example, for the deliverance of his countrymen from the Egyptians, were nothing more than a trial of skill between him and the magicians of Pharaoh, in whose art he was a proficient. It was God who wrought upon the side of the Hebrew, and confounded him, no

doubt, as much as his antagonists. Even in their own art, Moses, who was a man of extraordinary genius, showed himself in some instances, but not in all, to be their master; yet, if the Lord had not assisted him with pestilence and famine, Pharaoh would have hardened his heart till doomsday.

But it was not entirely with such labours and such speculations that David's time was filled up. The staircase gate was open during the day; and, as frequently as he found opportunity, he went out to walk on the ramparts, in the hope of falling in with mademoiselle de Laval, whose protection he intended to invoke for Hagar. He always, however, returned disappointed. He saw neither the Damsel nor the Jewess; and never met with a single inhabitant of the castle, who did not avoid him as if he had been a spectre.

His only hope now was in the expected visit of Pauline to Orosmandel; and every night he watched for her coming, till long after the mid hour. These prowlings very soon gave him so

perfect a knowledge of the localities, that he was able to traverse the passage in utter darkness with the same ease and freedom as at noon-day. No light was permitted to be brought into the passage; and he flattered himself that he should find opportunity to whisper a word into the young lady's ear as she passed. If this was impossible, might he not glide into the private apartments of her father, from which she would come, and the door of which would no doubt remained unfastened till her return? Might he not thus be enabled to penetrate even to the chamber in which Hagar was confined? This would indeed be a perilous adventure; but the scholar knew, that what in other cases would be madness, in circumstances of extremity is true wisdom.

His mind more and more misgave him with regard to Hagar's situation; for the dwarf was not the only traverser of the dreadful swamps of the Erdre. One night he had seen, from his watch-tower, when broad awake, and in the possession of all his usual faculties, the figure of an

armed man glide along that extraordinary path ! It is true, he resembled more an apparition than a human being ; for he appeared to be independent of the common laws of motion. The dwarf was accustomed to leap and gambol along, wanting only a light in his hand to be a true *ignis fatuus* ; but this Appearance skimmed along the surface of the swamp like a shadow. The night was dark, and David could not catch distinctly the outline of the figure ; but in a certain quiet majesty of deportment, it resembled the mysterious visitor of the alchemist in his subterranean abode. The heart of the scholar quaked as the idea flashed through his brain. Prelati possessed access to the castle, unknown, perhaps, to its lord himself. Prelati would be a confidential visitor in the prison of Hagar. Prelati and Gilles de Retz—these were the Scylla and Charybdis of the unfortunate Jewess ! David was more and more determined to risk his life, even for the purpose of whispering a word of caution into her ear.

One night, after meditating on these things,

and when just preparing to descend the ladder as usual, for it was near the middle hour, his quick ear caught a sound, as if of some one coming up. He lay down instantaneously, but noiselessly, on the bed ; and when, in another instant, the dwarf made his appearance at the trap-door, he started as if from sleep.

“Who is there ?” cried he, with the ill-humour of one suddenly awakened, “what do you want? I am for none of your amusements ; and I cannot work both night and day !”

“Thou must do what thou art bidden,” replied the dwarf with asperity, “and that instantly, for I have no time to parley. The master calleth for thee. Descend quickly ;” and so saying, he disappeared. David obeyed at once ; and soon found himself in the presence of Orosmandel in his study.

“I was minded,” said the philosopher, addressing him with his usual mildness, “to have explained to thee this night yonder plan of the heavens ; but even now I am to have a visitor

from the private apartments of the baron. When thou shalt hear a knock, open with this key. Take heed that thou admit no more than one, and that thou lock the door the instant after. Betake thee then to thy rest; and another time, perhaps to-morrow, the thirst of thy soul shall be satisfied."

"I thank you humbly," replied David, "but how shall I find the door in the dark?"

"True: I had forgotten that thou art yet a stranger. Here is a light"—and, putting his hand behind the curtain which covered the wall, he delivered to him a small lamp of a very singular form. David still waited.

"Get thee gone," said Orosmandel, stepping into the circle which inclosed the altar; "and do what thou art bidden."

"Sir," exclaimed David, in surprise, "the lamp is not lighted!" The philosopher raised his hand above his head, as if to say that he might not be spoken to there; a kind of hushing sound ran round the walls; and the student left the apart-

ment. No sooner had he gained the passage, than a flame rose up from the dead lamp in his hand, and burnt steadily ; and at the same moment, the startled novice heard a knock at the door.

He opened promptly, and found mademoiselle de Laval alone, and without a light.

“ Damsel,” whispered he, while shutting and locking the door after her, with as much noise as possible, “ I am a friend and kinsman of Douglas. Protect, I beseech you, for his sake, the young woman whom he recommended to you at Paris, and who is now within these walls, in imminent peril !” Pauline started ; but instantly recovering her self-possession, replied in the same tone :

“ Have no fear for her if she is here. And Douglas—?”

“ He watches over you : but it is needful for you to know—”

“ What art thou about ?” said the voice of Orosmandel, at the moment, almost close to his ear.

"The lock is difficult; and you cannot expect the hand which holds for the first time a lamp like this, to be perfectly steady."

"Give it me, my poor boy—and the key. Now get thee to thy rest; for I shall summon thee early to-morrow." David needed not to be bidden twice. With a profound but hasty obeisance, he made for his own premises, as if receiving the order as a boon; and presently the turning of the passage concealed him from their eyes, and he was once more in the dark.

The door of the study was open as before, while he passed. The lamp which hung from the ceiling rendered apparent the mysterious gloom of the place. Here Orosmandel was about to render an explanation highly interesting and important to all; in the course of which a clear light would probably be thrown upon the character of the sage himself. David, naturally daring, and filled with that strong curiosity which is the soul of adventure, did not hesitate for more than a second; and, although he would far rather have

plunged unbidden into the privacy of Gilles de Retz, yet since in the present case there was no choice afforded him, he glided into the chamber of mystery, and concealed himself behind the black hangings.

Some moments of suspense ensued. He put out his hands at each side to feel that he had no neighbours in this perilous retirement; when one of them encountered a human skeleton, and the other an unfolded mummy standing upright. The scholar would fain have had these things exchanged for a couple of living men cased in armour; but he determined at all events to get out of such awful society. Beyond the mummy, however, there was some object which required to be moved to allow him to pass; and the hand of the skeleton was raised, as if to serve as a barrier against intrusion. David, mastering a repugnance stronger than we can well conceive in our philosophic age, took hold of the fleshless member to try if he could put it aside without noise. The dead fingers instantly closed upon his; and it

required the strongest effort of courage and presence of mind to repress the shout of surprise and terror which rose to his lips. He extricated himself, however, as gently as possible from this unnatural grasp; and Orosmandel and the Damsel having now entered the room, he put back his damp hair from his brow, wiped away the drops of perspiration that were falling into his eyes, and prepared to look and listen with all the intelligence he could at such a moment command.

Pauline followed her conductor shrinkingly. She seemed afraid of the noise of her own footsteps; although that was little louder than the sound produced by a dry leaf falling on the ground.

"Father," she said, at last, "I can scarcely see you. Is it forbidden to have more light in this place?"

"In this place," replied Orosmandel, "we see with the eyes of the soul; while artificial light—such is the preponderance of the senses in our earthly tabernacle—would only confuse and bewilder. In a little while, when thou art more ac-

customed to the gloom, thou wilt see more clearly; but in the meantime, in order to dissipate uncertainty, whence arise fear and trouble of mind, behold the form of that small chamber, where a votary of science seeketh to extend his hitherto unimportant acquisitions;" and, touching the lamp, which hung motionless above their heads, with a slender black wand, a column of flame arose from it, which enlightened for an instant the whole apartment.

David had cause at that moment to congratulate himself on his forethought; for, instead of looking through the opening of the curtain, he had drilled in it a small hole for his eye, with the point of his dagger. The light, momentary as it was, seemed to be divided into different colours; and it was this perhaps which gave a strange appearance of instability to the whole scene. The curtains, with which the walls were completely hung, except at the altar-place, appeared to move and wave; and it was seen that they were not entirely black, but diversified with various figures, of a dull red co-

lour, representing men and monsters, which acquired the appearance of living but [still shadowy motion. The brilliant specks with which the roof was studded, reflected the many-coloured light in such a way, that they looked like a crowd of stars, thrown suddenly into confusion. The signs of the constellations, in like manner, which adorned the picture behind the altar, seemed to wheel round in a mystical dance. All was motion ; yet shadowy and indefinite, like the phantasmagoria of a dream.

When the column of flame sank down into the lamp, as suddenly as it had arisen, and only the usual, small, dim light remained, a double gloom seemed to fall upon the place ; and at the moment a hushing sound, like the one formerly noticed by David, ran round the apartment. On the present occasion, it approached so close to his ear, that he extended his hands to lay hold of the mysterious whisperer. They met, however, only the solid wall behind ; and the sound passed on, and died away near the altar.

“ Darkness,” said the sage, after a pause, and

in that sweet, rich, half-melancholy voice, which lingered on the ear that heard it like a spell, "Darkness, my dear daughter, is the light of the soul. The beams of the sun awaken the body to its functions, reminding us of our wants, and stimulating our passions and desires. Then the senses rise up, like an armed troop, to combat, and too often subdue, the mind; and thus we live through the daylight, as if the earth, its business, its glories, its delights, were the proper objects of human ambition, and the impassable boundaries of human pride. But in the night time, in the solitude of our chamber, with nothing accorded to our weakness, save the dim lamp which seems to reflect upon the studious scholar the experience of by-gone ages, we are no longer of the things which crawl upon the earth, build their habitations with its fragments, satisfy their aspirations with its rewards, and at last lay their heads in its dust. We are beings—fearful, mystic, wonderful beings of the universe. Our spirits traverse the immensity of space. Bound no longer in the chains of time,

we plunge into eternity. We feel a craving after knowledge, a hungering and thirsting after power, which are not of the world ; and our souls, indignant at the destiny to which they appear to be devoted by their mortal birth, at length doubt, question, deny its power, and assert their freedom and majesty, as spirits of the universe."

"Go on, my father—O go on ! I have no longer any fear. I would not tremble before the demons."

"Alas ! alas ! it is thy soul which speaketh ; forgetting that earth-born as thou art, the spirit cannot look even into the sublimest mysteries, save through the eyes of the body. Fear must be his, and trembling of the limbs, and quaking of the heart, and doubt, and shrinking, and horror, and self-reproach, who would seek to climb one step in the scale of being ! The mind cannot soar, except by trampling on the body. And what is the body in its connexion with spirit ? Prejudice, habit, instinct, strong affections, all that we are taught to practise, admire, esteem, and love, even from the womb ; and wisely so, if we are satisfied to re-

main on the surface of the earth, herding with the other things of clay."

"The virtuous affections of the body," said Pauline, "cannot be harmful to the spirit; and, as for the vicious ones, I feel that my courage would hold, even to obey literally the injunction of Scripture, and cut off or pluck out the member that offended me."

"What dost thou know, my child, of virtue or vice? What *canst* thou know, inured as thy spirit hath been, even from the womb, to follow the line drawn for thee by others? Come, answer me, didst thou form thy own habits, even of thought? or didst thou merely pour them, according as thou wert bidden, into the mould prepared for them by the society in which thou hadst the chance to grow? 'This is right,' thou wilt tell me, 'because thus said my grandame,' and 'This is wrong, because it is so written in a book!' Who were they who watched over thy infancy, and taught wisdom to thy youth? Were they themselves wise? Did their own spirits soar

above their human nature? Or were they, on the contrary, lower in intellect and meaner in aspirations than thyself—the *abecedarii* of philosophy, who teach the elemental forms they have learnt, without knowing their uses or properties? Such, I know, were thy instructors; and such are the instructors of the great mass of mankind. This is why prejudice flourisheth, while mind standeth still. This is why the search after knowledge is so difficult; yea, after that knowledge which is virtue as well as power, and which comprehendeth everything great, good, and desirable.”

The sage folded his arms upon his bosom with a deep sigh; and Pauline, half fearing that she had offended him by her ignorance, and half panic-struck at the consequences which might be deduced from his reasoning, gazed on him in silence. David, although he could not distinguish her features, was able to guess at the tumultuous emotion into which her soul was thrown, by the unequal heaving of her chest.

“Yes, Pauline de Laval,” resumed Orosmandel,

"fearful is the penalty of that ambition which scorns the playthings of the great of the earth ; fearful, even though suffered merely through the affections of the body. It is the punishment of Prometheus, for daring to penetrate into the far-hidden mysteries of knowledge—the tearing and gnawing of that vulture, by which is figured Remorse. Not courage alone is wanting, but also endurance ; not the will to dare, but also the constancy to suffer. The enemies which we must conquer are not so much the senses, as the habits and prejudices which mingle even with the operations of mind, and chain our spirits to the earth. Many there be who soar as boldly as Icarus ; but whose weak hearts and waxen wings at length dissolve as they approach the sun. Enough, my daughter. The time has not yet arrived when thou shalt be put to the test ; when that question regarding thee shall be determined, the solution of which an order of spirits born far higher than we, await at this moment in fear and curiosity."

"Would that the moment were come !" ex-

claimed Pauline. "And yet, no—I am like one who approaches, with intense longing, some fateful secret; and yet feels a strange joy, mingled with terror, in hovering darkling round the brink. Your words, my father, sound not like the words of other men. They come as if from afar off, wafted to the ear over the gulf of time, and rich with the music of an earlier world, when the gods talked with men. While I listen, the remembrance of more youthful days comes back upon me; when, wandering by the shores of the lake of Grand Lieu, I heard the tones of church-bells from within, and stretched my head over the brink, to look in the deep waters for the towers of the buried city."

"And thou hast been there?" said Orosmandel, suddenly, and with more of human interest than his voice usually expressed—"Thou hast *heard* the bells of Herbadilla; thou hast *seen* the towers of the Nannetes! Alas! alas!" and a warm smile broke over the old man's face; "these are the toys of imagination; for the morsels of carved

work, and the utensils of forgotten form, which are occasionally cast forth by the tide, are now the only remains of the city of the ancestors of thy people. And yet I, who dream no longer the dreams of youth ; I, too, have wandered by that lonely lake, and its sounds were in my ear, and its palaces before my eye ! But in vain I attempted to syllable the sighs of the wind into *her* voice ; in vain I demanded of the sullen wave to give me back even her mortal form ! It is strange this retentiveness of mind, which, after a lapse of time sufficient for an empire to crumble into dust, still continues to preserve intact the images of an early superstition. Why, Herbadilla itself is a heap of shapeless stones, covered by fifteen thousand acres of deep water ! and she stands there at this moment before me, as perfect in life and limb as that beautiful and graceful form of eighteen summers ! ”

Orosmandel spoke as one communing with himself—*seeing* his visitor, yet unconscious of her presence. Pauline hardly breathed, so much was

she amazed and perplexed by words capable of bearing so extraordinary a meaning; and David forgot at that moment both mummy and skeleton.

"Father," said the Damsel at last, impelled by a curiosity which she could not control, "I have heard that Herbadilla was submerged in the time of St. Martin, in the sixth century."

"It is a vulgar error," replied the philosopher, calmly.

"Is it not strange that even the learned are unable to assign a date to an event of such magnitude?"

"Not at all. The men of the present day are only learned in the learning of former ages. At the time of the destruction of the city, ignorance was so general, and so profound, that events still more stupendous took place, unchronicled or unobserved. On the night of the seventeenth of September, eight hundred and eighty-four, Herbadilla was ;—before sunrise, on the following morning, it was not. The surrounding marshes themselves

were drowned in the waters they sent forth ; and a vast lake slept tranquilly in the valley, where, but a few hours before, the atmosphere had vibrated with the manifold and mighty voices of a city."

"Then the story is untrue, that the catastrophe took place on account of the sins of the inhabitants—that the holy St. Martin led out from the devoted walls a single righteous family, who had received and protected him—and that the mother of that family, looking back, in disobedience to the saint's commands, was changed into a pillar of stone ! "

"It is the story of the virtuous and hospitable Lot, plagiarized by the priests, at a time when there existed not sufficient genius in the order to give originality to their fabrications. St. Martin was long since gathered unto his fathers : yet one was there, to whom chance and a knowledge of the phenomena of nature, had revealed the coming catastrophe. A single individual, not a single family, was led out by him :—not even the

family of his only sister—of his twin-sister—of his sole-blood relation upon earth ! It is true, the individual was fair, was passing fair ; and he loved her with the love of the spirit as well as of the senses. The sacrifice, however, he had made for her safety, was unavailing. She was torn from his arms by the tide, and plunged into an abyss, whose black waters cast him forth to wander desolate, and alone upon the earth. If you knew his feelings—if you heard the shrieks of his despair, while he fled from the spot !” Orosmandel’s voice sunk to a whisper, while he added, relapsing again into unconsciousness of the presence of another ; “ They sometimes come back upon me even now ; but they seem as if they were not my own ! ”

“ Your sister’s family,” cried Pauline, incoherently, as if striving to lay hold of the sympathies of nature for support, in a moment of supernatural awe, “ I would say the sister of that—that—man ; did they all perish ? ”

“ All save one ; a boy who chanced to be from home on the fatal night. His uncle watched over

him, and led him on to honour and distinction. His son, his son's son, his grandson's son—all, in like manner, arose in worldly preferment."

"And the line is still unbroken?" Orosmandel crossed his arms upon his bosom, and raised his head, till the faint beams of the lamp falling upon his noble features, displayed the traces of as much grief as a superior being may be supposed to feel at the casualties of human nature. He then slowly fixed his eyes upon those of Pauline, and answered her question with a mournful wave of the head.

"The name of the last of the line," said he, "was Prelati."

At this name the interest of the lurking student was increased to a painful degree; and Pauline seemed to be preparing her mind for something formidable.

"Father," said she, at length, in a steady tone, "According to your doctrine of the dissipation of the spirit, when it leaves the body, there can be no spectral appearance of the dead. Am I correct?"

"Thy supposition," replied Orosmandel, "is correct as a general rule; for such is the law of what is called nature."

"There are, then, exceptions to this rule?"

"There are. When a man raises himself by his acquisitions in occult knowledge, to a higher grade of being than that in which he was born—this is an exception to the general law of nature, an infringement of the universal system of classes, achieved by individual daring and wisdom. Such a man is a rebel against that species of order which is vulgarly called destiny; his aim is power, not over matter, but mind; and if successful, although he cannot restore life to the dead, or even bloom to the withered plant, yet, after mortal life hath departed, can he enchain, for a certain space, the spirit in its earthly tenement, and even compel it to his service. But I perceive what troubleth thy mind—thou hast seen Prelati?"

"In body—in spirit—with these eyes—with my soul—and with my senses!"

"Even for this have I invited thee hither.

Listen. There approacheth a crisis in the fortunes of thy father, which thou alone canst avert, but which it is mine to delay till thou art schooled enough in wisdom for the effort—Nay, hear me !”

“But I *must* speak ! Describe the effort—name the sacrifice ; and, by the aid of Him who planted filial love in my breast, I will save my father, if all the demons of the abyss should conspire to thwart and affright me !”

“Thou knowest not what thou sayest. The demons are not subdued by defiance, but propitiation ; and it is not spectral enemies thou shalt have to combat, but the habits and prejudices of thy human nature. Again I say, no more of this for the present. It is not by living men I do my work ; for over living men these aged limbs could have no control—yet I purpose not now to disclose unto thee what in the meantime it boots thee not to know. Against the testimony of thy body, however, of thy spirit, of thine eyes, of thy soul, of thy senses, I say unto thee, Prelati sleepeth with the dead !”

Pauline's head sunk upon her bosom ; and an air of dissatisfaction, which in moments of meaner emotion would have been called sullenness, seemed to spread over her whole figure. Orosmandel stood looking at her with a calm but earnest gaze.

"Father," said she at length, raising her head, and standing erect ; "the trial, to which you hint that I am to be subjected, requires, I may perceive, by the preparation that is necessary, a courage passing that of woman. Put mine to the proof ! even here, in this mystic chamber, and at the dead hour of night ! You imply that you have power over the dead : summon, then, before me the spirit of Prelati !"

Orosmandel stepped back in surprise ; and gazed at her for some moments before answering.

"I expected not this," said he, "for thou art a woman, though of the blood of Laval. Yet the visit would be less terrible to thee than to me for with it will arise the apparitions of memory which, in some cases, are more harrowing to the soul than those of the dead. But I force not this upon

thee ; for it is not necessary. Thy trial, believe me, will be sore enough when it comes. Yet, if after consideration thy desire holdeth, I will not refuse."

"I do not retract—I am ready."

"Yet, at least, wait till the morrow ; when thou mayest enter here with the consciousness, that only these walls are between thee and the daylight."

"I beseech you, my father !"

"Then be it so. But hearken to my counsel. Bethink thee that thou art in thy father's house—that thou art surrounded by the bravest and most faithful in the province—that darkness is nothing more than the absence of the beams of the sun—that thou art thyself a spirit—and that the only difference between thee and the spirits of the dead is the want or possession of that feeble breath of life which may be extinguished as easily as the flame of a lamp. Summon up the energies of thy mind ; and suffer not thy understanding to be bewildered by thy fears. Gaze boldly around thee. Look at things as they are ; and not as thy

imagination would make them: and so, even thy human nature will bear the shock unmoved."

Orosmandel then, entering within the circle, glided slowly and noiselessly towards the table.

The lamp burnt still dimmer than before; the gloom was like that of a sepulchre; and the majestic form of the minister of that equivocal altar resembled a tall, dark, shadow. He bent over the mystic book, without opening it; and then waving his slender wand in the air, a small blue flame appeared at the point; by which Pauline saw that he searched among various oblong pieces of parchment, projecting from the end of the volume, and impressed with seals.

The speck of flame was so small, that it scarcely illumined a hand's breadth around it; and yet the light, as the wand was moved from time to time—falling now upon the antique vessels upon the table—now on the remarkable head of the operator—and now bringing out, for an instant, some fantastic figure on the picture behind, added greatly to the effect of the scene.

Having found the one which he sought among

the ends of parchment, forming, as it appeared, the index of the book, he opened the ponderous volume at the place ; and at the same instant a rumbling sound was heard throughout the apartment, resembling the muttering of distant thunder. Stooping over the leaves, he seemed to read for some time ; during which the silence was so intense, that David could hear distinctly the breathing of Pauline. He then repeated the words aloud ; first in a low voice, but soon waxing by degrees, till the whole atmosphere of the room vibrated with the sound. Orosmandel, then, snatching a golden vessel from the table, turned hastily round ; and, at the instant, before the eyes of the spectators, the black girdle which he usually wore changed into a circle of fire.

A thick smoke issued from the vessel, which was formed like a censer ; and which the Magician waved about in all directions. As the fumes reached Pauline, she appeared, from the sinking of her form, to be struck with sudden faintness ; but the next instant she rallied ; she

raised her figure to its utmost height ; and then, bending forward, seemed to watch the event with an intensity of expectation which was visible in the convulsive heavings of her bosom.

David also experienced a slight sensation of sickness, as the vapour, eddying round the room, arrived at his place of concealment. This speedily went off, however, or else was controlled by strong resolution ; and he gazed at Orosmandel, as if he would have pierced into his very soul. But his sight became at length confused. The fiery girdle of the magician dazzled his eyes ; the curtains were shaken, as if by a blast of wind ; the hushing sound was repeated in his ear, first in a whisper, and then louder and louder, till the sound became a continuous scream. Terrified lest he should fall, for everything seemed to reel around him, he snatched from his pocket a phial of strong essence, with which he was in the habit of counteracting the effects upon his brain of certain drugs he sometimes compounded ; and after inhaling for some time the spirit, he found that

the delusions which had beset him wore partially off—or else, that the real confusion of sights and sounds around him began to subside.

He now saw that Orosmandel had left the enchanted circle, and advanced towards Pauline; who remained in the same agitation, and in the same attitude, only leaning further forward, as if she would have fallen on her face.

“He comes!” cried the magician—“Rally, daughter! Courage, noble spirit! for I shall not leave thee: although I may not myself look upon the countenance of him who was in life the only remaining link which connected me with the world;” and Orosmandel, walking to the side of the apartment, covered himself with the curtains.

The attention of the scholar was now directed exclusively to the space within the circle; and after an interval which appeared painfully long, he saw a light-coloured vapour rising from the altar, which was followed by a sudden flame, illuminating for an instant the whole apartment. But the smoke and flame vanished as suddenly as they had arisen; and at the same moment the Appear-

ance of a man clothed in black armour stood by the table.

It was the form of Prelati. The features wore the same calm and dignified expression which David had remarked on two former occasions. They were stamped by nothing of the ghastliness of death; and the attitude and manner of the figure, composed and unaffected, were altogether free from the appearance of *mystery* which is vulgarly associated with the idea of a supernatural being. The scene, however, the gloom, the hour, the evocation, the suddenness of the vision—all combined had such an effect upon the sensibilities of Pauline, that when the apparition advanced, as if for the purpose of speaking, and a kind of radiance broke over its face preparatory thereto, she fainted, and fell to the ground.

At this sight, David, who in the deep interest of the moment, had neglected to defend himself against the magic vapour which filled the room—was thrown into a state of feverish excitement, almost resembling frenzy. He laid his hand upon the curtain, for the purpose of tearing it open,

and rushing to the assistance of the Damsel. But his habitual presence of mind triumphed; and, inhaling the essence strongly, he looked once more through his hole of observation.

The spectre had vanished; and Orosmandel with his back towards him, now bent over Pauline, chafing her temples with ointment. She was therefore safe. This was the moment of escape, if escape were possible at all; and David, after an instant's reflection, glided forth from his lurking-place, and, although reeling, from the confusion of his brain, contrived to step so lightly, that he succeeded in gaining the door unperceived. When he was fairly in the passage, he was fain to lean for some moments against the wall; but the cool air speedily revived him, and presently he found himself once more in his own dormitory.

Here his first business was to drink largely from the water-pitcher, and to bathe his head in the refreshing element. He then threw himself down upon the pallet, wondering within himself whether the adventures of the night were over. His doubts on this subject were soon at an end;

for two or three minutes had scarcely elapsed, when he heard Orosmandel at the bottom of the ladder calling him by his name ; he sprang up on the instant, loosened his dagger in the sheath, in case of need, and descended to the passage, where he found the sage, with a lighted lamp in his hand.

“Thou slumberest lightly, my son,” said the latter, in his usual tone, “and this is well, for it indicates a preponderance of the intellectual over the corporeal part.”

“It is a custom,” replied David, “which we have over the water ; where sometimes, if a sleeping man start not up ere the voice is well out of the lips that call, he has a fair chance of awaking in purgatory.”

“Thine, I know, is a wild country ; but casualties sometimes occur, even in the dwellings of science. Here is a maiden, whose physical strength hath proved unequal to the vigour of her mind. Take her up in thy arms, and carry her through the private apartments, of the baron ; delivering her at the end of the corridor into the hands of

her attendants." He led the way as he spoke, to the door of the study; where Pauline lay upon the ground, resting her head against the wall, and, to all appearance, fast asleep.

"Take her up in thy arms," continued Orosmandel, "and have no fear, for the baron is forth to night. And be sure, that when her handmaidens have laid her down, thou linger awhile. till she awake. Then shalt thou put thy lips to her ear, and demand, 'Where hast thou been? What sawest thou?' for the answer thou shalt bring me will indicate the description of medicine she must receive to-morrow." David did as he was commanded, without reply; and the philosopher lighted him with his fair burden, along the passage, and opened the door with his own hands.

After descending some steps, and turning round a sharp angle, the student found himself in a corridor of great length, lighted at intervals by lamps hung from the roof. The doors on either side opened into the private apartments of Gilles de Retz; and one of these, no doubt, was the prison-house of Hagar.

David knocked at a venture, at some of these doors, as he went along; and at length, one was opened by an elderly woman, who demanded, in some surprise, but with infinite respect, what he wanted?

"The lady," replied he. She hesitated, looking frightened, and perplexed.

"Conduct me to her instantly," said he, sternly, and pointing behind with a significant gesture towards the magician's tower. Her scruples immediately vanished: and she led the way to a door a little further on, where she knocked softly.

"Who knocketh?" demanded a voice within.

"It is I," replied the woman, "you must open at once."

"Not at this hour, to any one—not till the light of God shine upon the world."

David knocked in the manner he had been wont to do at the subterranean door, and repeated aloud the word, "Trismegistus!" when immediately, as if wrought upon by a spell, the barrier flew open. On entering the room, he turned round deliberately, and shut the door in the face of the

astonished gouvernante. He then laid down his burden upon Hagar's bed, which had not yet been pressed by herself, and applying his phial of essence to the nostrils of the sleeper, she started, and awoke.

"Where hast thou been?" said he softly.
"What hast thou seen?"

"I have been beyond the clouds," answered Pauline, but without returning to consciousness of the things or persons around her, "and I have seen him, Prelati, who came from the grave to meet me."

"And when he vanished from before your eyes, what then?"

"I followed him, for I could not help it. He called my name; and I mounted after him into the air, higher, higher than the lark soars, or the cloud rolls. The stars swept in circles above our heads, hissing through the golden air, and the earth was like a star beneath our feet, only stationary and alone. Then Prelati turned round, and I saw that he was a demon of the abyss; and

I flew shrieking down the fields of space, till the whole universe rang with my cries. But he seized me ; he caught me by my long hair, that streamed in the wind—when suddenly his arm was struck from his body by the blow of a sword. We are now safe. Hide me, love, in thy coat, and lay the Bloody Heart next to mine. But take away the dead arm that still clings to my hair.—Faugh ! it makes me shudder. Cut off the tress—there—

“ ‘ O Douglas, Douglas,
Tender and true ! ’ ”

Pauline's voice wandered into a well-known tune, as she repeated these lines of a Scottish ballad ; and at the close she sank into a profound sleep.

Hagar, in the meantime, had been employed in arranging the bewildered lady in her bed ; and David lost some portion of the answer to his questions, in observing the grace of her motions, and the kindness and pity of her looks.

“ Hagar,” said he at length, taking hold of

both her hands, "I must be brief, for every moment is counted. The Damsel of Laval has promised to protect you ; and you have indeed need of all the protection you can receive, both from earth and heaven. Taste not of their potions or elixirs ; let not their ointments touch your skin ; and when their perfumes assail your senses, inhale the contents of this phial. Avoid the philosopher's tower, as you would avoid the abyss of hell ; for Prelati is there—the friend, the confidant, the accomplice of Orosmandel. Be wary, yet let not your heart fail ; and, in whatever circumstances of peril you may be placed, remember that there is one within these walls who would cheerfully lose his life to save one hair of your head !"

"Friend ! Brother ! Why is this ? I know thou hast the wit and the power to escape. Fly, I entreat, I implore thee, and leave in the hands of the Most High a life far less precious than thine !"

"May God do so to me, and more also, if I fly without you !"

"O wherefore is this? Merciful providence, this is the sorest trial of all! Get thee gone to thy people, to thy home, to thine altar; and I swear by the living God, that the desolate Jewess will bless thee with her last breath!"

"Here," said the student, "all creeds are alike; for this is the gate of death. Christian and Jewess no more, we are fellow-beings, twin-children of mortality, with one God for our Judge, one earth for our grave. Farewell!"

She could not answer for weeping. He opened the door, and signed once more an adieu. She clasped her hands upon her throbbing bosom, and threw them towards him, as if they contained the deepest, dearest blessings of her heart.

"Hagar!" cried he, with a sinking voice.

"David!"

And so they parted.

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THE
M A G I C I A N

BY
LEITCH RITCHIE

. THREE VOLUMES

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THE MAGICIAN.

CHAPTER I

IN this well-read age, it is needless to say, that the Jew's proposal to assassinate an enemy, too powerful to be brought to public justice, was listened to by his audience of the fifteenth century without the slightest manifestation either of surprise or horror. Douglas still thought, however, that he had a better chance of success with the sword, than the feeble old man with the dagger; and besides this, like a true knight-errant, he would almost have regretted the liberation of his mistress from the dragon which haunted her, if the adventure had been achieved by another. As for the three students, they were satisfied with neither champion.

They thought—and, perhaps, with reason—that the habitual punctilios of the knight would pass very well at a tourney, but were altogether out of place in the present emergency; while the deadly purpose of Caleb, after they had withdrawn from the fascination of the old man's glare, appeared to them almost ridiculous.

But the cool, or rather cold judgment of Andrew mastered even his own temperament; and, on the morning of his adventure, he took the way to the house of the Jew, determined to listen attentively to his instructions, and to obey them so far as he found it practicable and prudent.

The house of Rabbi Solomon was easily found; and he was conducted through several dark and narrow passages in it to the apartment occupied by Caleb. The room was large, but scantily furnished; and he found its tenant sitting at a table placed in the middle of the floor. No books, no papers, no food, were before him: his occupation was gone. No more the busy, restless, feverish alchemist we have seen him, he sat leaning his head upon his hand, his eyes round and dilated,

staring upon vacancy, and his features as destitute of colour and mobility as those of a corpse.

“Cover her with a veil!” said he, as Andrew approached the table, but without moving even his eyes, and in the voice of a sleeper who dreams. “I will not look upon her: not if my heart breaketh! Begone!” He looked up; and, after resting for an instant upon the visiter, his glance wandered round the room, as if in search of some one. The next moment he recovered himself, with a sound like that of a repressed shiver; and, crushing his withered fingers together, he rose up.

“It is cold,” said he, with a ghastly smile; “but I cannot give thee a warmer welcome, for my fire is out; see! there is not a spark left!” and he walked towards the chimney, which, indeed, bore no vestige of fire, save the ashes of last winter. “Who hath done this?” continued he, starting back. “Here be two stools! For whom is the second? Why, what a fool am I! Sit thee down, friend Andrew, for thou and I make two; sit thee down—sit thee down.”

Caleb betrayed no farther wandering of mind

during the interview. His thoughts, disturbed by the entrance of Andrew, in the midst of a reverie which had probably lasted several hours, seemed to recover their tranquillity as easily as the waters of a lake broken by the plunge of a stone; and the communion held between the two allies—with one brief and slight exception—was steady and business-like.

The questions to be propounded by Andrew related chiefly to the changes that might have taken place in the localities of the Magician's tower, and their connection with the rest of the building, during the residence of Orosmandel—a personage with whom Caleb appeared to be altogether unacquainted. He was particularly desirous of ascertaining whether the same interior communication, as formerly, still existed with the general storehouses of the castle; and he described minutely the manner in which it had been the custom to remove bulky articles from these dépôts into the tower.

If there was no change of importance, David was instructed to descend secretly, and in the night-

time, to the storehouse, immediately after the arrival of Houpelande's bales, and to cut one of them open, distinguished by stripes of green and red; in which he would find every thing that was necessary for the furtherance of their design. But in case circumstances should render his flight necessary before that moment, Andrew was furnished with a sealed document, addressed to his friend, which, he was assured, would materially assist in his escape.

"Having treasured in thy mind," concluded Caleb, "the answers of the young man, and delivered unto him this plan, which shall guide him, when he findeth opportunity of escape, through the watery wilderness, thou wilt ask him—No: what needeth this?—thou wilt ask him nothing. Thou wilt straightway hie thee back unto me; from whom thou shalt receive neither thanks nor silver, but gold—yea, much fine gold for thy pains. Yet, peradventure, he will open his lips unto thee without asking; and if so, thou wilt give ear unto his words."

"What words? On what subject?"

"Touching the Hebrew girl," replied Caleb, in a hoarse whisper, "whom he received at my hands. My soul knoweth her fate; but I would also hear it with mine ears. Peradventure, thou laughest in thy sleeve at the folly of the Jew? Laugh on; for it is the weakness of human nature, and thou art a man as well as I. I tell thee I have seen that girl in my dreams; and all this day she was present before my waking eyes. And how? Sitting upon the ground? her garments rent? her face covered with a veil? and dust upon her head? I say unto thee, Nay: but in raiment of angel whiteness; her dark hair crowned with the flowers of spring; with the soft, yet exulting step of the gazelle; with a face fairer than the fairest among the daughters of Jerusalem—fair as that of Eve before she sinned—as that of Dinah ere she visited the daughters of Shalem—as that of Tamar when as yet Amnon was her brother! O God of Jacob, how hard of belief thou hast made the heart of a father!" At this moment a noise of loud voices, and tumultuous steps, was heard in the passage; and Andrew, gliding to the door, slipped in the bolt.

"It is ill conversing," he remarked, "with fractious people about one; and may be Messire Caleb would not like to be intruded upon just at this moment."

"Open the door, signor Jew," cried a rough voice from without, after a rougher hand had tampered with the handle, till the whole machine shook in its frame: "we are here, two cavaliers of name and honour, upon lawful business; and if, before we go, we have not an answer, yea or nay, from your lips, call me no more Claude Montrichard!"

"Then I answer, Nay," replied Caleb; "and now go in peace, and go speedily, or it will be the worse for you both."

"We take no answer till you hear our business. The old fool must be crazed, I think. Lend me your shoulder, Beauchamp, and I'll warrant you we shall be admitted to the honour of an audience with his highness in half a second."

"I draw you to observe, sirs," said Andrew, "before you offer violence, that you intrude, at your own proper peril, not only upon a Jew, but

upon a Christian, and a Scot to boot—one Andrew Kerr, whose blood is as red as that of the laird of Cessford himself. The beleaguered garrison," continued he, in a whisper, "should always put a good face upon the matter; and in the present case, the odds are desperate enough to require the bravest words in the vocabulary. By the gingling of their spurs, and the clank of their metal, our assailants are men-at-arms, ready accoutred for the field; and you, Caleb, it cannot be denied (to say nothing of myself, which would be indecorous), are but a Jew after all."

A part of this aside was drowned in the scornful laugh of Beauchamp.

"A Scot and a Jew!" said he. "By my hali-dome, a right well assorted pair, and perilous to boot! I pray thee, Montrichard, be not over valiant; let us keep the windward side of the door, if thou love me." Caleb, stepping before Andrew, whose hand instinctively grasped the hilt of his sword as he heard an English voice, withdrew the bolt, and threw open the door.

"What would ye?" demanded he, imperiously.

“Money! money!” replied Montrichard. “The knave Solomon is too cautious, and refuses to deal; but you, I remember—if you be indeed Caleb the Jew—have a spice of speculation in your spirit, which induces you to lend an ear for your own advantage, even when no tangible security is in the way.”

“I am Caleb, the son of Benjamin; and I know thee well, Claude Montrichard. But for the present I am engaged—every moment of my time, every ounce of my capital. I pray thee be satisfied.”

“And so I will, when you hear me. Your money, of course, is engaged; but then, you know, you can borrow from another, and that demands double interest. Come, come, we are no strangers to each other, although we may not have chanced to meet for a few years. Will you hear my project?”

“No! I say unto thee again, that I cannot, and will not, assist thee—even were ample security deposited in the palm of my hand.”

“Then the toads of La Verrière may croak unmolested for Claude! Come, Beauchamp,” and

he was just striding out of the room, when Caleb sprang after him with a sudden bound, and caught him by the arm.

"How now, sir Jew?" cried Montrichard, shaking him off with disgust and indignation, "what is the bond between us, that you dare profane my person with your unbelieving fingers?"

"Pardon me, valiant knight—or pardon me not, for it is all one. If the project of which thou hast spoken relate to La Verrière, I will hear it. Speak, and to the point!"

"Crazed, by the mass!—hopelessly crazed!"

"I opine," said Beauchamp, "that the respectable person, into whose presence you have introduced me, is one of those who have been compelled, for some years past, by the magic of Gilles de Retz, to keep full the purse, which he, at the same time, toiled with both hands to empty. If so, it is nothing more than natural that he should wish to go shares with the spoilers of La Verrière."

"It must be so. Wilt be one with us, Caleb? Say, wilt buckle harness on? Or act as the banker of the camp? Choose!"

“It may be that I shall do both. But to convince you that the crawling Jew hath already his hand upon his bow and his spear—know, Montrichard, and thou who art called Beauchamp, that this young man is even now setting forth, on a visit of espial, to the castle of La Verrière.”

“Ha! Is it even so? A perilous adventure, if report speak true!”

“Not for our red-blooded friend,” said Beauchamp; “for a Scot is like your cat-o’-the-woods, who can creep as well as spring; and he hath also the feline property, that if you throw him league-high over the ramparts, he will alight upon his feet—and that, too, on the sunny side of the ditch.”

“I accept the compliment,” replied Andrew, “and forgive the sarcasm. It is owing, no doubt, to those same qualities of courage and sagacity, that a Scot makes his way where a Southron dares not show his face.”

“No more of this!” cried Montrichard, stepping between them, “our present meeting may turn out fortunate for all parties, if we only improve

the opportunity. Prithee, Beauchamp, forget your national animosities, and, since the youth claims to be of noble descent, receive him as a comrade."

"I am the slave of my friends," replied the English knight, superciliously; and turning towards Andrew, he bent forward, in a scarcely perceptible degree, and moving no more a joint of his body than if his armour had been a single piece of cast metal. This salute, having been imitated by the Scot with mathematical precision, the meeting then proceeded to business.

Montrichard explained frankly—for the matter had now become public—that the family of Laval with their friends and kinsmen, had resolved to look on no longer as indifferent spectators at the dismemberment of the princely property of Gilles de Retz. They had determined not only to prevent the further sale of his lands; but to wrest back from the Duke, if necessary by main force, those which that grasping potentate had already acquired.

The first step, in any case, would have been to

get possession, if possible, of the baron's person, and garrison his castle with the troops of the malcontents; for this was the usual opening of proceedings in a question even of law, which related to a noble. But Gilles de Retz was, in other respects, placed in very critical and peculiar circumstances. The vague rumours concerning him, which had echoed all over Brittany, had now begun to assume some intelligible meaning. The cry of blood was heard from the ditches of La Verrière. The church, neither cajoled by his appearance of piety, nor bribed by his gifts, demanded an inquiry into the magical abominations into which he was reported to have fallen; and the Legate of Rome, then in Nantes, exerted himself openly to procure his arrest as a suspected sorcerer. The Duke himself, though steadily pursuing his own aggrandisement, in defiance of his nobles, could no longer affect deafness in the midst of such a clamour. The alleged crimes, both against religion and nature, were in fact at this moment the subject of discussion in the council; and it was confidently expected that in a

day or two the enemies of Gilles de Retz would be backed by the government of the country.

But let not the reader miscalculate the effect of so formidable a hostility. Gilles de Retz was so strong in personal connections, and so well entrenched in the fortifications of his castle, that he might have set at defiance even a combination like this. A general would have brought the warrant for his arrest at the head of an army; and his process would have been carried on by the losing and winning of battles. If it was his fate to fall, he would have been defeated, and perhaps slain, on his own ramparts; but, if the contest could be sufficiently prolonged, the chances were, that circumstances of national emergency might occur, in which it would be the interest of all parties to terminate the affair by means of treaties.

The war, therefore, which the family of Laval contemplated, was tedious and doubtful; and Mont-richard sought to make preparations for the part he was to take in it, by raising a loan of money for the opening of the campaign. With the assistance of Beauchamp and his troop, he intended

to capture one of the inferior fortresses of the Lord de Retz, and compel the surrounding tenantry to pay his debt to the Jew. Beyond this his definite views did not extend. For any thing farther, he resolved, like a true soldier of fortune, to trust to the chance of arms.

His conference with Caleb, however, opened a clearer and prouder vista for his ambition. The old man assured him, in defiance of all received opinions, that the castle might be taken by surprise; and then, if successful, he, Montrichard, a subordinate leader in the cabal, would achieve the adventure in his own person. The wealth still at La Verrière, not only in money, but in precious articles of every description, was reported to be immense; and, as in single combats the horse and arms of the vanquished became the prize of the victor, so in assaults and sieges, if the conqueror did not help himself freely, he was held to be a person ignorant of the laws and privileges of arms.

As for Beauchamp, he had, no doubt, the same golden dreams as Montrichard; but, cold and supercilious as he appeared, he had also some that

were tinged *couleur de rose*. Want of employment, love of adventure, and a dwindling purse, all three causes combined, had induced him to take a part in the dangerous game now going forward; but no sooner had his eyes rested on the nobly beautiful face of Pauline de Laval, than a new impulse was added, which served, at once, to strengthen and elevate the others.

He became, from that moment, in the language of chivalry, the vassal of her charms; and, himself of a high and haughty family, he saw no impediment in the way of his love, which valour and good fortune might not remove. The enterprize to which the Jew darkly pointed—for he would give no explanation till the return of the spy—appeared to him to be an enterprize opened out for him expressly by his patron saint; and he turned towards the young Scot an eye, divested of every expression but that of the keen and critical inquiry with which practised soldiers examine their agent or comrade in a perilous adventure.

As for Andrew, who read nothing in his companions' looks, but that they longed mightily to

appropriate to themselves the honour and danger of an adventure, which he had privately determined to reserve for his own countrymen, he was little disposed to sympathize with the change in their demeanour. He continued to look first at one, and then at the other, with a coldness, but at the same time, with a keenness of observation, which at length gave some annoyance to the Englishman.

“By my faith,” said he, “if you will only use your eyes as well at La Verrière, you are the very man for our purpose.”

“You mistake,” said Andrew, quietly, “I thrust not my head into the lion’s mouth, for any purpose of yours. I go to La Verrière upon mine own errand; and while, there, if I further the views of Caleb, it is because he lends himself, in like manner, to mine. This, Sir Southron, is our way in the north.”

“And a very excellent way it is!” said Montrichard, biting his lips. “For our parts, we are ready to reciprocate with you, in every possible manner, if you will only let us know how.”

“That will I readily do on my return; and it

may be, that the only demand I shall make for my intelligence, will be a post in the forlorn hope of the attack. I might indeed boast of some little experience in culverines, and such like engines of war—but let that pass for the present. I shall now go forth, to creep into La Verrière; and if I only have the fortune to alight on my feet, when they throw me over the ramparts, we shall all four talk further;" and with a stiff bow to the knights, and a patronizing nod to the Jew, Andrew left the apartment.

"He will do!" said Montrichard, following him with a hawk's glance. "Bold, tranquil, keen, smooth, and tough as twisted steel, that fellow wants nothing but a little rashness and stupidity, to be an accomplished soldier! And now, friend Caleb, comes the most unpleasant part of the business:—we cannot stir, hand or foot, without money."

"It is ready."

"Bravely spoken! And the security—hum!—let me see—what say you, Beauchamp?" Beauchamp shrugged his shoulders, and began to whistle.

"Sir knights," said the Jew, "It may come to pass that, through my means, ye shall enter in triumph within the gates of La Verrière. There is one there—a daughter of our people—whom ye will know by her rent garments, and the ashes on her head. Swear unto me, that ye will bring that woman forth, and place her within the hands of my kinsman, Solomon, of this house? Will ye swear?"

"We will pledge our honour," said Montrichard.

"But we will not profane the name of our Saviour," added Beauchamp, "by taking it in question at the demand of a Jew."

"I accept your word," said Caleb, with a ghastly smile; "for I know that ye think it more base to lie unto man than unto God."

"And the security? When will the bond be ready?"

"Security! Bond! Do ye think that the Jew will demand more assurance for his gold, than for his—Away! Begone! The money will follow you; and when the young man returneth, it may be, that we shall meet again."

“Crazed, by the Holy Virgin!” ejaculated Montrichard in a whisper, as he went out, “wild—frantic—clean distraught!”

“If so,” said Beauchamp, with a shrug, “it is fortunate that his gold, for which he can have no further use himself, falls into the hands of true believers.”

CHAPTER II.

IT is necessary that we anticipate, by a brief space, the arrival of Andrew at the castle of La Verrière.

When Hagar and David parted, on the night when he had entered her room so unexpectedly, the heart of the young Jewess was in such confusion that it is no wonder if her usually steady brain shared a little in the disorder. She stood by the door, listening to his footsteps; and long after they had died away, continued to hear them in imagination; while tears, half of pity, half of a wild and fearful joy, streamed down her cheeks. She had at the same instant learnt to understand both David's feelings, and her own. There was no

longer any room for either doubt or fear. All was certainty—awful, dreadful certainty.

She at length turned round, with a faltering step, and whirling brain, and approached the bed. The Damsel remained buried in profound sleep; and it was some moments before Hagar could remember how she had come there. David was in her mind, and not his actions as regarded others. His words were still sounding through the innermost depths of her bosom—"Christian and Jewess no more, we are fellow beings, twin children of mortality, with one God for our judge, one earth for our grave!"

Summoning those energies, however, which she rarely summoned in vain, Hagar at length comprehended every thing; and it was with a gleam almost of hope, that she followed out in her own mind the adventure of which she traced the cause.

Pauline, it appeared to her, was, in one respect, in a predicament resembling her own: she was the expected neophyte of some new and extraordinary doctrine, of which her own father was the apostle. What was the end or object of this attempted prose-

lytism, Hagar could not tell, and hardly ventured to imagine. The philosophy of the calm and stately Orosmandel had come forth from the lips of Gilles de Retz in words of fire; and, on more than one occasion, the eyes of the Jewess had lightened, and her bosom throbbed high with enthusiasm, as she listened. The doctrine itself—grand, massive, lofty, and shapeless from its very vastness—was such as only a daring imagination could conceive, or follow. It was based upon pride and intellectual ambition. It asserted the equality of spirit throughout the universe, sinking man to the level of the worm, and yet raising him to the glory of the angels. It laughed at the immutability of nature, and preached rebellion against the decrees of destiny.

What was there in this to affright? It was not absolutely irreconcilable with some interpretations of revealed religion; it enlarged and elevated the mind; exercised the imagination; opened out more extensive views of the power of the Deity, and the vastness of the scheme of creation; and explored at least a portion of the immensity of the

universe which before was an abysm of darkness imperviable to the human gaze.

The evil was, that it was not merely a *speculative* philosophy, such as sages and poets might ponder over by the light of the midnight lamp. It was of a directly practical nature; and its proselytes were admonished, that they were to exchange slumber for waking, rest for action, the life of the body for the life of the spirit. By the body was meant, not merely the material form, but those sympathies which bind the human race together, and chain the individual to his place in creation. This bond was to be broken; the links of the habits torn asunder; the lessons of human wisdom unlearned; and the soul, even while tenanted a human form, set free from the trammels of humanity.

A curious distinction, however, was made between the habits, and acquired desires of the mind, and the instincts of the body. It was the former that were to be repressed, changed, or cast away; while the cravings of the latter, because they might be harassing to the spirit, were to be appeased by gratification. Was not this to strengthen the

meaner part of our nature, at the same moment when we attempted to liberate from its control the nobler? No, it was replied: it was to dis-unite for ever the two parts of our being. It was to confine the body to its sensual cravings, and leave the mind free to its intellectual pursuits. The passions might be indulged without danger; but the affections, which were the connecting links between the animal and the spirit, must be destroyed.

But here Gilles de Retz had hitherto stopped short. What was to be the application of so startling a lesson? No longer bold in reasoning or plausible in sophistry, at this point he hid himself in mysticism. With some reference to Orosmandel, as the master sage—with many hints that the moment for full explanation was not arrived—or that the mind of the novice was not sufficiently prepared, he retired from her presence, leaving her to digest what she had heard, and to lose herself in conjecture with regard to what was to come.

Hagar believed, from some words which had dropped unconsciously from the baron, that his

daughter was undergoing a similar course of instruction; and the adventure of this night inclined her to think, that the noviciate of Pauline was at an end, and that she had been admitted by Orosmandel into the secret. What secret this was, communicated in the dead of night, administered at the same moment with narcotic drugs, and followed by delirium and stupor, she dared not imagine. The whole, she could gather from the words of David, was a system of fraud and delusion. Yet how suppose that a father could be engaged in a plot against his own daughter? It mattered not: Prelati was the accomplice of Orosmandel, and if so, whoever were the other abettors, it must be in the perpetration of some gigantic crime.

At all events, her own situation and prospects were rather better than worse. In the morning she would make a confidant of Pauline; and that lady would perhaps be prevailed upon to take her under her protection. She would appeal to the baron's honour in behalf of David, whose liberation had been solemnly promised to her; and,

through the influence of his daughter she might herself be permitted to leave the castle. Such were the reveries of Hagar, when the attendants of the Damsel entered the room to seek their mistress.

Mademoiselle de Laval was carried, still sleeping, to her own apartments; and the Jewess followed close to the heels of the attendants, not daring to raise her head, and hardly believing her own good fortune. This, however, was soon at an end. The private corridor of the baron was separated from the other portion of the building by an iron door; on the inner side of which a porter sat constantly, day and night. The man recognised the two attendants, whom he had admitted but a few minutes before, and also the Damsel; but when Hagar attempted to follow them he thrust her back without ceremony. Remonstrances were vain; and she would have seized the young lady's gown to attempt to awaken her.

"It is needless," said the porter coolly, as he turned the key; "the damsel has no power on this side of the door. You can only pass by the

express orders of the baron." It may be conceived with what dismay the Jewess returned to her prison !

The next day, instead of waiting, as formerly, till she was sent for, she demanded an audience of the baron ; and, having received permission, she glided with a pale cheek, but a stately step, and a collected manner, to the room where he received publicly his visitors.

Gilles de Retz was striding rapidly through the room, with more of decision and exultation in his manner than she had ever witnessed before ; and Hagar paused, involuntarily, at the door, to contemplate for a moment his appearance. His step was firm, yet elastic ; his chest was thrown open with pride and determination ; his eyes blazed with a steady light ; and every part of his singularly handsome countenance bore the impress both of will and power. He was at an age when the passions are at the strongest ; and the frame in which they were lodged seemed to be as yet unwasted by the feverish workings of the spirit within. Even his hair, which was flung back

from his face in glittering clusters, exhibited no trace of that untimely change which prophecies decay, when man is still in the zenith of his strength, and whispers to the proud heart of forty years—"In the midst of life we are in death!" Hagar knew, while she looked upon him, that this man was a being either to be loved or dreaded, and she grew yet paler at the thought; but, summoning all her courage, she crossed her hands firmly on her bosom, and advanced into the room.

"My Lord de Retz," said she, steadily, "Thou didst tell me that the damsel, thy daughter, was absent from the castle on a visit. She hath now returned, for I saw her last night; and I claim thy promise to be permitted to lodge under her protection, so long as it is thy pleasure to keep me here a captive."

"You *are* a captive, Hagar," replied the baron, "and so am I. Yet we are not captives of each other, but of a higher power which modifies the actions of us both. Why did you thrust yourself upon me in the solitude of yonder midnight hill, sacred to the forgotten dead? Did I summon

you? Why, after we had parted, did you appear before me, like a spirit, in the midst of the private apartments of my own house? Were you sent for by me? You accuse me of contrivance and duplicity—it would be as rational for me to suspect you of forwardness and coquetry.”

“Suppose, then, that neither thou nor I have been to blame thus far—”

“I *know* it. I call God to witness that, from the moment of our first meeting, I have been as unconscious an agent in our destinies as a straw dancing on the waters of a torrent! You appeared before me; and, from the loveliness of your person, and the radiance of mind shining through your eyes, I believed you, for a moment, to be of a higher order of beings than we on the earth. I soon found my mistake. I saw that you were a woman—yet a spirit; a thing of dust, created lower than the demons, yet possessing within you the germ of that power which may be rendered capable of controlling and commanding them. What is it you desire? Liberty? It is neither mine to give nor yours to receive. Come, let us put it to the

test, and observe what will be the result. I bid you be free ! Away ! The doors shall be opened, till they strain their hinges. Vanish from my presence, and betake you, if you will, to the uttermost ends of the earth !”

“ Let me first ”—

“ Not a word ! Begone—I bid you be free ! What ! you hesitate ! Your cheek flushes, and then grows pale ! You will not accept of liberty ? Because you *cannot* ! You are mine, because my fortunes cannot be accomplished without your aid ; and I am yours, because without mine you cannot rise from the earth. I tell you, Hagar, we must on ; for there is no turning back. This world shall soon be no longer any thing to us but as one of the planets. Our home shall be the universe ; our dominion, the realms of space. Even our material part, which must still dwell below, will be sublimed by the dominance of spirit. Every fibre of the body will thrill with new and more delicate life ; till the meanest pleasures of the senses shall equal in poignancy the most ecstatic enjoyments of mind in an ordi-

nary state of existence. The connection which will exist between us can be only faintly shadowed forth by the name of love. Cut off from the upper beings by the difference in our created form, and from mankind by the acquisitions of our spirit, we shall be alone in the universe. The thoughts, and pursuits—as deep and vast as the immensity around us—which will be common to us both, but which cannot even be comprehended by others, will form the links of that chain which will bind us together, body and soul, as if in a single life !”

The baron spoke with headlong impetuosity. His words rushed forth, unselected and unimpelled; and his cheek burned the while, and his eye blazed, with an enthusiasm which would have fascinated, if it had not terrified, his hearer. This was no contrivance—no deceit. It was the earnestness of a man fully impressed with the truth of what he had said, and labouring under the influence either of inspiration or delusion. Hagar stood like one amazed; and looked upon the personification before her of Will and Power both with terror and admiration.

"I would cheerfully," continued he, "assign you a lodging in my daughter's apartments; but the hour of our fate is at hand, and all trivial considerations must be laid aside. It is impossible that you can have any serious apprehension for yourself; for although as completely in my power as if we were in the midst of a desert, I have never, in look, word, or action, offended your delicacy. The hour, I tell you, is at hand; and the intermediate time it is necessary that you pass in the study of Orosmandel." At these words, the Jewess, clasping her hands, uttered a stifled scream.

"Not there!" she cried, "not there! Bury me rather in the subterranean dungeons of thy house! Shut me up in damp, and darkness, and hunger, and cold—and see if there shall escape one tear from my eye, one murmur from my lips!"

"This is phrenzy, Hagar," said the baron. "Orosmandel, besides being a man without human passions himself, has a stake almost as deep as my own in your safety. Do you think that any consideration on earth would tempt me to place you in a

situation of danger? Do you at once doubt my love as a man, and my honour as a knight?"

"For thy love, my lord," replied Hagar, proudly, "it is a question in which I can have no interest; and which, indeed, as yet, to give thee due honour, thou hast not had the meanness to force into the ear of a captive. Last night, however, thy daughter was brought into my chamber by the young man whom thou didst solemnly promise some days ago to set at liberty. How am I to reconcile this with thine honour?"

"Easily: for the young man was in the service of Orosmandel, not in mine. My influence, however, has already been used, and I have received permission to do with him as I please. To-day—this instant, he shall depart. Will this satisfy you?"

"I thank thee, humbly and gratefully," replied Hagar; her mind relieved of one of its loads of care. "It is but to die," continued she, mentally, "and to die alone. I praise the Most High that David will neither witness nor share my fate!"

The baron, who seemed eager to re-establish himself in the good opinion of the Jewess, and also to give her some breathing-time before renewing the subject of their conversation, sent immediately to desire the attendance of Orosmandel's assistant. The servant whom he called for that purpose took the opportunity of announcing, that a messenger from Jacquin Houpelande waited without for an audience; and thus it happened, that David and Andrew entered the room at the same moment, by opposite doors.

Andrew bowed first to the lady, and then to the lord; and then looked steadily at his quondam comrade, thinking it prudent to wait for his recognition, and not a little marvelling at the new change which had taken place in his costume. David had doffed his cloak, and appeared now in a dress of buff leather, made so tightly to the form, that it must have been taken for his skin, had not his neck and chest, which were exposed, borne testimony against the fact, by their greater delicacy of colour. A red shawl, wrapped round his waist, completed his equipment; for his head was adorned only by his own

dark hair, which was thrown back in damp masses from his forehead. His face was flushed, and glistening with perspiration, like one who had been engaged in some hot and laborious employment; and his hands were completely bedaubed with the traces of his occupation. After one glance round the room, he looked neither to Hagar nor to Andrew, but, fixing his eyes on Gilles de Retz, awaited his expected communication.

“Young man,” said the baron, after eyeing him keenly, “I have a commission for Nantes, which is my purpose to entrust to you. You shall be furnished with what is necessary in half an hour at the latest; when you must immediately set out, and spur on, without drawing bridle, till you reach the city. After having performed your task, and received a sum of money—much larger, probably, than you expected to earn in this house—you will consider that you are your own master, and choose any of the paths of the world, save that which leads to La Verrière.”

“And I would pray thee,” said Hagar, stepping eagerly forward, “to bear, also, a message for me.

Pardon me for interrupting the thanks thou wert about to pay to the Lord de Retz—and which are well due—” this she said with significance; “but I humbly entreat that thou wilt go to the house of Rabbi Solomon, and inform my father—Caleb, the son of Benjamin—that his daughter is well. What more, my lord, ought thy handmaid to say unto the Jew?”

“Nothing,” replied the baron, “it is enough.”

“Bethink thee. Is it really thy design to deliver me up into the hands of Prelati?”

“Of Orosmandel, girl! Prelati is dead, as my daughter can now testify.”

“He liveth!—but I know that it is vain for me to endeavour to oppose his plans. Wilt thou absolutely consign me to the tower which, if not now, was formerly inhabited by him?”

“It is necessary for the welfare of us both. But I swear——”

“Enough! Young man, thou must also say unto my father, that his daughter is a captive, and that he must ransom her—instantly if at all—with as many shekels of gold as he may think her life

worth. Wilt thou do this? Wilt thou hie thee to Nantes, for my sake, as swiftly as horse may speed?"

The look which Hagar rivetted upon the face of the scholar hardly outdid, in eagerness of interest, that with which Gilles de Retz and Andrew awaited his slow, calm answer.

"Were it my purpose," said he, "to visit Nantes, I would obey you without fail; but I am, at present, under voluntary engagement to Orosmandel, and I acknowledge no other master."

"My lord baron, I claim thy promise! With this, the private inclinations of the young man have nothing to do; and if he will not go freely—thrust him forth! Look to it, if thou desire that I am ever again to hold converse with thee, as with one on whose word I can rely!"

"My lord," said Andrew, who could no longer withhold, "after taking your instructions regarding certain bales, furnished by Jacquin Houpelande, the arrival of which at the hôtel de la Suze, I am come to announce, the young man, if it so please you, can proceed to Nantes with me." Gilles de

Retz stood all this while glaring at the scholar, with a mixture of surprise and indignation in his feelings, to which he thought it beneath his dignity to give vent.

"You hear!" said he, in a suppressed voice.

"I have answered," replied David; "and as for you, Sir meddler, since you will concern yourself in other people's affairs, I advise you to ride back to your tailor's clouts, as if the devil was behind you, and do the lady's errand to her father yourself."

"My lord," said Andrew, "it is ill reasoning with fractious persons; and if you will only cause him to be mounted behind my saddle, I undertake to carry him as clean off, as if he had been caught up in a whirlwind."

"Silence, Sir!" cried the baron. "And you—did you actually comprehend that it was my pleasure you should proceed to Nantes."

"I cannot deny it; for your lordship is sufficiently plain spoken when you condescend to address your inferiors in station."

"Do you hear this, Hagar?"

"Oh! it is phrenzy," she replied, crushing her

fingers within each other; "but he must go nevertheless."

"Then, by St. Mary! he shall go—like a clod flung over the ramparts! Within there!"

"I call you to notice, my lord baron," said David, "that I am neither servant, nor liegeman, nor kinsman of yours; and that you have authority over me neither by law, nor blood, nor custom."

"Silence vassal, or I will pin you to the wall!" and Gilles de Retz, who was but little accustomed to opposition, more especially within his own entrenchments, drew his sword, and advanced upon the contumacious dependent. David, in the meantime, stood his ground; only slipping one hand into the shawl which girded his waist, and where, no doubt, his dagger was concealed, while he warned off his assailant with the other.

"Take heed what you do, my lord," said he, "for, although unarmed, I am not to be slaughtered like a calf, at any man's pleasure. Beware, if you love your life; for the Borderer, when he turns to bay, is as dangerous as the stag of his own hills!"

At this moment, Orosmandel entered the room; and the baron, recollecting himself, fell instantly back; his face, which before was pale with rage, becoming red with shame. He muttered an apology between his teeth; but threw the blame upon the young man's insolence.

"What is this thou hast been about?" demanded the philosopher, turning mildly to his apprentice.

"Obeying your instructions," replied David, significantly, "and also declining to forsake my employment, at the command of a stranger, with whom I have nothing to do. I should say, indeed, at the command of three strangers; for all the three now before you, would have thrust me forth of this castle, without rhyme or reason! As for the tailor's ambassador, who was to have caught me up like a whirlwind—have you a sword under your cloak, messire, that you talk it so bravely?"

"I have," replied Andrew; "and one that glided out of its scabbard of its own accord, when you talked of turning to bay." And, opening his mantle partially, the gleam of a well-polished blade

was seen extending more than half the length of his person.

"A sword," said David, with an appearance of heat, "that only shows itself when there are odds in its favour, is worth no more than a windlestraw. What would yours do in a case of equal numbers?"

"Try me, my man ! when it comes to cold steel, I can take a hint as well as another."

"I pray you all to pardon me. I could bear, in a case of necessity, being put to death by a baron ; but the interference of this person has somewhat chafed my blood. To lay aside for the present, however, such idle converse, I have an explanation to make, which regards most parties here ; but, as I have heard that the doors in great men's houses have the property of ears, you must permit me to shut these up ;" and the student deliberately bolted both.

Orosmandel, in the meanwhile, continued to regard him with calm attention, and the Lord de Retz with a scowl of impatient disdain. Alarm and expectation were in the eyes of the Jewess ;

but her manner otherwise was tranquil, and her figure as rigid as a statue. Andrew looked on with a grave and observant face, from which it would have been altogether impossible to predicate any thing, except the entire self-possession of the wearer.

“It is this lady,” said the student, after glancing at his audience one after the other, “who has egged on the baron to take me forcibly from the engagements I am under to him whom I serve, and to thrust me forth of the castle. Now, it is meet you should know the connection which subsists between her and me. She is the daughter of one to whom I acknowledge myself indebted, not only for the raiment which I possess (slightly diminished in amount, no doubt, by an epitaphium of my own, somewhat the worse for wear, which I left in his hands), but also for the instructions of several years in the sublime science of alchemy. In lieu thereof, and in full settlement of all scores between us, I, on my part, when my preceptor and his family were flying from Paris, in peril of their lives, undertook the charge of this young

woman's safety—solemnly promising to convey her to her relations at Nantes. Now, messires, that bond is unfulfilled. Instead of conducting her myself, I had the folly—should I not rather say the baseness?—to entrust her to another; and, in fine, she is now in the castle of La Verrière.

“What may be her anxiety to remove me from the house, who am, as it were, the representative of her father, I cannot say; but that does not interfere with the line of my duty—which is, to protect her at the hazard of my life. She is here—not to mince the matter—a prisoner; and, although her father, I have no doubt, is ready to pay down for her a king's ransom, yet is there no talk of negotiation. Under these circumstances, she is to be confined—aye, my lord, confined is the word—in a certain tower of the building, of which, right or wrong, she has an insuperable horror and aversion. It is not for me to speak of that place, seeing that I know but little of it myself; but this I may say, without transgressing my duty, that her repugnance, whether founded in prejudice or not, is natural, and easy to be understood. It is, more-

over—and this is all which concerns me in the question—a place of darkness and mystery, which the eye of man cannot penetrate; and thither, therefore, to speak plainly, I will oppose her being taken, even to the shedding of my blood!”

“Here is a peroration!” cried the baron. “By my faith, father, we shall be well served, if our business is to be entrusted to maniacs! The cure for this malady, I think, is a solitary dungeon, chains, straw, bread and water. Is it not so?”

“The youth for the present,” replied Orosmandel, “will betake himself to his employment, already too long interrupted; and the young woman, whose terror, as he remarks, is nothing more than natural and feminine, may remain in her present abode for a few days, till I find time to consider her case. A word, my lord;” and he drew the baron out of hearing.

“Thy triumph,” said he, “is premature. The Duke hath indeed made the purchase; but the money hath not arrived. Till then, this Jewess must be sacred, and it is better that she remain in a public part of the castle; else it will be in

vain to demand either loan or ransom from her father. As for the young man, he must live till the great minute of thy life hath arrived, for I have need of his services—but not longer.

“Hagar,” said David, in another part of the room, “you have gained but a short respite; yet keep up your spirits, and remember my words of last night.”

“Thou hast cast away thy life,” she replied—“and for me, wretch that I am! Oh, be careful, my best, my only friend! for I watched the face of him whom thou callest Orosmandel, and I saw suspicion lurking under the calm, deep moonlight of his eyes!”

“Andrew,” said David, “meet me secretly, after it is dark, at the top of the stair-case in the hall, which they will tell you leads to the magician’s tower.”

“I will, daddie,” replied Andrew, “but you are out in your policy for once. I have learnt that of the baron which would have justified us in smiting him, hip and thigh, as you no doubt intended; and that done we could easily have gagged the old

man, and made our way out of the castle—Jewess and all.”

Hagar was then remanded to her prison ; David sent back to his manipulation ; and Andrew, having been invited to partake of the hospitality of the house for the night, dismissed with a condescending message to Houpelande, inviting him to bring his goods forthwith to La Verrière.

CHAPTER III.

ANDREW's inspection of the defences of La Verrière, although, to a mind like his, a very exciting amusement, while it lasted, was by no means satisfactory in the results he obtained. The castle appeared to him to be absolutely impregnable; and when, in walking round the ramparts, he arrived at the two colossal culverines which adorned the principal gate, his heart died within him.

"Alas! daddie David," groaned he, "it is all over! If, with my little son of a gun, I defeated half-a-dozen of the best soldiers in Europe, its great-grandfathers ~~like~~, would scatter the army of Alexander! Our only chance is, that the cannoniers may be fools enough to load. Even a ball

of diameter like this, could not sweep away more than twenty men at a time ; and it would be morally impossible to make such a monster disgorge twice in the same hour. After the first shot, therefore, the prestige would be destroyed, and the besiegers might approach close to the walls ; as safe under the very chin of the giants, as if they were twenty leagues off. What could have come over David, that he did not smite the enemy when we had him in our power ! But was it not rather my own fault ? He, poor fellow, may have been bound by enchantment ; and I, who was a free agent, should have struck the blow. I'll warrant me, if I had once stood fairly committed in the quarrel, David would have sprung to the aid of his comrade, if fifty spells had been over him."

Andrew was permitted to make his observations without the slightest hindrance. It seemed, indeed, as if the authorities in command, rather encouraged his inquiries, than otherwise ; in the perfect confidence, no doubt, that his report could not be otherwise than favourable. While he was still lingering near the gate, with his eyes fixed, as if

by fascination, on the enormous culverines, De Briqueville, before whom he had been brought on his arrival, came up to where he stood, with a lady, whom he appeared to be attending on her afternoon's walk.

"You admire our cannon, friend!" said De Briqueville, with a smile. "This one, you must know, is the Duke, and the other the Baron; and if you want to match them, you must look among the Twelve Peers of France. I fancy you have hardly such things at home!"

"I will not precisely undertake to say," replied Andrew, "that we have culverines, or serpentines, of such unwieldly dimensions. The Scots, you must know, sir and madam (who are a very ancient people, being the Caledoniæ of the Romans, and descended from the old Scythian race), have a prejudice against the alliance of such inanimate things as they cannot wield with their own hands. They do not even affect so much as the English, their fractious neighbours, the use of arrows; holding it to be something less than manly to send such deadly missives through the air, on business

that ought to be transacted face to face. However, I would by no means disparage your culverines, which at least do credit to the founders; but with us at home, in fact, they could be of little use, for I assure you this bit hillock of yours whereon they have been so easily placed, compared with *our* mountains is an absolute wart !”

“ Perhaps, also,” said De Briqueville, with a sneer, “ these same mountains may be deficient in the materials for powder.”

“ By no means,” answered Andrew, hastily ; “ We have enough of willows for charcoal, which you think the best ; although in my opinion honest fir or larch would answer the purpose better, of which we have a still more abundant supply. Those timbers we burn to cook our victuals, and so preserve human life rather than destroy it. Then we have nitre enough, God knows, which the old wives use, with common salt, to cure their beef ; and as for sulphur, you may think it is plenty, when I tell you, that ~~there~~ are few of us who spare to employ it, for a kind of malady—brought

to us, it is said, across the channel by the south wind."

"Since you do not patronise cannon," said Pauline de Laval, who seemed desirous of prolonging the conversation, "pray what are the arms of your countrymen?"

"Madam, we have a dagger, fit for stabbing; and a sword that, if well applied, would slice you off a man's head so neatly as to leave no stain upon the blade. Then we have a pike, or spear, eighteen feet, six inches long, sufficient to keep off a charge of horse; and thus, with our steel coat and cap, defended at the joining between the two by a thick kerchief wrapped round our neck"—

"Sir, do you know Sir Archibald Douglas?" Andrew glanced at De Briqueville, who had just stepped aside to speak to the sentry; and then looking slily at the young lady, drew in his mouth like a purse, and gave an affirmative nod.

"Is he well?" said Pauline, colouring deeply.

"He is sound in body—but for the *sana mens*"—and Andrew shrugged his shoulders.

“For the what?”

“I would not just like to commit myself by affirming that he is well in spirit.”

“Did he know—did he send—that is—.”

“It would be improper to answer categorically, that he did not send; for, in fact, he looked more messages than I could carry, yet without ever uttering a word. If I could see as well into the mill-stone as my neighbours, I might venture to predicate that he would have thought it an enormous sacrilege to have mentioned a certain sacred name in my ears. Indeed, I have little hesitation in conjecturing, that he is somewhat wild—a little crazed, as it were—on the subject of punctilio. Would you think it? It was but the other day that he rated my comrade Nigel soundly for saving his life by slaying a horse, instead of striking unprofitably at a man cased in armour. Nay, if the culverine with which I put the assassins to flight had actually gone off, I do believe he would never have forgiven me, lest the shot might not have had the gumtion to strike within the four members !”

“By whom was his life attempted?”

“By six horsemen, with their vizors closed. Know you an individual called Prelati?” Pauline started, and grew pale.

“Nothing will satisfy our knight,” continued Andrew, “but he must have a fair fight with this Prelati, face to face; and, there being special reasons why he should be dissuaded from so doing, for at least a certain time, if your ladyship—”

“Tell him,” interrupted Pauline, eagerly, “that I entreat, and command him to forbear! Tell him that if he disobey me in this instance, I shall ever after hate as much as I have—have—esteemed him! Will you do this?”

“Assuredly I will. But there is another subject—.” At this moment they were rejoined by De Briqueville; who immediately after walked away with Mademoiselle de Laval, leaving Andrew staring after them with disappointment and mortification.

“They may well call me slow!” said he. “What a beast was I, to lose moments so precious in prating of culverines, punctilios, charcoal, sul-

phur, and cutaneous disorders ! Sir Archibald's business is done—for which he will by no means thank me, and David's name not even mentioned in her ears !” By the time he had made the entire circuit of the ramparts, it was completely dark ; and, watching his opportunity when there was no one in the hall, he glided into the staircase which he had previously ascertained led to the Magician's Tower.

Andrew, with all his shrewdness, was by no means insensible to the superstitious feelings almost universal in that age ; and when he found himself, in ascending the stairs, receding from even the grey light of the hall, and entering a region of darkness and mystery, it was not without some quicker motion of the heart that he repeated mentally an Ave.

His caution, however, did not forsake him. He crept up the steps as stealthily as a cat ; and when every gleam of light had deserted him, he went upon all fours, and thus might easily have been taken for the animal whose pace he imitated.

The stair led to the highest floor of the tower, and was therefore of considerable length; but multiplied by Andrew's imagination, it seemed to extend to a distance beyond all natural bounds. He at length began to conceive it possible that, for the offence of entering upon such an adventure, he was now travelling eternally through the void of space—when suddenly his head came in contact with the iron gate at the top.

When he had ascertained the nature of this obstacle, and the fact that he had really reached the landing-place, he raised himself cautiously, and put forth his feelers to examine the lock. The bolt was in, as thick as a man's arm: the gate was made fast, in such a manner, that it would have taken a well sized culverine, indeed, to open it without the key. Had David been aware that this would have been the case? Or was he now an unexpected prisoner? Might he not have been waiting in utter darkness for an hour past, and gone away in disappointment and dudgeon? Andrew pondered, and pondered—felt the thick

bars of the gate—endeavoured to insinuate his little finger into the bed of the bolt—and at length sat down, to meditate more at his ease.

Although the space around him was as black as night, he could see the dim light of evening beneath, at a distance which appeared to him to be immense. On this spot his eyes were fixed for so long a time, that his imagination began to grow confused; and at length he felt the sensation of being about to fall. He immediately started up; and, turning his back upon an appearance which only bewildered him, he grasped the bars of the gate with both hands, and gazed into the abyss of darkness beyond.

Before him, if all he had heard were true, was the study of the Magician; and still higher up, the lodging of his friend. A strange curiosity took possession of Andrew's mind. If David could not, or would not, keep the rendezvous, might not he visit him in his own quarters? Who could tell what discoveries he might make—what wonders he might behold—in tra-

versing the space between? Was it creditable either to his wit, or his courage, to have passed a day and night in La Verrière without having been able to obtain private speech of him to whom his errand was in reality done?

Andrew, after listening calmly to the suggestions of his prudence, and combating them successfully, seized a firmer and farther grasp of the iron; and inserting his knees between the bars, began to heave himself noiselessly up, with very little misgiving on his mind, that in a staircase where the walls were so roughly and slovenly built, he should be unable to insinuate his body between the gate and the roof.

The attentive reader will recollect that this gate was of no common altitude; and it is therefore not to be wondered at if Andrew's wandering of the imagination should have recommenced before he had reached the top. Often was he tempted to give up the adventure as hopeless, and allow himself to slip down; but as often did he find himself instigated to proceed by a still

stronger feeling—he knew not of what nature : till at length, it would have taken little to persuade him that he was enchanted.

On reaching the top, it may be a question whether he was more gratified or disappointed, to find that the gate and the arch of the roof met so nicely, that the human finger could not have been inserted between. At all events he hung suspended for some moments, as if to digest the annoyance, his fingers wandering almost incessantly over the surface of the stone ; till, at length, he felt one of the blocks of granite move sensibly in its bed, without the smallest agency of his, and turn round, as if to fall, for the express purpose of crushing him.

It required all Andrew's intrepidity to prevent the escape of a cry of terror which rose to his lips at the moment ; but, mastering this weakness, he first endeavoured—but in vain—to stop the motion of the stone ; and then, considering that to descend perpendicularly would be certain death, he sprang suddenly aside, catching by chance at a distant bar. In the midst of this manœuvre,

however, he was brought to, by the grasp of something, not unlike a human hand in the feel, upon his neck; and he heard these words pronounced in a low voice almost close to his ear:—

“Hold, you misbegotten elf! Let not our homulus prove a homunculus, and sneak out of his comrade’s way, without so much as a ‘God be with you!’ Is it to play the spy you are here, you tiny corpse-candle? Were it not a shame to cheat the fishes of the Erdre, I would this moment crush you to a pinch of dust, you bog-trotting, serpent-hunting, toad-inveigling little devil!”

“As God shall judge me,” said Andrew, half strangled in the powerful grasp, “I am five feet eight and a half! I a spy! Alas! Is it for the purpose of espial that a man thrusts his head into utter darkness? You mistake me for another; and, if you will only come down into the blessed light of heaven, you may convince yourself of the fact.”

“Why, in the most sacred name, are *you* here, Andrew?” Could you not have waited on the

stairs, like a decent man's son, till I came to you? Did you expect to find a crow's nest, that you would needs climb in this fashion? By the holy St. Bride, when I felt your head, as I opened the wicket, my heart jumped into my mouth!"

"The devil take your heart, and your hand to boot!" said Andrew. "Have I been climbing here, by the hour, for your sake, to be throttled by you at last? Do I feel like an elf, or a corpse-candle? By the mass! I fear you have gotten into ill company in this house; and a man they say is known by his comrades."

"It is all the effect of unlawful curiosity," replied David; "but I forgive you for the terror you have caused me; and the rather that the feeling was unreasonable in itself, seeing that he for whom I took you is at this moment playing his gambols among the toads and serpents of the swamp. Come, since you are farther ben than you were invited, you may as well rest where you are. There are few likely to stumble upon our counsels here!"

"I shall remain, David, since you desire it; but

as for rest upon these upright bars, it is out of the question. Had you provided but a nail projecting crossways for the accommodation of your guests, little fault need be found; but as it is, let me tell you, it is no mighty matter of a parlour."

Here the two students held high converse for a considerable time. Andrew was informed by his friend, that no change whatever had taken place in the mode of communication between the general storehouses of the castle and the tower; and that David was able himself to descend into the former whenever he had a mind. He was, in fact, at more liberty than he could account for; except on the supposition that his days were already numbered, and that it was thought impossible for him, in the interim, to make any dangerous use of such facts as might come to his knowledge.

"If your days are numbered in the castle," said Andrew, "why, in the name of God, did you not betake yourself to the outside of the walls, when your liberty was offered to you? One would think, that you really are bewitched; and although such a thing might well take place with Nigel, Bauldy,

or even myself, I actually marvel at its occurring to you !”

“ Did you not hear me explain, that, consistently with honour, I cannot leave the young woman, whom I solemnly engaged to protect, in the hands of her enemies ?”

“ There is no dishonour in your abandoning a post where you can be of no use. Nay, it is folly, and something worse, to shut yourself up to die with her, instead of bestirring yourself without the walls in obtaining her release. I can tell you there is warm work forward; and it would be more both for your temporal and eternal advantage to come out, and take a hand in the game, than to stay here consorting with imps and goblins, and brewing drugs to raise the devil.”

“ I am not wholly unacquainted, Andrew, with what is going forward out of doors, and I desired to see you here for the express purpose of taking a hand in it, and an important one too. Where is Douglas ?”

“ At Nantes.”

“ Know you aught of Montrichard and Beauchamp ? ”

“ They are at Nantes also ; and have borrowed money from Caleb the Jew, to fit them out for action against the Lord de Retz. ”

“ Then let Archibald join them ; and with this secret, fit to buy the swords of their whole force—that the money paid by the Duke for his last great purchase comes hither to-morrow afternoon by the river, with such slender and disguised escort as may awaken no suspicion of its value. If they sieze this fund, it will cripple the baron at the outset. He will be compelled to borrow from Caleb ; and Hagar, therefore, will be delivered up intact, and I shall be set free. Tell these things to Douglas ; and add, that Prelati resides secretly in this house, and that his mistress is in worse peril than he dreams of. ”

“ By my faith, David, it is not so unreasonable an enchantment that has beset you after all ! But why, if it was really a dagger which you were grasping in your shawl—why did you not embrace

the opportunity of escape which presented itself to-day?"

"Because the slaughter of the baron would not have opened the gates to us, since we had not the word. That deed I would only have attempted in the event of their putting hands upon Hagar, to remove her to the tower by force. If successful, we must have taken our chance for the rest."

"Vastly well. I see you are so much at your ease, that perhaps it will be impertinent to intermeddle further. Yet in case circumstances should occur more instant than the risk of such trifles as assassination, here is a paper sent to you by Caleb the Jew, by means of which he thinks you may escape from the castle. And now, David, while I have blood enough left in my arms to get me well down to the surface of the earth, I shall bid you farewell."

"Tell me first, how is Nigel?"

"He is as long as ever, poor fellow, but that is the only evil report I have to make of him."

"And Bauldy?"

"He is making cogent love to Felicité, the

daughter of Jaquin Houpelande; and he, you know, although an echevin of Paris, is nothing more than a tailor. What think you of it, David? A tailor's daughter!

"Is she a woman?"

"A woman! Aye, marry is she; and as bonny a lass as ever looked at her own fair face in the waters of the Seine! A woman, every inch of her, I'll warrant."

"Then is she a match for a man. Greet me to them all, Andrew; and if I should never see them more, let this shake of the hand be the poor scholar's legacy. Say to the Jew, in case of the worst, that I forgive him my blood; and that I died to save his daughter. Farewell!"

Andrew wrung his comrade's hand, but could not trust his voice to reply to his adieu. He suffered himself to slip down to the landing-place, and then slowly descended the stair, and betook himself unobserved to the apartment assigned to him.

David, in the meantime, when he had heard the last footfall of his friend, and observed the faint light at the bottom of the staircase darken for a

moment, and then gleam as before, retreated, with a heavy heart, to his own roosting-place. The appearance of Andrew upon the scene, associated as it was with hope—freedom—companionship—and the thousand visions of daring and presumptuous youth, had acted as a stimulant upon his mind; and now that this factitious influence had been withdrawn, a corresponding reaction took place. He was once more left to his own unassisted energies. Before to-morrow's sun was fairly risen, there would not be a human being in the castle in the remotest degree interested in his fate—save one.

In the statement of the circumstances in which he was placed, made to Andrew, he had touched only upon the few specks of hope in the picture, leaving the rest in shadow. Even if the money were seized by the malcontents, however, it was hardly likely that Hagar would be delivered up to her father. Some juggle would, in all probability, be resorted to; and Caleb would be defrauded at once of his money and his daughter. There seemed to be an importance attached to her detention, to

which the purposes of mere voluptuousness on the part of the baron were subordinate. She was first, it appeared from all he had been able to gather, to be tempted to the performance of some dreadful and impious deed; and, if her seducers failed in this, she was then to be given up to the criminal desires of Gilles de Retz. In the former alternative she was to be the substitute of Pauline de Laval; and from the course of instruction he had seen adopted with that young lady, David could not but come to the conclusion, that the required service was one which could only be performed by a mind perverted from its integrity, or maddened into feverish delusion by drugs.

The time, however, when all would be certainty on this point, he had ascertained, was now near at hand. The catastrophe of the drama was approaching; the arrangements were nearly ready; and little more was wanting than the drawing up of the scene. The arrival of the money was to be the signal—or its loss.

On the morning of this day, he had determined to inform Gilles de Retz that Prelati was alive, and

even to explain, so far as was in his power, the delusions practised upon his daughter. The circumstances, however, which had subsequently occurred rendered this out of the question. The baron was now his enemy ; and any attempted revelations of the kind would only accelerate his fate, by withdrawing from him the support of Orosmandel. That it was the philosopher, and he alone, who had hitherto kept him suspended over the abyss, he knew—as well as he knew that it was his intention to allow him to drop, as soon as his services could be dispensed with. David even knew, by observations connected with his employment, that the moment of his fate was that of the catastrophe in which either Hagar or Pauline was to be involved. The day of the arrival of the money, therefore, or of the news of its loss, was, in all probability, to be the last of his life.

These reflections kept him awake so long, that, after he did fall into a heavy and feverish sleep, he was only awakened by the beams of the sun glancing on his eye-lids. He started up, and proceeded to examine the paper sent to him by the Jew ; a

purpose for which he had not thought it worth while to strike a light before going to bed.

The paper contained a minute plan of the swamp; by the assistance of which, it appeared, that any one light of foot, and steady of brain, might easily perform the exploit which had made Prelati seem, in the scholar's eyes, a supernatural being! This was, indeed, a document of importance; and for a moment David's heart beat high at the idea of escape. The selfish feeling, however, was soon repressed, and he considered the subject in a different light. If one man could traverse the dreadful path, why not a hundred? Could the Jew, possessing knowledge like this, have been seriously anxious to favour the designs of Montrichard? or was his merely a purpose of private vengeance, to be completed by others only, in case of his own failure? The latter must, no doubt have been the case; and Caleb, in putting into David's hands the plan of the swamp, not only provided for the escape of the victim he had half bound to the altar, but added to the chance of success in any attack upon the castle, which might

be made, after his own design had been either accomplished or frustrated.

In the hands of Douglas, a document like this would be invaluable. How to get it there was the question, for Andrew had left La Verrière before sun-rise. The student was almost frantic. This was the only probable chance that had as yet presented itself; and it was to elude his grasp, because he had not taken the trouble of lighting a lamp before going to bed!

On examining the paper farther, he found that the ramparts were descended by means of irregular steps, broken, as if by accident, in the wall. But there was also another intimation given with a view to escape, which, in the student's eyes, possessed a still higher interest. Near the middle of the plan of the heavens—which existed, it seemed, during Caleb's residence—there was a brazen hand, which, on being bent downwards, opened an avenue to the private apartments below. This accounted for the well-managed appearance of Prelati's spectre! By this means, in the case of Hagar being finally conveyed into the tower, David would obtain access to her prison, in

time to prevent the last violence, or to die with her !

As for the obstacle which had so successfully opposed his previous attempt to enter within the enchanted circle, he had discovered its nature during the instantaneous illumination of the apartment, on the night of Pauline's lesson. It was nothing more than a thin sharp-edged bar of iron, which ran breast-high from wall to wall. Two slender rods of the same description, which supported it in the middle of the floor, formed, no doubt, the door-way ; and, even if he could not find the secret of opening the bar at the top, he would have nothing more to do than to stoop his body, in order to pass under it.

The brazen hand seemed, to David, to be of still more importance than the guide through the swamp ; and he continued, with renewed zeal, the plan he had adopted from his first arrival, of prowling about after dark, and entering secretly the Magician's study, on every opportunity which presented itself. On the night of this very day, an adventure occurred to him, while thus engaged, of consequence enough to be treated of in a new chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

DAVID was once more ordered to usher into the study a visiter from the private apartments of Gilles de Retz. He was then to shut the door, and betake himself to his own dormitory for the night.

On the present occasion, the countenance of Orosmandel was more touched with care, amounting almost to anxiety, than he had ever seen it. In general, his expression, though mild and indulgent, was too little associated with the things common to humanity to excite a warmer feeling than reverence; or, at least, than that species of admiration which we bestow upon the idea of a superior being, invested with form and substance

by the enchantments of genius. To-night, however, there was a human light in the eye, and a mobility of the lip, which spoke of meditations more intelligible, though, perhaps, not less pure, than those of which the planets and the demons were the objects; and David, as he looked upon him, felt strongly the recurrence of an idea which had often stolen round his heart, that he had done this remarkable man injustice.

On such occasions, the scholar in vain inquired what could be the plans, for the furtherance of which so gifted a being was induced to hide his actions behind a cloud; and even to stoop to what appeared to be contrivance and duplicity, for the purpose of acquiring that ascendancy over the minds of other men, to which he would have been entitled by the unassisted strength of his own intellect. All this was hidden in impenetrable mystery, and the fact alone remained as evident as it was astonishing—that an individual, endowed with every noble quality of mind and heart, was the friend of the atrocious Prelati, and the ally of the voluptuous and abandoned Gilles de Retz.

The ideas which passed through the student's mind could hardly have been unobserved by the bright and penetrating eye which now rested upon his. The old man's expression softened as he looked; and a gentle smile broke gradually over his face, as if from some fountain of light within.

"I observe, by thy conduct to-day," said he, "that thou hast treasured my advice; and I forgive thy distrust for the sake of thy fidelity. Continue to avoid and suspect him of whom I warned thee. Believe not evil of me, even if thine own eyes should be the accusing witness; and rest assured, that the hour is at hand, when the light of heaven shall stream upon a path which appeareth to thee to lead through clouds and darkness!" David bowed himself humbly before the Magician; and walked away towards the private apartments, resolving to think for the future, that Orosmandel was an angel in disguise.

This time he had not been furnished with a lamp, and he did not ask for one; but by the faint light of the private corridor, when he opened the door, he observed that it was again Pauline who

sought admission. It was impossible for her, however, to recognise him, as he stood shrouded in the darkness of the tower; and she suffered him, after she had shut the door, to lead her on by the hand, without a word of communication passing between them on the subject of the Jewess for whom he had besought her protection. David did not advert to the cause of this seemingly cruel neglect; and he walked on in sullen mortification.

“And this is the goddess of Archibald!” said he, within himself. “Alas! is it not truly said, that love is blind? *Quisquis amat ranam, ranam putat esse Dianam!*” It was, perhaps, owing to the irritation he felt, that he abandoned his just-formed intention of obeying the philosopher’s commands, and retiring for the night. Nothing new, indeed, had occurred to re-awaken his suspicions; but ill-humour is always an infidel. Having ushered Pauline into the study, and seeing her advance several paces, he shut the door, and glided into his old retreat between the mummy and the skeleton.

Orosmandel was, as usual (when he received company), standing near the table with his face

towards the picture; and several minutes elapsed before he turned round. He at length did so, and glided noiselessly forth from the circle.

“My daughter,” said he, “I hardly thought that so much courage could exist within so frail and delicate a frame. Thou hast already sought again, of thy own purpose, a place which must be associated in thy imagination with every thing most ghastly and unnatural. I lament, however, that thou hast chosen the midnight hour for thy visit; because it is my interest, in order to prepare thee for that which must soon arrive, to tame down thy youthful fancy, and leave thy reason free.”

“Sir,” replied Pauline, “I had no choice. I do confess that this place is abhorrent to my thoughts, but were it hell itself, I would still enter, prompted and supported as I am by those feelings which are the good angels of the soul.”

“I know thy purpose,” said the philosopher, coldly; “and as it at least belongs to the highest of the instincts of our human nature, it is entitled to some respect. A treasure, bought with the fairest, and almost the last, portion of thy father’s estates, and

sent to him this afternoon by the Duke, has been intercepted by brigands. Thou desirest, perhaps, to know whether its recapture is possible? Thou wouldest inquire into the fitting moment for the attempt? Thou wouldest ask of me to examine, and calculate, the position of the stars, and so determine whether the celestial influences are favourable or otherwise? But thou art in error. The day, indeed, has been, when I looked into the book of nature, and opened the heavens before me like a map. But it is many years—many, many cycles since I closed the page in discontent. Mine is a far higher pursuit than astrological science; and thy father must look beyond the planets for salvation from the destruction which threatens him.”

“It is even on that point I would speak. The destruction which threatens my father, if I may judge by his manner, is instant, and terrible; and from some words which escaped him in the agony of his mind, connected with your own communications to myself, I am led to infer, that it is in my power to save him. The means, if I interpret rightly your broken hints, and the wincings of his

paternal love, are painful, awful, horrible—startling, not only to the weakness of woman, but to human nature. So far am I prepared. By the ghostly vision which stood before me on that spot, I can well guess what sights and sounds I may encounter; and, by the terrors which followed, I already know that the spirit of man lives, and dares, and dreads, and suffers, independently of the body; and thus have I learnt to look down with contempt on the feelings of mere mortal nature. Speak then! Tell me what is to be done! On the first trial I was found wanting, because unsupported by any thing higher than curiosity. The case is different now. I dare you to show me that from which I shall shrink, or command me to do that which I shall not venture!” Pauline approached close to Orosmandel as she spoke, fixing upon him a look which seemed to the scholar to emit sparks of light, even in the midst of the darkness which surrounded her; and, as she drew herself up to her full height, assuming a wild and picturesque majesty which gave the idea of one

inspired, David's heart smote him for the injustice he had done her.

"There spoke the spirit of Laval!" cried the philosopher, with exultation. "I hold as nothing the labours of years, since they have conducted me to thee—for thou art alone among the daughters of the human race! It is neither the stars nor the destinies which have brought round the period of thy probation, but the energies of thy own mind. To-morrow, at that moment when we say, 'to-night,' and ere the sound hath left our lips, it is morning—thou shalt know all—dare all—do all. Thy father shall be saved, and by thee; and a new course of existence entered upon by you both, better, higher, and nobler than as yet thy soul can conceive."

"Be it so," said Pauline, "I will now to the chapel, and spend the intervening time in fasting and prayer."

"There is nothing connected with religion," said Orosmandel, hastily, "in that which cometh. If there were, thou and I could not be engaged in the

same work. Religion is as far beyond even the sublimest science as God is beyond the spirits he hath created; and, although men must still believe as they are taught, yet it befitteth not the beings of earth to imagine that they know surely that of which the demons are ignorant. The work to be done toucheth not the welfare of the soul as regardeth its Maker, but as regardeth itself; and the powers to be invoked must be its own courage and energy. Fasting is doubly injurious, inasmuch as it not only weakeneth the mortal part, which is the vehicle of mind, but, through that weakness, disordereth the fancy."

"Alas, my father!" exclaimed Pauline, with a troubled sigh. "Strange and terrible must be that deed, in which the protection and assistance of the holy saints avail nothing! There are secrets, you seem to say, hidden even from the Demons! To me this is extraordinary doctrine; for I imagined that in that other world they inhabit, all was as clear as daylight to us."

"Thou believest as thou wert taught; and thou wert taught erroneously even from the books of thy

own faith. The ignorance, in some respects, of the Angels—who, according to the Christians, are of the highest order of Demons—is asserted by the apostle Matthew; and Job declareth, that the Almighty taxeth them with folly. All knowledge is relative. What we know is as nothing compared to the knowledge of the meanest of the Demons; and the knowledge of the greatest is less than nothing compared to that of God, their Creator.”

“There are ranks, then, among the Demons as among us?

“There is a scale extending throughout all creation. Man is the highest of that series of beings, the vehicle of whose spirit is the visible and tangible substance we call matter. The series beyond are of another frame, so highly etherealized by spirit, that, except by their own consent, they are invisible to mortal eyes. Among them, the same gradations of excellence and power prevail as among the things formed of clay. This was known to the Hebrew sages; and is mentioned, among others, by the prophet Daniel, and by all the apostles.”

“And these beings—so high, so dreadful—if

created like us, have they also our portion in death? Are their bodies of light dissipated in the waste of space? and their glorious spirits shed abroad over creation, like a perfume that loses itself in the air?"

"Such, reasoning by analogy, may be pronounced to be their fate; but of this we can know nothing with certainty. The idea of any thing without end cannot be grasped by the human intellect; and the immortality accorded to the Demons is probably nothing more than a space of time beyond our conception. This we know, however, that the same who existed in the earliest times of tradition exist at this day—for their names, differing with the languages in which they are pronounced, cannot conceal their identity. Long before the Babylonian captivity, the Hebrews had beheld those terrible shapes which alighted on the hill-tops of Chaldea. These are few, however; they are even as a handful compared to the myriads alluded to by Daniel, and by the apostles; and it therefore seemeth to me, that there are some among the race, *as among us*, who, by superior daring and

knowledge, have made themselves exceptions to that rule of creation, which is vulgarly called Destiny." The philosopher drew himself up majestically, while he spoke; and Pauline looked with awe at the wild and proud expression of his eyes, on which the light of the lamp at the moment fell—appearing to receive illumination, rather than bestow it.

"What a pity," thought David, as he gazed with admiration upon the old man, "that the youth of the body cannot be made immortal as well as that of the soul! But this I fancy is impossible; for even Aurora could not accomplish it in the case of her sweetheart Tithonus."

"Go now, my daughter," said Orosmandel, taking her hand, and leading her away, "Go in peace, satisfied that thy request is granted. Strengthen thy mind against itself—against the habits of thought and affection which have been instilled into it from the cradle. Remember that the salvation of thy father dependeth upon thee; but keep still more before thine eye that glorious destiny thou art about to achieve—the accomplishment of

which would be cheaply bought by the immolation of one half of the human race !" Pauline started, and turned round at the singular conclusion of this address ; she gazed in the old man's face, and her lips opened to speak, but the words seemed to freeze in her mouth ; and pressing the hand which was at liberty upon her bosom, she walked slowly away.

When they had left the study, Orosmandel conducting the Damsel in the dark, David glided from his retreat. A thought struck him, as he crossed the floor, that it might be possible, in the few moments at his disposal, to ascertain the important fact, as to the existence of the brazen hand, which opened the avenue to the apartments below. He hesitated for a second ; and that second rendered his escape impracticable. A loud voice, and a quick tread, were heard approaching along the corridor ; and he had hardly time to regain his station behind the curtain, when Gilles de Retz strode into the room.

"It must be done !" he said, forcing the words between his clenched teeth. "And why not now

as well as again? Earth, heaven, and hell combine to drive me on; and what avails my resistance? Orosmandel"—for the philosopher re-entered the study at the moment—"you wonder, perhaps, at my agitation, and at the abruptness with which I have broken upon your privacy?—but no, you wonder at nothing. You are aware of the seizure of the money. My last resource is gone. The means by which I thought to keep my destiny at bay, or at least, to bring it round in the form and manner I chose, exist no longer. Do you know this?"

"I do. It is a trifle."

"A trifle? you will drive me mad! Look at me. I am Gilles de Retz—he who was not so much the child as the master of fortune—whose possessions were so numerous that his memory could not retain their names—whose eye brightened or withered that on which it fell—the sound of whose tread was waited for like the foot-falls of an approaching deity! What am I now?"

"An immortal spirit," replied the philosopher, "whose mortal form hath been stripped of the

paraphernalia with which it was invested by the accident of birth. For what wert thou deified, proud thing of dust? For thy lands?—for thy money? Behold, they are gone, and thou art a man! Is this all? What wouldst thou?" Gilles de Retz did not reply for some moments; but David could see that his whole frame was convulsed. The mien of Orosmandel, on the contrary, was proud and lofty, and the habitual calmness of his look, just touched, and no more, by indignation.

"Cast me not off," said the baron, at length, "for, although weak and overthrown for the moment, I am resolved! It was but time—but a little time I demanded, and all would have been well. Have I not sought like one who was determined to find? Have I not trampled, and tortured by turns? Have I not shed blood, as if it had been water? Have I not writhed under the pangs of guilt, till the moral sensibilities became callous, and I slept, like a victim amidst the torments of the wheel? There is only one point in which I can still be wounded—one nerve

which, when wrung, will make me shrink and shiver, through my whole being. Pauline!—my own daughter! my only child!—the sole link which remains for me between earth and heaven!”

“Weak indeed!” exclaimed Orosmandel, in a tone of contempt mingled with pity. “The loss of thy paltry treasure hath not only overturned thy courage, but upset the whole fabric of thy mind. Art thou indeed the vile and guilty thing thou describest? Or is this a moment of what may be said to be nothing more than physical prostration, since the blow hath been struck through the things of the body? Dost thou now writhe in that sick-bed repentance, in which the spirit, succumbing under mere pain and weakness, howleth forth the recantations which are received by bigots and idiots, with more reverence than is due even to the avowals of healthful conviction?”

“I recant not!” said the baron; “I repent not! Neither heaven nor hell shall move me from my purpose! If I had not the sensibilities of a man, where would be my merit in controlling them? where the strangeness of my destiny in surmount-

ing the fate of humanity? I have but one human feeling remaining; and, if I shrink when that is rent away, so far from blaming my weakness, you should admire the courage which submits to so fearful an infliction. I tell you, that if no other can be found, my daughter—yes, Pauline—Aye, gaze and point, and wring your hands, pale shadow! Hence! Begone! This is no place for you!” His eyes wandered, as if following some object round the room, till they rested on the fold of the curtain behind which David was concealed. “You think to affright me from my purpose!” continued he. “Away! for I am more horrible to look upon than you.”

“Thy fancy wandereth,” said Orosmandel, laying his hand upon his shoulder. “These be shadows;” and touching the lamp with his wand, it threw a dull glare round the room.

“I know it,” replied Gilles de Retz, without withdrawing his eyes; “but, for all that, is it not enough to curdle a man’s blood? Do you call me coward now? See, I look upon her without blenching. Can you not speak as well as gaze?”

Sight—sound—yea, touch itself—I can bear any thing. There is my hand—count if my pulse throb quick with fear;” and he crossed the room to the spot on which his eyes were fixed.

“What, vanished!” cried he; “Did I not say I was the more terrible of the two? Art thou indeed gone?” and, throwing open the curtain, he paused for a moment, as if transfixed, before the skeleton, which stood dimly visible in the gloom, confronting him with outstretched arm.

“I will not retract,” said the baron, faintly. “There—there is my hand!” and, as the dead fingers closed upon his, he sunk lifeless to the ground.

David, on the baron’s approach to his lurking-place, had shrunk behind the mummy; where he waited, with his dagger ready drawn. The head of the conscience-stricken wretch, when he fell, was only a few feet from where he stood; but so deep was the shadow in which the scholar was hidden, that he could see all that passed, without running any risk of being observed himself. Orosmandel drew near.

“This might have been good service, Ismael,” said he, addressing the skeleton, “if circumstances had coincided better : take thou care, Eugene”—to the mummy—“that thou mark times and occasions more attentively.” These were the names of the two murdered apprentices ! The old man then stooping down, lifted up the baron, as if he had been an infant, and carried him out to the middle of the floor.

David, as the fold of the curtain closed, shutting him up once more, in utter darkness, with the ghastly remains of his two predecessors, felt his blood run cold. The details of Marie’s legend came back upon his memory, and, with the dead witnesses beside him, he could not doubt its truth. He felt that he was indeed the Third Victim ; but more than ever resolved to sell his blood dearly, and, in fact, on consideration, somewhat better reconciled to the society of his two companions, from the idea of his being destined to be their avenger, he resumed his place, between them, and applied his eye as before, to the hole of espial.

The baron was already on his feet once more,

having revived instantaneously on the application to his nostrils of a distilled spirit, so pungent that even the scholar, although at some distance, could with difficulty hold from sneezing. By the assistance of this powerful drug, he seemed to regain his recollection at once, without passing through the intermediate stage of confusion; and, after a brief, but steady glance at the place where he had fallen, he turned to the philosopher.

"I crave your pardon for the interruption," said he, in a tone, half of haughtiness, half of shame; "but, with all your immobility, you will remember, I presume, that I have not yet passed my noviciate, and that my soul has not yet been altogether rent asunder from its earthly habits and prejudices."

"Talk not of it," replied the sage calmly; "that is a trifle;" using the expression for the second time during the intercourse, and in the tone of one who held all obstacles alike in habitual scorn. "The question is," continued he, "Doth thy resolution hold?"

"Do you ask of a swimmer, who has nearly

gained the opposite shore, having left behind him a breadth of water, over which there is no return, whether he will actually cross the gulf?"

"Then the thing is to be done—when? Wilt thou linger yet a little while? Wilt thou still send forth to gather the virgins of the land, even when thou observest that the lot hath already fallen?"

"Not fallen," said the baron hastily; "or, at least, the sacrifice is not inevitable. Do you remember the Trojan prince—for you are learned in the learning of all times and countries—whose daughter, chosen by lot for destruction—"

"Pshaw! I remember that Hesione was saved, and Laomedon slain. But at present I have no time for idle tales."

"Nor I!" exclaimed Gilles de Retz, with a sudden effort. "Hagar is as firm as a rock in the obstinacy of her unbelieving race. This night I could have slain her where she stood—but not till after I had bent her, in a humble matter, to my will, and so have reduced to be the plaything of

my senses, her who might else have been the agent and companion of my soul's ambition."

"It is well. The Jewess must remain intact, till the moment when thou canst dispense with her father's wealth; and that moment dependeth upon thyself. The peasant Marie—what of her?" The baron shook his head.

"Hast thou tried her well?" demanded the old man. "Hast thou touched upon the main-spring of her heart? She is fair, and therefore vain; poor, and therefore a lover of gold; proud, and therefore ambitious of title and nobility; a woman, and therefore given to pleasure, and pomp, and sway."

"I have tried her in all these. I have wrought upon her love and her fear—her pride, vanity, avarice, and ambition. For the tithe of what I have offered her, *I* would decimate mankind!"

"Then thou art resolved?"

"It must be so—I am," replied the baron, in a hoarse whisper. "Are you sure—of—*her*?"

"Absolutely. She hath inherited from thee a portion of thy own spirit."

“Alas, poor Pauline ! Will you not try her again—to-morrow ? You may be mistaken.”

“I never mistake.”

“And the bond ?”

“It is ready.”

Orosmandel walked into the circle ; and, extending his wand towards the altar, a small blue flame issued from the point, by which a sheet of folded parchment was seen lying upon a pile of bones. It was sealed with a black seal, still larger than those with which the princes of the time confirmed their public deeds.

“Art thou ready ?” demanded the Magician.

“I am. But you have repeatedly told me, that all must be completed in a single night, and it is now almost morning.”

“I tell thee we have yet time ; for the Damsel is prepared. Dost thou hesitate ?”

“I pray you bear with me,” said the baron, in a faltering voice ; “she is my daughter ; and I thought, even at the worst, to have had one being in the world to pray for me in heart and spirit ! I left Marie—although with faint hopes of her, I

confess—yet on the understanding that she was to consider farther of what I had said. Let her be brought here, and deliver her answer in this sepulchral gloom, and in the midst of these forms of mystery and terror. Perchance her mind may be wrought upon by fear, although it is deaf to reason.”

“The experiment will be vain,” said Orosmandel, “and at present I have no time to await the result.”

“Then I will receive her alone. Give me this one chance; and if, when it fails, I do not act as you would have me—then abandon me at once to contempt, poverty, and death!” The philosopher hesitated.

“In a few minutes,” said he, at last, “I must be far hence; and for this reason I would have refused compliance with thy desire. Here, on the uninterrupted portion of the floor, thou art safe; but if, in forgetfulness, or curiosity, or passion, thou attempt to penetrate beyond, thy life is forfeited. Away! and bring the young woman hither. Thou and I shall meet again to-morrow.” The baron, relieved

as it appeared, by the respite of a single day; and perhaps hoping that something might really occur in the interval to snatch his daughter from the horns of the altar, thanked Orosmandel humbly for the boon, and left the apartment.

The Magician maintained the same calm dignity of deportment when supposing himself to be alone as when in the presence of his protégé or victim; and David, who had expected some demonstration of private character and feelings, was more than ever confounded and amazed.

Orosmandel approached the altar; and after dipping the end of his rod into one of the vessels, struck smartly with it a portion of the circle on the floor. On the instant, a low, hissing sound was heard; and almost at one moment, a thousand small tongues of flame rose up among the bones of which it was composed. So dull was this light, that it disclosed nothing more than the forms of the things among which it played without burning them; now illumining a skull, now peeping through the eye-holes, and now thrust out of the grinning mouth. David was absorbed for an instant in the

effect of this phenomenon. When he raised his eyes, the apartment was vacant—the Magician had disappeared.

The scholar was not slow of following the example. At that moment even the brazen hand had no longer any power to excite his interest; but slow, and feeble, and well-nigh sick at heart, he glided from his retreat, and regained his own apartment.

So far the secrets of his prison-house were unveiled. The baron, not satisfied with the paction he had long ago virtually entered into with the enemy of mankind, would needs put his hand to a bond; of which bond, as it appeared, his own daughter, failing the peasant Marie, was, in some terrific, yet inconceivable manner, to be the security! And what was the part taken by Orosmandel in this strange drama, in which was blended so much of the ludicrous with the horrible? David was so confounded by all he had heard and witnessed, that he was incapable of answering the question. It seemed to him that he had been in a dream, from which he had not even yet awaked; and

he lay for some time on his bed, quaking with the feeling of indefinite terror which besets a man who is bestridden by the night-mare.

Hagar, however, was absolutely safe for twenty-four hours. This was something ; but at the end of that period would come the struggle, of which no possible termination could be foreseen, save the destruction of both. O for some messenger to carry the plan of the swamp, with one whispered hint to the ear of Douglas ! But this was out of the question. Could he not fly himself ? By means of the secret outlet at the top of the gate, the court and the ramparts were accessible to him at all times ; and, fearing no failure either of heart or limb, the success of the attempt, he persuaded himself, would be beyond a doubt. But this would be to leave Hagar—to forsake her at the very moment of her approaching trial ; and to trust to the faithless tide of circumstances for his return.

Even while abandoning this idea, however, he sprang up from his bed ; and going out by the skylight window, sought his old post on the roof of

the tower. Near the surface of the earth, the atmosphere was as calm as death; but in upper air, it seemed as if the Demons were keeping their sabbath. Black and heavy clouds hurried across the sky; and as their shadows, cast earthwards by the struggling moon, passed and repassed over the Erdre, its smooth waters now resembled a lake of molten silver, and were now buried in unfathomable gloom. Two figures were visible on the swamp, receding from the castle; but at too great a distance to be recognised by a common spectator, even as human; yet David, whose eyes were taught by practice, and sharpened by exigence, had no difficulty in discovering them to be those of Prelati and the dwarf.

He lingered for some time on the roof, his eyes fixed, as if by fascination, on those mystic wanderers of the night; but at length, when they had completely vanished from his view, he crept back to his bed, and endeavoured to compose his troubled mind to sleep. This, however, was impossible. Prelati and the dwarf still flitted like spectres before him; Hagar and Pauline, with clasped

hands, white lips, and burning eyes, were by his side ; and in the distance, Archibald, and his three comrades, stood by the brink of the impassable swamp, extending their arms towards him, and their faint voices floating mistily over the deep.

He started up between sleeping and waking, as a louder cry smote upon his ear. He thought his own name had been pronounced ; and listened, with intense impatience, for a repetition, to know whether or not he was the sport of a dream. The sound returned, however, faint yet intelligible : and he heard distinctly the word " David " uttered in the midst of a succession of shrieks. He sprang at a single bound from his bed, rushed down the ladder ; and was in the middle of the Magician's study, before one other idea had crossed his mind than that the kind hearted Marie was in danger, and had summoned him to her assistance.

The peasant girl was still struggling, though almost exhausted, in the arms of Gilles de Retz ; whose face, illumined at the moment by the ghastly lamp, exhibited the paleness, not of passion, but despair. When the scholar entered, he stared at

him, as if he had been a messenger from another world, but still retaining Marie immoveable in his gripe.

“Who art thou?” demanded he, hoarsely.

“The comrade of Ismael and Eugene,” replied David. A spasm appeared to pass across the baron’s face; his arms relaxed their hold; and Marie fell to the ground. He did not bestow a glance upon her prostrate figure, but strode towards the door; addressing a single word to the intruder as he passed, in a tone of menace mingled with exultation, and given forth with all the energy of hate.

“To-morrow night!” said he, shaking his clenched hand above his head; and the next moment he disappeared in the darkness of the corridor.

“Marie,” said David, raising her up, and speaking in a quick yet clear whisper, “are you sufficiently composed to listen to words, on which life and death depend?”

“I am My mind is strong, though my frame

is weak; and even that would soon recover, could I obtain a draught of fresh air."

"Here, then, is a plan of the swamp, describing the mode of descending the ramparts, and tracing minutely the path which leads across the abyss. Is your heart stout? Is your brain steady? Is your foot light and free?"

"Fear not for heart, brain, or foot. I am a native of the banks of the Erdre; and when a girl, I have played upon marshes where the wild duck would scarce trust himself to alight."

"Mark me, then. When you have gained the firm land, search instantly out Sir Archibald Douglas. I must trust to your wit to find him; for I can only inform you that he is known to Caleb, the Jew, who lodges with Rabbi Solomon of Nantes. Put the plan into his hands; and tell him, that if he can turn it to fitting and soldierly account before midnight, he will save his love and his friend from destruction. Will you do this?"

"I will, if I have life and strength to do it, so help me heaven!"

"Then give me your hand:" and he led her beneath the bar of iron, and into the enchanted circle; Marie following with a firmness of step, which even at that moment excited his admiration.

"On descending to the apartments below," said he, "I believe I can promise that you will meet with no interruption. The dumb slave will question no one descending from this place; Orosmandel must long ere now have gone forth, having announced his intention of so doing in my own hearing; and Prelati and the dwarf I know, have already crossed the swamp. To the floor below these apartments, which is on a level with the ground, you will no doubt find a descent of the usual kind; and there, in fine, a door, opening upon the ramparts, will let you forth to light and liberty. Let us now search, in this accursed gloom, for a hand of brass, on turning down which the avenue will be disclosed."

"It is here!" said Marie, stepping forward. She turned down the hand; and in the same instant sunk through the floor, and disappeared

with the speed and silence of light. Not a cry escaped from the lips of the dauntless girl; and when, in another minute, the trap-door as noiselessly rose again, and recovered its place, David could have believed that all was a dream.

Giving up not an instant, however, to surprise, he left the study, and, darting up the ladder, soon found himself on the roof of the tower. How long he waited for the appearance of Marie it is impossible to tell. The sands of time never seemed to run so slowly; and he had almost determined to return, and inquire into her fate in person, when he saw her make her appearance upon the ramparts. The moon was then obscured for some minutes; during which the whole world was wrapped in gloom. When again the light streamed suddenly down upon the earth, the white figure of the adventuress—who was still dressed in her bridal garments—appeared far out upon the swamp, gliding among the moonbeams, like a thing as fair, and unsubstantial. Sometimes it paused, as if uncertain of the path; but anew,

darting away, flitted swiftly on, till it looked like a thin, pale vapour skimming along the surface of the morass. The moon was again eclipsed; and David saw it no more.

CHAPTER V.

ANDREW, in the meantime, had left the castle, agreeably to his intention, soon after sunrise; and it may be supposed, that, with a commission like that which he had received from David, he did not draw bridle till he reached Nantes. He went straight to the lodgings of Sir Archibald; and there found his two brother students in deep conclave with the knight.

“If this be really Andrew in the flesh,” cried Nigel, “there must indeed be magic in La Verrière! Why, man, we thought you would have taken at least a week to consider of the prudence of giving yourself another day. Houperlande’s oxen, in the meantime, have all gone out

to grass; Bauldy there has set himself down before Felicité, to attempt palisade, ditch, rampart, and finally curtain, in regular succession; and the knight, and his esquire—that is, I myself—were just setting about defying Prelati to the field, and so finishing the adventure out of hand.”

“It is every word of it true,” added Bauldy; “and in case of failure in the duel—which indeed was to be looked for, with a ’squire as long as a lance, but neither sharp nor polished—we were to have had war in your absence, Andrew, glorious, gallant war. Nigel and I were to serve as men-at-arms with Sir Archibald; who was to take on for a while under a certain valiant commander, whose name is Montrichard.”

“What is the news?” demanded the knight, impatiently. “Did you get private speech of David? Have you brought us a plan of the castle in your memory? Or were you pitched over the ramparts the moment you got in, as one Beauchamp, a strolling Englishman, told us would be your fate?” Andrew looked sedately at the speakers, one by one, as they addressed him, and

then replied to them seriatim, beginning with the last.

“Sir Archibald of the Braes,” said he, “I did get private speech of David; and, by the same token, a most uncomfortable parlour he has yonder, for any two Christian men to commune in. I will not precisely undertake to say how many miles it may be above the surface of the earth; but, certes, there is no crow in all the Borders of Scotland who could not offer better accommodation to a friend. The plan of the castle of La Verrière is this: impassable ditches, unapproachable ramparts, impregnable walls; with a gate defended by two culverines, each four times as long as Nigel, and wide enough in the mouth to swallow us all three. I was *not* pitched over the ramparts; but if the lord de Retz had been just a trifle more fractious, David and I should have been under the necessity of pitching ourselves, after slaughtering him in his own den.”

“By the mass!” cried Nigel, “there would have been some sense in that.”

“As for you,” said Andrew, turning to him, “you are unfit to be an esquire, as Bauldy has

justly observed, by reason of your unconscionable length. You are to conduct Jacquin Houpelande's waggon to La Verrière to-morrow; and I myself will remain with the knight."

"Heyday!"

"You, Bauldy, are to give up the idea of being a man-at-arms. You are to continue the siege of Felicité, all the time that Nigel is conducting you to La Verrière. I assure you I took David's counsel touching that matter, with no small apprehension on my mind; for you know he was always a stickler for propriety. I reminded him that Jacquin Houpelande was a tailor."

"And an echevin of the city!" added Bauldy, hastily.

"True: but it was no redeeming circumstance of rank that weighed with him. It was all on account of Felicité herself."

"God bless him!" cried Bauldy, breaking into a glow of delight. "He never saw her three times in his life, and yet—— Well, it is wonderful, the sense, the understanding, the gump-tion possessed by that daddie David! But what

did he say, man? what were the qualities he more particularly distinguished?"

"Tut!—we have no time for that now. He said, that though a tailor's daughter, she was still a match for you, because she was a——"

"Well?"

"A woman. And now, Sir Archibald."

"Aye, now comes my turn. May I crave to know what it is David's pleasure that I am to do, and what he wills that I must leave undone? Perhaps, since I am deprived of my esquire, I ought to consider myself forbidden to challenge Prelati at all?"

"Undoubtedly you ought. On this point, you are not only entreated, but commanded to forbear; and, in case of disobedience——"

"Sir!"

"Don't interrupt me, or I shall never remember the message. In case of disobedience, I say, you shall know, to your cost, what it is to be hated, as well as to be loved——"

"Holy St. Bride!"

"By a woman."

“What! This message was not from David?”

“No. I am just coming to his. You are by no means to take on with Montrichard, or any body else. You are to hire *them*, if they will accept of service; or, at least, you are to be the leader of the enterprize, assisted by me, in the character of esquire, or henchman, or any thing you please. The treasure, you must know, on which the enemy mainly depend, is to be sent to them in the dusk of this evening, by the river. It will probably be contained, for the purpose of exciting no suspicion of its value, in a market-boat, followed by two or three others, like a convoy of peasants returning homewards from the city. They must of course be met with by an equal fleet, chancing, at that moment, to come down the Erdre; of which you, Sir Archibald, shall be admiral. It order that your pennon may not be unattended, Bauldy and Nigel, if sufficiently well disguised to prevent them from being known afterwards, may be with us for an evening's amusement; but they must take care, if not killed, to return unsuspected into the city, as they set out for La Verrière, with Jacquin Houpe-

lande and his cortege, in the morning. And now, my friends, set about mustering your force, without loss of time. I shall return before you are ready to set out; but, just at this moment, I have other affairs before me. All I have to add, by way of news, is, that David is in hourly and imminent danger of his life; and to you personally, Sir Archibald, that Prelati resides privately in the house, and that Pauline de Laval is in worse peril than you ever dreamt of. Further details as we row up the river. Meantime, adieu!"

Andrew then went to the house of the Rabbi Solomon, and was admitted, as before, to the presence of Caleb. The Jew was in the same room, sitting in the same attitude, at the same table; and so completely unchanged was the whole scene, since his last visit, that the emissary could have believed, that all which had taken place in the interval was only a gambol of the imagination, performed in the winking of the eye.

"Awake, Caleb," said he, "for I have good news!" The old man started.

“Good news!” repeated he. “Then she was not overcome? She died by her own hand; and gave forth her spirit to Jehovah, as pure as she received it!” His countenance was lighted up, while he spoke, by a fierce and terrible joy; and his eyes were fixed upon the calm face of the messenger, as if they would have pierced through the cold and immoveable surface.

“Your daughter,” replied Andrew, “is alive and well, both in body and mind. She spoke as bravely to them as if she wore a steel doublet instead of a silken vest; but she indeed looked like one who would not hesitate, if occasion called, to give up her life for her honour—or, to speak the truth, for any idle whim which the imagination of woman consecrates into something divine.”

“Is she in the tower? Answer me that, young man!”

“Not as yet.”

“When goeth she thither?”

“I fear me, to-morrow night.”

“It is well, it is well. It is indeed good news.

Thou shalt now have much gold for thy tidings ; and that will satisfy thy Christian heart better than thanks and blessings."

"Gold is a blessing of itself, Jew ; and truly one wherewith the Lord hath not blessed Andrew very abundantly. You must know, that we of the true faith think it as much our bounden duty to spoil the Jew of his gold, as your ancestors did to cheat the Egyptian wives out of their bits of trinkets, and bravery, and pots, and pans, and so forth, when they went up yonder from Ramases to Succoth. Alas !" continued Andrew, accepting a well-filled purse, and fastening it under his girdle, "to think of the sin of covetousness ! I doubt whether that same itching after the gold, and silver, and utensils, and old raiment of other people, is at this blessed day clean out of the fingers of the children of Israel."

"The young man David," said the Jew impatiently, "what didst thou learn from him ?"

"Let me first have done with your daughter. She wishes you to know that she is a captive ; and that you must ransom her—instantly if at all—with

as many shekels of gold as you may think her life worth."

"Her life, young man, is worth not a tithe of one of these coins!"

"But if honourably delivered?"

"Not with gold—that cannot be with gold. No more of it. What sayest thou of David?"

"The localities of the castle are unchanged; he has refused to fly alone; and, in case of the worst befalling him, you are to know that he forgives you his blood, and that he died to save your daughter."

"Oh, that he were an Hebrew!" cried the Jew, smiting his hands together, "oh, that he were of the house of Israel, and of the blood of the sacred people! Alas! my senses again wander; for there is no hope but of revenge. When goeth the waggon of Houpelande to La Verrière? Answer me that."

"To-morrow morning."

"Good, good. I would speak with thy comrade who is called Bauldy; and in private, where the ear of Houpelande may catch no echo of our

voices. Wilt thou send him hither? Away, good Andrew, and do my bidding. Go at once."

"I will; for you have somewhat overpaid me for the message, and I am scarce of change. Look, however, that you stir not out, for he will be here soon, as in the evening we take an airing upon the river."

And the evening at last came. It was a soft and mysterious twilight, the tranquillity of which was undisturbed by a murmur among the trees, or a ripple on the water. The wind was not yet born, the existence of which a few hours later, was manifest to David in the rack hurrying across the sky, while all was peace below. The heavens were closely packed with those wave-shaped clouds which sometimes give them the appearance of a sea; and, although the moon was risen, it seemed as if her beams had not as yet acquired strength enough to break their prison. The scene to which we would transport the reader has been thus described, on another occasion, by the same humble pen of which he now follows the traces.

"The Erdre resembles more a basin of the

Loire, than a river falling into it. Its motion is invisible, its current imperceptible. You glide in a canoe-like boat over its waters as calm as death, shut in by melancholy banks, that look like the sides of a grave. The very mariners are silent, and their oars dip into the heavy element, as if they feared to disturb it. You fancy yourself, at length, on some lake, over which you are transported by the mute ministers of enchantment, and look forward with curiosity to the end of your voyage, which seems to be near at hand. If in the meantime, a trout should leap out of the water to look at you, as you pass, you are carried instantly to the Arabian Nights, and the Ebony Islands, and remember, with a pleasing shiver, the lady stepping out of the kitchen wall, and tapping the fish in the frying-pan, with her magic rod, as she inquired, 'Fish, fish, are you in your duty?' to which the fish answered and said, with equal mystery, 'If you are in your duty, we are in our duty; if you reckon, we reckon; if you fly, we overcome, and are content.'

"On reaching the end of the lake, however,

and near the bank, just as you are preparing to disembark, the canoe shoots round the corner, and you find another lake before you, of nearly the same form, and precisely the same character. You are reminded of the changes of a pantomime, though this one is much more cleverly performed. Before it took place, the river around you looked like a plain of black marble, polished like a mirror, in which the stirless trees on the banks were reflected with magical precision. But at the instant of the shifting of the scene, you are smitten—and the occurrence is not a rare one—by a blast of wind, which stops your breath, and almost upsets your frail bark. A sail would have been fatal. The blast whitens the black river where it passes, and some faint surges rise, as if unwillingly. But, in another moment, the foam disappears; the waters relapse into their enchanted slumber; and all is calm, and black, and mute, and lifeless as before.”

On the present evening, in the very midst of the calm twilight, when it would have been impossible to say whether the hour partook more

of night or day, two boats were drifting down between those mysterious banks. They were filled with men dressed in the slouching hats, and large holiday cloaks of peasants. The hour was late for such persons as they seemed, to be sailing towards the city; but they appeared to have no desire to abridge their voyage, using neither oar nor paddle, but permitting their rude vessels to glide sullenly along, at the almost imperceptible pace of the current.

On arriving at the embouchure of the little river Cens, the navigable part of the stream became more confined; the confluence of the two waters taking place in a bay, the surface of which was so completely covered with aquatic plants, as to resemble a marsh. On the opposite side, there was a projection of the land, corresponding, in some measure, to the concavity of the bay; only sharper, and in the form of a low promontory. As the boats approached this place, the current drifted them so close to the shallow part of the river, that one of the passengers, afraid of getting aground, caught hold of the steersman by the arm.

"I warned you," said he, sternly, "and by St. Bride, I will keep my promise either way! If you perform your task faithfully, you shall be well rewarded; if not"—

"Silence," Sir knight! said the man—"or if you must threaten, at least speak lower. On this river, you may hear a trout leap at many hundred yards. That I know myself; but there be some who say, that words spoken where the stream enters the Loire at Nantes, are instantly heard at La Verrière, and the answer returned in the same minute."

"For all that, take care we do not ground upon the shallows. At this moment we cannot see fifty yards of the river; and, for aught I know, the company we come to meet may be on the other side of yonder rocks. I promise you, my man, I do not like your looks; and, if you are a native of these parts, as you say, it is not a little suspicious that, instead of yielding slowly to bribes or threats, you should have undertaken a service like this, as recklessly as if the object were to break the crown of a brother peasant."

“And what then?” said the pilot, “Is it because I am a peasant that I cannot have my motives like other people? Now, I’ll warrant you, if I were a knight, I might be as ugly as sin, and as close a neighbour of Gilles de Retz as Satan himself—the Lord preserve and forgive me!—without exciting your suspicions. You would say—‘Ha! he hath his enmities and revenges—he holds him at feud,’ and all would seem well. Why, do you think I am not a man as well as you? You may grind us to dust, messire, but that will not take the human nature out of us; which is a part of the very substance of our souls and bodies!”

“I have heard the like impertinences before,” said a young man slowly, who was leaning against the gunwale, as if fatigued with inaction, “and by St. George, I think they are spreading in our England! What will the country come to, if such monstrous ideas should get abroad among the great mass of the common people? If all men are alike, there can be no need for an hereditary nobility at all; but each man, having inherited his father’s fortune, should scramble for distinction as he might. There

would be a chaos for you ! When England sees that day, instead of being one of the great nations of Europe, she will be nothing more than a rock in the sea, the haunt of fishermen and pirates !”

“ You mistake, Sir knight,” said the first speaker, “ It is not the doctrine, but its application which is wrong. All men are indeed alike in their human nature, and its feelings and passions, as this fellow would seem to urge ; but some are born great and noble, and some little and mean. It is the duty of the former to grant shelter and protection, and of the latter to render service and fidelity. As the clump increases to the grove, and the grove to the forest, so individuals planted by God in this reciprocal connection, if they are only true to their several duties, become at length a mighty tribe. He who sows dissension among the parts, is guilty of the dismemberment of the whole. The chief who turns his dependents against him by oppression, cuts down the roof-tree of his fathers ; and the clansman who would infringe upon the just privileges of his chief, is a parricide and a cannibal, who should be hung up alive

to feed with his body as foul carrion as himself !”

“Silence with your arguments !” cried a third passenger, “in which, so far as Claude can see, both Scot and Englishman agree like good fellows, in the main : that a peasant is to be a peasant, and a lord a lord, to the end of time. I even now heard a sound down the river, which more resembled the dip of an oar than the leap of a trout ; and our pilot heard it too, for he pricked up his ears like a hound.”

“If you will take my advice,” said the person referred to, “we shall lie to, under the shade of this promontory. Two strokes of the oars will bring us out to the middle of the stream when required ; and those you expect, if they attempt to fly, will ground upon the shallows of the bay.” This counsel, being deemed judicious by the leaders of the party, was immediately acted upon. The boats were brought close to the bank, with their heads outwards. A sufficient space was between to prevent their oars from getting entangled ; and in both vessels, these were extended parallel with the water, and ready to dip simultaneously as soon as the signal should be given.

In one boat, as the reader may have perceived, the principal persons were Douglas, Beauchamp, and Montrichard; and in the other, besides some friends of the malcontent baron, there were Bauldy, and Nigel, and Andrew. The last three, who had had rarely the luck, since they left the Borders, to fall in with an adventure of the kind on so respectable a scale, were too deeply absorbed in the sport to utter a word. They sate in watchful silence, eyeing one another with a grim smile; which the good humoured Nigel, however, had occasionally some trouble to prevent from breaking, on his part, into a chuckle of boyish delight."

In the first boat, the leaders were too much accustomed to such scenes to exhibit any token of more than ordinary emotion; yet Douglas, who in spite of the resistance of Beauchamp, had assumed the direction of the enterprise, felt not a little of that anxiety which is the penalty of rule. His eye was fixed so intently upon the pilot, that the latter, who seemed to be habitually of a downcast look, could not help at length manifesting his annoyance.

“Sir knight,” said he, in a low voice, “you stare at me, as if I was a wonder; and yet you have even now acknowledged, that a peasant may have the same feelings and passions as a noble. Now, the case is this. I was born on the estate of the Lord de Retz; and I have not only paid faithfully all his dues, but also served him zealously in other matters to which I was in nowise bound. It was but the other day that I delivered, by stratagem, into his hands a woman who fled from him.”

“A woman!”

“Yes—but she was only a Jewess. She was fair, however, almost as fair as the Damsel of Laval herself, and noble looking, and kind withal: and she gave me gold, when I looked but for silver. Yet I betrayed her; to recommend myself to the lord of the land, and to save my family, who had harboured her, from persecution. Well; what do you think was my reward? Why, the very next day, they carried off by force my cousin Marie, who was brought up with me from her cradle; and she is now caged in La Verrière, the plaything of the lordly appetite of Gilles de

Retz, to be polluted, and then cast forth into the ditch."

"By the mass!" cried Douglas, "I thought I had seen your face before. You are Jehan, the brother of Annette, the same who"—

"Precisely. The same who would have delivered you into the hands of assassins. This was all for the sake of Marie; for they had the art to persuade me at the castle, that she had gone off with your friend, through your seduction. Now, are you satisfied? Have I cause, or not, for throwing off my allegiance to my chief? You only wonder that I should have found the courage! Yet it is you yourself who have torn away the prestige which encompassed La Verrière. When I saw that expedition flying homewards, as if the devil was behind them; and more especially, when I saw one in the midst, who seemed to have been raised from the dead to command it—'Ho! ho!' said I, 'Is it you who will trample upon your peasants, and make their women harlots?' And so I swore to be revenged!"

"Silence, fellow!", whispered Beauchamp, "or

your equality in human nature with the Scottish knight will hardly save your churl's blood."

"Yes, silent all!" said Montrichard." They come! Now, be ready, my men, to send us out into the middle of the stream at two bounds." The measured dip of oars was distinctly heard.

"Beauchamp," whispered Douglas in the knight's ear, "I shall forgive your taunts, if you only show me that your sword is as sharp as your tongue!"

"Thanks for your clemency!" replied the other; and in token of the bargain, they pressed one another's hand till the splints of their gauntlets crackled.

The sound of the oars came nearer and nearer; and then some voices were heard speaking in a muffled tone, which showed that the enemy, even on approaching so near to the termination of their voyage, had by no means laid aside their caution. The next moment, two boats, close to each other almost to touching, darted round the promontory; and Douglas, raising his battle-axe above his head for a signal, the ambush sprang

upon their prey, with no other notice of their approach than the shock and crash of the collision of the vessels.

Even the treasure-carriers found no time for exclamations, but assisted by their silence the policy of the assailants. The rowers, with one hand interposed their oars to protect their heads from the blow, while, with the other, they tugged at their swords, concealed and entangled, in their peasant's cloaks. The men-at-arms, lying perdué at the bottom of the boats, raised themselves up, with smothered curses, to meet an attack, of which they knew not the nature or strength; and thus the conflict went on for some time, with hardly any of the usual sounds of battle, except the clash of swords and battle-axes.

Such was the suddenness of the assault, that the affair would have been decided almost at a blow, had the numbers of the parties been equal; but on the side of the treasure-carriers, there were three boats, well manned, while Douglas commanded only two. This, even taking into account the dis-

advantage at which men fight who are set upon unawares, kept the balance pretty nearly equal; and in a few minutes, the shouts of the Laval party, when they had recovered recollection sufficiently to know that noise was their true policy, threatened to bring assistance even from the castle.

The middle boat of the three was evidently the one which contained the money; for the other two, instead of attempting to fly, pressed in to its assistance. The fight was thus concentrated in a single spot; and the majority of the combatants, crowding round the few who were actually engaged, could only take part in the conflict by their cries and gestures.

“Sir Englishman,” said Douglas, when they had both stood back to breathe for an instant. “Will you put it to the trial of our strength and courage which has the fairest mie?”

“Agreed,” replied Beauchamp. “May I crave to know which of the red-haired daughters of Caledonia has the honour of calling you her servant?”

"The daughters of Caledonia," said Sir Archibald, "are fairer than your mother's fame; but to-day I strike for Pauline de Laval!"

"And I also, in the name of St. Michael and St. George!—as witness this blow—" and Beauchamp, forcing his way to the front, raised himself upon the gunwale, and swinging his axe round his head, let it fall, with deadly aim, upon the casque of one who was clothed in complete mail, with vizor down, and who seemed to be the chief of the adverse party. This personage, however, stooping his head adroitly at the instant, the weapon just touched the smooth steel, and glancing away, the luckless knight, borne down by the impetus of his own blow, dived headlong into the enemy's boat.

"Douglas to the rescue!" cried Sir Archibald, bounding after him like a tiger. But he was down the same instant, felled by a blow from the redoubtable leader. At this sight, a shout burst simultaneously from three voices in the second boat; and Nigel, and his comrades, hewing down all opposition, forced their way into the enemy's

vessel, crying, "A Douglas! A Douglas! St. Bride for the Bleeding Heart!"

"The heat of the battle was thus suddenly transferred to the treasure-boat; and one of the others, imagining that its principal was taken, and the affair decided, made off at full speed, pulling lustily towards La Verrière. The crew of the remaining vessel, which was now stuck immoveable among the soft, deep mud, and aquatic plants of the bay, were not so fortunate. Some, indeed, contrived to reach the nearest land by swimming; but others were slain before they could spring from the gunwale; and others, attempting to strike across the river, were borne down by the weight of their armour, and disappeared before they had gained the middle of the stream. The waters of the sluggish Erdre, in the immediate scene of the fight, were one puddle of blood; only diversified here and there by a white bubble rising to the surface, with the last breath of one gasping beneath.

The pilot, in the meanwhile, sat immoveable in the stern of the boat; which, by this time, had

been whirled into the bay, and lay wedged among its floating turfs, and matted plants, with the treasure-boat close outside in deep water. He gazed, in stupified fear, not so much at the bloody scene, as at one of its principal actors. His eyes appeared to be fixed, as if by fascination, upon him who appeared to be the leader of the escort. This individual, indeed, performed such feats of strength and valour as excited the admiration of the whole of the combatants. The sweep of his arm appeared to be resistless; and his battle-axe struck to the ground whatever it touched. But, to turn the fate of the day, was impossible even for him; his comrades were slain by his side, or taken prisoners one by one; and, retreating from beam to beam of his own boat, he was at length driven into that of the pilot.

The dread which seemed to have taken possession of the mind of Jehan, instead of diminishing as the defeat of its object became certain, acquired new force every step that the stranger was forced backwards; till at length, on seeing him retreat alone into the boat where he sat, his stare became

ghastly, his jaw collapsed, and his whole countenance assumed the colour and immobility of death. The capture of this formidable personage, however, was now certain ; for the distance from the bank was at least twice more than a man could overleap, and the shaking and splashing, during the struggle, of the grassy surface between, proved the nature of the gulf beneath.

“Demand quarter !” cried Douglas, following the stranger, with some of the others, into the boat. “Keep back, my friends ; it were shame to slay so brave a man !” And the generosity was ratified by his comrades, who all cried out with one voice, “Yield, Sir stranger ! We grant you life and liberty !”

The vanquished knight, after turning one glance upon the space between him and the bank, paused for a moment, waving back his pursuers, as if he intended to accept the proffered grace. But the next instant, he turned round as quick as thought, caught up the pilot, with no more effort than if he had been an infant, and threw him, like a lifeless clod, midway to the land. He then leaped upon

the gunwale, sprang upon the breast of the fated wretch, and thence bounded anew far enough to reach the brink. Jehan uttered neither word nor cry; although the clutch he caught of the floating surface, when he descended upon it first, showed that he was still sensible. His body, which might else have floated for some time, spurned by the foot of the stranger sunk at once; and when the convulsion occasioned by the plunge was over, the tangled weeds of the Erdre closed over it for a pall.

Douglas did not this time repeat the contemptuous reproaches he had showered after his intended assassin, when he took to flight before the unloaded culverine!

"It is he!" was all that he uttered, in a tone of wonder and deep anxiety, as he followed with his eyes the retreating form of the stranger.

"It is he!" said Nigel, who overheard him.
"There is but one in Europe!"

"It is indeed he," repeated Andrew, musingly,
"as sure as a gun!"

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER the campaign had been opened in so brilliant and decisive a manner, it was necessary for Montrichard and his party, to throw off all disguise; and messengers, therefore, were despatched the same night from Nantes, to acquaint the more powerful lords of the family of Laval with what he had done, and to summon his immediate friends and neighbours (who awaited impatiently the signal), to a common rendezvous, with what force they could muster.

The money taken was not completely divided among the captors, because it was prudent, at least in the meantime, to represent their proceedings as arising from public and disinterested motives. A

sum, however, was subtracted from the fund, and equitably apportioned, sufficient to repay all parties for their trouble; and, among the rest, our three students found themselves possessed of what appeared to them to be inexhaustible wealth. The business in which they had assisted, was indeed, in some of its details, not altogether such as could be dwelt on with pleasure by the imaginations of youths raw to the world; but this was all the better reason why they should be paid handsomely for what they had done. As they pocketed the gold, they thought that war was not so *very* horrible a trade as it seemed; and then they set their faces to further adventures, with the grave looks of men who are "getting on," and waxing in the prosperity of life.

Early in the morning, the four Scots separated into two parties; Andrew and Douglas taking the road with Montrichard, and Nigel and Bauldy setting forth with Houpelande's waggon. Before they parted, Andrew ascertained that the culverine was still properly fixed, and took great pains to teach his comrades how to point it: only cautioning

them strongly not to be guilty of the extravagance and impolicy of charging it with powder and ball. He then took Bauldy aside, out of earshot, and said to him in a low voice :—

“ You have seen Caleb, the son of Benjamin ? ”
Bauldy nodded.

“ He is a decent man that, for a Jew. ”

“ Is he ? ”

“ You had doubtless some cracks with him ? ”

“ Doubtless. ”

“ He is not so ill-spoken neither. I dare say he told you what he wanted ? ”

“ If he did, it was only natural. ”

“ Something, I guess, that is not to be cried in open market, like a proclamation ? ”

“ You have hit the mark. ”

“ Well, well, God preserve you, Bauldy ! I see you can keep your tongue within your teeth, and that is a rarer accomplishment than fiddling. But, between ourselves, if David should take me to task about the Jew’s communication—supposing I meet him first, poor fellow !—what am I to say ? ”

“ Why, this, ” said Bauldy, with a grave and

mysterious look, as he put his lips close to Andrew's ear, which distended visibly to catch the secret; "Just this,—and then God bless you till we meet again—that you know nothing at all about the matter!" and so saying, the canny Scot pushed his friend away from him, and went to lift Felicité upon the waggon.

Bauldy felt supremely happy. The assent given by David to his love-speculation was no less welcome than surprising; for, although hardly conscious of the fact himself, he had awaited the decision of the master-scholar with more dread and anxiety than if he had been his legal guardian. But how David's whole theory of sentiment and action could have been so suddenly overturned, was a puzzling question. He had always, as Andrew said, been a "great stickler for propriety;" which meant, as touching the present subject, that he was for having every body enter into the holy estate of matrimony, like the brutes into the ark, each male and female after his kind. The lion was to mate with the lioness, the boar with the feminine pig; and the gentle blood of such a beast as Bauldy,

was by no means to intermingle with the red puddle of a ruturier animal.

But Bauldy was unacquainted with the history of David, since he had leaped the window of the Scottish college, and withdrawn for ever from the maternal shades of Academia. In great political convulsions, rank and birth are forgotten; high families are overthrown; mean ones rise up from the dregs of society; and men begin to reckon by a new scale of honour—which, however (though this is beside the question), wants nothing but antiquity to identify it with the old. In like manner, when the individual is taken suddenly away from the routine of every day existence, to find himself involved in the shock and struggle of the world—with the allegorical winds and waters of life howling round his head and hissing in his ears—it is no wonder that he should forget the nice rules which he had planned for the government of society. In such a situation, all men are his fellows; only distinguished by their greater, or less capacity to battle with the waves, or ride

out the gale. His human instincts and affections have fair play; beauty is beauty, whether on the cheek of a peasant or a queen; and the companion—if such there should happen to be—of his toils and dangers, is considered worthy of his love, not as a member of this or that gradation of rank—but simply as a woman.

As Bauldy lifted up his fair burthen, to place her on the waggon, he pressed her more warmly in his arms than he had hitherto ventured to do. Her hand was temptingly near. He put his lips, unperceived, to the cool, fresh fingers; and almost lost his balance, when he felt the young bosom, which leant upon his shoulder, throb suddenly and wildly at the touch. The poor girl trembled as he set her down; her cheek paled and flushed alternately; and her eyes, dewy and half closed, were fixed upon her feet.

“Felicité,” said Bauldy softly, “the last few days have been the happiest of my life. How has the time passed with you?” She tried to speak, but seemed unable; and, in lieu of words, a

demure smile just touched, without stirring her features, and then fled suddenly, as fearing it had said too much.

“Our journey,” continued Bauldy, “is a type of the journey of life. Oh, if I could have you for a companion, not only on this smooth road, but on the long, and rough, and dreary ways of the world! I would guard you, *Félicité*, as a young mother guards her first-born. In the green fields, you should walk by my side; near the cool and murmuring fountain, I would lay you down to rest; in the mountain paths, I would bear you in my arms; and in storm and thunder, I would wrap my plaid round your head. I am poor, *Félicité*—but what then? I am young, and strong, and I am come of a gentle line. My heart is stout; and my bold father’s sword hangs by my side. What say you? Will you with me, over valley and mountain, plain and rock, in peace and war, in storm and sunshine? Speak!” During this address, the blood rushed tumultuously to her face, suffusing neck, and cheek, and brow with the

same bright glow; her eyes glistened with tears; and her lips quivered.

“Not to rest by the fountain,” she almost sobbed; “not to oppress you with my weight; not to add to your cares, and dangers, and fatigues; but to help—and sooth—and cheer—to lighten your journey with my songs—and bring down blessings on your head with my prayers!” Bauldy looked in his young mistress’s face, through the tears that stood trembling in his bold, blue eyes; and read there, in the midst of its ingenuous pride, and virgin shame, the apology and assurance of our high-hearted Juliet—

“But trust me, gentleman, I’ll prove more true
Than they that have more cunning to be strange!”

Such was the wooing of Bauldy.

Nigel, in the meantime, who, with all his rash, daring, off-hand mode of doing business, was as clear sighted as a hawk, guessed at once what was going on; and he took especial care to keep Houpelande out of the way. The worthy echevin,

indeed, was in nowise inclined to ride in front of the waggon, where, on turning his back, he might have seen the lovers. He remembered the "fractiousness," as Andrew called it, which he had witnessed on this very road, and was well contented to keep his horse close to the wheels of the vehicle, seeming to derive an idea of protection from its very bulk.

On the present occasion, he was dressed in all the finery of his municipal office; and, being really a personable man, the tailor was completely merged in the alderman. The idea of being admitted to the presence of the Lord de Retz, in his own house—of paying him a family visit, as it were, was highly flattering to his vanity, and he assumed a corresponding dignity of demeanour. Added to this, there was the pride of wealth—the idea of accommodating one of the greatest nobles of his time; and it was no wonder that he had peremptorily declined listening to the suggestion of Bauldy, that his daughter should be left behind till their return.

The reports, indeed, respecting La Verrière

were by no means favourable ; but he had the pledge of the accredited agent of its lord, that *his* bill at least was secure. The rich cloths, besides, were already made up, and into dresses of so rare and splendid a description, that if Gilles de Retz did not have them, they might lie upon his hands for ever. As for the habitual gallantry attributed to the baron, Felicité would be, in some sort, the guest, or at least under the protection, of Mademoiselle de Laval ; and that was enough to ensure her honourable treatment at the hands of the Damsel's father.

They arrived, without adventure, at the village near La Verrière ; and, much to his surprise, Nigel found the very scene going on which had been described to him as taking place here, by Sir Archibald. The knight had explained, both to him and Bauldy, the words and motives of Jehan ; and it was, consequently, with some interest, that they proceeded to inquire into the fate of Marie, and the particulars of the new nuptials that were going forward so soon after her disappearance, and on the same ill-omened spot

The villagers were in the height of their glee ; tables were spread on the green, with wine in abundance ; the rude song, and ruder jest went round ; and when Nigel strode, like a youthful giant, into the midst, his appearance was marked—especially by the women—with shouts of welcome.

“ Sit down, Sir stranger,” cried they, “ pass not by, without drinking a cup to the health of the bride and bridegroom, who are soon to be man and wife !”

“ Two of them, if you will !” replied Nigel joyously ; “ but permit me, in the meantime, to ask a question.”

“ Drink first, and question afterwards,” said the bride, presenting him with a cup, after having touched it with her lips. She was a pretty brunette, with sharp, sparkling eyes ; and looked still prettier in her dress of virgin white, and coronal of flowers.

“ To your health, then, I drink, my bonny May, and to his whom you have favoured with your choice—a strapping youth he is, by the same

token, and well-favoured—and I wish you a life of honey-moons, and a knave-bairn every year that there is not a lass!" This speech was received with a shout, during which Nigel emptied the cup.

"And now for the question," said he to the blushing and smiling bride; "although it is one that may awaken unpleasant recollections to some of you here. I would demand of you news of Marie."

The ill-omened name had no sooner escaped his lips, than the bride, uttering a loud scream, dropped senseless upon the ground. A storm of exclamations arose from the whole group; and all crowded round to offer their assistance, or indulge their curiosity.

"This is Marie's cousin, Lisette," said one of the peasants, observing the inquirer stare at them in amazement; "and the bridegroom is Marie's betrothed, Victoire!"

"Let the jade lie then!" cried Nigel, indignantly. "To step thus into another's shoes, and even before her fate is fairly ascertained!"

"Alas!" replied the peasant, "there is no need to trouble ourselves about that. It were enough, if she had only passed one night within the walls of La Verrière—Yes, lady," addressing Felicité, who had joined the group, "your cheek may well grow pale at thought—enough to render her ever after unfit to step into an honest man's bed. Whatever may become of her, she can never be the wife of Victoire; and, as Lisette had always a hankering after the young man, who is as well-pleased to have her as Marie for a wife—why, the sooner the thing is done the better; and now we only wait for the return of Jehan, as the priest will not do his office, without the personal sanction of her brother."

"I will have more than Jehan's sanction!" cried Lisette, getting up from the ground in strong agitation. "I will never marry without the sanction of Marie herself—so help me the Virgin Mother!" and she burst into hysterical tears.

"Have then your wish!" cried a voice from behind. "Marry the choice of your heart, if such be Victoire, and may God bless and prosper your

union !” Marie, who had joined them unawares, in the pre-occupation of the moment, now stepped into the circle ; and the two brides, dressed in their wedding-garments, stood confronting each other. The new-comer was far more beautiful than Lisette, and the dignity of intellect sat so visibly on her brow, that the rude peasants felt an unconscious awe as they looked upon her. As for the suspicion that she had received stain or tarnish, at La Verrière, it was dismissed to the winds the moment she appeared.

Marie took off her chaplet, and considered it for a moment with a grave smile.

“ The flowers are withered,” said she at last, “ and that is a sure sign that my wedding was not to be. Thus do I break the betrothing, and set Victoire at liberty !”—and tearing the garland in pieces, she threw the fragments at the feet of Lisette.

“ And now,” continued she, “ in token of goodwill to my cousin, who but fulfils her woman’s destiny, and of forgiveness to Victoire, who was never intended by heaven as a mate for me, I

would fain see the sacred knot tied which makes them one. If this can be, however, it must be at once ; for I have pressing business before me for the rest of the day. Where is Jehan ? Has he not already signified his assent to the priest ?”

“ He did not think it worth while,” said one of the friends, “ as he intended to assist at the ceremony himself. Yesterday afternoon, however, he went down to the river-side, after a horse which had strayed, and he has not been seen or heard of since.”

“ What horse was that ?” demanded she.

“ The horse left here by the strange gentleman, with whom it was at first supposed that you, Marie, had gone off ; but who is now said to be——”

“ Hush ! Hush !” cried the others.

“ The Third Victim !” said Marie. “ That horse must have been an instrument in the hands of Heaven ; but whether of preservation or destruction I fear to inquire.”

“ Fear no longer for Jehan !” said Nigel. “ He who one day betrayed a Jewess to destruction, and the next, delivered a Christian knight into the

hands of assassins, could hardly miss his reward. Go search for him in the bay of Cens, to the left of the embouchure of the stream, and you will find his body stiff and stark, in the thick waters, with a pall over it of the obscene plants that furnish food neither for man nor beast !”

“My brother ! my brother !” shrieked Lisette ; and she tore the bridal garland from her hair, and scattered its flowers upon the ground.

“This comes of being over-hasty,” remarked Nigel to Bauldy.

“It is a just punishment,” replied the other.

“Tell me, messire, for the love of God,” said Marie, “by whose hands did Jehan perish ?”

“He had the honour of meeting death at the hands—or, I should rather say, at the feet—of the stoutest warrior in Brittany ; whose name is Prelatl.”

“Mysterious heaven ! And the knight betrayed by Jehan,” continued she eagerly, “he did not fall ?”

“No. It was he who, without recognising his face, invited the dark-looking peasant to pilot him

down the Erdre, and thus unconsciously delivered him to destruction. Know you that knight?"

"I do. Ever since day-break, I have sought Sir Archibald Douglas; and on an errand on which hang life and death."

"Then you are sent by David Armstrong! Fear not to explain yourself to us; for we are friends and comrades of both, and leagued in the same cause." Marie, after some hesitation, explained herself fully, although declining to trust the plan of the swamp out of her own hands. In vain Nigel offered to be the bearer of it himself; reminding her of her incapacity to defend herself, if attacked upon the road. She replied, that her very insignificance would be her protection, and that, wrapped, in her peasant's cloak, she would be able to penetrate, where swords and spears would oppose the progress of one like him. Yielding at length to this reasoning, they described the place of rendezvous where she would find the knight; and, bidding her God-speed, the two friends resumed their journey. As they followed the waggon, which had gone slowly on, they could see

the marriage guests separating sadly, to their several homes ; and, by and by, they observed a woman come out from one of the huts, completely wrapped up in a cloak. She waved her hand to them, as she entered the moorland behind the village ; and, for a long time, the solitary figure was occasionally visible, skirting along the low hills in the direction of the Loire.

Félicité had heard enough to alarm her both for herself and her lover ; although she had still no suspicion that he who had taken his leave so tenderly, yet so gaily, on the evening before, to meet her in the morning with a glowing cheek and a laughing eye, had been engaged in the interval in a desperate and deadly fight, which cost the life not only of Jehan, but of many better and braver men. She stated her fears so strongly to Houpe-lande, that the echevin, who doated on his daughter, regretted that he had not taken Bauldy's advice ; and at length, although groaning at the idea of depriving himself of so trusty an escort, proposed to the Scot to carry her back to Nantes.

"It is impossible," said Bauldy, firmly, but

sadly, "I cannot accompany Felicité myself; but she will ride on Nigel's horse, and he and I will conduct the oxen ourselves, that she may have the attendance and protection of the drivers." His mistress opened her eyes upon him with astonishment.

"Ay, you may stare," said her father, "but it is the way with the students; whichever place holds out the fairest promise of drawing of blood, and breaking of heads, thither they will go, in spite of all the fathers and daughters in Christendom. I know them well, Felicité; and I can say, that there are more garments torn and dabbled in one night on the hill of St. Genevieve, than in the rest of France in a twelvemonth."

"Are you resolved?" said the young lady, in a low voice, as Nigel drew her father aside.

"I am. But you must not leave me in anger. We are leagued with Douglas in a plan to deliver a comrade of ours, who is now a prisoner at La Verrière, in instant peril of his life. We have just heard, most unexpectedly, that a surprise is to be attempted this night; and surely even you, my

gentle love, would not advise your friend, who has nothing in the world to depend upon, save his courage and his sword, to skulk out of the danger?"

"Come Felicité," cried the echevin, turning round, in a flutter, determined that his daughter should be safe at all hazards, "are you ready to mount?"

"Yes, father," said she—"the waggon."

"But I say, the horse. Come, up with you; and go, Nigel, and give the men their instructions. Quick, quick; we are too near La Verrière already."

"It is thither I am going," said the young lady, "and no more need be said about it. If there is no danger there, why should I turn back?—and if there be danger, is it not fitting that your daughter should share it?"

"But there is no danger for *me*. Lord love you, I am the first man of my guild! Danger indeed! Why girl, I am an echevin of Paris!"

"And I am an echevin's daughter. No more, dear father, for I have ceased to be a child.

Ever since we set out on this journey, I have felt myself growing into a woman ; and I am determined to have my way for once !” Nothing that could be said by the whole three, had the slightest effect on Felicité, and she at length resumed her seat in the waggon, which moved on as before.

The fortress, as we have already observed, was not particularly imposing in its distant aspect ; and when a low black building, appearing and disappearing by turns, according to the inequalities of the road, was pointed out to the travellers as the castle of La Verrière, a weight of care seemed to be removed from the breasts of the whole party. Jacquin Houpelande remarked, that the French nobles were much more splendidly lodged than those of Brittany ; although, in all probability, the Lord de Retz considered it beneath so great a man to take any care about the house wherein he condescended to reside. And yet I must say,” he added between his teeth, “that it was ill thought of by the baron, to provide himself with no better a castle when he ordered my magnificent liveries !”

Felicité amused herself with asking questions about the Damsel of Laval, touching her age, her beauty, and her dress; and with conjecturing whether the brave knight who was to take the castle by surprise, looked forward to her hand as a part of the goods and chattels which would be the fruit of his victory. As for Bauldy and Nigel, they thought that their luckless comrade must be spell-bound indeed, to remain in such a place a single night longer than suited his own pleasure and convenience. "At this distance, in fact," said Nigel, "I am inclined to doubt whether yonder walls are much more difficult to descend than those of the Scottish college."

On the first view of the ramparts, however, which they found suddenly barring their way, on emerging from a wood, an instantaneous change was operated on their minds. At the sight of the enormous culverines, both the echevin and his daughter turned pale; while Bauldy and Nigel broke into exclamations of astonishment and admiration. The garrison were now closely on their guard, doubtless from their loss the evening before; and it seemed to be as difficult a matter to enter,

as they had heard it was to leave, the enchanted stronghold. The waggon and its contents were scrupulously examined; the bales were pierced through with a sword, to ascertain that they held nothing more dangerous than garments; and the faces of the whole party were subjected to severe scrutiny in the guard-house.

This last was a ceremony which the students had by no means expected; and they began to consider, in some trepidation, whether their disguises during the fight on the river had been complete enough to enable them to escape detection. To be startled at midnight by the cry of "treason!" and the clash of arms, and to find themselves in the midst of the hurry and danger of an assault, were adventures for which they were completely prepared; but to be laid hold of as spies, and hung instantly up, to gasp and choke in the face of the blessed sun, were contingencies no less new than revolting to their imaginations. No remark, however, was made on their appearance; and in a little while, waggon, oxen, servants, travellers, and all, were swallowed up by the ponderous gates; which, shutting behind them with a

crash, and a roar, made more than one of the group quake to the very centre.

The party passed on in profound silence, only interrupted by an occasional exclamation of wonder from Nigel, or by a soft whisper addressed by Bauldy to his mistress. Jacquin grew more serious, and his face more pale, as they proceeded through the intermediate fortification; but on arriving at the last gate, where he saw the two culverines on the top, one at each side, supported on men's shoulders, while another stood behind, blowing his match, and pointing the deadly instrument full at his head, he had well nigh fallen from his horse.

"Hold, for the love of God!" cried he. "I am an echevin of Paris!"

"It is but a form," said Nigel; "See, the gate opens. Pass on."

"To the bottomless pit with their forms, say I! Why they might go off—those bloody-minded culverines—before the men themselves were aware! O my God! was the like of this ever heard or seen? And I an echevin of Paris!" He passed

through this gate, bending over his horse as low as if he had been riding for a prize; and when they had entered into the court, the perspiration was seen falling, in large drops, down his pale face.

He was somewhat re-assured, however, by being invited, the moment he dismounted, into the presence of Gilles de Retz; an attention, he thought, which it was civil in the baron to pay, and honourable in himself to receive.

“You see,” said he, wiping his brow, “that no time is lost. Why, in the court-yard of a lesser noble, I might have kicked my heels for hours! It must be owned, however, that I have done the handsome thing by his lordship; and above all, that I am an echevin of Paris, and the first man in my guild!” But when it was signified, that his Scottish allies must accompany him, he could hardly account for such a clause in the politeness; till, on the young men endeavouring to excuse themselves, on pretence of having to attend to the discharge of the waggon, a file of soldiers began to move towards them, at a signal from the obliging messenger. Jacquin saw at once, that, in a place

like this, it was ridiculous to have any thoughts of his own—that the ceremonial of the court of La Verrière was as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and the Persians. He therefore followed his conductor in silence, with Felicité clinging to his arm, and Bauldy and Nigel bringing up the rear.

In the hall of audience, they found Gilles de Retz, seated at table, with Sir Roger de Briquerville, and other officers, standing unbonnetted around. The baron seemed surprised at the entrance of Felicité, but he rose up, with habitual politeness, and pointed to a seat. His eye wandered over her figure for an instant; but speedily relapsing into the stern and gloomy abstraction from which their appearance had roused him, he seemed to forget that such persons were in the room.

“My lord,” said De Briquerville, after a pause, “the prisoners are here.” The strangers started at this announcement; and Houpelande made a sudden step forward, as if about to speak.

“O,” said the baron, with a careless bend of the head, and the slightest possible approach to a smile.

"You have brought the liveries? That is well. We shall confer touching them to-morrow; but in the meantime, you will stand aside, and answer whatever questions may be demanded of you. Are these the men, De Briqueville?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Where were you last evening at sunset, fellows?"

"We are no fellows," answered Bauldy, "but Scottish gentlemen, and somewhile students of humane learning at Paris."

"Very well. Where were you at sunset?"

"Fighting pell-mell on the river!" said Nigel, suddenly. "You see it is nonsense to deny it, Bauldy."

"And after slaughtering our men unawares, and stealing our money, you come hither to add the part of spy to that of murderer and thief? We doom you to the gallows. Let them swing, De Briqueville!" and the baron rose up.

"My lord," said the officer, "I have already suggested, that the men, who are Scots, and will therefore fight for any body, if they are paid well,

might be as useful on our side as against us ; and at present, you know, we have need of recruits."

"But are we to take their fidelity for granted? Who knows any thing about them? Do you—tailor?"

"My lord," said Houpelande, "I am an echevin of Paris! I will take my oath that they are poor, innocent, God-fearing youths; and if they were taking their pleasure on the river last evening, and may be drank a bottle or two of wine, and drew a few drops of blood, or broke three or four heads—what then?—they are students of humane learning, as they have informed you, and were brought up to such things as naturally as to Greek and Latin."

"What then, indeed! By the mass, this is a most valiant tailor, and an admirable witness to boot! We shall fall upon a plan of requiting him for his testimony before he leaves La Verrière."

"They are perhaps known," said De Briquville, "to Orosmandel's assistant; who is a countryman of their own, and was also a student at the university." David was accordingly sent for, and

made his appearance before another word had been uttered in the room.

“Do you know these men?” said the baron. The eye of the witness wandered slowly round the room, examining each person, individually, from head to foot.

“I do,” he replied. “That is Jacquin Houpe-lande ; whom I scruple not to recommend to your lordship as the best fashioner of an epitagium in Paris : although, in his accounts, as I have often urged upon him, he will occasionally confound the Latin particles.”

“And the other two?”

“I doubt whether so much can be said in favour of them. They are clerks of the university, indeed ; but, alas ! it is not always piety and learning that are to be found under the cowl. They were sore fighters, I remember, and given to drink wine, when by any chance they could get at it. But, in truth, I can say little about them ; being myself, from my youth up, a lover of peace, and a hater of brawls.”

"The turn-coat villain!" groaned Houpelande, half aloud.

"That is nothing against them," said De Briqueville; "at least nothing that we do not know already. But can you tell us what security have we for their honour, in case of their being admitted to save their lives by entering into the service of my lord?"

"I can answer that best, if you will tell me for what crime they have forfeited their lives."

"Only murder and robbery."

"As for murder," said David, "by which you no doubt mean, in general terms, a violent death, I should think that man over bold who would undertake to guarantee, either that they should refrain from giving it, or escape receiving it. But robbery, brings us direct to the question. We Scots, you must know, valiant sir, and my honourable lord, are sometimes in the case to leave our own beloved country; either because we have not wherewithal left to live in it, or because our enemies—or, as it may happen, the laws of the realm—will not permit us to do so. Now, suppose us landed in Brittany, at our own

charges, and with our own sword by our side, come hither all the way, of express purpose to take a hand in what may be going forward—how think you we determine as to our course of action? Observe, you are all alike to us; there is not one drop of your blood in our veins; we know you not from Adam; and we have, therefore, no duties to bind us, no predilections to consult.”

“You sell your swords, of course,” said De Briqueville, “to whomsoever will hire them.”

“Of a surety we do! And then you ask, what security you can have for our honour? Why, our honour goes into the bargain with our swords; and the honour of a military adventurer is fidelity. You have said, and said truly, that we do not *give* our fidelity: we sell it. But fidelity is not a material object, like house or land, which you part with in perpetuity. The service and the hire, go on from day to day; and thus I humbly opine, that you may absolutely depend upon a soldier’s honour, so long as you pay him better than other people.”

“A most wise conclusion!” said the Lord de Retz. “Hire them, De Briqueville, since you

will have it so; for the question of their life or death is not worth the words it has cost." Bauldy and Nigel looked at each other for a moment, and then the former stepped forward.

"My lord," said he, "we humbly thank you for the honour you intend us; but till our present engagement be at an end, we cannot possibly accept of it."

"Think better of it, young men!" said De Briqueville, sternly. "You will find that this is no boy's play. You are offered instant choice between the gallows, and a fortune which half your beggarly nation might covet."

"It is clear at least," cried Nigel, with a bitter and haughty laugh, "that your nation covets the strength and valour of ours. I take all here to witness, that we die, partly for conquering in battle, against odds of three to two, which this man calls murder and robbery; but principally because we refuse to forfeit our honour, by entering into the service of the Lord de Retz!"

"De Briqueville," said the baron, in a low voice, but which was heard distinctly all round the

room, "I am in no mood for fooling. Away with them at once !"

"Let there be three of them, then," replied the officer, whose cheek was burning with shame and anger. "We owe the taunt to this other Scot; and if he dangle with the rest, Orosmandel will never miss him."

"Whatever you owe me," said David calmly, "I could excuse your paying in such a manner as that. But I really cannot comprehend your anger. You have put the courage of your prisoners to the most ample proof; and if you were desirous of engaging them before, you ought, in common reason, to be doubly more so now. You do not know our countrymen. These young men are at this moment piqued in honour. Their pride is wounded, and their very valour impeached, by the alternative you have offered them. Manage them as is the custom of our canny country. Give them a night to think of it. Fill their bellies with the rich meats and strong wines of the castle, that they may compare them with the hungry diet to which they have been accustomed; and let them walk round your

impregnable ramparts, and think the while of the brown heaths and naked hills of their own home. If by this time to-morrow, they do not crave service under your banner as a boon, without consulting Orosmandel at all on the subject, I will place my head at your disposal."

"Will you do this?" cried the Lord de Ret suddenly, while a baleful smile lighted up his countenance. "It is agreed! Not another word, De Briqueville! Away, all of you. I bid you welcome to my poor house of La Verrière; and I pray you to feast your fill!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE audience-hall not being in the private apartments of the baron, David left it by the public avenue as well as the rest. Houpelande was in no state of mind to speak to him, and Felicité, with pale cheek, and staring eyes, looked like one walking in a dream. His fellow-students, however, were broad awake. They acknowledged the wisdom of his policy as regarded them; and comprehended at once that the lives of all three, together with the property of Houpelande, and perhaps the honour of his daughter, depended upon the success of Sir Archibald. It was now well on in the day; and by midnight, at latest, their fate would be sealed for good or bad.

Even supposing, however, that Douglas secured his footing within the walls, Bauldy and Nigel could by no means understand how a vast fortress was to fall into the hands of so small a force as could cross the swamp unobserved: but David informed them that this consummation was neither necessary nor possible. Douglas knew too well the art of war not to give himself the advantage of a division, by causing a simultaneous attack to be made on the outer works of the fortress. But, even if this were left undone, the forces of Mont-richard were known to be assembling in the neighbourhood; and on this night the dwelling-house would be comparatively deserted, and almost every man capable of bearing arms posted on the fortifications nearest the expected enemy. Bauldy and Nigel themselves might open the doors to the knight, if he could not accomplish it himself by force; and once in, they might defy, at least for some hours, the whole garrison out of doors.

The house of itself was a fortress of considerable strength, defended by a thick curtain; and being niched in the angle toward the river, it commanded

the passage of the Loire. Thus if the knight's enterprise succeeded, all who chose would be able to escape in the boats; and even the property of Houpelande might find its way back to Nantes in a much shorter time than it had taken to come.

This explanation, which David did not give, till they were in the court, and out of hearing even of the walls, was so satisfactory that a slight tinge of rose-colour began to revisit the cheeks even of Felicité. Her father, however, was still gloomy and disheartened.

"I am an echevin of Paris," said he; "but when the moment of strife comes, they will mind me no more than a cast-off coat. I can fight, for that matter, as well as another; but then it must be in the day-time, and in a sober, citizen-like manner. To be cutting and slashing, in utter darkness, and with all the noises of hell in my ears—why, it would make me mad. I should thrust straight on, and embowel my own mother if she stood before me. Now, if you, David, who always know what you are about, and who mind whether it is light or dark no more than a cat—if

for old acquaintance sake you would only let me take hold of your cloak, when it comes to escaping? —What, you wont?"

"My good friend," replied the scholar, "I grieve to say that you must not depend upon me for any thing. I have another, and a far harder task before me."

"I thought so. Nobody cares for the old tailor. I don't mind to be called *sartor* now, or *vestiarius* either; and I doubt whether, even if you did lend me a catch of your new cloak, the stuff is good enough to hold. The knight, Sir Archibald—he and I have drank together as good fellows, and I have seen him eat like three counsellors. Do you think he will remember me in this pinch?"

"Unhappily, he will have the Damsel of Laval on his hands."

"Not a doubt of it; or any body else but Jacquin. It is needless to speak to you, Nigel; for you go on as if you had as many lives as inches—and these are not far from four score."

"I should be quite at your service," replied Nigel; "but I must tarry behind to speak a word in

the ear to De Briqueville—he who is so ready at tying up Christians in bunches, like haddocks to dry.”

“I could have taken my corporal oath of that ! Bauldy, you have more sense than Nigel, though not much neither. If you will save me and my property, you shall have one half for your reward.”

“And who will save your daughter?”

“Sir, my daughter is myself; and the one cannot be saved without the other. Is it agreed?”

“Agreed. For my half of the property, I shall accept of a very moderate sum of money; and for my half of the persons, I choose *Felicité* !”

“What is that? You ! Come, this is nonsense. We have no child’s play before us, as De Briqueville most justly said.”

“Keep your money then, since you grudge the price of my service ! *Felicité* has already given me her heart, for that was her own to bestow; and I ask of you, in full of all demands, nothing more than her hand. Even this, however, I shall leave to your generosity, when all is over. In the meantime, you may be assured, that if I leave

this house alive, you and she shall be with me !”

David recommended to his two comrades, to play the part of unwilling guests for an hour or two, but to allow their ill-humour to subside gradually under the influence of good cheer. If they could even affect intoxication towards bedtime, it would be so much the better ; as in that case suspicion with regard to them would be laid asleep for the night. But when thus disposing, as it were, with their heads, they were to have their eyes and ears in their breasts, like the Blemmyes of Ethiopia, mentioned, as they no doubt remembered, by Strabo. They were to observe the geographical position of their dormitory, so as to be able to find the great door in the dark ; and, while waiting for the sounds which should call them to such course of action as their prudence and courage might suggest, they were, above all things, to spend the interval in supplications to God, through the mediation of the Virgin Mary and the blessed St. Bride.

David then bade a solemn adieu to the whole

party individually; but, on arriving at *Felicité*, he lingered for a moment, and raised her hand to his lips.

“My bonny May,” said he, “I leave you in good hands. Instead of the wealth and municipal distinction to which you might have looked, you have chosen a stout arm, a true heart, and a blythe blue eye. In times, and countries, like these, the election is not only honourable to your womanly affections, but to your judgment; for the youth of the city are not only dissolute but effeminate, and truly it becomes a prudent lass, who would walk in safety through this perilous world, to have a man for her companion, and not to go to and fro in the image of the nymph *Hercynna*, the companion of *Proserpine*, with a goose at her side. *Deii vertant bené!* The dearest blessings of heaven be upon you! Away now with you all. Eat, drink, and be merry; and let not the thought cast a shade upon your brow, that we five, in all human probability, shall never meet again!”

David betook himself again to his employment; but it appeared that all was now at an end. The

fire was extinguished ; the crucibles were thrown into a heap in a corner ; and what remained of the various substances, which it had been necessary to separate with so much care, was swept into one heterogeneous mass. The object of his blind, but incessant labours, was no doubt accomplished. This night was to end the noviciate of Gilles de Retz ; to fulfil the purposes, whatever they might be, of Orosmandel ; and to see at length attempted the long projected villany of Prelati. What these things were, David knew no more than the man in the moon : yet he knew, that they involved the safety of Pauline's soul, of Hagar's honour, and his own life.

As the shades of evening began to fall, his cheek may have become paler, but his heart grew firmer and firmer. He had sharpened and polished the blade of his dagger, till it resembled a huge lancet. He had girded up the loins of his soul, as for a journey on which there was no turning back ; and though somewhat confused by the mystery in which the coming catastrophe was enveloped, he had accustomed himself to look so long and so steadily

into the darkness, that his mental optics were prepared to seize the faintest glimmering of light the moment it appeared.

He had leisure enough allowed him for reflection. His appearance, even in the passage, was observed with indifference. The Lord de Retz, indeed, deigned to notice him once as he passed with a scowl of disdainful triumph; and the dwarf, as he looked up in his face, perpetrated a grin, filled with so much devilish glee, that the scholar could hardly refrain from uttering an invocation aloud. But Orosmandel, his arms folded in his cloak, his head erect, yet the eyes fixed upon the ground, glided past him like a spectre. No one asked what he did there. It seemed as if the plans, which were approaching the moment of completion, were too securely laid to have any thing to fear from him. His day was past—his apprenticeship was out; and, like the crucibles and chemical agents in the laboratory, he was laid aside till the morning, when there would be time to break all in pieces and cast them into the river.

He was, at first, greatly puzzled to account for

the escape of Marie having attracted neither suspicion nor attention of any kind; but at length, on mature reflection, he ascribed it to what must have been its true cause. Gilles de Retz, ashamed of the circumstances of his defeat, was not likely to have mentioned the subject at all, unless interrogated; and Orosmandel was far too busy with more important reflections to think of the fate of a peasant girl. If her idea crossed the mind of the philosopher at all, he must doubtless have concluded, from the silence of the baron, that his persuasions had been unsuccessful, and that he had sent Marie back to her prison-chamber, to await his leisure for seductions of another kind. For Gilles de Retz, it was enough that he had left her in the Magician's study, and in the hands of his assistant: and as for a thought of her escape from the fortress, it could hardly have entered the brain of either party.

David, therefore, had come under no suspicion on this account; and he was snared so inextricably in the toils, that now even his cries and struggles would have provoked no more notice than the

dying agonies of a fish in the angler's basket. But it was not the moment for resistance ; and as the evening darkened apace, he crept mutely up and down the ladder which led to his garret ; now perching himself upon his tower of observation, and now gliding, like a shadow, through the corridor. All here was now as calm as death. The communications which appeared to have been going on throughout the day between the baron's private apartments and the study, were at an end. The quick, irregular step of Gilles de Retz, as he came and went, was heard no more ; the goblin messenger of Orosmandel had performed his last commission ; and the tall, still, spectral form of the Magician himself had vanished in the interior of his den. The elements which had been so long preparing, were ready ; and there hung, brooding over the tower, that preternatural stillness which prepares the seaman for the bursting of the hurricane.

But when the air is stillest, and the ocean smoothest ; and when the dark grey mist which curtains the sky, and the broad and dense shadow

which belted the horizon, let forth no sound to tell of what is coming—the elementary agents are at work within and beyond. The strife is going on; the chaos is in motion; although man, owing to the weakness of his outward senses, only feels that the evil spirits of nature are at hand by the quaking of his own heart.

In like manner—although to the ear and eye of the scholar all was silent and motionless around—within that mystic chamber at the very moment the war of the human passions was at its highest. The place was so constructed, that when the ponderous doors were completely closed, no sound could escape from within; and to this circumstance, no doubt, was owing the facility with which David had found access, whenever he chose, to the interior; for the time and labour which were requisite to shut up the room could not always be spared.

Ever since night-fall, Orosmandel and Gilles de Retz had been in colloquy, as secure from listeners as if they were in the middle of a desert. The baron, when he first entered, was calmer in his

motions and manner than on former occasions ; but his face was deadly pale, and the tone of his voice was so much changed, that it hardly appeared to be the same, although one would have been puzzled to describe the difference.

The arrangements of the place were the same as usual, with the exception of a light which burned upon the table, gleaming faintly through the crevices of a human skull. The parchment, with its black seal, was thus rendered more distinctly visible ; while a brazen hand behind the altar, touched by the rays of the lamp, appeared to point, with extended finger, to the mysterious document. On this object the eyes of Gilles de Retz were fixed.

“ All is prepared ? ” said he, when Orosmandel had secured the door.

“ All.”

“ And there will be time ? ”

“ Yea.”

“ That is well. You do not believe in destiny ? I do.”

“ What the vulgar call destiny,” said Oros-

mandel, "is nothing more than a general rule, by which the universe of mind and matter is governed. It is practicable for individuals, by means of superior knowledge and higher daring, to step forth from the crowd, and free themselves from the yoke. The days of a man, for instance, are numbered at three score and ten years. How many overstep the bounds! To extend the term by ten, twenty, or thirty years, is easy, even for common men. Shall it be said, that it is *impossible* to turn these acquisitions into cycles—scores—centuries? When Adam, by eating of the tree of knowledge, became even as a demon, his next step, according to thy Scriptures, would have been to take also of the tree of life, and so live for ever."

"Not believe in destiny!" said Gilles de Retz, who apparently had not heard, or else was unable to follow, the reasoning of the philosopher. "Why, look you here! Was it I who formed for myself that peculiarity of mind which incited me to the pursuit of occult studies? Did I shape out the circumstances which have led me here? These hands, which were once as soft and stainless as if

they had known no other bath than new milk, are now so incrustated with blood, that it is only use which enables me to bear the sight or smell ! Was this done of my own will ? I am ambitious, it is true ; but so are other men. * I am voluptuous ; and so are other men. Why did I not do as they ? Why did I not pass my life, or throw it away, in the chace after love or honour ? When I reached at distinction, it yielded itself, without an effort, to my grasp. When I looked with desire upon beauty, it melted spontaneously in my embrace. Even she—my wife—Catherine—who could have filled this wild bosom, as she filled my arms, when she had just suffered me to taste of the fulness of content—she died ! Was this my doing ? Why, if every drop of blood in my veins had been a separate and individual life, I would have given them all to save her !”

“ My son”—said Orosmandel.

“ Nay, hear me still. Bond after bond was loosed of my grasp of heaven, till only one golden thread remained. When you proposed to me to sever that blessed tie, by making Pauline a thing

as guilty as myself, I could have stabbed you to the heart. And what held me? Amazement, not so much at the wickedness, as at the folly of such a thought! I put back the clustering ringlets from the face of the innocent, and bright-minded girl, and looked through her's into her mother's eyes. And then I renewed my covenant with Catherine; and my heart was glad within me, as I thought, that come what might, I should still, while she lived, have one being on earth to pray for me, not for gain, but in spirit; and when she died, an angel in heaven, to join her mother in pleading for my soul at the throne of God."

"The time flieth apace," said Orosmandel impatiently.

"And then I tried the spells of love, and the allurements of wealth and power. I sounded the depths of woman's heart, and found vanity, ambition, voluptuous desire—all bad things that may coexist with maiden purity; but I found not what I wanted. When argument was unavailing, I substituted threatening; and when persuasion failed, I had recourse to force. Screams were heard within

these walls, instead of laughter; and for wine, the banquet furnished blood and tears. The noble would gladly sacrifice her pride at my bidding; the wealthy her wealth; the virgin her modesty; and thus my senses were pampered, while my soul brooded lonely, and afar off, over the fate she prophesied. The secrets of nature were invoked in vain, and gold was showered into the crucible, as if it had been water. Still there was hope. Still some new victim presented herself, almost unsought—for no other purpose than to baffle her destroyer; and at length, a mighty sum, obtained with almost the last of my possessions, and at the probable expense of a civil war in the country, was the only chance left of saving father and daughter from destruction." The baron paused, as if exhausted.

"The money was intercepted by brigands," said the philosopher calmly, "and what then?"

"Why, there it is! The last stake was lost——"

"The last but one," interrupted Orosmandel.

"Did I not tell you? I am like a man sinking into a gulf, and catching desperately at the lichens

above his head. There is but one remaining—just one!—and that is small, and delicate——”

“But strong as twisted steel.”

“And graceful, and beautiful—twined round with the virgin flowers of spring, and glistening with nature’s holy water, the dews of morning! To that must I cling; on that must I fix my foul grasp—or perish.”

“The lichen will transplant,” said Orosmandel; “it will take root anew, in a firmer, loftier soil; and its crushed flowers will be no whit the worse. Still, if thy heart fail, there is time to retract, even at the twelfth hour. Thou art ruined, it is true. Lands, money, power, and place—all are gone. Verily one half that thou hast spent in this pursuit, would have sufficed, with prudence and house-keeping economy, for many years!”

“Do you dare to taunt me!” cried the baron, stung by the tone of voice in which this was uttered. “Is it not you who have led me on from the first step? Did I seek your presence or your counsel? Did you not appear before me, like a demon of the abyss, unsummoned, save by

the evil thoughts that were in my heart? Retract? What if I do retract? The world has yet wealth to win, and there are armies to command, and states to govern! What would the Duke refuse to the request of him whom his purchases have ruined?"

"Liberty!"

"How?"

"The Duke hath signed the decree for thine arrest."

"Mother of God, can this be possible? But I will be revenged! I will take back my lands by the strong arm. By St. Mary, I will light a brand, which shall set one half of Brittany in flames!"

"If thou do this, it must be alone; for the church hath already stretched forth her hand to set the mark of Cain upon thy brow; seeing which, men will hide their faces when thou passest by."

"Can you mean this?" said Gilles de Retz, trembling.

"The crimes imputed to thee, are murder and

sorcery ; and the president of thy trial is to be the Nuncio of the Pope. If thou refuse to surrender, then cometh excommunication ; if thou give thyself up—the fire and the faggot.”

The baron was stunned by this communication, which lost no part of its effect from the calm, cold manner in which it was delivered. His head drooped upon his bosom ; and his chest, which, the moment before, had been heaving with tumultuous passion, exhibited not even the motion of life. Orosmandel continued to regard him with a calm, but observant look.

“ And you will not believe in destiny ? ” said Gilles de Retz, at length, as he raised his head ; “ Come, I am ready. Forgive me for the idle words I have used ; and let us proceed. Are all things ready ? ”

“ All.”

“ And I also ; ” and the baron deliberately bared his left breast. The magician, then entering within the circle, approached the altar. He lifted up the parchment, and opened it ; when a powerful and

exhilarating odour escaped from its folds, and filled the whole apartment.

“Art thou prepared?” demanded Orosmandel, solemnly.

“Tell me first, if you remember our covenant? All things will I give, save one. When in the very gulf of sin, I will still have a hope—faint though it be—of salvation.”

“Fear not. All is according to thy desire.”

“Then am I ready.”

“Approach, then. Do what thou doest quickly; for, until all is accomplished, thou must not draw thy breath within this circle. Come!” The baron paused for a moment; but then walking steadily towards the altar, he wounded himself with his dagger, and dipped in the blood a pen, which he received from Orosmandel. As he stooped over the bond, he was bewildered rather than guided by a sudden blaze of light. But he signed his name, and in the midst of a convulsion, resembling the slight shock of an earthquake, which shook the tower at the moment, he staggered out of the circle, and fell upon the floor.

When he recovered, he was again on his feet, supported by a grasp which Orosmandel held of his arm.

“Is it done?” said he. “Did I sign?”

“All is well. Thou wilt now prepare to go instantly forth whither thou knowest.”

“And Pauline? Has she consented?”

“She is prepared; but, as yet, in ignorance of the precise task that is before her. Whisper it not till the moment arrive; when every lingering scruple will be lost in enthusiasm. Away!” and Orosmandel, opening the massive door, the baron went out, and reeled, rather than walked, through the corridor to his own apartments.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHILE these things were taking place in the tower, Sir Archibald Douglas, and his allies, at some miles distance, were concerting measures for prosecuting the contest which they had commenced under such favourable auspices. The mind of the young knight, however, was by no means easy under the part he was playing; and, there was frequently so much inconsistency observed in his counsels, that he already began to lose the place he had acquired in the estimation of his companions.

He had opened his wooing, indeed, in rather an extraordinary manner—by robbing the father of his mistress of a large sum of money; and he was now openly in arms against him. He more than

half repented the reliance he had placed on David's judgment; and condemned the facility with which he had bent his neck to a yoke, which, however reasonable for the fellow students to bear, was unworthy of a belted knight. Pauline, it seemed, "was in worse peril than he had even dreamed of"—but surely not from her own father; and was it his wisest course to league himself with the spoilers of her house, and force his way to his high-born mistress at the point of the sword?

Andrew, however, who had by this time become the confidant of his plans and wishes, held strictly to his original opinion of the wisdom of the master-scholar. David, he observed, was not over-much given to explanation; but, neither would he suggest any plan to another, on which he had not previously brought to bear the resources of a mind far less given to miscalculation than is usual. It was difficult, doubtless, to conceive the nature of the danger which menaced the Damsel in her father's house—but was not the place a den of mystery altogether? Sir Archibald might depend that every thing would turn out for the best; and,

in the meantime, he had nothing to do but to follow out the suggestions of David, by prosecuting the war as briskly as possible.

In the midst of these debates, the news came to the camp, that the Duke had at length listened to the remonstrances of his nobles; that he had consented to surrender his last purchase on receiving back the money; and that an ordinance had been published, by sound of trumpet, forbidding the farther alienation of the family estates.

This, although certainly not quite unlooked for, came like a shock of thunder upon Montrichard and his comrades. The enterprise which had occupied their thoughts so long was to be abandoned; their German auxiliaries were to be turned adrift without satisfaction; and worse than all, the money they had so fairly earned was to be given up! Curses, both loud and deep, ran through the camp; and many a petty baron there prepared to ride home in headlong haste, to shelter himself from the creditors that had been gathered like harpies around him by the news of his expedition.

Beauchamp was perhaps in secret more discontented than any; although no one could have discovered this through the habitual apathy of his manner. He congratulated Douglas, sarcastically, on the wisdom he had exhibited, in seeming to doubt of the expedience of pursuing an adventure which he had himself commenced; and speculated on the advantage which the prudent Scot would enjoy, in the prosecution of his love suit, when undisturbed by the bustle of war.

"You cannot anger me, Beauchamp," said Sir Archibald gaily; "for at this moment I am glad to the heart at what has occurred. When we have full leisure, however, if you will try with me, either on foot or on horseback, either with sword or lance,—not which has the fairest mistress—but which is the worthiest servant, I will exchange as many gibes with you in that fashion as you please."

"And why not now?" said the English knight. "Neither you nor I are much encumbered with men to take care of; there is not a better field in Brittany than this whereon we stand; and here

be judges enow to determine our pretensions." The rude chiefs of the rising, gathered round them in expectation of the duel.

"Come hither," answered Douglas, "and I will tell you why it must not be now;" and the two knights—whose talk was of hewing one another to pieces—walked out of the group, arm in arm. On getting beyond ear-shot, the Scot, much to his rival's amazement, explained—if he can be said to have explained what he did not himself understand—the situation of Pauline de Laval; and proposed that, for the present, they should lay aside their mutual jealousies, and join hand in hand to save her. Beauchamp, although more a man of this sinful world than Sir Archibald, was not less a knight, and he at once pledged himself as required; but, in the midst of the arrangements consequent on their new confederacy, another messenger reached the camp, whose news turned all things upside down.

This was an officer of the law, bearing a warrant for the arrest of Gilles de Retz, on a charge of

murder and sorcery ; and he called on all who heard, to assist him, in the name both of the church and the Duke.

If it be remembered, that many of the chiefs present were blood relations of the house of Laval, and that the ostensible object of the whole was simply to preserve the integrity of the family estates, it will easily be imagined, that this intelligence acted by no means as a sedative upon their disturbed nerves. The consultations that ensued, were brief, but conclusive. The Duke, before rendering justice, had put them to the trouble of taking up arms ; and it was surely not in his service they would use them. The charge of murder might be brought against any baron in Brittany ; but Gilles de Retz had murdered no kinsman of theirs, and what had they to do with it ? As for sorcery, it was an affair they did not understand, and with which they would not presume to meddle ; being well satisfied to leave such delinquences in the hands of the church, which they more immediately concerned.

Montrichard was the first to give the signal for

breaking up the rendezvous. Each chief collected his own men round his standard; and, by and by, the parts of the mass were seen detaching themselves by degrees, and successive bands marching sullenly away, to all points of the compass, and losing themselves in the shades of evening. Beauchamp, however, with about twenty spears of his own countrymen, still remained on the ground; and also Douglas (with Andrew for his esquire), surrounded by about as many more, consisting of foreign mercenaries, or isolated adventurers, who apparently not well knowing whither to betake themselves, looked up to him as to a leader, in as desperate a plight as themselves.

“Sir Knights,” said Andrew, after a silence of some minutes, “if you will take my advice you will ride your several ways with what speed you may. If the Lord de Retz get an inkling of your situation here, he will send out a force sufficient to cut you in pieces; and I pray you to observe, Sir Archibald, that being without my culverine, you can reckon me only as a common man. I have observed a figure, for some time past, crossing the

hills from the direction of La Verrière ; and, although it is now lost in the shadows that are falling around, I can almost undertake to say, that its errand is to us."

"You are right, friend," said Beauchamp, "for see, it appears again, advancing steadily to the mark—and in the semblance of a woman ! If you do not claim a monopoly in that way, Douglas, perhaps you will permit me to receive her?—Pshaw, it is only a peasant!" and, as he spoke, Marie stepped into the group, and approached Sir Archibald.

"I am late," said she ; "I have lost precious minutes in pursuing those whom I took for your party. Tell me, Sir knight, for the time presses, are these your friends by whom you are surrounded?"

"All friends."

"Yet speak low, my woman," interposed Andrew, "for you shall know that friends are oftentimes unsafe confidants. Bend down your ear, Sir Archibald; and if need be, you can take to yourself the merit of publishing the secret."

"He speaks well," said Marie; "step aside with me, for a moment, for my errand is of life and death."

"He speaks like a true Scot," observed Beauchamp, superciliously, when they were gone, and measuring Andrew with his eye, from head to foot.

"It is gratifying to me to hear the acknowledgment," replied the latter. "But you seem to be astonished, Sir knight—and the feeling is nothing more than natural—at finding a grain of common-sense beneath a steel cap! Now, I would have you to understand, that although possessing some slight knowledge of military matters—as touching culverines, for instance, and such engines of war, I by no means consider myself as a mere soldier; I am a votary, you must know, of that virgin-goddess, who had Jupiter for a mother, and Vulcan for a midwife; and who is not only the patroness of arms, but of wisdom, and the liberal arts."

"Silence, Andrew, for the sake of heaven!" cried Douglas, rejoining the group; "for this is a moment in which wisdom must give way to

daring. Sir knight, I have received sure intelligence, that the Damsel of Laval, if not saved this night, is lost. A plan has been put into my hands, which will enable us to cross the supposed impassable swamps of La Verrière, and so surprise the castle. Will you assist me?"

"Will *you* assist *me*?" replied Beauchamp, with heat. "It is my turn to lead; and there are twenty pairs of hands that go with mine, while you are almost alone. In any other adventure, I would second you at your request; but an enterprise which concerns the Damsel of Laval must be conducted by me."

"That cannot be," said Douglas; "yet it is not from any idle jealousy I refuse your offer. At a crisis like this, I would not hesitate to follow your standard, in a field on solid ground; but the habits of my boyhood, and the nature of the wild country where I was born, give me an unspeakable advantage over you, in an adventure like the present. What say you, gentlemen, are there none here who will follow me, for the sake of chivalry, and in honour of the lady they love?"

“And for a rich booty, withal !” added Andrew quickly. “I know every inch of the ground. The bulk of the garrison, you must be aware, will be out to-night, on the more distant fortifications ; and the house, if we once get into it—and which commands the passage of the river—may be defended against them all. As for the swamp, it has already been traversed by this bonny lass, and is there a man among us who would hesitate ?” These appeals had no effect on the Englishmen, who stood firmly, and in silence, by their chief ; but almost all the other desperadoes ranged themselves on the side of Douglas. They tied their horses in a neighbouring thicket ; and a rendezvous near the swamp, and a signal, being agreed upon, they began their march separately, in order that the point to which it tended, might not be discovered ; although, before setting out, they gave a loud shout, in order to apprize the scouts of the castle, if any were within hearing, that enemies were at hand. It was, indeed, the true policy of the adventurers, to keep the garrison that night in a state of constant alarm.

The two rivals saluted each other sternly and stiffly as they parted ; but Beauchamp, with a degree of awkwardness, which contrasted strangely with the dignified, yet supercilious apathy of his usual demeanour.

“The danger which threatens the Damsel,” thought he, as he looked after the retreating figure of the knight, “cannot be within her father’s castle ; and without the gates, I shall be as likely to protect her as he. My numbers, added to his, would give him at least the possibility of success—and that would be to put her into his hands. Yet he is a gallant fellow, though a Scot, and Pauline will weep for him when he falls !” The young knight’s eye fell upon the peasant-girl, who turned round several times to look at him, as she walked slowly away. He imagined that wonder and scorn sate upon her features. “It is a daring enterprize !” continued he mentally ; “such an one as minstrels will celebrate with songs, and ladies with tears.—What ho ! gentlemen !” and the ring of arms followed his sudden voice, as every one moved to

hear him. "Shall it be said that we alone hung back when danger like this was to be dared?"

"I was just thinking," replied the lieutenant, "that the Scot, by some miracle, may escape alive, and get back to tell it one day on the borders!"

"That were shame!" cried they all. "Let him lead across the swamp if he will; but once upon the ramparts, the best man will be first!" On the instant the awkwardness of the leader disappeared, as well as the island taciturnity of his troop. They tied their horses to the trees, the young knight gave the word, and, as they commenced their march, stepping lightly and cheerily along the sward, the cry of their nation rose clear and high in the evening air, "St. George for merry England!"

Douglas, in the meantime, followed by Andrew, walked swiftly on; but it was as yet far too early for action, as the fitful beams of the moon were only beginning to be felt amidst the flying twilight. He at length directed his companion to

proceed alone to the river side, and collect the men at the rendezvous; determining himself to approach within view of the principal gate, and endeavour to ascertain whether the garrison mustered there in such force as to leave a probability of the house being comparatively undefended.

His walk, owing to the nature of the ground, was much longer than he had expected. Occasionally, on reaching the summit of an eminence, he caught a distant peep of the Erdre, with a dark object at the brink which he knew to be the abode of Gilles de Retz; but his progress towards it was so slow, that he could have fancied himself in the condition of some knight of romance, who sought in vain the avenue to an enchanted castle. He was not yet within the circle of its attraction; and it seemed as if some good genius, operating through the natural intricacies of the ground, was warning him away from the fatal spot.

A large lake of the Erdre was at length before him; and, although the house was invisible, he recognised the localities, and knew that he could

be at no great distance from the place he sought. The dimness of evening was creeping rapidly around. The frame-work of the picture was misty and indistinct; and the dull sky seemed to be showering down shade upon shade over the whole piece. There was just light enough to gratify the eye, and darkness enough to excite the imagination; and nature looked like some lovely face, which is not the less lovely when seen through a veil.

He passed through an amphitheatre, and ascended a steep beyond. The view here was magnificent, embracing the large lake of the Erdre, and many of its windings before and behind; but Douglas bestowed not a glance upon the scene: he pressed forward through valley, and over steep, threading the forest with the intuitive instinct of the forest-born, and leaping the marsh-pools with the agility of a deer. He was able, for some time, to steer his course by the direction of the river, which was visible from every height; but, by and by, the mist gathering upon its surface, and rising from the marshes at its sides, rendered its form so indistinct, that it no longer served as a guide.

Douglas, whose fears for Pauline increased every moment, plunged on almost at random, till at length even the dusky twilight was no more, lost and absorbed in the darkness of night. He had by this time entered an extensive wood, which had appeared, to his hopes at least, if not to his conviction, so long as there was light enough to enable him to form some idea of its shape, to resemble the forest scenery that surrounded the castle of La Verrière. He still pressed on, therefore, in expectation of seeing lights in the windows, which might direct his further search.

And his expectations were realized; for he had not stumbled on in the dark for many minutes, when he saw something in the distance which resembled the glimmering of a taper. The light increased in magnitude, as he approached, till at length, he was somewhat startled to find that it must proceed from the flame of a torch. An opening in the wood, besides, by enabling him to catch a glimpse of the dull sky behind, convinced him that no human habitation intervened; and he paused, in some perplexity, to consider.

No one who is unacquainted with the manners of that epoch can enter into the feelings which this simple object—a torch seen at night in a lonely wood—awakened in the bosom of the knight. Of all the dangers which he had prepared to encounter, this seemed the most terrific; and, while the wild and singular tales connected with La Verrière, forced themselves like realities upon his imagination, he drew near with as much fear as a brave man can be supposed to feel.

It was fortunate for Douglas that some revulsion of his feelings had taken place, to diminish the rapidity of his approach, otherwise he must have fallen over a precipice of naked rocks, which intervened between him and the object of his wonder. The hollow below, of inconsiderable area, but great depth, was almost circular in form, and bound in by a range of cliffs, the sides of which were naked, but the jagged tops surmounted by uncouth-looking trees, twisting their ungainly branches over the gulf. The bottom of the amphitheatre itself was swollen here and there into irregular mounds; but, with the exception of a tall

yew-tree, which stood in the middle, it was wholly naked of foliage.

On the upper branches of this tree hung the light which he had supposed to be a torch. What was its nature he could not tell; but it seemed to be placed there as a lamp to enlighten this strange scene, on which it shed a steady, but dull and sepulchral glare. At the bottom of the tree there was a pit, which the shuddering witness speedily recognised, by its oblong form, to be an open grave; and near it lay a human figure—the corse, no doubt, as Douglas thought, destined for such unholy burial. At a few paces distant, there was a heap of large stones, of a reddish colour, rudely placed together—resembling, perhaps, a Druidical altar; and near it an object which seemed to be a basket covered with a white cloth.

All this was so strange and unworldly, that when the first emotion of superstitious fear was over, the knight could easily have persuaded himself that he was in a dream. There was, indeed, spread over the whole scene, the same kind of dimness which attends our impressions in sleep.

The sides of the amphitheatre were without definite form; and their projecting points, and indented fissures, brought into play, in light and shadow, by the lamp, seemed like unearthly shapes waiting for the unhallowed rite; while the unchanging surface of the sky, seen among the twisted trees above, gave the idea of spectral faces looking down through the branches. The silence was so intense, that Douglas feared to interrupt it with his own breathing; and at length, dreading that he was fascinated there by a spell, he recited the pater-noster inwardly; and, turning resolutely, but noiselessly away, prepared to leave a spot dedicated, it was too evident, to services at which no Christian man ought to assist even as a spectator.

The next moment, however, a stir below caused him, half in fear, half in curiosity, to resume his observation. The supposed corse had moved its position, and discovered itself to be a hideous dwarf lying fast asleep. The light of the lamp fell upon the grotesque features of the face, that was turned upwards; and Douglas, as he gazed, could

easily have believed, that he saw, in bodily presence, one of those goblin-sprites, whose business it is to mislead and destroy.

A sound was now heard, apparently from the opposite precipice, but so faint that Douglas could not have detected it but for the preternatural stillness of the moment. At the instant, however, the sleeping dwarf sprang upon his feet, and throwing one of those somersets—heels over head, which are common on the modern stage, stood immovable. Presently a tall figure entered the arena slowly, by the further end. His dress resembled in some measure the robes of a high priest; but, on his breast and forehead, were large plates, apparently of polished gold; and he carried a long black wand in his right hand. Behind him two other persons approached still more slowly, who, at the exclamation of “Hold!” from the Magician, for such Douglas deemed him to be, stood still.

The priest then prostrated himself before the altar, remaining, however, at a little distance; and on rising, touched it with his wand, when immediately a clear blue light arose from the summit. His face

was now distinctly visible; and the knight saw, in the commanding and majestic features, and the beard as white as drifted snow, the likeness of Orosmandel.

“Approach!” exclaimed the old man, and his voice ran like music through the amphitheatre. The two persons behind obeyed; and, as they came within the light of the altar, Douglas almost fell to the ground, when he saw that one of the actors in this accursed rite was Gilles de Retz, and the other—Pauline! For some moments he was affected by a reeling of the brain, and a swimming of the eyes, which prevented him from either seeing or hearing; but, on recovering his faculties, the two lost ones were close to the altar, which he now observed was surrounded by a circle of human bones.

Pauline looked like a Pythoness, in the moment of inspiration. A small circle of jewels surrounded the crown of her head; but her hair, otherwise unconfined, floated wildly over her shoulders. She reeled in her walk, as one who had drank of some intoxicating drug, and a feverish brightness shone in her wandering eyes. Instead of being blanched

with fear, a red spot burned on either cheek; and she looked round upon the scene with an inquisitive wonder, which seemed almost to partake of strange, unnatural mirth. The yew-tree—the lamp—the circle of human bones—the altar—all by turns were singled out by her flitting glance; and then a sound resembling laughter escaped from her lips. But when her eye rested upon her father, a strong shudder shook her frame, and she drew close to his side, embracing his arm convulsively, as if at once to give and receive protection.

What passed afterwards was in dumb show. A dagger was placed in the hand of Pauline, and her father appeared to solicit her aid in vain to use it in some manner. He at length bared his arm, and held it close over the sacrificial fire. She still appeared to hesitate; till a groan of pain escaped his lips; when she suddenly plunged the point of the blade in the scorched flesh. The blood spouted from the wound upon the flame, which rose up with a sudden flash that rendered the whole amphitheatre, for an instant, as clear as day. A moment's pause ensued; and then the ground seemed to move

beneath their feet, as if shaken by an earthquake. Some stones fell from the altar; and a thick blue smoke rose up from a thousand crevices around.

“It is accepted!” cried the high priest, who stood without the circle. “Another blood-sprink-
ing, and all is accomplished!” A pause took place. Pauline gazed in the face of Gilles de Retz, who seemed to shrink from the look. At last, siezing both her hands, he addressed her for some time in a low, but earnest tone.

She appeared, at first, not clearly to comprehend his meaning; but soon, as gathering conviction forced itself upon her mind, she raised her hands in horror and aversion. He became more animated, and urgent—seemed to entreat—promise—threaten—command; while Pauline remained silent, at first in determination, and then in stupefaction. At this moment, the hideous dwarf caught up the basket covered with a white cloth, and with a grin, half of malice, half of gratulation, handed it over the circle to the Lord de Retz.

“Strike!” cried the high priest, in a voice of thunder, as the baron drew aside the cloth.

The cry of a young child followed ; and, at the sound, Pauline, starting from her trance, dashed the dagger upon the earth, and, catching the infant to her breast, covered it with tears and kisses.

Gilles de Retz sprung out of the circle, and rushed towards the priest, who, in pacing to and fro with impatience and disdain, had now stopped short under the cliff on which Douglas leant.

“Father,” said the baron, in a voice of despair, “is there no other means? She is obstinate. Her hand may be forced to do the deed, but her heart never.”

“Then thy trouble is lost,” replied the Magician gloomily. “The blood must be shed by a pure maiden, and of her own free will.”

“And is there *no* other means?” Orosmandel was silent for some moments.

“None?—None?” persisted the baron.

“Yes—one!” cried he, suddenly, in his smooth, sonorous tone no more, but with a voice as hoarsely ominous as that of a raven grating on a sick man’s ear. “The maid must first be sacrificed by thee ;

and then the blood of the infant will be accepted at thine own hands !”

“ My own daughter !—My own daughter !”

“ Perish, then, infirm of heart ! I leave thee to thy fate.”

“ A moment !—another moment !—I adjure thee in the name of the master thou servest !” and the desperate man rushed again towards the altar. What he said it was impossible to distinguish ; but one moment his face grew bright with enthusiasm, and the next black with rage : Pauline, in the meantime, only straining the infant closer to her bosom. At length, in sudden phrenzy, her father caught up the dagger, and grasping her by the hair, while he held the blade to her breast, exclaimed—in a tone which seemed to make the whole atmosphere vibrate—

“ Speak ! in a single word—or, sign but with thy finger in answer. Wilt thou kill, or die ?”

“ In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost !” cried a voice at the instant—but before the abjuration of Douglas was complete, the flame on the altar, and the lamp on the tree,

disappeared. A sound, like the rattling of bones, ran round the amphitheatre, mingled with sobs and wild laughter; and as the lover of Pauline descended the cliffs, with headlong impetuosity, it seemed to his excited imagination as if he heard also the gushing of blood.

By the time he had reached the plain below, all was silent; but he heard, or fancied he did so, the distant trampling of feet; and, assisted by the faint, grey light of the sky, where not a star was visible, he rushed towards the place where he had seen the actors in this memorable scene enter the arena. The faint twinkling of a lamp, although several hundred yards before him, served for some time as a guide; but soon, even this disappeared; and, having entered the forest, which extended far beyond the amphitheatre, he groped his way in utter darkness.

The loyalty of the knight must be ill-understood by those who imagine, that even the spectacle of his mistress taking an active part in ceremonies accursed of God and man could weaken his attachment, or change his heart. Douglas felt absolutely

convinced that Pauline was the victim of enchantment, and was, vulgarly speaking, under a spell; and he praised more the virtuous heroism of her nature for refusing to complete the sacrifice, than her weakness for commencing it. Was this the peril—more imminent, indeed, than he had ever imagined—alluded to by David? Was his midnight attempt intended to save both her soul and body? If so, the deed was accomplished. The magical ceremony was broken off in the midst; and however desperate might have been the intentions of Gilles de Retz in the impious phrenzy of the moment, it was absurd to suppose, that, in cold blood, and without having any advantage to expect, he would take his own daughter's life.

Pauline's farther safety, then, must be provided for in daylight. By the first peep of dawn, he would spur to the court of John V.; he would declare what he had witnessed in the presence of the Nuncio himself; if necessary, he would send his voice throughout Christendom, and call to the rescue of his mistress all the chivalry and nobleness of the time. The Lord de Retz, with an arrest

hanging over his head, and a bull of excommunication thundered against him, even if there survived not one natural feeling in his bosom, would not dare to increase wantonly the fury of his enemies. Even when defying the power of the state in his own person, he would give up his daughter to the protection of the laws; and thus Pauline would be saved—and by her lover.

As these reflections passed through his mind, the knight slackened his pace. David, it seemed, had been wrong in the hour, which was now elapsed, although it was not yet midnight. His warning, notwithstanding, had been effectual; and it was to the scholar he owed the salvation of his mistress. This idea called up another, which made the heart of Douglas leap with affright. It was not Pauline alone who was to have been saved by his prowess, but David also! On these precious moments, which he was now wasting in idle meditations, perhaps hung the life of his friend! Was he to be guilty of the selfish baseness of abandoning the enterprize the moment his own purpose was served? The young knight scorned the thought. He knew

that the adventure was desperate; and he felt convinced that on his own life depended the eventual safety of his mistress. What of that? He believed in honour with a religious faith. He would do his duty, and leave the rest to heaven.

Bitterly regretting the moments he had lost, he abandoned all thought of approaching the castle walls. He was determined that no appearance he might see there should prevent him from attempting the enterprize; and, bending his steps towards a part of the Erdre which he had recognised when as yet there had been light enough to observe distinctly, he found himself, in a much shorter time than might have been expected, approaching the brink of the swamp.

"Who goes there?" cried Andrew, emerging from a thicket.

"It is I. For God's sake make haste! Where are our men?"

"Haste, indeed! And is it you who give the injunction? Where, in the most holy name, have you been this livelong night?"

"I have been at a sabbath of sorcerers; and that

same most holy name—to it be the praise for ever!—was to me even as a sword and a spear;” and, in a few words, he gave him an account of his adventure. “But come, make haste, I say,” continued he; “for, judging by yonder misty moon, the night is now in the death-grips with morning. Pray heaven a bloodier struggle be not even now going on in those dark towers! Where are our men?”

“Couched close by; their limbs stiffening in their armour in the night air, like a blade rusting in its scabbard. Will you sit for a while? Fye! you breathe as quickly as a young wench after a dance.”

“That is no wonder; for I have not had time to breathe at all for the last half hour. But it will pass.”

“And so it will; there is nothing like exercise for the asthma. I trow that shaking bog will give us something else to do than count our breath; and these black pools—lo you there! it is a head thrust up from the waters to see what we are about. Down again it goes—I wonder what the toads think of

the business ! Come, gentlemen, up and be doing. Remember, the word for the onslaught is, ‘ Douglas to the rescue ! ’ ”

As the adventurers gathered round their leader, their practised ear caught the tread of a body of men approaching softly through the trees ; and, forming into line instinctively, they drew their swords with one motion, the sound of which ran through the thicket like that of a brief gust of wind striking upon the leaves.

“ Are you for Douglas ? ” cried Sir Archibald. “ Speak, ere you come nearer ! ”

“ We are for God and our standard ! ” answered Beauchamp. “ But, to say the truth, Sir Scot, I now see that you were right in the matter of the leadership. I never yet stepped upon field which would not bear the weight of a man and his horse ; and, with or without a plan, I should have been but a poor guide over yonder swimming, quaking, gurgling swamp. They say the lowlands of Scotland are mostly composed of such soil, and the highlands of granite ! ”

“ Come one day and see, my friend, ” said

Douglas ; “ but, in the meantime, be sure that you put your feet in the very prints of mine. Here is now a gleam of the unsteady moon, which will light us from the firm land, and yet last not long enough to betray us. Come on, Sir knight—a better friend, or a braver foe, could not be desired. Andrew, you are next. Follow, gentlemen, one by one ; and heed not the shaking of the bog, for we will not give it time to sink. Holy and immaculate Mother of God, be thou as a lamp to our feet ! ”

The adventurers bowed down their heads during the invocation, and a rough whisper ran, like a breeze, through the crowd. The next moment, they stood again erect ; and the rustling of their armour, and catching of their breath, preparatory to taking the first step upon their perilous path might have been heard at some distance. They then, following their leader one by one, forsook the firm land. The motion of the floating mass, under so unusual a weight, communicated itself to the whole river, the waters of which rose in huge waves upon the bank ; and the rushing, gurgling, groaning noise of

the convulsed swamp seemed to fill the atmosphere. These desperate men, however, pursued their way, if not without fear, yet without shrinking; till, the moon diving suddenly into a thicker mist, they were enveloped by the shades of night; and a spectator on the main land would have supposed that they had been swallowed up, and had passed away for ever from the surface of the earth.

CHAPTER IX.

LONG and anxious was the watch that night of David Armstrong. Hour after hour passed on, and the portentous tranquillity of the castle was uninterrupted. He had observed Orosmandel go into the private apartments of Gilles de Retz, from which he did not again return; all was silence and solitude in the study within; and without, the swamp was only traversed by the shadows of the dull leaden clouds which moved slowly between the moon and the earth.

In vain he caught at the idea, that the appointed time was deferred. The very silence undeceived him. The stillness of the air—the veiled moon—the slow-pacing clouds—all were omens and wit-

nesses. It was not the muteness of sleep, but of watching, which pervaded the elements, and the spirit of the winds did not seem so much to rest as to hold his breath.

In this state of the imagination, the inaction to which the scholar was condemned, had in it something inexpressibly terrible. He was plunged among his own thick-coming fancies, like a man thrown bound and naked, in a den of wild beasts. He glared at the monsters, as they moved around, glaring at him; and envied the fate of the slave condemned to fight with tigers in the arena. As midnight drew near, his agitation increased almost to insanity. The shadows of night were converted into shapes of terror; mysterious voices filled the silence of the air; and, ever and anon, a wild scream, which he knew to be an illusion, yet felt as a reality, pierced through his brain.

He tried to compose himself, first by prayer, and then by passing methodically in review before him, the circumstances of his situation. Both of these employments, had their effect; and, when in the midst of the latter, he suddenly remembered the

request of Caleb the Jew, transmitted to him by Andrew, to search in one of Houpelande's bales for some object which would assist his purpose. That he had forgotten this so long, may be ascribed partly to the confusion of his mind, and partly to the little importance he attached to the request. With arms he had already been provided, and with a means of escape, if he had chosen to use it. What, then, could this further aid be—if, indeed, it was not the sovereign good of messire Jean, gold? He caught at the idea, however, now that it had suggested itself to his mind, as a positive relief; and set about fulfilling the Jew's desire, with the same zeal as if he had expected salvation from the result.

The stores of the castle communicated with the laboratory, by means of a long and steep stair; and David had once descended on business connected with his occupation, and more than once on a visit of espial. In the vaults themselves, a strong door opened into the ground-story of the tower, for the purpose of admitting such articles as could not conveniently be introduced through the study; and

as the scholar had observed that Hagar had never been received in the latter, he had some notion that, if taken into the tower at all, it would be by this avenue.

Having lighted his lamp, he descended the steep stair without interruption, and soon found himself in the vaults. The vast and massive door of the tower was closed as usual, and seemed as steadfast as the wall in which it was fixed. The door, also, opening to the court, strengthened by heavy bars of iron, was locked on the outside; and, added to these appearances of security, the low-browed arches, stooping as if they sustained the whole weight of the building, gave the idea of a dungeon where even hope could not live. Above, whence he had come, the well-closed avenue into Gilles de Retz's apartment, and the immense iron gate of the staircase leading to the hall, afforded the only outlets from the tower; so that it is no wonder, if both Orosmandel and the baron, who were unacquainted with his knowledge of the turning-stone, looked upon the apprentice, as a victim already bound inextricably to the altar.

David looked round among the anomalous objects which filled the place, and at length discovered the large bale indicated by Andrew. It was marked with stripes of blue and green ; but near them there was one also, more irregular in figure, the colour of which was red.

As a strange idea came into his head, he hastily touched the place with the point of his finger. It was moist and clammy ; and, with an ejaculation of surprise, not altogether unaccompanied by horror, he cut open the bale with his dagger.

In the middle of the package, surrounded by a thick layer of cloth, and laid out as if in a coffin, although with an air-hole opposite the mouth, intended, no doubt, for breathing, lay the body of Caleb the Jew !

“Holy Mother of God !” cried the scholar, almost dropping the lamp, “Is this a time for such legacies ? Even gold itself, though useless here, would have suited better as a posthumous gift. Unhappy old man, why hast thou sent thyself to me ?” But, recollecting the next moment, that the blood was still moist, he began eagerly to

search for the wound; and at length discovered that a sword, or some other sharp instrument, had passed through the flesh of the side beneath the arm-pit. The ribs, however, though grazed, were uninjured, and almost hoping that Caleb might have fainted from pain or weakness, he applied a phial of essence to his nostrils.

Life still lingered in the body, but only like the sunken flame of a lamp, which a breath may extinguish. An indistinct murmur came from the lips, and the hand twitched, as if the muscles were called, and called in vain, to perform the functions they now disavowed.

“Speak!” said David, whispering softly in the wounded man’s ear. “Try to speak ere your soul, which is flickering upon your lips, takes its departure! Show me your wishes; and, in token that I forgive you my blood, I swear to obey them, in so far as they compromise not the safety of Hagar.”

The lips of the Jew moved, but the sound that came from them was unintelligible. His hand again twitched convulsively; and David, raising it in such a manner as to assist, without directing its

motion, found that the fingers rested on the breast. Something hard was concealed under the dress on this spot; and the student, well knowing his quondam master's knowledge of drugs, was not surprised to find that it was a small bottle.

He applied it hastily to the lips of the wounded man, from which the hue of life, recalled for an instant, was fast fading; and no sooner did a small portion of the contents enter the mouth, than Caleb opened his eyes. He tasted a second time and then rejected the phial.

"Enough for the present," said he, in a low but distinct voice. "A time cometh for the rest." David then dressed his wound to the best of his ability, staunching the blood, which had begun to flow anew; and in another minute, to his great astonishment, the Jew was able to sit upright.

"Why art thou yet here?" said Caleb collectedly.

"Because I have sworn not to fly without Hagar."

"What hast thou to do with Hagar, young man? She is a Jewess—thou a Christian."

"She is a woman—I a man! thus much my apprenticeship has taught me! We are of the same species—of the same human family; and we worship, though under different forms, the same God. What I have to do with her, is to watch over, protect, and save her—or lose myself."

"This is foolishness," said Caleb, but his voice faltered with emotion. "Fly, for it is in thy power. Lo! I have made thee the heir of my wealth. Away, and forget, in the lap of pleasure or of glory, the daughter of the stranger, and the old man who would have delivered thee up to the death!"

"You waste time," replied David. "To take your fortune would be to spoil the orphan, and that is forbidden alike by your law and mine. But it will be wiser employment for the present, if we consider how we are to save the gem about the disposal of which we argue so idly."

"That is my task, young man. I am now here to save my daughter, if she can yet be saved, or to avenge her, if fallen. Do thou care for thy own

safety, for thou canst not meddle in the business I have in hand."

"Your business, I guess, is with Prelati. In that case, mine must be with Gilles de Retz, by whom the dishonour of Hagar, is as a thing sworn."

"By Gilles de Retz! God of Abraham! Hath not my sin been yet redeemed? What wilt thou do, good David? What is thy plan?"

"I had some hopes—but these begin to die away—of the castle being surprised to-night, by my friends, through the secret avenue of the swamp; and, in that case, we all might escape in the boats. Should it happen otherwise"—and the student drew his polished dagger from its sheath—"Hagar herself told me to keep this to guard the life of its master; and so I will—yea, even his life of life!"

"At this period of the conversation, the Jew again became weak, and he directed David to lift him up, and set him upon the ground.

"Is he gone forth!" said he, in a faint voice, "or do they tarry within?"

"My impression is," replied David, "that there is no one in the tower, except, perhaps, a deaf and dumb slave; yet I cannot speak with certainty but for Orosmandel. Him I saw, two hours ago, enter the private apartments of the Baron. If Prelati and the dwarf have gone forth, as I believe they have, it is not by way of the swamp."

"It is well. And Hagar?—she hath not yet entered within these precincts?"

"Does this blade look else than a virgin?" answered David, smiling grimly.

"It is excellently well. Praise be to the Lord of Hosts that thou wert here!—for the strength was gone from my limbs; and, instead of rising up, like a lion from his couch—even like the lion of the tribe of Judah—I should have died where I lay, slain by the sword which the infidel dog at the gate thrust through the bale."

"You did not cry when he smote!" said David, with involuntary admiration.

"Patience," replied the Jew, "is the badge of our nation; for Issachar is an overladen ass stooping between two burdens. Were Israel as ready to strike

as to endure—but it may not be; the word is spoken, and we must await the day of the Lord.”

At this moment, a faint scream was heard, as if from the top of the stair-case, and David, grasping his dagger firmly, made a step forward. Caleb drank off what remained of the drug, and threw the phial away.

“Back, young man!” whispered he, catching hold of the scholar’s arm, with a force which made him start; “I tell thee again, this is no business for such as thou. If it be Prelati who cometh, he is cased in steel, against which thy blade would shiver like new ice; if it be not, the moment hath not yet arrived. Extinguish thy lamp; hide thee in yonder recess; and, as thou lovest the life and honour of Hagar, take no part in what thou shalt see!” Another scream showed, by the sound, that the victim had descended midway; and presently, the deaf and dumb slave made his appearance in the vault, with De Briqueville, bearing Hagar in his arms.

“I pray thee pardon me,” said the Jewess, looking round, when she was set down. “Had I

known that it was to a dungeon thou wert conducting me, I should have offered no resistance. Leave me, and I will forgive and pray for thee !”

“ Nay,” cried De Briqueville, forcing a laugh, “ you are too uncharitable in your conclusions ! This is only the ante-chamber of your destined lodgings ; within which you will find better accommodation than at Huguemont, and a hospitality that will not hear of refusal.”

“ Art thou a knight ? Art thou a man ! Nay friend, not yet”—and she took hold of the arm of the slave, who was about to unlock the door ; “ give me but another minute, for the love of gold, if not of God ! I have a father, messire ; and he is rich, and loves his child. Only leave me to myself ; let me but hide in this vault, and trust in Jehovah to find a refuge ; and a ransom shall be thine that might befit a princess !”

“ And how shall it come into my hands ?” asked De Briqueville, from whose heavy features, it was impossible to gather, whether or not he thought seriously of the proposal.

"Thou shalt bear a message from me, with this ring as a sign; and thou shalt take with thee the young man, David Armstrong, to prove that it was given of my own will."

"And what if he will not go?"

"Thou must then compel him, for my father will not believe thy words."

"That is hard! I would I could manage it alone!"

"But thou canst not," said Hagar eagerly. "Dost thou fear the young man? Take him even as a captive, bound hand and foot! Thou shalt have half the riches of my father; and, if it be not ready for thy hand in gold, he will borrow from his kinsmen, who are the wealthiest of their tribe."

"But this David Armstrong. Truly I would it were otherwise. It cannot be done without him?"

"It cannot."

"That is a pity! for look you here—I could not set out for Nantes before day-break, and in less than ten minutes, David Armstrong will be feeding

the fishes of the Erdre !" and the knight broke into a discordant laugh, which rang through the vault. Hagar appeared to be stunned.

"Dost thou mean this ?" said she, at length ; "Say that it is but a jest—that thou laughest at my misery, and I will forgive and bless thee !"

"It is no jest," said the knight ; "and, rough as you may think me, I am your best friend to do away with this maiden fancy at once. Do you think David would have kept his roost, which was not twenty yards distant, if he had heard your voice ? He did not hear—and why ? Because his wine to-day was drugged—and our friend has a commission"—touching the slave's dagger, who grinned, and pointed up the stair-case—"to see that he awaken not from his stupefaction." The faint colour, which her varying emotions had sent into Hagar's face, disappeared suddenly, and had she not been supported by the slave, whose quick eye watched all her motions, she must have fallen to the ground.

"In with her now," said De Briqueville, making

a sign, "By my faith, she is a rare wench after all; and, if I believed that she was to come to bodily harm in the tower, I should think twice before she entered! As for her delicacy about the Lord de Retz—why, she will get over those whims in time, with every thing else that pertains to maidenhood. By the mass, if she were not an infidel, and therefore forbidden to me by our holy religion, it would take little to persuade me to think of her myself!"

"Yet another moment!" said Hagar, recovering her recollection, but not her colour, and standing upright, without assistance—"I have wept, prayed, screamed, struggled, bribed—and all in vain. Hope is no more. Lo, the door opens! I am on the threshold. Will the Most High, under these circumstances, impute it to me as a crime, if I transgress his divine laws?"

"That he will not!" said De Briqueville—"I will take my oath of it. And if he should—why, you are a Jewess, and will be damned at any rate!"

"In His mercy I put my trust; and I deliver

myself into His hands—thus !' and with the speed of lightning, she drew a small dagger from beneath her vest. Even the quick eye of the slave was too slow. He could not turn aside the blow ; but he instantaneously covered her heart with his broad hand, which she pinned to her side with the blade. Hagar, in all probability ignorant that her design had failed, was then carried senseless into the tower, amidst the muttered curses of De Briquerville, and inarticulate cries at once of pain and triumph from the slave.

During this scene, the Jew had maintained his hold of David ; sometimes pressing his arm, and sometimes drawing him back, as the rebellious motions of his charge required. At the proof, however, given by Hagar at that trying moment, of her deep love and feminine devotion, the breast of the scholar rose with such painful convulsions, as must in another instant have betrayed them, had he not been relieved by a gush of tears. The burning drops fell upon the hand of her father ; but the old man remained as calm and firm as a statue. As for the attempt upon her life it was so sudden

and unlooked for, that there was no time for interference even by a cry.

"All goeth well," said the Jew, when the door had shut. "I feel that the God of Israel is on our side. In a little while they will come forth again, and when they are gone, I myself will enter."

"And I also," added David.

"Hast thou not something else to do before hand?"

"I like it not," replied the scholar. "The slave will doubtless seek my roost, for the purpose of murdering me in my sleep; and if he return, his account of my absence, where flight seems impossible, will cause the very tower to be searched, and so we should be discovered. Yet I like it not—for he saved the life of Hagar!"

"And for what purpose? Because it is the living whom his master lusteth to dishonour, and not the dead! Let that thought nerve thee—but hush! they come."

The door opened, and De Briqueville and the slave reappeared, the former muttering and grumbling, as he walked.

"I do not understand these women," said he, "and never did in all my life. Their flesh is as soft and smooth as the leaf of a lilly; and yet I could as easily persuade three men, in full harness, to do what they did not choose as one of them! However, she is safe enough now, and I wash my hands of her. Go first, sirrah, and light me up the stairs. I never could abide the looks of the dumb villain; and I will have nothing to do with his present errand. David should have swung tomorrow on the gallows, if condemned to death, for then it would have been the baron's affair: but to slay a sleeping man in his bed goes against my conscience. Well, well, if this night were once over, I trust we shall all be quiet and happy tomorrow!"

When the sound of his voice was lost in the staircase, Caleb pressed strongly the hand of his companion.

"In case we meet not again," said he, "I bid thee farewell. Thou shalt inherit my wealth, and my laboratory, with all its utensils and materials

for the great search, which thou knowest, could hardly be bought with gold."

"If you are slain," replied the scholar, "and if I escape, I shall keep your wealth in trust for your orphan. But, as for the Miraculous Stone, and the Elixir Vitæ, I tell you plainly I have done with them. Among the secrets I have learnt in my apprenticeship are these: that human life is long enough as it is; and that gold, except in the moderate quantity required for ordinary purposes, and attainable by honest industry, is the most useless of all commodities. And now, farewell; if I get over yonder grewsome business in time, I shall join you in your ambushade." The Jew then wrung his hand once more, and entered the tower—shutting and bolting the door after him, as David, to his great wrath and amazement could distinctly hear!

"That is not in the paction!" cried the indignant scholar, knocking loudly. "Do you forget your age and infirmities, and will you trust the salvation of Hagar to so weak an arm?" But it

was vain to remonstrate. The sullen echoes of the place were the only reply to his blows; and, in the midst of all, the slave, with a lamp in one hand, and his long dagger glittering in the other, re-entered the vault.

David crossed his hands upon his bosom, and stood immoveable, looking towards the assassin; who, after a moment's scrutiny, came stealthily towards him, rising upon his tiptoes, at every step, as if about to spring, while his eye-balls glared in the red light of the lamp, like those of a beast of prey. No words were wasted; for one of the party could neither hear nor answer. They held communion only with the faculty of sight; and David's calm, but observant, glance was not withdrawn from the eye of the slave even to wink.

When the latter had come near his intended victim, he stepped aside, circling round him, like a bird of prey; while the scholar moved at the same time, as if turning slowly on a pivot. When the slave was at length within striking distance, he dropped the lamp suddenly, and sprang; but, as if the form before him had been but incorporal air,

he darted through the space where it had seemed to stand, and almost in the same moment, the dagger of the student was three times sheathed in his body.

David, as soon as he had ascertained that the wretch had ceased to breathe, drew him away; and, groping as well as he could in the dark, deposited the body in the package which had so nearly been Caleb's coffin, and fastened down the lid. He then ascended the stair, half hoping, since this adventure had terminated so well, that on regaining his tower of observation, he might see the expedition of Douglas crossing the swamp.

When he reached the door of the laboratory, however, he found it locked; and he was under the necessity of retracing his steps in the dark, to take the key from the dead man. This, firm as were David's nerves, was more difficult than to snatch the life from its casket; and his hand was far less steady when dabbling in the blood he had shed, than when grasping the dagger with which he had struck the blow.

But he at length reached the corridor in safety;

when he found that the enchanted silence of the castle was at an end. The tramp of the guard was distinctly heard without, and calling voices, and clapping doors within. Was he alone to remain inactive? How could he tell that Orosmandel would return by the private apartments, and thus afford him an opportunity, either by craft or force, of descending by the study? He crept out upon the roof of the tower by his skylight window. The night was dark; the swamp was covered as with a veil; the wind had arisen, and swept, with a low moaning sound, along the waste.

A sound, notwithstanding, came upon his ear, which was different from the accustomed noises of night. It came from the abyss; and the veil which covered it began to move tumultuously. The scholar waited no longer; but, seeking his nightly egress of the turning-stone, he glided down the stair, like a shadow passing along the wall.

CHAPTER X.

THE sounds heard by David were, in all probability, occasioned by the return of the Magician, and his cortege, from their broken sabbath; for at the same moment, Hagar heard the rampart-door of the tower open. Her prison was a small, but well-furnished room, on the ground floor, of which even the party walls were of enormous thickness. The door, like all the rest in this portion of the castle, was strengthened with iron, and on the present occasion, was locked on the outside. A single window, too narrow to admit the body even of a child, threw a dim light into the apartment.

Hagar, when she fully recovered her recollection, did not regret the loss of her dagger; nor did the

observant glance, which she threw round the room, inquire whether any substitute were at hand. The preservation of her life appeared to her to partake of the miraculous. It was a direct interposition of God himself; and, believing herself to be in hands so powerful to save, she now awaited the event, rather in awe and wonder than in fear. This, however, was not the uniform mood of her mind. Mingling with her religious confidence, there came fits of faintness and trembling; and pangs of terror shot ever and anon through her heart, even in its moments of loftiest enthusiasm.

Her enthusiasm, however, partook no more of that hue which glorifies the dreams of woman. David was slain, and the current of her life had changed. Her crushed heart could emit no tears. Sick of the daylight, she fixed her eyes on the darkness of the grave; and the boon she looked for at the hands of Providence, was to descend therein pure and unblemished. The doubt, however, which occasionally swept across her mind, as to whether this boon would be granted—and, perhaps, even a small and lurking hope which

sprung up, unconsciously to herself, that the tale of her lover's fate was untrue—prevented her from sinking completely into the apathy of despair.

The dread of Prelati had been early instilled into her mind. She had seen her father tremble before him like an infant; and she had observed on all things around her, the impress of his irresistible power. At his command, the hoards of the avaricious Jew had poured themselves at his feet; and Caleb, without a tinge of inhumanity in his disposition, had given up the blood of his dependants, one by one, to the same inexorable master. Beauty was rather the toy, than the serious desire of this unfathomable being—the toy which a child plays with for one moment, and breaks in pieces the next. His passions were not the lords, but the slaves, of his judgment; and when he designed to permit them gratification, it was like a chief, who calmly and scornfully gives up to the fury of his soldiery a conquered city.

When she heard the outer door of the tower open, a chill, like that of death, ran through her frame. She stood transfixed upon the floor,

breathless, motionless, and glaring towards the wall, as if she saw beyond it. Two persons entered. She heard their footsteps; she heard the breath of their lips—it seemed as if at that moment her ear, sharpened by intense terror, could have distinguished the waving of their hair! One, she knew, was Orosmandel, the other the dwarf. Was there yet a third? The door moved—it shut. Hagar fell, first on her knees, then on her face; and tears of weakness, rather than of joy, gushed from her eyes.

Calmly, yet sternly, the philosopher passed on, throwing a brief glance towards the room. He ascended a stair which led to his private apartments, and entered the one immediately under his study. This seemed to be the retreat of pleasure refined by taste. Elegance, combined with luxury, reigned around; and so well adapted was the very magnificence of the place, that an idea of fitness rather than splendour was conveyed. A sofa, covered with the richest velvet, embroidered with gold, appeared to be used as a bed, the scantiness of space permitting no separate chamber; and the

curtains of the narrow windows were voluminous folds of the same material, corresponding in colour and workmanship.

“All is over,” said Orosmandel, throwing himself upon the couch, “and the catastrophe hath turned out somewhat different from my expectation. How came it that thou, who canst hear a gossamer thread breaking under a flake of snow, knewest nothing of the presence of a witness? Art thou tired of my protection? Wouldst thou try the world without me? Wouldst thou sell thy weakling body to some strolling brotherhood of the Passion? or buy thee a jackanapes, and earn copper pieces by puzzling the crowd to tell which is which?”

“I knew not of the witness,” growled the dwarf, “and that is enough. But even were it a fault not to hear a man breathe at two hundred yards distance, I can afford to bear it. I! I did not fly from an unloaded culverine!—I did not lose a treasure, when attacked by inferior force—ha! ha! thou art indeed a fit organ of reproof! Protection! What do I give thee in return? Is it for myself

that I travail? Is it to gratify my own evil passions that I traverse the earth like a wind which beareth pestilence on its wings?"

"If my passions be evil," said Orosmandel, with a sardonic smile, "still they are passions; and that is excuse enough for my deviations from what the vulgar name virtue. But thou!—who gatherest in what thou canst not hold, and destroyest what thou canst not feed upon—how shalt thou be justified?"

"Why, that is it!" cried the dwarf, his limbs shaking with rage, and his eyes flashing with a baleful light. "That is the excuse which might justify the blackest devil in hell! Does the lame man help his neighbour along, or bear him down with his weight? Does the sick man exhale health, or disease, upon those who surround him? A speck, a blot on the face of nature—a loathing, a hissing, and a horror among the human race—is it *I* who should labour for the happiness of mankind, and the order and beauty of creation? Look here—I am a man as well as thou! There, where thou sittest, is the frame which the old sculptors

embodied from the whispers of their dreaming mistress. There are the limbs which the original Mother sometimes moulds, to show that even the visions of poetry have their source in her. There is the brow, encircled by that starry halo of command, before which all meaner creatures fall prostrate in the dust. Now look on this—ha! ha! ha! Are these legs made for any thing but to spurn? Are these nails—or talons? Are these hands for rending or embracing? Are these eyes for the smile of love and pity, or the glare of hatred and revenge? But the curse was not enough! I was made supple, that my gambols might draw down the laughter of mankind upon my head; crafty, that the passer-by might spring out of my path, and turning round, pursue me with shouts and stones: but the strength to execute followed not with the will to dare, and the thirst of vengeance; and so was I turned into the crowd of my fellow men, to endure their scorn, even when doing my utmost to deserve their hate!”

“It is enough. In me thou hast found an ally

sufficient to make up for the unkindness of nature. Watch better in future ; for if I am the directing mind, thou art the faculties of sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell, which it sendeth forth for observation."

" And Prelati is the active force, the energy, the body, as it were? Good, good. But it is *not* enough. I know not why I should recall these things now—but they will come. Who would think, to look on us, that the same minute ushered us into life—that the same womb gave us birth—that we hung at the same breast ! Thou !—ha ! ha !—*thou* art my brother ! *Why* was this ? What crime had I committed against nature ere I was born, that, step-dame like, she should have mixed all the bitterness in my cup, and all the sweets in thine ? Answer me that !"

" Thou art somewhat mistaken," replied Oros-mandel. " In me the passions are stronger, because more practical, than in thee ; and their disappointment, therefore, hath a bitterer sting. Ambition, for instance, which can find but little place in thy bosom, is the god of mine. Had

Prelati succeeded in his attempt upon the Damsel of Laval, through her it would have been easy to have obtained her weak father's forgiveness—and then no island of the ocean would have held his greatness! If to-night I had but once steeped her hands in guilt—she was ours, body and soul! That Demon, in whom I devoutly believe, although his abiding-place is not the empty air, but the minds of men, would then have truly come when called upon. I should have restored, by the magic of my will, the vanished hoards of Gilles de Retz. By the wisdom of my counsels, insured by thy omnipresence, and enforced by a sword which never yet met its equal, I should have scattered his enemies; and when it pleased the baron, in some speedy moment, to withdraw into a grave, or a cloister, it would hardly have dazzled the eyes of the victorious Prelati—the husband of his heiress—to look towards the ducal crown itself!” Orosmandel, appearing to forget his age in the picture thus conjured up by his imagination, started from the sofa, and with a burning cheek, and flashing eye,

walked with a warrior's stride through the apartment.

"Didst thou love her?" said the dwarf, with curiosity. "Is the sting of that passion left rankling in thy heart with the other?"

"As a man loves the hand that smites him—the tongue that reviles him—the eye and lip that scorn him! The day will yet come, when she shall repay with tears of blood, the years which Prelati hath spent in her pursuit! But enough of this. It is now almost our time. Is the boat ready? Where is the slave?"

"All is ready; and the slave is doubtless with the boat."

"Armstrong, then, is disposed of?"

"His bottle of wine was, as usual, half empty when the dinner-things were removed; and thou knowest our friend Iglou loves the use of his dagger too well to make half work."

"It is well."

"He was too sharp for his vocation," added the dwarf, with a grin. "Such as he do not deserve

to live; for they can answer no purpose but to interrupt the business of life. Besides, he scorned and gibed at me. Had my presence not been required at the intended sacrifice, I should have loved to have dealt with him myself, between sleeping and waking."

"Yet it is not for such demerits he hath perished," said Orosmandel; "for our sojourn here was at an end, and so was his vocation. But he loved Hagar, and the Jewess loved him."

"And thou? Thou lovest her not? Thou wilt carry her with us, only as a hold, should circumstances render it convenient to use it, upon the purse of her father?"

"Thou art mistaken. At first it was curiosity—interest—then admiration of her courage, and loftiness of mind which beset me. I saw that she was beautiful; and that, if fairly tutored, she might be useful. I marked her for my own; and when Gilles de Retz would, as usual, have taken the lion's share, I swore to foil him. She shall be mine, and remain so, if all her father's gold were ten times told down as a ransom. With the wealth I

have heaped up, and now safe at Florence, and Hagar for my mistress, I shall by and by cease to regret the time we have spent at La Verrière."

"Calculate not too surely," said the dwarf. "This is an unlucky night, and the Jewess is as slippery as an eel. Once in the open air, I should not wonder if she vanished like a shadow—thanking thee in her heart for her escape from the Lord de Retz!"

"She shall be mine," replied Orosmandel, "*ere she reach the open air!* Mine within these walls, were an army beating at the door! Mine, now and for ever! To be foiled once in a single night is enough, and more than I am accustomed to. Go, liberate the flutterer from the cage, where she doubtless is, since its gate is fastened on the outside, and send her hither." The dwarf received the mandate with a discordant laugh, which resembled a succession of screams.

"Get all things ready for departure," continued Orosmandel, "when I give the signal. I will myself lead Hagar to the boat."

When the dwarf had left the room, Oros-

mandel continued standing in the same attitude for some time, looking towards the door. Although his features were not so tranquil as hitherto, and a deep flush had risen to the brow, yet so much of a proud dignity remained, that, even setting aside the question of age, no one could have imagined that, at the moment, he meditated a deed of frightful violence. As he heard the soft footsteps of Hagar ascending the stair, he withdrew several paces back into the room; and when she entered, he received her with a bend of the head, at once graceful and commanding.

Hagar, after throwing a quick glance round the apartment, appeared to be somewhat re-assured; and she advanced several paces, crossing her hands upon her bosom, and bowing low before the master of her fate. When she raised her head, however, there was an expression in her face, which seemed to move the surprise of Orosmandel. There was less fear than he had anticipated, and also less courage of the mind. When the slight, momentary agitation, which she had experienced at the door, had passed away, a deep and death-like still-

ness descended upon her features—an air of desolateness, rather than of grief.

“Thy handmaid is here,” said she, in a low, calm voice, whose calmness was not that of peace.

“Dost thou guess why?” asked Orosmandel.

“Doubtless, to pay my thanks for my rescue from the hands of Gilles de Retz, and to arrange with thee the terms of the ransom which shall deliver me up in safety to my father.”

“Thou art mistaken. I value thee at too high a price to permit thy departure.”

“The Jew is rich, and so are all our kin! But, even were it otherwise, thou wilt not distress an old man for his daughter? Thou hast indeed the solitary look of one who knoweth not the ties of blood; yet thou hast no baseness in thy mien, and no cruelty in thine eye; and the many winters which have shed their snows upon thy beard, must have brought with them lessons of mercy to thy heart. Send me away, I beseech thee, in the name of the Most High God, from this den of horrors—in the guilt of which it is impossible that thou canst participate!”

"Horrors! What are these horrors? Thy cheek is as pale as a monument of Parian marble, the transparency of which showeth only cold, hard stone within; thine eyes beam not with natural light, but with the enchanted flame which hath brightness and no heat; and thy voice is even as a memory of music—a faint, hollow, lifeless echo of tones that have passed away! What blight hath fallen upon thy heart? Thy father liveth, and no death hath taken place since I saw thee last—save one." The Jewess started. A flush rose to her face, and instantaneously faded away, into a more death-like paleness than before.

"Heed not my words," she cried. "Grant me my prayer—or shew me thy commands."

"What aileth thee? I talked of the youth who served in my laboratory. Thou art too proud to have loved such as he; and thou art too pure to permit thy cheek to flush at the idea of any man."

"Sir," said Hagar, "the love of the dead cannot be otherwise than pure! He was a stranger—even as I. For me he perilled his life—and lost it!" Her voice faltered; but it was only for an

instant: "On this subject," she continued, almost sternly, "we twain can have no mutual interest. I pray thee, once more, let us to business."

"Thou art a splendid creature, Hagar!" said the philosopher, looking at her admiringly: "There is more within thee, than the common vapour which women call their soul. I would thou hadst not loved this youth;—and yet, if I judge thee aright, thy mind is still stronger than the passion it contained. Were it possible, I would give thy wound time, and trust to nature for a cure: but just now, the moments are precious; and those who deal with the soul have their violent remedies, as well as the mediciners of the body. I remember, in earlier years, I loved a woman, who was fair and young, and whose case resembled thine. Dost thou smile at my white beard?"

"I smile not at all."

"She loved a youth, lofty enough, if compared with the mass of mankind, but far below her in the scale of intellectual being. She was one of those rare creatures, in whom thou canst not tell where

body endeth, and spirit beginneth. She was instinct, one would have imagined, with thought, instead of animal life. The very tone of her voice, the touch of her hand, spoke directly, as it were, and not through the agency of the senses, to the mind; and the sound of her foot, as it touched the earth, resembled the low, light wind, when it whispers mysterious things among the leaves. Such she was—or such I imagined her to be: and that in love, thou knowest, is the same. Now, this youth he comprehended her not. He thought of her only as of one of the daughters of men, and of her beauty as of the beauty of women. Yet he stood in my path; for the damsel, ignorant that among mankind there were spirits kindred with her own, loved him. What then was there to be done? My destiny called me away to other climes, and there was no time to allow her to find out her delusion. Canst thou guess what I did?"

"I cannot guess."

"I slew him."

"God of mercy! Thou!"

"I bore her away in my arms; revived her crushed heart, till it smiled and budded anew; opened out to her new worlds of thought, and prouder vistas of ambition; and this magnificent creature, who, in the arms of my rival, would have turned to clay, in mine became one of those spirit-women, to whom the antique world erected altars, and offered up sacrifices!" Orosmandel looked at her with a gaze so intense, and so dazzlingly bright, that he seemed to have not only the desire, but the power, to read her inmost soul.

"What thinkest thou of it?" said he.

"As of a deed abhorred of God and man," she replied solemnly. "But it was perpetrated in thy hot youth; when even the proudest reason is sometimes obscured by passion; and, judging by the accustomed serenity of thy brow of age, I feel that thou hast long since repented of thy crime, and received forgiveness and peace!"

"I thank thee," said Orosmandel, with a smile, which made her look at him with surprise. "Both thou and I have spoken, at least partly, in anticipa-

tion; and with the prospect before me of such future calm, I may now follow out what I have commenced with an untroubled mind."

"What meanest thou? Have I heard aright?"

"Thou hast heard thy fate in that of the imagined love of my earlier years."

"This is phrensy! Thou! Dost thou jest with a heart like mine—before the blood of him it loved is yet cold?"

"Hagar, it is no jest! If I afford thee not time, it is no fault of mine, but of circumstances over which I have no control. The moment approaches, when I must fly from this house—and with thee. Not to fly would be to give myself up to the death; and to fly without thee would be to render life worthless. Thou art wise as well as beautiful. Embrace willingly the fate thou canst not avoid; and so change passion into love, and strengthen love with gratitude!"

"Dost thou mock me?" cried the Jewess, her surprise lost in indignation, which had something fierce as well as majestic—"Willingly! And with thee!—whose soul is freshly stained with

blood dearer than my own ! Hence, coward, nor dare to raise thy craven eyes to the face of woman ! Hence, murtherer, to thy skulking-place, with horror at thy heels, and scorn hissing in thine ears !”

“Damsel,” said Orosmandel, stepping suddenly forward, and grasping her by the arm, “thou hast nerved my heart, which even now began to plead in thy behalf. Besides, thou art more beautiful in anger than in despair. The glow of life hath revisited thy cheek, and all the woman flasheth ‘in thine eyes ; thy bosom panteth and swelleth to the touch ; thy limbs round, and expand, with passion —Nay ! it is in vain to struggle ; and thou feelest that it is so. See, I confine not thine arm more closely than with the soft pressure of love ; and yet an armourer’s hammer could scarcely undo the clasp. I but now thought to fly with thee first, and then woo thee to be mine. My plan is changed. Thou shalt be mine now, and we shall fly afterwards.”

“Dreadful man ! add not to the guilt which hath already brought thy soul to perdition. Use not

the miraculous strength with which heaven hath endowed thee in the transgression of its laws. O shame! O horror! think of thy white hairs! I might be the daughter of thy daughter! In the eyes of thy people, I am of an unclean race!"

"What is age," exclaimed Orosmandel, whose face was now fiery red, "if it chill neither the body nor the soul? But yet to throw off a score, or two, of years methinks is no heavy miracle for love!"—and, tearing away his cloak, his beard, his eyebrows, he stood before her, on the instant, a man in the prime of life, cased in the hauberk of a knight.

"Lost! lost!" cried the Jewess; and her screams rent the air: but they suddenly ceased when she knew, from the dull, heavy sound given back by the massive walls and impenetrable door, that all hope of being heard was vain. As she gazed on the apparition before her, the light forsook her eye, and the colour her cheek; her form seemed to sink, and her heart to die within her; and although her eyes were open to an unnatural extent, she seemed more to have an

inward consciousness of the presence of her enemy, than to see him with the external organs of vision.

“How dost thou like the metamorphosis?” demanded the knight.

“As I like a bad man,” she replied, in a hollow voice, “changed into a fiend of the abyss! Will not money win thee to mercy—money that will buy thee whole years of pleasure? Will my blood not save me?—for thou art greedy alike of blood and of gold. Speak, Prelati, wilt thou indeed consummate a life of crime by a deed so coward-like and so atrocious? A man! Thou a man!”

“Ay, and a bold one!” cried Prelati, who was hastily releasing himself from his hauberk, and the other heavier pieces of armour—“or I should not trust myself thus with a desperate woman. Not for years before have I dared to doff this harness—not even within these walls; and now, methinks, my muscles play with a new life, as if they rejoiced at their emancipation.”

At this moment a knock was heard at the door.

“Make haste,” said the dwarf from without;

"for there are sounds abroad, which I know not of; and the night being now at its darkest, the moment of our departure hath arrived."

"Presently," replied Prelati. "Were an army before the walls, or even the secret of the swamp discovered, we should be safe here for hours, and be able still to command access to the river. And now, Hagar, thou art mine!"

Another long, wild scream broke from her lips, as he approached.

"Father of mercies!" she exclaimed, shutting her eyes, and clasping her hands upon her bosom, "Do thou give ear unto my cry, for man will not hear me! Help, thou Hearer of Prayer! Arise, O Holy One of Israel, for thine own name's sake!"

As she uttered these words, Prelati had approached close beside her; and she sank, powerless, and almost senseless—not into his arms, but at his feet. At the instant he had been about to clasp her, he felt a sudden sting of pain, he knew not, in the tumultuous confusion of his thoughts, of

what nature, and a voice behind rang, like a knell, in his ears :

“The Lord, he is the God !” it cried—“The Lord, he is the God !”—and at every word, the long knife of Caleb the Jew darted deep into the vitals of the ravisher. Prelati sprang round, too late for life, but not too late for vengeance. With the last convulsive energies of nature, he caught up the unresisting Jew, and whirled him over his daughter’s head against the wall ; and then, staggering back to the farther end of the apartment, he sank down upon the floor.

The senses of Hagar had not completely fled ; and this surprising event recalled her at once to life and recollection. A single bewildered glance, indeed, round the room told the confusion of her thoughts—her amazement at the apparently preternatural appearance of her deliverer—and even her doubt as to the condition of her own intellects. But in one moment this was over ; and in the next, she was seated on the ground, with her father’s grey head in her lap, and immersed in all the cares

and attentions which, in sickness, and at the hour of death, render her a ministering angel, who was before only a woman.

No cares nor attentions, however, were of any avail: the Jew sunk rapidly; and in a few moments, Hagar saw that she was to be alone in the world.

"Speak," she whispered, "O my father! Show unto me thy last commands; for the seal of death is on thy brow."

"I am slain," said Caleb feebly, "but not by him. I arose from a bed of death, to save, or avenge thee. The transitory strength of my arm was from a drug; and that of my heart from above. Away, my daughter, and open the door which leadeth into the stores."

"Father, I cannot leave thee!"

"There wilt thou perhaps find the young man, David."

"Alas, alas! it is thou who goest where thou shalt find him!"

"Away, I command thee; for I cannot die till I know that thou hast one friend upon the earth."

As Hagar darted down the stair, to obey her father, a hollow, rumbling noise resounded through the apartments below; and she paused for an instant, as she found that this proceeded from an attempt to force the door which she was directed to open. There was no time, however, to think; and besides, a wild hope had sprung suddenly up in her heart. She withdrew the bolt—and in an instant was in the arms of her lover.

“My God, I thank thee!” cried the scholar. A gush of tears from the full heart of Hagar thanked God too for her risen-again.

“Tell me all,” said he, “and in one moment. Is Prelati here?” She ascended the stair, yet weeping.

“There,” said she, “is all!” and David comprehended the scene in an instant.

“Hast thou hope of escape?” demanded the Jew.

“Yes—hope. But the struggle is even now going on; and, having seen that Hagar is safe, I must away to rejoin it.”

“Go then, and may the Lord of Hosts fight on

thy side. I bless thee, O my son, as fervently as I curse——”

“Curse him not!” cried Hagar, throwing herself suddenly upon her knees. “Enter not the presence of the Father of mercies with such a thought in thy heart ! Tell me that thou forgivest him, I entreat—I implore thee ! Tell me, with thy last breath, that thou art fit to meet thy God ; for the films of death are already closing over thine eyes !”

“Is he dead ?” said Caleb, faintly.

“Not yet. But thou forgivest him ?”

“I would I could live to hear that he was dead ! Yes, yes, I forgive him, in the hope that God will forgive me.”

“With thy whole heart — with thy whole soul ?”

“Yes, yes. Art thou sure he is dying ? If I could but live——” but the words died on his tongue, and his head fell back. Hagar put her lips to his ear, and continued to whisper comfort and exhortation.

David, in the meantime, who had crossed the

room, treading on the Magician's disguise, which lay upon the floor, stood gazing, with mingled feelings upon Prelati, who yet breathed, although the damps of death had settled on his brow. Suddenly, a ray of returning animation appeared on the wounded man's features, and he signed to the spectator to stoop down. His efforts to speak, however, were for some moments unavailing; but at length he uttered, in feeble, interrupted accents, these words :

“ Knowest thou whether my brother—whether the dwarf—hath escaped ? ”

“ I saw him spring through the crowd of my friends,” replied David, “ as they climbed up the ramparts, and then he vanished upon the swamp.” A gleam of satisfaction spread, like sunlight, over the face of the dying man, and then slowly melted away. He spoke no more. No other change took place in the expression of his features; and no man can tell what was the nature of his last thoughts.

“ He is dead ! ” said David solemnly, and he turned away.

“Dead!” cried the Jew, raising his head, with a sudden effort, and striving to look across the room, through the films of death. “Dead! and by my hand!—ha! ha! ha! The destroyer! the invulnerable! Hagar, I forgive him now! ha! ha! ha!” And Caleb, suffocated by the exulting laugh which mingled with the death-rattle in his throat, gave up the ghost.

CHAPTER XI.

IF David had not descended to the hall, after his successful duel with the slave, the attempt of Douglas and Beauchamp upon the castle would, in all probability, have failed. Immediately after the return of the Magician, and his cortege, he found Nigel and Bauldy fighting their way desperately, and almost in the dark, to the door, which was already attacked by the surprise party. The odds were so great against them, that even the accession of the master-scholar, as an individual, would not have saved their lives; but, in addition to his stout arm, he brought to their aid a prestige, before which all who saw him fled in dismay. The door, which no efforts from without could have

forced, was speedily thrown open to the invaders, who entered, at the moment when the alarm had been sounded from post to post upon the walls, and the whole strength of the garrison was crowding to the spot.

It is a remarkable indication of the state of mind that night of Gilles de Retz, that he heard not the rushing of armed men through his house, nor the cries for mercy, and shrieks of pain and terror, which filled the air. When Douglas and Beauchamp entered the room at the same moment, sword in hand, he was sitting at the farther end, in an attitude of stupor, his face as bloodless as that of a corpse, and his eyes fixed. Pauline was stretched upon the floor, her head resting upon a footstool, her arms clasped round one of his legs, and fast asleep !

“What would ye?” cried the baron, starting up, and laying his hand mechanically upon his sword.

“We have come, my lord,” said Douglas, “for the purpose of saving your daughter from a fate too horrible to think of; and it is our purpose to

remove her this night to the ducal court for protection."

"*How* have you come?" cried the baron, in a voice of thunder. "Are my people traitors, and are both heaven and hell against me?"

"Your people are true," replied Sir Archibald, "and a warrant having been issued against you, charging you with dreadful crimes, you will speedily have need of all their valour and fidelity. We have surprised your castle by a secret path across the swamp."

"One of the many means, my lord," added David, who had now entered the room, "which have been used to delude and destroy you!" The baron dropped his sword at these words, and sank down upon the seat, trembling and aghast.

It was evident that the sleep of the Damsel of Laval, was the effect of the drugs with which they had attempted to work upon her mind; but Beauchamp, who had no clew to explain it, looked with wonder upon the scene, and with still more wonder, upon the comparative coolness of Douglas.

He proposed, notwithstanding, that, since the lady could take no part in the affair, it should be left to the decision of her father, which of them should have the honour of her escort. This was agreed to; and the Lord de Retz, to whose ear the name of Beauchamp was familiar in the later wars of Brittany, had extended his hand to designate him as the one he chose, when Andrew entered the room.

“Choose *him*,” said he, walking up solemnly to Gilles de Retz, and pointing to Douglas, “*in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost !*” and the baron obeyed.

An unwilling truce was now established with the garrison out of doors, although it threatened to be of short duration. Not one of the soldiers could comprehend that this amicable arrangement was proposed with the serious concurrence of Gilles de Retz. They believed him to be a prisoner : ignorant that his only chains were a paralysis of the soul ; and by and by, they were seen re-assembling in large groups, and dragging culverines to a part

of the walls which would command the embarkation.

All things were at length ready. Pauline de Laval, Hagar, with the body of her father, and Felicité, were placed in the same boat—when it was discovered that Jacquin Houpelande was missing. The echevin, when the first alarm of the attack was over, and all things were going on smoothly, had occasioned some discussion even among his friends, by insisting upon carrying his property back with him. Beauchamp had strictly prohibited his men from taking booty; and David had promised so large an indemnity to Sir Archibald's followers—to the knight's unspeakable astonishment, it should be said—that they also gladly consented to forbear. Jacquin, however, argued, that the goods, as they were not paid for, were his own, and by no means the spoil of battle; and at length, by the consent of the Lord de Retz himself, he obtained the leave he sought. He had now been gone long enough to have effected his purpose, leaving Felicité in the care of Bauldy; and

it was only when the patience of the party had been exhausted, and their fears awakened by the hostile dispositions on the part of the garrison, that he made his appearance.

“Are the bales coming?” asked Bauldy. “A boat is ready for them, and we have not another moment to lose.”

“Push off!—push off!” cried the echevin, stepping in and sitting down beside him, with a bewildered and ghastly look.

“And the bales?”

“Let them go! I wash my hands of them! O holy and immaculate Mother, to think of the devices of Satan! What think you my rich cloths, and gold and silver trimmings, have turned into? Another man would have fainted upon the spot; but I looked on for more than half an hour, without moving my eyes even to wink.”

“And what did you look at?” cried more than one voice, eagerly.

“Why, at a corpse—stark, stiff, and black-aviced, and weltering in blood!”

“What, in all the bales?”

“ In all, as I am a sinner ! This it is to work for a MAGICIAN.

The boats were at length fairly under weigh, and floating down the river ; but, even when all fear of interruption from the garrison had passed away, the party continued to gaze in silent awe upon the castle of La Verrière, as it slowly receded from their eyes. As the circumstances of his strange apprenticeship passed in review before David's mind, he needed the spectacle of the dead body of the Jew, with its head resting upon Hagar's lap, to convince him of their reality. The Third Victim had been redeemed from the horns of the altar—and at the exact cost predicted in the superstitions of the peasantry ! Messire Jean, able no more to pay his tribute to the Demon under whom he had fallen, had broken the bond at the forfeit of his own life !

Apart from the rest of the garrison, on an angle of the ramparts, there stood a solitary figure ; and on this the eyes of Pauline were fixed with a wildness of gaze which might have seemed to partake of insanity. As the boat receded, she rose up, and

bent so eagerly forward, that she must have fallen but for the support of Douglas. At length the figure on the ramparts moved, and the right hand was extended towards her. A scream broke from the lips of Pauline at the sight—

“My father blesses me!” she cried, and sank fainting into the arms of her lover.

THE reader may expect, in this place, some account of Prelati; but we have none to give. It is supposed, but even this is not fully known, that he was a Florentine by birth, and of good family. His education must have been a brilliant one for the age; and he must have fallen very early—perhaps when yet a child—into hands skilful to pervert even good and noble qualities to bad uses. His brother, the dwarf, who had talents enough to render lovely and respectable, even an unsightly

form like his, but who fell into the absurd error of supposing the body to be all in all, was never heard of more. If he did not perish that night in the swamp, he must have fled the country.

Their hoard of ill-gotten wealth was found at Florence, by David Armstrong—who did not leave La Verrière without possessing himself of the papers of Prelati; and some years after, it formed part of the rich dowry brought to his friend Douglas by the heiress of Gilles de Retz. The lapse of time which took place before the marriage of the knight was not considered by him as a misfortune. He had never contemplated aspiring to her hand, however eager he might have been to win her love, till he had rendered himself worthy of his fate, by distinguishing himself in arms. This consummation at length gradually came; and although some men laughed at his chivalrous punctilios, in an age when the loftiness of chivalry was a tale and a dream; yet all allowed that nobler deeds of valour and generosity had never been performed—

“Since the old Douglas’ day.”

When the time was expired allotted for mourning among the Jews, David Armstrong and Hagar bade adieu to their friends, and turned their faces towards a far and foreign land.

“The time will come,” said the ex-scholar, “when men will judge of their fellows by their deeds; and when it will be left to God to inquire whether or not he is worshipped in forms agreeable to him. Yet it is, indeed, a delightful thing, and beneficial to the soul, to have the same form of religion, as well as the same habits of taste, with her we love; and I trust that my example will induce no child of mine to look out for a wife, except among those whom he meets at the foot of the Cross. But, in the extraordinary circumstances in which we have been placed, I could see in Hagar only a woman: and after all, if she believe not in the man Jesus, is not her Jehovah the God Jesus? and do we not meet thus in the hour of prayer, and may we not hope to do so after the hour of death?”

It may be doubted whether Jacquin Houpelande would not have refused, after all, the suit of

Bauldy, had it not been for the shock his nerves had sustained at the sight of the dead slave in one of his bales. Had he returned to Nantes with his property, the idea of his own consequence would have come back upon his mind; and he would hardly have thought of matching his daughter with a poor adventurer. But as it was, he felt a positive relief in the alliance; and on the day of the marriage, surrounded by the bold and cheerful Scots, he enjoyed a feeling of security which he thought had been lost for ever.

But the most singular marriage was that of the cool, quiet, sagacious Andrew—with the peasant Marie! The first time he saw her, he was struck in a remarkable manner both with her beauty, and her thoughtful, collected air; and when circumstances, which it is unnecessary to detail, made them better acquainted, he felt justified in the opinion he had then instinctively formed. His first mention of the projected match exposed him to some good-humoured railery, especially from Nigel, who had determined to follow the fortunes of David, “without encumbrance.”

"And then," continued he, after some mock objections had been answered, "What is the Venus of the proverb to do without Ceres and Bacchus? Suppose Marie brings you children?——"

"Silence, young man!" interrupted the master scholar, with indignation. "Since he loves, let him marry her; and God, and his own industry, to say nothing of David Armstrong, will take care of his family. The children of Marie shall be provided for, if she had as many as Eutyche—and she had thirty!"

Andrew was the only one of the comrades who settled at Nantes; where he rose, assisted by the influence of Douglass, into a station of profit and honour in the service of the Duke. His name, Kerr, in some of the documents of the time, is Frenchified into Caire; and in the following century, one of his descendants, proud, no doubt, of his Scottish ancestry, transmuted it into M'Caire, or Macaire.

Three years after the date of our story, in the month of September, 1440, a procession, of which Gilles de Retz was the hero, passed Andrew's

house. This weak-minded and strong-passioned nobleman had at length been taken, and condemned to the death which his crimes deserved. To these, the superstition of the age added SORCERY; and he who had been only a dupe, was burned for a wizard! Marie, on that dreadful morning, caused the doors and windows of the house to be shut up; and retiring to the room most distant from the street, she fell upon her knees, and remained there, with pale cheek, and mute yet moving lips, till the procession had passed by, and the sound of the death-hymn died away upon her ear.

E N D.

NOTE.

VOL. III.

O

N O T E.

A FRENCH critic is surprised, that in so many romances there should be a MAGICIAN, while in not one is there any MAGIC. The reason is, no doubt, that the authors, capable of opening the mystic book have been withheld by those associations which connect the superstitions of infant science with the miraculous stories of our boyhood. The other subjects of vulgar credulity were believed to be less dangerous ground. The dread of spectres, for instance, even in this educated age, is not confined to the professedly ignorant, but exists, in a greater or less degree, in all classes of society ; and therefore no scruple was made, either to withdraw boldly the curtain which separates the two worlds,

or, after working upon the imagination through its instinctive and involuntary fears, to explain frankly the illusions that had governed it.

But, when referring incidently to the operations of ENCHANTMENT, or the popular belief in them, our romancers cautiously abstained from entering into details. The Magician was either a miserable juggler, whose tricks were unworthy of serious explanation, or a grand and shadowy personage, whose sublime pursuits would have become ridiculous, if too closely examined. They did not introduce the reader into the Circle, nor afford him more than a peep of the *smoke* of the Cauldron; and, when interrogated, with indiscreet curiosity,

“What is’t ye do?”

they replied, with the Witches of Shakspeare—

“A deed without a name!”

It seems to me, however, that the influence exercised, in the middle ages, upon the human

mind, by a belief in Magic—to say nothing of its earlier history—would warrant something more. I have even thought, that in describing the manners of the French nation in the fifteenth century, it was *necessary* to afford a large and important space to the superstition which delivered up the immortal Virgin of Dom-Remi to the flames. I considered, that a delusion operating so deeply upon the destinies of man, even when treated in its most grotesque details, could not be looked upon as contemptible. In the history of the too famous Gilles de Retz, I found unoccupied ground, and all the materials I could desire for my conjurations; and, in the shadowy portrait it was my business to draw of the Personage who really governed the fate of that remarkable criminal, I thought I should not offend probability by mingling with his own individuality the historical features of his class.

What these features were may be discovered with very little research.

It is needless to repeat the arguments which have been so frequently used, to prove that Magic, in early times, was nothing more than a knowledge

of the natural sciences. Moses was a still better magician than the priests of Pharaoh. Even without the divine assistance, he could have beat them at their own arts; or, in the poetical phraseology of his history, the rod of Aaron would have swallowed up theirs. This, however, would have gained him nothing but the crown of martyrdom; for the king himself was of the adverse sect, and was by no means dismayed at the occasional success of the strangers. It was the God of Israel who assisted the "enchantments" of the Hebrew sage by miracles, and thus drew forth the chosen people out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage.

In those days, and long before and after, the sciences were hidden in the temples, and that god was the greatest whose priests were the most learned. The whole progress of the Israelites is a religious struggle; and the first and greatest commandment given to this fickle and ignorant people is, "Thou shalt have no other gods but Me." Their frequent disobedience, notwithstanding the magnitude of the miracles of God, as compared

with the juggleries of the pagan priests, can only be explained, by supposing what was no doubt the case, that the latter were expressly and skilfully adapted for the purposes of delusion and imposition. Moses himself was too well acquainted with the men he had to deal with to disdain the use of artifice. The column of flame, for instance, seen by night, and of smoke by day, arose, in all probability, from the sacred fire carried before the ark; and it could not have been intended to serve as a pilot through the wilderness, since Hobab was entertained expressly for this purpose—"to be to them instead of eyes."

The knowledge of the priesthood was carefully retained within their own body. In general, it was guaranteed by tremendous oaths; and their secrets were written in unknown tongues, in ciphers inexplicable without a key, in languages composed of emblems. Their books were kept in the innermost recesses of the temple, and hedged round from curiosity by mysterious denunciations.

Men thus set apart from their fellows imbibed a peculiar character. *They were themselves the god:*

for it is not to be supposed that they believed in an idol in whose service they were every day employing the truths of science for the purposes of deception. Elevated far above the ignorant crowd by whom they were surrounded, their chief characteristic was a disregard of human life and human feelings. They trampled upon the ties by which they were not bound themselves. They poured blood upon their altars like water. Human sacrifices are common to almost all the early religions; and Abraham himself was neither surprised nor horrified at the command to slay his only son for a burnt offering.

At the gradual intermingling of the East with the West, of the unstable with the stable form of civilization, Magic necessarily declined in importance. The massacre of the Magi, after the fall of Smerdis, scattered abroad the secrets of the temple. The integrity of the pontifical order in Egypt was broken up by the consequences of the Roman conquest. Christianity, while as yet undebaased by the juggles of the clergy, had no mysteries but moral ones; and all men were invited

to enter within its pale without money and without price.

The mystic union of the magi, however, still lived for a while in the various Secret Societies of Europe; and the wandering priest of Egypt, who had fled from his impoverished country, with no other riches than his manuscript of occult science, became the ancestor of the modern Sorcerer, and his magic book.

The portrait I have desired to draw of a Magician, in the foregoing work, comprehends, as I have said, the general historical features of the class; although the individual is a real personage. His magical tricks I have rendered few and unimportant; because the very best I could describe might be performed as well by any natural philosopher of the present day. His moral power, however—and in this I have exaggerated nothing—could only have been acquired and preserved by the union I have assumed to exist, of the highest qualities of intellect with the utmost depravity of mind.

The odours made use of in the Magician's study were well known to the miracle-workers. Jam-

blichus informs us, that certain perfumes rendered the mind more fit to receive the inspiration of the Deity ; and Proclus describes a composition of this kind, made up of the amalgamation of various different odours, which was used by the institutors of the ancient priesthood. The property of the fumes of henbane, as disposing to strife and anger, it may be mentioned by way of illustration, is well known to modern medicine. A husband and wife, as is recorded in a French work of science, supposed themselves to be under the influence of witchcraft ; because, although agreeing perfectly well on other occasions, they never could remain long at work together without a violent quarrel. On a packet of the troublesome grains being removed from the stove where it lay, peace was instantaneously restored in the family.

Of all the magical agents, fire is the most common. A box of phosphorus—or, still better, of Lucifer—matches, now in the hands of every old woman, would have terrified half the ancient world. Zoroaster, according to Hermippus (in Arnobius), possessed a fiery girdle as well as Orosmandel ; but

this, with the aid of any of the pyrophoric substances, might be manufactured in the next street. If Horace had lived in our day, he would not have refused to believe in the miracle operated in the sanctuary of Gnatia, when the incense kindled of its own accord.

Spontaneous combustion sometimes produces as disastrous effects as if it had been the work of sorcery. Some years ago a man was tried in London for setting fire to a floor-cloth manufactory; which, there was as good reason to believe, had set fire to itself, by the casual meeting of different chemical substances. The jury, however, if the thing had occurred to them at all, would have been ashamed to be thought more credulous of impossibilities than a heathen poet; and the poor wretch (*who was hanged*), it is hardly uncharitable to believe, fell a victim to the ignorance of the nineteenth century, and the stupid brutality still remaining in the criminal laws of England.

The flame that does not burn, and the artificial earthquake, are well known to the readers of different little treatises on chemical recreations.

The time of the story, it will be remembered, was the epoch when the glorious Virgin of Dom-Remi was burnt for sorcery; but the peculiar character of the prevailing superstition is shown so clearly in a contemporary oration of a doctor of the Sorbonne, that I may be excused for adverting to it here.

“Superstition was so universal in France at this time, that in the oration pronounced before the Dauphin and the Court in justification of the Duke of Burgundy, by Master John Petit, professor of theology in the university of Paris, one of the principal charges made against the Duke of Orleans was, for having conspired against the life of the king by sorcery, charms, and witchcraft.

“His agents, according to the learned professor, took up their abode in the lonely tower of Mont Zay, near Laigny-sur-Marne, and their principal, an apostate monk, performed there numerous invocations to the Devil. At length, on a Sunday, one grand invocation was made on a mountain near the tower, and the priest of darkness, stripping himself naked to the shirt, kneeled down. He stuck the

points of a sword and dagger belonging to the Duke of Orleans in the ground, and near them laid the Duke's ring. Whereupon, two demons appeared to him, in human shape, and clothed in a brownish green, one of whom was called Hermius, and the other Estramain; and the monk paid them the same honour and worship which is due to our Lord.

“The demons then seizing the weapons and the ring, vanished; but the monk soon after found the sword and dagger lying flat upon the ground, the point of the former being broken off and laid in the midst of some powder. In half an hour, the second demon reappeared with the ring, which was now of a red colour, and presenting it to the monk, said to him, ‘Thou wilt put it into the mouth of a dead man, in the manner thou knowest,’ and then vanished. The whole oration, which is highly curious throughout, is embodied by Monstrelet in his *Chroniques*.”*

* “Romance of French History.” By the Author of the “Magician.”

The impositions of Orosmandel, if more refined, would have been less true, both to the manners of the epoch, and in fact ; for, after the above extract, even the least informed reader will not be surprized to hear, that there is ample foundation for the wildest pages in the book.

The following is an account of Gilles de Retz, taken from a memoir of an excursion I made some years ago, among the localities of the story. It appeared in a publication which is now only to be found in the cabinets of the lovers of the arts ; and which was discontinued, because the taste of the "general public," was not sufficiently refined, to appreciate justly the drawings of Turner.

"The bay of La Verrière, beyond the Cens, exhibits, in its tracts of mud, and shallow and stagnant waters, a striking picture of the fertility of nature. These are covered with vegetation, and present the botanist with a remarkable variety of curious plants. Near it an ancient ruin, concealed among the thickets, and scarcely distinguishable from the rocks on which it is raised, recalls to

our memory a character, remarkable for the same rank growth, and which, although now forgotten, or buried in poetry and fable, excited, at one time, the interest of all inquirers into the mysteries of the human mind.

“These ruins are all that remain of the abode of Gilles de Retz, the veritable Blue Beard, the hero of the celebrated tale of Perrault. He was Lord, also, of Ingrande, Chantocé, Machecore, Bourgnœuf, Pornic, Princé, and many other places—each of which claim the distinction of having been the principal theatre of his crimes. Without entering into this controversy, however, all that we can do at the present moment is, to offer a very slight historical account of the Marechal de Retz, who flourished—if the Upas tree can be said to flourish—in the reign of Jean V., Duke of Brittany, in the early part of the fifteenth century.

“Born of one of the most illustrious houses of Brittany, he found himself an orphan at twenty years of age, and the possessor of enormous wealth. He was of course immediately surrounded by parasites, who, by flattering the weaknesses, and

cherishing the evil passions of his nature, and introducing new ones, contrived to turn both his follies and crimes to their own advantage. He was a man of extraordinary bravery; and, while yet in his youth, acquired, by his services in war, the honourable title of Marshal. This, however, although high enough for his ambition, did not suffice for his vanity. He would be known to the world, not only as a brave soldier, but as a man of illustrious birth, immense fortune, and boundless generosity. The world, he knew, can only distinguish characters by their outward manifestations, and he therefore assumed a state befitting the exalted personage whom he imagined himself to be.

“When he went abroad, he was followed by two hundred men of his house, well mounted, and magnificently equipped; and, on returning to the chateau, he was joined, at some distance from the house, by his almoner, attended by a dean, a chanter, two archdeacons, four vicars, a school-master, twelve chaplains, and eight choristers, each handsomely mounted, and followed, like his body

guard, by valets. The clothing of this ecclesiastical company was splendid in the extreme, consisting of scarlet robes trimmed with precious furs. In religious pomp, in fact, he was scarcely surpassed by the wealthiest churches. His travelling chapel dazzled every eye by the numbers it displayed of crosses, chandealers, censers, vases of gold and silver, and other ornaments. The procession was closed by six organs, each carried by six men.

“ All this state, however, which might have well satisfied a monarch, was vanity and vexation of spirit to Gilles de Retz, on account of one little desideratum. He wished that the priest of his chapel should have the privilege of wearing a bishop’s mitre ; and this, in spite of his entreaties, his ambassadors, and his gifts, the Pope had the insolence to refuse ! The chateau in which he deigned to reside, emulated the splendour of one of those fairy fabrics which cost a poor author only a page or two of words. The roofs were painted in imitation of azure skies, sprinkled with stars ; the gilded cornices were carved so as to resemble

foliage, and the walls were tapestried with cloth of gold, which cost six hundred francs the ell. Often, however, he forsook this palace of the genii, in order to dazzle the wondering citizens, accompanied by a train of flatterers, dancing and singing boys, musicians and stage-players. He betook himself to some great town, where he not only treated the people to gratis representations of mysteries—the only sort of drama then known—but distributed refreshments to all who were polite enough to look on.

“It is hardly necessary to say, that a very few years were sufficient to exhaust a fortune subject to such demands, and pillaged at the same time, by the owner’s friends. Gilles was by no means alarmed at this consummation. His estates were so numerous that he could hardly repeat their names without book; and he looked upon them as possessing the same kind of inexhaustibility which he had attributed to his vanished millions. He began to sell. First went one Lordship and then another, till at last, his relations, taking the alarm, petitioned the king to forbid the further alienation

of the family property; which, after many disturbances, threatening a political convulsion, was at length done in due form, and the proclamation published by sound of trumpet.

“This was a blow which almost upset the brain of Gilles de Retz, enfeebled by continual debauchery. Was he to sink at once into the station of a private individual, and drag through an ignominious life, the remembrance of his past glories, converted into present shame? Money, it seemed, was the one thing needful—the bauble which he was accustomed to play with and throw away. Were there not other means of obtaining it than by the sale of estates? Could it not be dragged from the mine, or the deep, by other methods than the employment of capital and the working of machinery? His thoughts darted themselves into every hole and corner of human and superhuman speculation; and he gave to things possible and impossible, the same eager and devout attention. The following is the result, as it is related by a Breton historian.

“‘God not having listened to the impious

desires of the Marshal, this warrior resolved to obtain, by other ways, the power and riches of which he was ambitious.

“ ‘ He had heard that there existed on the earth, men who—for certain considerations, and by means of great intrepidity—had been able to overstep the bounds of the known world, and to tear away the veil which separates finite beings from forms of incorporeal air; and that the spirits subjected to their power, were compelled to minister to their smallest wishes. On the instant, his emissaries set out to traverse Italy and Germany, to penetrate into distant solitudes, and the depths of primeval forests, and to sound the gloomy caverns, where report had placed the servants of the Prince of darkness. Soon malefactors, rogues, and vagabonds of all orders, formed the court of Gilles de de Retz. He saw apparitions; he heard voices; sounds of terrible import were muttered from the bosom of the earth, and in a little while the subterranean vaults of the chateau resounded to the cries of victims.

“ ‘ The most odious ideas that ever entered into

the depraved brain of the alchemist were put into practice, to effect the transmutation of metals, and obtain that philosopher's stone which was to confer on them riches and immortality. Mysterious furnaces were burning night and day; but the real treasures which disappeared in them were not sufficient to satisfy the cupidity of the adepts by whom he was surrounded. They presented to him, at length, an Indian sage, who, as they informed him, had travelled over the whole earth, and from whom Nature had been unable to preserve a single secret.

“ ‘ An imposing, and severe countenance, eyes that dazzled those on whom they shone, and a beard as white as snow, distinguished the man of the East; while his simple, but elegant manners, announced that he had lived habitually with the great ones of the earth. Nothing appeared new or strange to him; no name, no person, no event. He was almost always buried in profound silence; but when he did condescend to speak, his discourse was of things so extraordinary, so wonderful, or so terrible, and all occurring in his own presence, that

Gilles de Retz became fascinated while he listened, and delivered himself up, with all the remains of his fortune, to this remarkable stranger.

“It was then that the dungeons of his chateau echoed with groans, and were watered with tears. It became necessary to call up the Prince of the Fallen Angels, the contemner of God, the devil, Satan himself, and the only cuirass which could preserve the invoker from the first effects of his indignation must be cemented with human blood. Nay, the Marshal himself must plunge the poniard into the heart of the victim, and count the quick convulsions that preceded and accompanied the instant of death.

“At a short distance from the chateau there was a forest as ancient as the world, in the centre of which a little spring, bursting from a rock, was absorbed and disappeared in the ground. A thousand fearful tales were told of this solitary spot; phantoms glided shrieking through the trees; and, if any of the neighbours, attracted either by pity or curiosity, approached the unhallowed precincts, they were never more seen. Their

bodies, it was supposed, were buried round the spring. It was here that the Indian proposed to subdue the rebel angels, and to bring the most powerful among them under the dominion of the Marshal.

“ ‘One night, at the mid-hour, the sage proceeded to this spot, armed at all points, protected by the cuirass cemented by human blood, and furnished with the seal of Gilles de Retz, who followed him alone. He first dug a grave, round which he traced various circles, and these he intermingled with strange figures, in which he deposited some odd or hideous objects. He then built an altar with the earth taken out of the grave, and some flat stones that he had set carefully apart, placing upon it, when ready, the bones of the victims buried round the spring.

“ ‘A new crime was then committed. The blood of an infant flowed into the grave ; and responding to its death-cries the voice of an owl was heard, which the stranger a few days before had set at liberty in the forest. Up to this moment, the theatre of the dreadful sacrifice, had received no

light except from some rays of the moon darting fitfully through the foliage; but when the Indian had pronounced certain barbarous and impious words, a thick smoke appeared round the altar, and was followed by a bluish light, so brilliant that the eye could scarcely endure it. The magician then struck fiercely on a buckler, which resounded to the blow: and in the midst of a terrific noise which filled the forest, a being resembling an enormous leopard, whose horrible form was long imprinted on the imagination of the Marshal, advanced slowly, with seemingly articulate roars, which the Indian explained in a low and troubled voice to his wretched employer.

“‘It is Satan,’ said he, ‘he accepts your homage. But curses on my soul! I have forgotten the most important part of the incantation. He cannot speak to you. Why did I not think of this sooner?’

“‘Can we not begin again?’ cried the Marshal, trembling with hope and fear.

“‘Peace, in the devil’s name!’ whispered the Indian, appearing to listen. ‘At Florence,’ con-

tinued he, 'yes, in the depths of that cellar—Do you then consent to the death of'—

"'Just heaven!' shouted the Marshal in a fury, 'May the great God confound you! have I not already promised?' But, at the holy name of the Father of mercies, the vision vanished; the echoes of the forest repeated a thousand wild and mournful cries, and the dazzling light expired in thick darkness.

"'I recommended silence to you,' said the Magician, after according an instant to human weakness, 'but the name which escaped from your lips has lost to you for ever the power you were on the eve of acquiring over the spirit. He said enough, however, to enable me to render you the possessor of all the treasures buried in the bosom of the earth. The talisman, by means of which this must be effected, is at the bottom of an urn in a tomb near Florence; and behold, continued he, stooping, and picking up a plate of gold which the Marshal had not before observed, behold the sign which will introduce me into places however deeply hidden.'"

“ The Marshal returned to his chateau ; placed in the hands of the Indian the whole amount he was able to raise—saw him set out on his journey to Florence, and with a heart full of rage for having lost, by his own fault, the immense advantages he had expected, awaited with anxiety the expiration of the year, which the impostor had marked as the period of his return.

“ Disappointed in his search after the philosopher’s stone, and in his longings for dominion over the powers of the air, Gilles de Retz sought in marriage a means of replenishing his coffers. The dowry of his wife was soon exhausted—or her charms palled upon his senses—and she disappeared ; a second supplied her place—a third—even to the seventh wife ! The cry of blood at length rose to heaven, and Jean V. Duke of Brittany, determined to arrest this gigantic criminal. After some difficulty he was taken—not in his own chateau, which was too well defended, but by means of an ambuscade, and thrown into the dungeons of Nantes.

“ The Indian was next seized, who proved to be a

Florentine called Prelati. He was put to the torture, and confessed every thing. Gilles himself could not stand unmoved the appearance of the rack; but, forgetting the resolution he seemed to have taken to die in silence, poured forth a declaration of his crimes which filled his judges with horror. Even in the midst of such revelations, however, he endeavoured to relieve himself of a part of the blame, by complaining of a bad education, and of the arts of Prelati and his accomplices, who, working upon his infatuated predilections for forbidden studies, had led him on insensibly from horror to horror, till at length his mind became seared to the sense of guilt. It is remarkable that the audience at this period of the trial, forgot the horror which such a monster ought to have inspired, and melted into tears of compassion.

“Gilles de Retz was then condemned to be dragged in chains to the meadow of the Madeleine, near Nantes, and there to be bound to a post raised on a pile of faggots, and burned alive. The fathers and mothers of families who witnessed the trial fasted for three days after, according to the

custom of the period, in order to obtain a hearing for their prayers in behalf of his soul. They at the same time scourged their children with great severity, to impress upon their memory the awful lesson they had received.

“The Marshal was conducted to the place of punishment, in the midst of a vast procession, formed of the monastic orders, and the clergy, and secular congregations of the city. He was much cast down, and seemed to dread the sufferings he was about to undergo; but these, through the interest of his friends, were in part commuted, and when the flames rose, he was strangled, and with comparatively little pain, yielded forth his spirit to the latter judgment.

“The ruins of the chateau of La Verrière, and the whole scene around them, have an air of melancholy and desolation that disposes the mind to reverie. A stair cut in the rock leads to a little hall tapestried with ivy, and round this are planted seven funereal trees, as monuments to the manes of the seven murdered wives. At some distance from the chateau, there were found, in 1810, a

number of slate coffins. Near the Verrière, the ruins of an old bridge are seen under the surface of the Erdre; but the date of this construction is altogether unknown.

“ ‘None of those associations,’ says M. Richer, ‘which connect the epochs of history, are attached the banks of the Erdre. This tranquil river is the image of oblivion; and on its shores, as on those of Lethe, we seem to lose the memory of the past.’ ”*

* “Turner’s Annual Tour.” By the Author of “The Magician.”