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Title: Lord Montagu's Page: An Historical Romance

Author: G. P. R. James

Release date: July 22, 2012 [EBook #40295]

Most recently updated: September 1, 2020

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Juliet Sutherland, Jane Robins and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

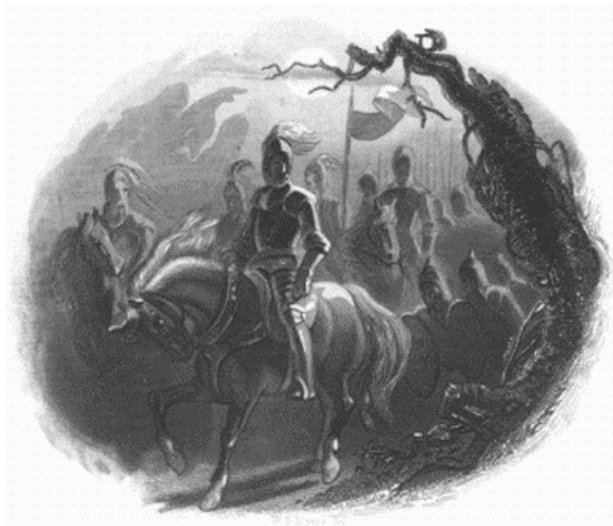
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LORD MONTAGU'S PAGE
AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE

BY

G.P.R. JAMES.



PHILADELPHIA
CHILDS AND PETERSON,
602 ARCH STREET.
1858.

I. WATY

Lord Montagu's Page:

AN

HISTORICAL ROMANCE

OF THE

Seventeenth Century.

By

G. P. R. JAMES,

Author of

"RICHELIEU," "DARNLEY," "MARY OF BURGUNDY," "OLD DOMINION," ETC.

PHILADELPHIA:
CHILDS & PETERSON, 602 ARCH ST.
1858.

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PHILADELPHIA.
PRINTED BY DEACON & PETERSON.

[1]

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

[From Allibone's forthcoming Dictionary of Authors.]

George Payne Rainsford James was born in London about the year 1800, and commenced his literary career at an early age by anonymous contributions to the journals and reviews which catered to the literary taste of "a discerning public." Some of these juvenile effusions fell under the notice of Washington Irving, and this gentleman, with his usual kindness of heart, encouraged the young author to venture upon something of a more important character than the fugitive essays which had hitherto employed his pen. Thus strengthened in his literary proclivity, the young aspirant nibbed his "gray-goose quill," commenced author in earnest, and gave to the world in 1822 his first work,—a *Life of Edward the Black Prince*. Mr. James now turned his attention to a field which had recently been cultivated with eminent success,—historical romance,—and completed in 1825 his novel of *Richelieu*, which, having received the favorable verdict of Sir Walter Scott, made its appearance in 1829. This was followed in the next year by *Darnley and De L'Orme*.

Richelieu was so fortunate as to secure the favor of the formidable Christopher North of Blackwood; but this invaluable commendation was withheld from Darnley:—

"Mr. Colburn has lately given us two books of a very different character, Richelieu and Darnley. Richelieu is one of the most spirited, amusing, and interesting romances I ever read; characters well drawn—incidents well managed—story perpetually progressive—catastrophe at once natural and unexpected—moral good, but not goody—and the whole felt, in every chapter, to be the work of a—Gentleman."—*Noctes Ambrosianæ*, April, 1830; *Blackw. Mag.*, xxvii. 688, q.v.

From this time to the present Mr. James has been no idler in the Republic of Letters, as the following alphabetical list of his writings amply proves:—

- [2] 1. Adra, or the Peruvians; a Poem, 1 vol. 2. Agincourt, 1844, 3 vols. 3. Agnes Sorrel, 1853, 3 vols. 4. Arabella Stuart, 1853, 3 vols. 5. Arrah Neil, 1845, 3 vols. 6. Attila, 1837, 3 vols. 7. Beauchamp, 1848, 3 vols. 8. Blanche of Navarre; a Play, 1839, 1 vol. 9. Book of the Passions, 1838, 1 vol. 10. Cameralzaman; a Fairy Drama, 1848, 1 vol. 11. Castelneau; or, The Ancient Régime, 1841, 3 vols. 12. Castle of Ehrenstein, 1847, 3 vols. 13. Charles Tyrrell, 1839, 2 vols. 14. City of the Silent; a Poem, 1 vol. 15. Commissioner; or, De Lunatico Inquirendo, 1842, 1 vol. 16. Convict, 1847, 3 vols. 17. Corse de Leon, the Brigand, 1841, 3 vols. 18. Dark Scenes of History, 1849, 3 vols. 19. Darnley, 1830, 3 vols. 20. Delaware, 3 vols; subsequently published under the title of Thirty Years Since, 1848, 1 vol. 21. De L'Orme, 1830, 3 vols. 22. Desultory Man, 3 vols. 23. Educational Institutions of Germany, 1 vol. 24. Eva St. Clair, and other Tales, 1843, 2 vols. 25. False Heir, 1843, 3 vols. 26. Fate, 1851, 3 vols. 27. Fight of the Fiddlers, 1848, 1 vol. 28. Forest Days, 1843, 3 vols. 29. Forgery; or, Best Intentions, 1848, 3 vols. 30. Gentleman of the Old School, 1839, 3 vols. 31. Gipsy, 1835, 3 vols. 32. Gowrie; or, The King's Plot, 1 vol. 33. Heidelberg, 1846, 3 vols. 34. Henry Masterton, 1832, 3 vols. 35. Henry Smeaton, 1850, 3 vols. 36. Henry of Guise, 1839, 3 vols. 37. History of Charlemagne, 1832, 1 vol. 38. History of Chivalry, 1 vol. 39. History of Louis XIV., 1838, 4 vols. 40. History of Richard Cœur de Lion, 1841-42, 4 vols. 41. Huguenot, 1838, 3 vols. 42. Jacquerie, 1841, 3 vols. 43. John Jones's Tales from English History, for Little John Joneses, 1849, 2 vols. 44. John Marston Hall, 1834, 3 vols; subsequently published under the title of Little Ball o' Fire, 1847, 1 vol. 45. King's Highway, 1840, 3 vols. 46. Last of the Fairies, 1847, 1 vol. 47. Life of Edward the Black Prince, 1822, 2 vols. 48. Life of Henry IV. of France, 1847, 3 vols. 49. Life of Vicissitudes, 1 vol. 50. Man-at-Arms, 1840, 3 vols. 51. Margaret Graham, 1847, 2 vols. 52. Mary of Burgundy, 1833, 3 vols. 53. Memoirs of Great Commanders, 1832, 3 vols. 54. Morley Ernstein, 1842, 3 vols. 55. My Aunt Pontypool, 3 vols. 56. Old Dominion; or, The Southampton Massacre, 1856, 3 vols. 57. Old Oak Chest, 3 vols. 58. One in a Thousand, 1835, 3 vols. 59. Pequinillo, 1852, 3 vols. 60. Philip Augustus, 1831, 3 vols. 61. Prince Life, 1855, 1 vol. 62. Revenge, 1851, 3 vols; so styled by the bookseller, without the author's consent. It was originally published in papers under a different name. 63. Richelieu, 1829, 3 vols. 64. Robber, 1838, 3 vols. 65. Rose D'Albret, 1840, 3 vols. 66. Russell, 1847, 3 vols. 67. Sir Theodore Broughton, 1847, 3 vols. 68. Smuggler, 1845, 3 vols. 69. Stepmother, 1846, 3 vols. 70. Story without a Name, 1852, 1 vol. 71. String of Pearls, 1849, 2 vols. 72. Ticonderoga; or, The Black Eagle, 1854, 3 vols. 73. Whim and its Consequences, 1847, 3 vols. 74. Woodman, 1847, 3 vols.

It will be seen that the above list presents a total of 188 vols.,—viz: 51 works in 3 vols. each, 2 in 4 vols. each, 6 in 2 vols. each, and 15 in 1 vol. each. Almost all of these volumes are of the post-octavo size. Mr. James is also the editor of the Vernon Letters, illustrative of the times of William III., 1841, 3 vols. 8vo; and of Wm. Henry Ireland's historical romance of David Rizzio, 1849, 3 vols. p. 8vo; and was associated with Dr. E. E. Crowe in the Lives of the Most Eminent Foreign Statesmen, 1832-38, 5 vols. p. 8vo, (4 vols. were Mr. James's, and 1 vol. Dr. Crowe's,) and with Mr. Maunsell B. Field in the composition of Adrian, or The Clouds of the Mind, 1852, 2 vols. p. 8vo.

To this list may be added Norfolk and Hereford, (in a collection entitled Seven Tales by Seven Authors,) and enough articles in various periodicals to fill eight or ten volumes. Perhaps we should not omit to notice that a work entitled A Brief History of the United States Boundary Question, drawn up from official papers, published in London, 1839, 8vo, and ascribed to Mr. James, is not his production; nor had he any share (further than writing a preface, or something of that kind) in another work often credited to him,—Memoirs of Celebrated Women, 1837, 2 vols. p. 8vo. During the reign of William IV. the author received the appointment of historiographer of Great Britain; but this post was resigned by him many years since.

- [3] There have been new editions of many of Mr. James's novels, and some or all of them have appeared in Bentley's Series of Standard Novels. There has been also a Parlor-Library Edition. A collective edition was published by Smith, Elder & Co., commencing in June, 1844, and continued by Parry, and by Simpkin, Marshall & Co. In America they have been very popular and published in large quantities.

About 1850 Mr. James, with his family, removed permanently to the United States, and resided for two or three years in Berkshire county, Massachusetts. Since 1852 he has been British Consul at Richmond, Virginia. The space which we have occupied by a recital of the

titles only of Mr. James's volumes necessarily restricts the quotation of criticisms upon the merits or demerits of their contents. It has fallen to the lot of few authors to be so much read, and at the same time so much abused, as the owner of the fertile pen which claims the long list of novels commencing with Richelieu in 1829 and extending to the Old Dominion in 1856. That there should be a family likeness in this numerous race—where so many, too, are nearly of an age—can be no matter of surprise. The mind, like any other artisan, can only construct from materials which lie within its range; and, when no time is allowed for the accumulation and renewal of these, it is vain to hope that variety of architecture will conceal the identity of substance. Yet, after all, the champion of this popular author will probably argue that this objection against the writings of Mr. James is greatly overstated and extravagantly overestimated. The novelist can draw only from the experience of human life in its different phases, and these admit not of such variety as the inordinate appetite of the modern Athenians unreasonably demands. A new series of catastrophes and perplexities, of mortifications and triumphs, of joys and sorrows, cannot be evoked for the benefit of the reader of each new novel. Again, Mr. James's admirer insists that this charge of sameness so often urged against our novelist's writings is perhaps overstated. Where one author, as is frequently the case, gains the reputation of versatility of talent by writing one or two volumes, it is not to be believed that Mr. James exhibits less in one or two hundred. He who composes a library is not to be judged by the same standard as he who writes but one book. And even if the charge of "sameness" be admitted to its full extent, yet many will cordially concur with the grateful and graceful acknowledgment of one of the most eminent of modern critics:—

"I hail every fresh publication of James, though I half know what he is going to do with his lady, and his gentleman, and his landscape, and his mystery, and his orthodoxy, and his criminal trial. But I am charmed with the new amusement which he brings out of old materials. I look on him as I look on a musician famous for 'variations.' I am grateful for his vein of cheerfulness, for his singularly varied and vivid landscapes, for his power of painting women at once ladylike and loving, (a rare talent,) for making lovers to match, at once beautiful and well-bred, and for the solace which all this has afforded me, sometimes over and over again, in illness and in convalescence, when I required interest without violence, and entertainment at once animated and mild."—LEIGH HUNT.

Two of the severest criticisms to which Mr. James's novels have been subjected are, the one in the London Athenæum for April 11, 1846, and the one in the North American Review, by E. P. Whipple, for April, 1844.

- [4] We have spoken of Mr. James's champions and admirers; and such are by no means fabulous personages, notwithstanding the severe censures to which we have alluded. A brief quotation from one of these eulogies will be another evidence added to the many in this volume of a wide dissimilarity in critical opinions:—

"His pen is prolific enough to keep the imagination constantly nourished; and of him, more than of any modern writer, it may be said, that he has improved his style by the mere dint of constant and abundant practice. For, although so agreeable a novelist, it must not be forgotten that he stands infinitely higher as an historian.... The most fantastic and beautiful coruscations which the skies can exhibit to the eyes of mankind dart as if in play from the huge volumes that roll out from the crater of the volcano.... The recreation of an enlarged intellect is ever more valuable than the highest efforts of a confined one. Hence we find in the works before us, [Corse de Leon, the Ancient Régime, and The Jacquerie,] lightly as they have been thrown off, the traces of study,—the footsteps of a powerful and vigorous understanding."—*Dublin University Magazine*, March, 1842.

The Edinburgh Review concludes some comments upon our author with the remark,

"Our readers will perceive from these general observations that we estimate Mr. James's abilities, as a romance-writer, highly: his works are lively and interesting, and animated by a spirit of sound and healthy morality in feeling, and of natural delineation in character, which, we think, will secure for them a calm popularity which will last beyond the present day."

We have before us more than thirty (to be exact, just thirty-two) commendatory notices of our author, but brief extracts from two of these is all for which we can find space.

"He belongs to the historical school of fiction, and, like the masters of the art, takes up a real person or a real event, and, pursuing the course of history, makes out the intentions of nature by adding circumstances and heightening character, till, like a statue in the hands of the sculptor, the whole is in fair proportion, truth of sentiment, and character. For this he has high qualities,—an excellent taste, extensive knowledge of history, a right feeling of the chivalrous, and a heroic and a ready eye for the picturesque: his proprieties are admirable; his sympathy with whatever is high-souled and noble is deep and impressive. His best works are Richelieu and Mary of Burgundy."—ALLAN CUNNINGHAM: *Biographical and Critical*

The critic next to be quoted, whilst coinciding in the objections prominently urged against Mr. James as an author,—repetition, tediousness, and deficiency of terseness,—yet urges on his behalf that

"There is a constant appeal in his brilliant pages not only to the pure and generous, but to the elevated and noble sentiments; he is imbued with the very soul of chivalry; and all his stories turn on the final triumph of those who are influenced by such feelings over such as are swayed by selfish or base desires. He possesses great pictorial powers, and a remarkable facility of turning his graphic pen at will to the delineation of the most distant and opposite scenes, manners, and social customs.... Not a word or a thought which can give pain to the purest heart ever escapes from his pen; and the mind wearied with the cares and grieved at the selfishness of the world reverts with pleasure to his varied compositions, which carry it back, as it were, to former days, and portray, perhaps in too brilliant colors, the ideas and manners of the olden time."—SIR ARCHIBALD ALISON: *Hist. of Europe*, 1815-52, chap. v., 1853. See also *Alison's Essays*, 1850, iii. 545-546; *North British Review*, Feb. 1857, art. on Modern Style.

[5]

Prefatory Dedication.

TO

GUSTAVUS A. MYERS, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR:—

In dedicating to you the following pages, I am moved not more by private friendship and regard, than by esteem for your abilities, and respect for your many and varied acquirements. It might seem somewhat presumptuous in me to call for your acceptance or seek your approbation of this work, when not only your general acquaintance with, but your profound knowledge of, almost every branch of modern and ancient literature qualify and might be expected to prompt you to minute and severe criticism. But I have always found, in regard to my own works at least, that those who were best fitted to judge were the most inclined to be lenient, and that men of high talent and deep learning condescended to tolerate, if not to approve, that which was assailed by very small critics, or scoffed at by men who, calling themselves humorists, omitted the word "*bad*" before the appellation in which they gloried.

To your good humor, then, I leave the work, and will only add a few words in regard to the object and construction of the story.

We have in the present day romances of many various kinds; and I really know not how to class my present effort. It is not a love-story, for any thing like that which was the great moving power of young energies—at least in less material days than these—has very little part in the book. I cannot call it a novel without a hero, because it is altogether dedicated to the adventures of one man. I cannot call it a romance without a heroine, because there is a woman in it, and a woman with whom I am myself very much in love. I cannot call it absolutely a historical romance, because there are several characters which are not historical, and I am afraid I have taken a few little liberties with Chronology which, were she as prudish a dame as some of the middle-aged ladies whom I could mention, would either earn me a *box* of the ear, or produce so much scandal that my good name would be lost forever. Plague take the months and the days! they are always getting in one's way. But I do believe I have been very reverent and respectful to their grandmothers the years, and, with due regard for precedence and the Court Guide, have not put any of the latter out of her proper place.

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I do not altogether wish to call this a book of character; for I do not exactly understand that word as the public has lately been taught to understand it. There is no peasant, or cobbler, or brick-layer's apprentice, in the whole book, endowed with superhuman qualities, moral and physical. There is no personage in high station—given as the type of a class—imbued with intense selfishness or demoniac passions, wicked without motive, heartless against common sense, and utterly degraded from that noble humanity, God's best and holiest gift to mankind. There is no meek, poor, puling, suffering lover, who condescends humbly to be

bamboozled and befooled through three volumes, or Heaven knows how many numbers, for the sake of marrying the heroine in the end. I therefore cannot properly, in the present day, call it a work of character.

[7] I might call it, perhaps,—although the hero is an Englishman,—a picture of the times of Louis XIII; but, alas! I have not ventured to give a full picture of these times. We have become so uncommonly cleanly and decorous in our own days, that a mere allusion to the dirt and indecency of the age of our great-grandmothers is not to be tolerated. In order, indeed, to preserve something like verisimilitude, I have been obliged to glance, in one chapter, at the freedom of manners of the days to which I refer; but it has been a mere glance, and given in such a manner that the cheek of one who understands it, in the sense in which one of those very days would understand it, must have lost the power of blushing. At all events, it can never sully or offend the pure, nor lead the impure any further wrong.

There are a great many explanations and comments, in illustration of the times, which I should like to give for the benefit of that part of my readers who have put on the right of knowing all things at the same time that the third change was made in their dress, and I would have done so, in notes; but, unfortunately, I do not write Greek; and a little incident prevented me from writing those notes in Latin. A work—a most interesting work—was published a few years ago in London, called the Bernstein Hexe, or Amber Witch. More than one translation appeared; and one of these had the original notes,—some written in Latin where they were peculiarly anatomical and indecent; but, to my surprise, I found that several ladies were fully versed in that sort of Latinity. I cannot flatter myself with having a sufficient command of the Roman tongue to be enabled to veil the meaning more completely from the unlearned.

[8] Only in the case of two personages have I attempted to elaborate character,—in regard to my hero, and in regard to the Cardinal de Richelieu. The former, though not altogether fictitious, must go with very little comment. I wished to show how a young heart may be hardened by circumstances, and how it may be softened and its better feelings evolved by a propitious change. The latter, I will confess, I have labored much; because I think the world in general, and I myself also, have done some injustice to one of the greatest men that ever lived. Very early in life I depicted him when he had reached old age,—that is to say, his old age; for he had not, at the time of his death, numbered as many years as are now upon my own head. He had then been tried in the fire of the most terrible circumstances which perhaps ever assayed a human heart; not only tried, but hardened; and even then, upon his death-bed, his burst of tenderness to his old friend, Bois Robert, his delight in the arts, and passion for flowers, showed that the tenderer and—may I not say more noble?—feelings of the man had not been swallowed up by the hard duties of the statesman, or the galling cares of the politician. I now present him to the reader at a much earlier period of life,—young, vigorous, successful, happy,—when the germs of all those qualities for which men have reproached or applauded him were certainly developed, were growing to maturity; when the severity which afterwards characterized him, and the gentleness which he as certainly displayed, had both been exercised; but when the briars and thorns had not fully grown up, and before the soft grass of the heart had been trampled under foot.

All men have mixed characters. I do not believe in perfect evil or in perfect goodness on this earth; but at various times of life the worse or the better spirit predominates, according to the nourishment and encouragement it receives. How far Richelieu changed, and when and how he changed, would require a longer discussion than can be here afforded. But one thing is to be always remembered,—that he was generally painted by his enemies; and, where they admit high qualities and generous feelings, we may be sure that it was done with even a niggard hand, and add something to the tribute of the unwilling witness.

[9] In regard to critics, it may be supposed that I have spoken, a few pages back, somewhat irreverently: I do not mean to do so in the least. Amongst them are some most admirable men,—some who have done great, real, tangible service to the public,—who have guided, if not formed, public taste; and for them I have the greatest possible respect. I speak not of the contributors to our greater and more pretentious Reviews,—although, perhaps, a mass of deeper learning, more close and acute investigation, and purer critical taste, cannot be found in the literature of the world than that contained in their pages; but I speak of the whole body of contemporary critics, many of whose minor articles are full of astute perception and sound judgment. But there are others for whom, though I have the most profound contempt, I have a most humble fear. It is useless in Southern climates, such as that which I inhabit, to attempt to prevent oneself from being stung by mosquitos or to keep one's ears closed against their musical but venomous song. The only plan which presents any chance of success—at least, it is as good as any other—is to go down upon your knees and humbly to beseech them to spare you. I therefore most reverently beseech the moral mosquitos, who are accustomed to whistle and sing about my lowly path, to forbear as much as possible; and, although their critical virulence may be aroused to the highest pitch by seeing a man walk quietly on for thirty years along the only firm path he can find amongst the bogs and quagmires of literature, to spare at least those parts which are left naked by his tailor and his shoemaker; to remember, in other words, that, besides the faults and errors for which I am myself clearly responsible, there is some allowance to be made for the faults of my amanuensis and for the errors of my printer. I admit that I am

the worst corrector in the whole world; but I do hope that the liberality of criticism will not think fit to see, as has been lately done, errors of mind in errors clearly of the printer; especially in works which, by some arrangement between Mr. Newby and the Atlantic, I never by any means see till the book has passed through the press. But, should they still be determined to lay the whole blame upon the poor author's shoulders, I may as well furnish them with some excuse for so doing. The best that I know is to be found in the following little anecdote:—

When I was quite a young boy, there was a painter in Edinburgh, of the name of Skirven, celebrated both for his taste and genius, and his minute accuracy in portrait-painting. A very beautiful lady of my acquaintance sat to him for her portrait in a falling collar of rich and beautiful lace. Unfortunately, there was a hole in the lace. As usual, he did not suffer her to see the portrait till it was completed; and, when she did see it, there was a portrait of the hole as well as herself. "Well, Mr. Skirven," she said, "I think you need not have painted the hole."

"Well, madam," answered the painter, "then you should have mended it first."

G. P. R. JAMES.

ASHLAND, VIRGINIA,
December, 1857.

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LORD MONTAGU'S PAGE.

CHAPTER I.

It was a dark and stormy night,—a very dark night indeed. No dog's mouth, whether terrier, mastiff, or Newfoundland, was ever so dark as that night. The hatches had been battened down, and every aperture but one, by which any of the great, curly-pated, leaping waves could jump into the vessel, had been closed.

What vessel? the reader may perhaps inquire. Well, that being a piece of reasonable curiosity,—although I do wish, as a general thing, that readers would not be so impatient,—I will gratify it, and answer the inquirer's question; and, indeed, would have told him all about it in five minutes if he would but have given me time.

What vessel? asks the reader. Why, a little, heavy-looking, fore-and-aft, one-masted ship, somewhat tubbish in form, which had battled with a not very favorable gale during a long stormy day, and had, as the sun went down, approached the coast of France, it might be somewhat too close for safety. The atmosphere in the cabin below was hot and oppressive. How indeed could it be otherwise, when not one breath of air, notwithstanding all the bullying and roaring of Boreas, had been able to get in during the whole day? But such being the case, and respiration in the little den being difficult, the only altogether terrestrial animal—sailors are, of course, amphibious—which that vessel contained had forced his way up to the deck through the only narrow outlet which had been left open.

[12]

The amphibia have always a considerable dislike and some degree of contempt for all land-animals, and the five sailors, with their skipper, who formed all the crew so small a craft required, would probably have driven below the intruder upon their labors, had they had time, leisure, or light to notice him at all. But for near two hours he stood at the stern on the weather side of the ship, holding on by the bulwarks, wet to the skin, with his hat blown off and probably swimming back toward Old England, and his hands numbed with cold and with hard grasping.

There is something in the very act of holding on tight which increases the natural tenacity of purpose that exists in some minds, and, if I may use a very vulgar figure, thickens the glue. At the end of the two hours, one of the sailors, who had something to do at the stern in a great hurry, ran up to the spot where the only passenger was clinging and nearly tumbled over him. Then, of course, he cursed him, as men in a hurry are wont to, and exclaimed, "Get down below! What the devil are you doing up here, where you are in everybody's way? Get down, I say!"

"I will not," was the reply, in a quiet, and even sweet, but very resolute, voice.

"Then I'll knock you overboard, by ——" said the seaman, adding an oath which did not much strengthen the threat in the ears to which it was addressed.

"You cannot, and you dare not try," answered the other. But then the voice of the skipper, who had been working hard at the tiller, was heard exclaiming, "Let him alone, Tom;" and he beneficently called down condemnation not only upon the eyes but upon all the

members of his subordinate. "Mind your own work, and let him alone."

[13] Now, it may be worth while to ask what sort of a personage was this, whom the somewhat irascible Master Tom threatened to knock overboard, and who replied with so little reverence for the threat. He could not be a very formidable person, at least in appearance,—a very necessary qualification of the assertion; for I have known very formidable snakes the most pitiful-looking reptiles I ever beheld; and some of the most dangerous men ever seen, either on the same stage of life where we are playing our parts with them, or on the wider boards of history, have been the least impressive in person, and the meanest-looking of creatures. But, as I was saying,—for it is too late to finish that sentence now,—the single passenger could not be very formidable in appearance; for Tom was probably too wise and too experienced to engage in what he considered even an equal struggle on so dark a night, while the wind was blowing a gale, and the little craft heeling gunwale to. Yet he could not be one without some powers, internally if not externally, which rendered him fully as careless of consequences as the other. Well, he was only a lad of some five feet eight or nine in height, slight-looking in form, and dressed in a common sailor's jacket. But in a leathern belt round his waist was a large caseknife, on the handle or hilt of which, while he continued to hold on to the rail of the bulwark with his left hand, he clasped the fingers of his right in a very resolute and uncompromising manner. We all know that bowie-knives, in one land at least, are very useful companions, and in all lands very formidable weapons. Now, the knife in the lad's black leather belt was not at all unlike a bowie-knife, and not in the least less formidable. There was the slight insinuating curve, the heavy haft, the tremendously long blade, the razor-like edge, and the sharp, unfailing point; so that it is not improbable that the youth's confidence was mightily strengthened by the companionship of such a serviceable friend, although he was not half the size of his adversary and not above a third of his weight. Boys, however, are always daring; and he could not at the utmost have passed much more than seventeen years on the surface of this cold earth.

[14] Now, all this account would have been spared the beloved reader had not a trait of character at the outset of the career of any personage, in a poem, novel, romance, or tale, been worth half a volume of description afterward. It would have been spared, indeed, simply because the little incident ended just where we have left it. Tom, the sailor, though a reckless, ill-conditioned fellow, was obedient to the voice of his commander, and, after having boused the boom a little to the one side or the other of the vessel,—which side I neither know nor care,—he returned to the bow, muttering a few objurgations of the youth, implying that if it had not been for him they would never have come upon that d—d voyage at all, and that probably they all would go to the bottom for having such a Jonah on board.

The truth is, Tom had left his sweetheart at Plymouth.

As soon as he was gone, the skipper called the lad a little nearer and said, "Tom says true enough, Master Ned. You were better below on every account. I don't see what you want to come up for on such a night as this."

"Because I do not want to be smothered, Captain Tinly," replied Master Ned. "I had rather be frozen than stewed; rather be melted by the water like a piece of salt or sugar than baked like a pasty. Besides, what harm do I do here? I am in no one's way, and that sea-dog could do his work as well with me here as without me. But I'll tell you what, captain, we are getting into smoother water. Some land is giving us a lee. We ought soon to see a light."

"Why, were you ever here before, youngster?" asked the master.

"Ay, twice," said the boy; "and I know that when the sea smooths down as it is now doing, we cannot be far from the island; and you will soon see the lantern."

"Well, keep a sharp look-out, then," was the reply: "you can see better where you stand than I can, and it's so dark those fellows forward may miss it. A minute or two to-night may save or sink us."

"It matters not much which," answered the young man. A strange thought for one at the age when life is brightest! but there are cases when the disappointment of all early hopes—when the first grasp of misfortune's iron hand has been so hard that it seems to have crushed the butterfly of the heart even unto death,—when it is not alone the gay colors have been brushed off, the soft down swept away, but when Hope's own life seems extinguished.

[15] Happily, it is but for a time. There is immortality in Hope. She cannot die; The fabled Phoenix of the ancients was but an emblem, like every other myth; and, if the painting of Cupid burning a butterfly over a flame was the image of love tormenting the soul, the Phoenix rising from her ashes was surely a figure of the constant resurrection of Hope. Ay, from her very ashes does she rise to brighter and still brighter existence, till, soaring over the cold Lethe of the grave, she spreads her wings afar to the Elysian fields beyond!

It is an old axiom, never to say "die;" and though there be those who say it, ay, and in a momentary madness give the word the form of action, did they but wait, they themselves would find that, though circumstances remained unchanged, the prospect as rugged or the night as dark, the sunshine of Hope would break forth again to cheer, or her star twinkle

through the gloom to guide.

The boy felt what he said at the time, but it was only for the time; and there were years before him in which he never felt so again.

"Captain, there is a light surely toward the southwest," said the lad: "that must be the light at St. Martin's-on-Re. It seems very far off. We must be hugging the main shore too close."

"I don't see it," answered the skipper; "but there is one due east, or half a point north. What the devil is that?"

The boy ran across the deck nearly at the risk of his life; for though the sea and wind had both fallen, the little craft still pitched and heeled so much that he lost his footing and had wellnigh gone overboard. He held on, however, was up in a moment, and exclaimed, "Marans! The light in Maran's church! You'll be on the sands in ten minutes! Put about, put about, if you would save the ship!"

[16] A great deal of hurry and confusion succeeded; and there was much unnecessary noise, and still more unnecessary swearing. The youth who had discovered the danger was the most silent of the party; but he was not inactive, aiding the captain with more strength than he seemed to possess, to bring the ship's head as near to the wind as possible. And the manoeuvre was just in time; for the lead at one time showed that they were just up the very verge of the sands at the moment when, answering the helm better than she did at first, she made way toward the west, and the danger was past. In half an hour—for their progress was slow—the light upon the Isle de Re could be distinctly seen, and one by one other lights and landmarks appeared, rendering the rest of the voyage comparatively safe.

Still the lad kept his place upon the deck, addressing hardly a word to any one, but watching with a keen eye the eastern line of shore, which was every now and then visible notwithstanding the darkness. The moon, too, began to give some light, though she could not be seen; for the clouds were still thick, and their rapid race across the sky told that, though the sea under the lea of the Isle de Re had lost all its fierceness, the gale was blowing with unabated fury.

The lad quitted his hold of the bulwarks and walked slowly to the captain's side, as if to speak to him; but the skipper spoke first. His professional vanity was somewhat mortified, or perhaps he was afraid that his professional reputation might suffer by the lad's report in the ears of those whose approbation was valuable to him; and consequently he was inclined to put a little bit of defensive armor on a spot where he fancied himself vulnerable.

"We had a narrow squeak of it just now, Master Ned," he said. "However, it was no fault of mine. I could not help it. It is twenty years since I was last at this d—d place, and the chart they gave me is a mighty bad one. Besides, those beastly gales we have had ever since Ushant might puzzle the devil,—and this dark night, too!"

"You've saved the ship, captain," answered the lad: "that is all we have to do with;" and then, perhaps thinking he might as well add something to help the good skipper's palliatives for wellnigh running the ship ashore, he added, "Besides, there is a strong current running,—what between the sands of Oleron and the point of Re, and the Pertuis d'Antioche—I do not know very well how it is; but I was so told by one of the men last time I was here."

[17] "Ay, 'tis so, I dare say," answered the captain. "Indeed, it must be so; for we could never have got so far to the eastward without one of those currents. I wish to heaven some one would put them all down, for one can't keep them all in one's head, anyhow. You tell the duke, when you see him again, about the currents, Master Ned."

"What is the use of telling him any thing at all but that we got safe to Rochelle?" asked the lad. "If we get there—as there is now no doubt—he will ask no questions how; and if we don't, anybody may blame us who likes: it will make little difference to you or me."

The skipper was about to answer; but just at that moment a light broke suddenly out upon that longish point of land which a boat that keeps under the western shore of France has to double—as the reader very well recollects—before it can make the port of La Rochelle; and the boy as suddenly laid his hand on the captain's arm, saying, "Make for that light as near as you can, captain; keep the lead going; drop your anchor as close as you can, and send me ashore in a boat."

"Why, Master Ned, I was told to land you at Rochelle," replied the other.

"You were told to do as I bade you," answered the lad, as stoutly as if he had been a captain of horse,—adding the saving clause, "in every thing except the navigation of your vessel. I must be put ashore where you see that light. So send down for my bags, have the boat all ready, and when I am landed go on to Rochelle and wait till you hear more."

The captain of the vessel did not hesitate to obey. The ship ran speedily for the shore and approached perhaps nearer than was altogether safe; the boat was lowered to the water, and the lad sprang in without bidding adieu to any one. There was a heavy sea running upon the coast, and it required no slight skill and strength on the part of the two stout rowers to land him in safety; but he showed neither fear nor hesitation, though probably he

knew the extent of the danger and the service better than any one; for, when he sprang out into the shallow water where the boat grounded, he gave each of the men a gold-piece, and then watched them with somewhat anxious eyes till they had got their boat through the surf into the open sea.

[18]

CHAPTER II.

What an extraordinary world it is! Men in general are mere shellfish, unapproachable except at certain tender points; such as the eyes of the crab, or the soft yellow skin under an alligator's gullet,—Achilles' heels which have been neglected by the mothers of those sapient reptiles when they were dipped in Styx. But perhaps it is as well as it is; for if a man were tender all over, and once began to think of all the misery that is going on around him, the faces he would make would be horrible to see. Reader, at this very moment there are thousands dying in agony, there are many starving for lack of food, there is a whole host of gentle hearts watching the expiring lamp of life in the eyes of those most dearly loved, there are multitudes of noble spirits and mighty minds struggling in doubt for tomorrow's daily crust, there is crime, folly, sorrow, anguish, shame, remorse, despair, around us on every side; and yet we are as merry as a grasshopper unless somebody snaps off one of our own legs. There is not an instant of time that does not bring with it a thousand waves of agony over the stormy sea of human existence; and yet every man's light boat dances on, and the mariner sings, till one of the many billows overwhelms him. It is quite as well as it is.

Some, however, are blessed—or cursed, as it may be—with a faculty of feeling for others; and that boy, as he took his way up from the shore toward the little hillock of sand on which a bonfire of pine logs was blazing,—with two heavy bags on his arms, and the rain dashed by the fierce wind in his face,—could not help thinking of the roofless heads and chilled hearts he knew were in the world.

"Poor souls!" he thought; "in an hour I shall be warm and dry and comfortable, and tomorrow all this will be forgotten; but for them there is no comfort, no better to-morrow."

[19]

Stay a minute, my lad! Do not go too fast and reckon without your host, either for yourself or others. Joy may light up the dim eye, hope fan the aching brow; and you,—after all you have seen and undergone even in your short life,—how dare you count upon the events of the next hour,—nay, of the next moment?

He climbed the hill stoutly but slowly; for it was steep, and his bags were heavy. The wicked wind, too, fought with him all the way up, and the rain, which had lately begun to fall, came loaded with small particles of hail, as if it sought to aid the wind in keeping him back till their united force could put out the beacon-fire. But the pine was full of resin, and it burned on, with the flame and the smoke whirled about by the wind but never extinguished, until at length he stood on the windward side of the fire and looked round, as if expecting to see the man who lighted it.

There was no one there, however; and the youth, who, it must be acknowledged, was of a somewhat eager and impatient temper and apt to come to hasty conclusions, fancied for a moment or two that those he should have found there had grown weary of waiting in that boisterous night, and had left him to enjoy its pleasures or its terrors by himself. A moment after, however, as the flame swayed a little more to the westward, he caught a glimpse of the ground on the other side of the hill sinking rapidly down into a little dell where some less arid soil seemed to have settled,—enough at least to bear some scanty herbage, a few low bushes, and some thin pines; and there, amongst the latter, appeared a small fixed light. It might be a candle in a cottage-window, and probably was; for it was too red for a jack-o'-lantern.

"Ah! I can at least find out where I am," thought the lad; "but I dare say the men are there, taking care of their own skins and little caring about mine."

Thus thinking, he began to descend, and had not proceeded far when a voice hailed him in French. The lad made no answer, but went on; for, to say sooth, he was somewhat moody with all the events of the last three or four days.

"Is that you, Master Ned, I say?" repeated the voice, in English, but with a very strong foreign accent.

[20]

"Ay, ay!" replied the youth; "but how the devil did you expect me to find you if you did not stay by the fire?"

"Oh, we kept a good look-out," answered a stout man of some five-and-thirty years of age, who was advancing to meet him. "We have waited for you by the fire long enough these two last nights; and, as we could see any one who came across the blaze, there was no use of our getting frozen, or melted, or blown away on the top of the hill. But what has made you so long behind? You were to have been here on Tuesday night: so the letters said. What

kept you?"

"Head-winds all the way from Ushant," replied the boy. "But let us go on, Jargeau, for we must be far from the town, and time enough has been lost already."

"Well, come down to the cottage," said the other, in a musing sort of tone. "You want something to refresh you while the horses are being saddled. Here; let me carry your bags." And as he spoke he laid his hand upon one of the large leather-covered cases.

"Not that one," said the boy, sharply, pushing away his hand: "here; you may take this." The man laughed, saying, "Ay, as sharp as ever!" and they descended to the pines, where the light still glimmered behind one of the few remaining panes of glass in the window of a dilapidated cottage, on the leeward side of which stood three horses, tethered but without their saddles.

The interior of the building offered no very cheerful aspect; but, seeing that the boy had not eaten any thing for the last twelve hours, that he was weary, wet, and cold, the sight of a very tolerable supply of viands on the floor,—for there was furniture of no kind within,—and a large black bottle fitted to hold at least a gallon, was very consolatory.

[21] The only other objects which the cottage contained were the rosin candle fixed into a split log, and a lean but apparently strong man of perhaps forty, whose face had evidently had at least a ten years' intimacy with the brandy-flask. He was stretched out at length upon the ground, but with his head and arm within reach of the viands and bottle; and though, in answer to some observations of his comrade of the watch, he swore manfully that he had touched neither, yet he wiped his mouth upon the sleeve of his coat, as if he felt that something might be clinging to his lips which would contradict him.

"Ah, Master Ned!" he exclaimed, in French, but without moving from where he lay, "I am right glad you have come, for my throat is as dry as an ear of rye, and Jargeau there would not have the cold meat touched nor the bottle broached till you came."

"By the Lord, you have broached it, though!" exclaimed the other, who had been stooping down: "the neck is quite wet, you vagabond; and, if we did not need you, I would give you a touch of my knife for disobeying my orders. But come, Master Ned, sit down on the floor and eat. There is enough left in the bottle for you, at all events; and, on my soul, he shall not have another drop till both you and I have finished."

The other man only laughed, and the boy applied himself to the food with a good will. When he had eaten silently for some ten minutes, he stretched out his hand, saying, "Give me the bottle, Jargeau: I will have one draught of wine, and then I am ready. Pierrot, get up and put the saddles on the horses."

"No wine will you get here," replied Jargeau; "but this is better for you, wet as you are,—as good eau-de-vie as ever came from Tonnay Charente. Take a good drink: you will need it."

"Get up and saddle the horses," said the boy before he drank, addressing somewhat sharply the lean gentleman on the ground. "Have you forgotten St. Martin's, good Pierrot?"

"I will have my drink first," answered the other, grinning. "I brought the bottle here; and drop for drop all round is fair play."

As the quickest mode of ending all dispute, the youth drank and gave the bottle to Pierrot; but it remained so long at his lips that Jargeau snatched it angrily from him, swearing he would not leave a drop. He seemed loath to part with it, but at length raised his long limbs from the floor, and, lighting another rosin candle, went forth to perform his task.

[22] "And now, Master Ned," said Jargeau, "I have news for you which you may be will not like. You are not going to La Rochelle to-night. There is no one there whom you want to see."

"I must go," said the boy, thoughtfully, as if speaking to himself. "I must go."

"But just listen, Master Ned," said Jargeau. "I know you are somewhat hard-headed; but what is the use of going to a place where there is no one to deal with? Now, the Prince de Soubise and the Duc de Rohan are both at the Chateau of Mauzé; and with them are all the people you want to see."

The lad paused and mused for several minutes without making any answer, and Jargeau pressed him to take some more of the brandy, saying that he would have a ride of thirty miles. But still he replied nothing, till at length, awaking from his reverie, he asked, "Who is to guide me? I do not know the way to Mauzé."

"Oh, Pierrot is here for the very purpose," answered Jargeau: "he will guide you, and though, by one way or another, he will find means to make all you leave of the brandy disappear, you know he is never drunk enough not to find his way."

Master Ned, as they called him, again fell into thought for a moment or two, and then answered, "It would be better for you to go yourself. But perhaps you are wanted in Rochelle?"

"No," answered the other, in an indifferent tone; "I have got to go to Fontenay, where some of our friends—you understand?—are to have a meeting to-morrow night."

"Then you must be there, of course," replied Master Ned; "but, if Pierrot is to ride thirty miles with me, the poor devil had better have some food. He has tasted nothing but the brandy."

"That is enough for him," answered Jargeau: "he cares nothing for meat when he can get drink."

[23] "Well, then, let him have enough of what he likes best," answered the lad; "and in the mean time I will get a cloak out of the bag, for we shall have a wet ride as well as a long one." Thus saying, he rose, took the bags into the farther corner of the cabin, and certainly took a cloak out of one of them. Whether he brought forth any thing else I do not say; but the cloak was soon over his shoulders, and a moment after Pierrot appeared at the door, saying that the beasts were saddled.

"Here, Pierrot," exclaimed the lad; "come in and devour that chicken, and then you shall have some more of the devil's drops."

"Take some more yourself, Ned," said Jargeau: "'tis the only way to prevent catching the fever."

The lad assented, and, taking the bottle with both hands, put it to his lips; but whether any of its contents passed beyond them I am doubtful, seeing that the throat, which was fully exposed by his falling collar, showed no signs of deglutition. He then handed the liquor to Pierrot, who by this time had torn a large fat fowl to pieces and swallowed one-half of it. The brandy fared still worse; for, although Jargeau frowned upon him fiercely while he drank, the bottle, whatever remained of the contents when he put it to his mouth, left that organ quite empty.

"You drunken beast, you have swallowed it all!" said Jargeau.

"True," answered Pierrot, with a watery and somewhat swimming eye: "my mouth is not large, but it is deep. I wish the Pertuis d'Antioche could be filled with the same stuff and my mouth be laid at the other end. There would be only one current then, Monsieur Jargeau."

The lad and the elderman both eyed him keenly as he spoke; but, strange to say, the sight seemed to please the former more than the latter, and, as they issued forth to mount, Jargeau drew Pierrot aside and said something to him in a low but angry voice.

The lad took not the slightest notice of this little interlude, but, advancing to where the horses stood with bent heads, not liking the rain at all, he selected the one which seemed to him the strongest and best, without asking consent of any one, placed his bags, tied together with a strong leathern thong, over the pommel of the saddle, and then sprang into his seat. "Come on, Pierrot!" he cried; "we have far to ride, it seems, and but little time." Jargeau advanced to his side and said, in a whisper, "That beast is half drunk. Take care of him. You remember it is the Chateau of Mauzé you are going to. He may turn refractory."

[24] "Oh, no fear," replied Master Ned. "I can drive him as well as any other ass. I have driven him before. Mauzé?—that is upon the road to Niort, is it not?"

"Yes," answered the other. "Where the road forks, keep to the right, and then straight on: you cannot miss it. I think the moon will get the better of the clouds and shine out."

"Good!" said the youth. "We want a little light."

Thus saying, he struck the horse with his heel, and the beast started forward. Pierrot, who by this time had contrived to mount, followed, and Jargeau returned to the cottage, as he said, to put out the light.

CHAPTER III.

There had been something a little peculiar in the way in which Master Ned had pronounced the words, "We want a little light," which, if Jargeau had remarked the curl of his lip as they were uttered, might have induced him to turn his horse's head toward Rochelle instead of Fontenay; for in truth the lad spoke of other than moonlight. Ned rode on in silence, however, for some minutes, along a small road, or rather path, which led from the old cottage, first to a small straggling village, such as is still to be seen in the Bocage and its neighborhood, and then to a place of junction with the highroad running from Marans to Mauzé. It was called a highroad then, God wot; but it has fallen into a second-class way now, and was in all but name a very low road always.

Pierrot was silent too,—not that he had not a strong impulse toward eloquence upon him, but that he felt a certain confusion of thought which did not permit of seeing distinctly which was the head, which the tail, of a subject. The last draught of brandy had been a deep one. Yet Pierrot was practised in all the various phases of drunkenness, and in general knew how to carry his liquor discreetly; but this was in fact the reason that he

[25] abstained from using his tongue, feeling an intense conviction that it would either speak some gross nonsense, or betray some secret, or commit some other of those lamentable blunders in which drunken men's tongues are wont to indulge, if he once opened his mouth.

It was not an easy task to keep quiet, it is true; and, had he not been a very experienced man, he could not have accomplished it. But the struggle was soon brought to a conclusion; for, when they had ridden about half a mile, Master Ned turned sharp upon him, and asked, abruptly, "What was that Jargeau said to you, just as we were coming away, Pierrot?"

"Oh, nothing," answered Pierrot, in a muddled voice, "but to lead you right."

"Where?" demanded the lad, sternly.

"Why, to Mauzé, to-be-sure," replied Pierrot.

"What a pity he gave himself such unnecessary trouble!" answered the lad, in a quiet tone: "neither you nor I go to Mauzé to-night, Pierrot."

"Then where, in Satan's name, are you going?" demanded his companion, checking his horse.

"To Rochelle," replied Master Ned. "Jog on, Maître Pierrot. It is the next turn on the right we take, I think. Jog on, I say. Why do you stop?"

"Because I ought to go back and tell Jargeau, and ask him what I am to do," answered the other, half bewildered with drink and astonishment.

"You are to do what I tell you, and to do it at once," replied the lad; "and, if you do not, I have got a persuader here which will convince you sooner than any other argument I can use." And as he spoke he drew one of the large horse-pistols of that day from beneath his cloak and pointed it straight at Pierrot's head. "It is the same argument that stopped your running away and leaving us in the enemy's teeth at St. Martin's-in-Rhé," he said.

[26] "You young devil, the ball is in my leg still," answered Pierrot. "But this is not fair, Master Ned. You might be right enough then, for you thought I was going to betray you; though, on my life and soul, I was only afraid. Now you want me to disobey those I am bound to serve, and do not even give me a reason."

"I will give you a reason, though I have not much time, for fear the powder in the pan should get damp," replied the boy; "but my reason is that I was told to go to Rochelle and see Maître Clement Tournon; and therefore I am going. Now, in the Isle de Rhé I did not think you were going to betray us, and knew quite well it was mere fear; but at present I do think Jargeau is seeking to betray me,—or mislead me, which is as bad. At all events, you have got to go with me to Rochelle, or have the lead in your head, Pierrot: so choose quickly, because you know I do not wait long for any one."

"Well, I vow you are too hard upon me, Master Ned," said Pierrot, in a whimpering tone. "You take the very bread out of my mouth and give me over to the vengeance of that cold-blooded devil Jargeau."

"You will find me a worse devil still," replied Master Ned, coldly; but even as he spoke he fell into a fit of thought, and then added, "Listen to me, Pierrot, if the brandy has left you any brains, or ears either. I want a man like you to go with me a long way, perhaps. It will not be I who pay you, for I have got little enough, as you know; but I will be your surety that you shall be well paid as long as you serve well. I know you to the bottom. You are honest at heart, whether you are drunk or sober; though liquor has not the same effect upon you as upon most men. You are brave enough when you are sober, but a terrible coward when you are drunk. Now, if you like to go with me, you shall have enough to live on, and to get drunk on, when I choose to let you get drunk."

"How often will that be?" asked Pierrot, interrupting him.

"I will make no bargain," answered the lad; "but this much I will say: you may drink whenever I do not tell you I have important business on hand. When I do tell you that, you shall taste nothing stronger than water."

"Good! good!" said Pierrot: "strong water you mean, of course."

[27] "Well-water," said the lad, sharply. "But, remember, I am not to be trifled with. As to Jargeau, I will take care he does nothing to injure you. If it be as I think, I have got his head under my belt, and he will soon know that it is so. Now choose quickly, for we have stood here too long."

"Well, I'll go," said Pierrot; "but I am terribly afraid of that Jargeau. However, your pistol is nearest; and so I'll go. I know you are not to be trifled with, well enough; but I must find some way of letting Jargeau know I have left him. It would be a shame to go without telling him, you know, Master Ned."

"We shall find means enough in Rochelle of sending him word," answered the lad, putting up his pistol and resuming his journey.

Pierrot followed with sundry half-articulate grunts; but he appeared soon to recover both good humor and spirits, for ere they had gone half a mile he burst forth into song, broken and irregular indeed, now a scrap from one lay, now from another; but, at all events, the music seemed to show that no very heavy thing was resting on his mind. His rambling scraps of old ditties ran somewhat as follows:—

"Whither go you on this dark, dark night,
Wayfaring cavalier?
Go you to love, or go you to fight?
Either is better by clear moonlight,
Venturous cavalier.

"By my life, the moon is beginning to break through,—though how she will manage it I don't know; for there is mud enough in yonder sky to swallow up the tallest horse I ever rode.

"Oh, tell-tale moon,
You are up too soon
For the long train of kisses yet on the way.
Your eyes so bright
Make all the world light:
We might just as well kiss in the full of the day."

"She has got behind the cloud again. Moons and maidens don't know their own minds.

"Katy went to the cupboard-door,
Ah, Katy, Katy!
What want you in your grandam's store?
Cunning little Katy."

[28]

"She went quietly over the floor:
Fie, Katy, Katy!
No use of the lock, no use of the door,
Against that little Katy."

"She's put away her own little snood:
Fie, little Katy!
She has got on her grandmother's hood:
Can that be pretty Katy?"

"She has opened the back door into the wood:
Beware! Katy, Katy;
Such sly marches never bode good
To any little Katy."

"But there's a priest with the yeoman tall:
Is that it, little Katy?
And now she is wedded and bedded and all,
And no more little Katy."

The concluding stanzas, if they were neither very excellent nor very tender, were at least an indication that his mind was settling down into a calmer state than when he began. They were connected, at all events; and continuity of thought is a great approach to reason, which dwelleth not in the brains of any man together with much brandy. The finer spirit was, therefore, apparently getting the better of the coarser; and Master Ned thought the time was come for him to take advantage of the change of dynasty and see whether he could not obtain some advantage from the new ruler.

"Well, Pierrot," he said, "this is a very pretty business you have been engaged in. After having had the honor of serving the King of England and fighting for the liberty of the Protestants of France, you have been persuaded to aid in trying to betray me into the hands of the enemy, though you did not know that I might not be the bearer of important messages to your own people."

"Whew!" cried Pierrot, with a long whistle. Now, whistles mean all kinds of things, from the ostracism of a play-house gallery to the signal of love or housebreaking; but the whistle of good Pierrot was decidedly a whistle of astonishment, and so Master Ned interpreted it.

"Do not affect ignorance or surprise, Pierrot," he said: "that will not do with me. Jargeau is a traitor: that is clear."

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"Well, well, Master Ned," interposed his companion, "you are a mighty sharp lad, beyond question; but sometimes you ride your horse too fast, notwithstanding. Just stop a bit till my head gets a little—a very little bit—clearer, and I'll set you right. As you think the matter worse than it is, I may as well show you it is better. I don't mean to say they did not want to trick you; but not the way you fancy."

"Why, are not all the towns round in the hands of the Papists?" asked the lad. "We have had

that news in England for the last four months."

"No, no, no," answered Pierrot: "the Papists may have the upper hand in most of them, it is true; but stop a bit, and I'll tell you all clearly. Your long pistol half sobered me; and when I can get to a spring and put my head in, that will wash out the rest of the brandy. It is of no use giving you a muddled tale."

"Take care you do not make one up," answered Master Ned. "I shall find you out in five minutes."

Pierrot laughed. "I'd as soon try to cheat the devil," he said. "But let us ride on. There is a well just where the roads cross, and it will serve my turn. Brandy is a fine thing, but a mighty poor counsellor."

[30] The lad followed the suggestion, for he did not wish to give his companion too much time to think, and, urging their horses on, in about five minutes they reached the spot where two highways crossed, and where a large stone trough received the waters of a beautiful and plentiful spring, affording solace to many a weary and thirsty horse in those days of saddle-travelling. There Pierrot dismounted, slowly and deliberately, for he could not precisely ascertain to what extent he retained a balancing power till his feet touched the ground. With more directness of purpose, however, than could have been expected, he made his way to the trough, and, kneeling down, plunged his head once or twice into the cool water. He then rose, with his long rugged black hair still streaming; and, after the horses had been suffered to drink, the two travellers resumed their way. The moon by this time had completely scattered the clouds; glimpses of dark-blue sky appeared between the broken masses, and the keen eye of the young lad could mark every change in the expression of Pierrot's face as he went on.

"Now, Master Ned," he said, "I think my noddle has got clear enough of the fumes to let you know something of what people have been about here, which you do not know rightly, I can see. Rochelle is going to be taken by the Catholics: that's clear to me."

"Unless the great Duke of Buckingham drive the Catholics beyond the Loire, it must be taken," answered the lad. "You can never stand against all France. But what makes you give up hope, Pierrot?"

"First, the King of France, and his devil of a Cardinal, are drawing together a great army all around us," answered Pierrot,— "a greater army than ever approached Rochelle before. That we could manage to resist, perhaps. But then they are going very coolly to work fortifying every town and well-pitched village of the Papists within fifty miles of the city, and filling them with soldiers, so that every egg that comes to market will have to be fought for. Well, that we could perhaps manage too, for we could get supplies from England. But look here, Master Ned: there are two parties in Rochelle. Our best lords and wisest citizens, our chief generals and captains, know well that our only hope is in the support of England; but there is a more numerous, if not a stronger, party, who do not like your great duke, would have nothing to do with your good country, and would have us stand alone and fight it out by ourselves. One of their chief men is Jargeau."

"I see," said the lad. "But what did he seek by trying to entrap me to go to Mauzé?"

"First, your letters were likely either to fall into the hands of the Catholics, and, by showing how firmly Rochelle could count upon English help, frighten them and make them reasonable," answered Pierrot, "or, secondly, they might fall into the hands of Miguet and his other friends, who would take care they should never reach their destination. That was the plan, Master Ned."

[31] "And not a bad plan, either," answered the other, thoughtfully, "supposing I had any letters. But, as you say, Rochelle is in a bad way; for, if her leaders are afraid to let each other know their exact position and what they may count upon, she is a house divided against herself, and cannot stand. But what made Jargeau think I had letters? Nobody told him so, I think."

"No; but they told him you would have messages for our principal people," answered Pierrot,—adding, not unwilling, perhaps, to show a little scorn for one whose strength will had exercised what may be called an unnatural ascendancy over him more than once, "and Jargeau never believed that they would trust messages to such a young boy as you."

"He must have thought my memory very bad," replied the lad, "not to be able to carry a message from England to France. But my memory is not so bad, good Pierrot, as he may find some day. At all events, if Rochelle is to be lost by the intrigues of a man who does not choose his comrades to know where succor lies when they like to seek it, all the world shall know who ruined a good cause. But I suppose, Pierrot, all he told me of the meeting of the Reformed leaders at Mauzé was a mere lure."

"No, no; it is all true," answered Pierrot. "The prince is there, and Rohan, and a dozen of others; and if you could have got safe through without the loss of your bags, you would have found some of those you want; but I suppose he had provided against that. I don't know: he never told me; but it is likely."

"Very likely," replied Master Ned; "but you say 'some of those I want.' I only want one

person; and him I must see if it be possible. Is Maître Clement Tournon in the city?"

"He is not with those in the Chateau of Mauzé," replied Pierrot. "I know little of him. He is a goldsmith,—a very quiet man?"

"Probably," answered the lad: "quiet men are the best friends in this world. So, on to Rochelle! Will they let us pass the gates at night?"

[32] "'Tis a hard question to answer," said Pierrot. "Sometimes they are very strict, sometimes lax enough. But it is somewhat late, young lad, and, if none of the guard is in love with moonlight, we shall find them all asleep."

"Asleep in such times as these!" exclaimed the young man.

"Why, either the Papists are trying to throw us off our guard," said Pierrot, "or they are too busy cutting off each others' heads to mind ours. They have not troubled us much as yet. True, they have taken a town or two, and stopped some of our parties into the country, and begun what they call lines; but not a man of their armies has come within cannon-shot. And there is not much more strictness than in the times of the *little war* which has been going on for the last fifty years. But the people in the town vary from time to time. When one man commands, the very nose of a Catholic will be fired at; and, when another is on duty, the gates will be opened to Schomberg, or the devil, or any one else who comes in a civil manner. But there is Rochelle peeping over the trees yonder, just as if she had come out to see the moon shine."

"Well, then, mark me, good Pierrot," said Master Ned, "I expect you to do all you can to make them open the gates to us. You understand what that means, I suppose?"

"That I shall have a shot in my other leg or through my head if I do not, I presume," answered Pierrot. "But don't be afraid. When you have given me a crown, I shall have taken service with you; and then you know, or ought to know, I will serve you well."

[33] The lad, it would seem, had some reason to judge that the estimate which his companion put upon such a bond was just. Indeed, in those days the act of taking service, confirmed by earnest-money, implied much more than it does in our more enlightened times. Then a man who had thus bound himself thought himself obliged to let nobody cheat his master but himself, to feel a personal interest in his purposes and in his safety. Now, alas! we hire a man to rob us himself and help all others to rob us,—to brush our coats in the evening, and cut our throats in the morning if we have too many silver spoons. However, Master Ned put his hand into his pocket and pulled out a piece of money, which he held out to Pierrot, who seemed for a moment to hesitate to take it. "I wish I had told Jargeau I was going to quit him," he said: "not that he ever gave me a sol, but plenty of promises. How much is it, Master Ned?"

"A spur rial," replied the boy,—"worth a number of your French crowns."

"Lead us not into temptation!" cried Pierrot, taking and pocketing the money. "And now tell me what I am to do."

"All you can to make them open the gates," answered Master Ned. "You have got the word, of course?"

"Nay, 'faith, not I," replied Pierrot: "Jargeau got it this evening, but I did not think of asking. Never mind, however: all the people in Rochelle know me, and I will get in if any one can."

He was destined to be disappointed, however. In the little suburb, just before the gate, he and his companion passed a little tavern where lights were burning and people singing and making a good deal of noise; but it was in vain that Pierrot knocked at the large heavy door or shouted through a small barred aperture. No one could be made to hear; and he and Master Ned were forced to retreat to one of the cabarets of the faubourg and await the coming of daylight.

CHAPTER IV.

"Who is that boy?" said one of the early shopkeepers of Rochelle, speaking to his neighbor, who was engaged in the same laudable occupation as himself,—namely, that of opening his shop for the business of the day. At the same time he pointed out a handsome lad, well but plainly dressed, who was walking along somewhat slowly toward the better part of the city. "Who is that boy, I wonder?"

[34] "He's a stranger, by that cloak with the silver lace," replied the other: "most likely come over in the ship that nearly ran upon the pier last night. He carries a sword, too. Those English make monkeys even of their children; but he is a good-looking youth nevertheless, and bears himself manly. Ah! there is that worthless vagabond, Pierrot la Grange, speaking to him. And now Master Pierrot is coming here. I will have naught to do with him or his."

And, so saying, he turned into his shop.

The other tradesman waited without, proposing in his own mind to ask Pierrot sundry questions regarding his young companion; for, although he had no curiosity, as he frequently assured his neighbors, yet he always liked to know who every-body was, and what was his business.

Pierrot, however, had only had time to cross over from the other corner of the street and ask, in a civil, and even sober, tone, where the dwelling of Monsieur Clement Tournon could be found, when the good tradesman exclaimed, "My life! what is that?" and instantly darted across the street as fast as a somewhat short pair of legs could carry him.

Now, the street there was not very wide; but it was crossed by one much broader within fifty yards of the spot where the shopkeeper was standing, called in that day "Rue de l'Horloge." It may have gone by a hundred names since. The street was quite vacant, too, when Pierrot addressed the tradesman; but the moment after, two sailors came up the Rue de l'Horloge, and one of them, as soon as he set eyes on Master Ned, who was standing with his back to the new-comers, laid his hand upon his shoulder and said something in a tone apparently not the most civil, for the lad instantly shook himself free, turned round, and put his hand upon the hilt of the short sword he carried. It seemed to the good shopkeeper that he made an effort to draw it; but whether it fitted too close, or it had got somewhat rusted to the scabbard during the previous rainy night, it would not come forth; and in the mean time the sailor struck him a thundering blow on the head with a stick he carried. The youth fell to the ground at once, but he did not get up again, and the two tradesmen ran up, crying, "Shame! shame! Seize the fellow!"

"You've killed him, Tom, by the Lord!" cried the other sailor. "You deserve hanging; but get back to the ship if you would escape it. Quick! quick! or they will stop you."

[35] "He was drawing his sword on me!" cried our friend Tom, whose quarrel—not the first one—with Master Ned we have already seen as the ship neared the Isle of Rhé. But, not quite confident in the availability of his excuse, he took his companion's advice and began to run, turning the corner of the Rue de l'Horloge. One of the tradesmen pursued him, however, shouting, "Stop him! stop him!" and the malevolent scoundrel had not run thirty yards, when he was seized by a strong, middle-aged man, who was walking up the street with an elderly companion and was followed by two common men dressed as porters.

The sailor made a struggle to get free, but it was in vain; and the shopkeeper, who was pursuing, soon made the whole affair known to his captors.

The elderly man with the white beard put one or two questions to the prisoner, to which he received no reply; for since that untoward event of the Tower of Babel the world is no longer of one speech, and Tom was master of no other than his own.

"Take him to the prison," said the old man, addressing the two men who had been following him. "Do not use him roughly, but see that he does not escape."

"He shall not get away, Master Syndic," replied one of the porters; and, while the syndic was speaking a few whispered words to his companion, Tom was carried off to durance vile.

The two gentlemen then walked on with the tradesman by their side, and were soon on the spot where the assault had been committed. By this time a good many people had gathered round poor Master Ned; and the other English sailor had lifted the lad's head upon his knee, while Pierrot was pouring some water on his face. The shopkeeper, to whom the latter had been speaking when the misadventure had occurred, was trying to stanch the blood which flowed from a severe cut on the head; but the moment he saw the syndic approach he exclaimed, "Ah, Monsieur Clement Tournon, this poor lad was inquiring for you when that brute felled him."

[36] "Indeed!" said the old man, with less appearance of interest than might perhaps have been expected. "Leave stopping the blood: its flow will do him good; and some one carry him to my house, where he shall be well tended."

Pierrot had risen from his knee as the syndic spoke, and now whispered a word in his ear, which he evidently thought of much consequence; but the old man remained unmoved, merely saying, "Not quite so close, my friend! I tell you he shall be well tended. Neighbor Gasson, for charity, call two or three of your lads and let them carry the poor lad up to my dwelling."

At this moment the younger and stouter man who had seized and held Master Ned's brutal assailant suggested that it would be better to take the boy to his dwelling, as it was next door but one to the house of the famous physician Cavillac.

"Nay, nay, Guiton," replied the syndic, "my poor place is hard by; and yours," he added, in a lower tone, "may be too noisy. You go and send down the doctor,—though I think the lad is but stunned, and will soon be well again. Pierrot la Grange, follow us up, if you be, as you say, his servant,—though how he happened to hire such a drunken fellow I know not. Yes, I know you, Master Pierrot, though you have forgotten me." Thus saying, he drew the personage whom he had called Guiton aside and spoke to him during a few moments in a

whisper. In the mean time, two or three stout apprentices had been called forth from the neighboring houses; and the youth, being raised in their arms, was being carried along the Rue de l'Horloge. Clement Tournon followed quickly, leaving his friend Guiton at the corner; and at the tenth door on the left-hand side the party stopped and entered the passage of a tall house standing somewhat back from the general line of the street. It was rather a gloomy-looking edifice, with small windows and heavy doors plated on the inner side with iron; but whether sad or cheerful mattered little to poor Master Ned, for the state of stupor in which he lay was not affected by the act of bearing him thither, nor by the still more troublesome task of carrying him up a narrow stairs. That he was not dead his heavy breathing showed; but that was almost the only sign of life which could be discovered by a casual observer.

[37] "Carry him into the small room behind the saloon," said Clement Tournon, who was at this time following close; and in another minute the lad was laid upon a bed in a room situated in the back of the house, where little noise could penetrate, and which was cheerful and airy enough.

"Thank you, lads; thank you!" said the syndic, speaking to the apprentices. "Now leave us. You, Pierrot la Grange, stay here: undress him and get him between the sheets."

The noise and the little crowd going up the steps had brought forth several women-servants, belonging to Monsieur Tournon's household, in large, helmet-shaped, white caps; and, after gazing in silence for a moment or two, with wonder and compassion, upon the handsome pale countenance, all bedabbled with blood, of the poor lad, they began to make numerous suggestions to their master, who answered nothing, but inquired, "Where is Lucette?"

She was gone, they told him, to Madame Loraine's school; and then, rejecting all their counsels, and merely telling them that Dr. Cavillac would soon be there, he ordered the room to be cleared of every one but Pierrot and himself.

The old syndic paused for a moment or two after his commands had been obeyed, gazing upon the pale face before him with a look of greater interest than he had yet suffered to appear upon his countenance. Then, suddenly turning to Pierrot, he said, "Now tell me all you know about this youth. Who is he? What did he come hither for? What is his business with me?"

"What is his business with you, Monsieur Tournon? I do not know," replied Pierrot la Grange. "What he came hither for was to bring letters or messages from England; and as to who or what he is or was, that is very simple. He is Lord Montagu's page."

"And his name?" asked the syndic.

[38] "We used to call him Master Ned," replied Pierrot. "That was when I was with the English army in the Isle de Rhé; but his name by rights, I believe, is Edward Langdale." The old man continued silent; and Pierrot, whose tendency to loquacity easily broke bounds, went on to tell how Etienne Jargeau had received, some days before, information that Master Ned would arrive upon the coast on business of importance, with directions to have a small beacon-fire lighted that night, and every night after, on a little hill just above the *trou bourbé*, till the lad appeared. "You know Jargeau used to be a retainer of the Prince de Soubise, monsieur," Pierrot continued; "but of late he has left his service and has gone over—some say bought—to the French party."

"I trust we are all of the true French party," replied Monsieur Tournon. "But the lad landed last night, you say. Had he no baggage with him?"

"Yes, two large leather bags with padlocks on them," rejoined Pierrot: "they are left safe under lock and key at the Coq d'Or, where we were obliged to rest last night because the guard was so sound asleep that we could not wake them to let us in."

"Ay? so sluggardly? This must be amended," said the syndic. "At the Coq d'Or, in the suburb? That is no safe place for such bags."

"So I was just thinking," replied Pierrot: "I will go up and fetch them. He has got the key of the room in his pocket."

The worthy gentleman made a movement toward the bed, as if to take the key; but Clement Tournon stopped him with a somewhat sarcastic smile, saying, "If the Coq d'Or is no safe depository, Pierrot la Grange is no safe messenger."

The man's face flushed. "You do me wrong, sir!" he exclaimed. "Bad enough I may be; but I never stole a thing in my life."

"Not a cup of brandy?" asked the syndic, with another smile.

Pierrot laughed. "Fair booty, fair booty!" he cried: "strong waters are fair booty everywhere, monsieur."

"Well, I suspect you of nothing worse," replied Tournon; "but, if you were once to go for the bags, Heaven knows when we should see you again; and then you would come without the bags; for there would be plenty of people to lighten you of your load. Besides, the people of

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the cabaret would not let you take them. I will send my head-polisher with you and give him an order to receive the baggage in my name. They dare not refuse my order. Get the key gently. I do not love putting my hands into other people's pockets."

As soon as the key had been obtained, Clement Tournon led his companion into a large, curious-looking apartment on the floor below, where round the room appeared a number of dingy glass cases, through the small panes of which came the gleam of various articles of gold and silver, while in different parts of the room were several anvils and work-benches, with some half-dozen men filing, hammering, and polishing. Near the window was a tall desk within a sort of iron cage, and two clerks writing. Every thing was orderly in the house of Clement Tournon; and, advancing to one of the scribes, he directed him to write the order he had promised, saw it made out and signed it, and then called a strong, middle-aged man from a bench, whom he ordered to accompany Pierrot to the tavern and return with him. He then took his way back to the little room behind the great saloon and sat down by the bedside of Master Ned, murmuring, "Poor boy! poor boy! He reminds me of my own poor Albert."

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Ere five minutes were over, he was joined by the physician,—a man celebrated in his day, well advanced in years, and with that peculiar look of mysterious noncompromising solemnity which many a doctor still affects, and which was then as necessary to the profession as rhubarb. As a description of medical treatment in those times, though it might prove in some degree interesting to those who are fond of "picking the bare bone of antiquity," would neither interest nor instruct the general reader, I will pass over in silence all the remedial means resorted to in the case of Master Ned. I only know that cataplasms were applied to the soles of his feet, and that some blood was taken from his arm. The doctor, after examination, declared that the skull was not fractured,—which might well have been the case; for, by a curious arrangement of nature, those whose brains are the best worth preserving have uniformly the thinnest cases in which to put them. "No, the skull was not fractured," Monsieur Cavillac said; but the lad had received a severe concussion of the brain, which was sometimes worse. He, however, held out good hope, though he told the syndic that he did not anticipate any change till the sun went down, and read him a lecture upon the effect of the various changes of the moon, and even of the day, upon the human frame, assuring him—a fact in which many still believe—that a scotched viper never dies till the sun sets.

After he was gone, Clement Tournon took care to have all the directions carried out to the letter, and the cataplasms had just been prepared and applied when Pierrot and the polisher returned with the bags.

"Take him below," said the syndic, addressing his workman, and indicating Pierrot by a nod of his head toward him,—"take him below, and let him feed with our people; but take care that he does not get at strong drink. Now, keep this place as quiet as possible, but tell old Marton to come here in half an hour: for I have affairs, and must go at that time."

"Can I not stay and attend upon my young master?" asked Pierrot, in a respectful tone.

"No," said the syndic, dryly: "men who drink are always noisy."

When left alone with the door shut, what imaginations came upon the good old merchant! "Would that I knew the lad's errand!" he thought; and his eyes turned toward the bags, which had been set down at the foot of the bed. "His letters must be in there," said Tournon to himself, "and the key of the padlocks is doubtless in his pocket."

Ah, Mr. Syndic, it is a moment of temptation.

"Perhaps his business is matter of life and death, and an hour even may be of vast consequence to me, to the city, to the Protestant cause. Indeed, it must be so, or they never would have sent him over in such stormy weather." So said fancy,—a quality much more nearly allied to curiosity than people think; and Clement Tournon rose from his seat. But the fine moral sense that was in him interfered. "No, never!" he said; "no, never! I will not touch them so long as he lives. They shall not be fingered by any one in my house."

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Still, he felt strongly tempted; and after a while he rose again and went to call Marton, feeling it would be better for him not to remain in that room alone. His large-capped pippin-faced maid-servant was then duly imbued with all the doctor's directions, warned to change the cataplasms every two hours and to keep the wet cloths on the head cool; and then Clement Tournon walked forth from his house toward the fine old town-hall.

Marton sat and sewed. The invalid did not stir, and an hour passed by. "It must be time to change the cataplasms," she thought: "he will not wake till I come back: would Heaven he could, poor lad!" and down she went to the kitchen where what she needed had been left to keep warm.

In the mean time, we may as well look about the room. It was a very pretty little chamber, well and even luxuriously furnished withal. Two windows looked out to the back court, and the sunshine came in over a lower house behind. The rays first fell upon a small writing-desk of dark carved oak, then touched upon a small bookcase in the same style, well provided with books, and then upon a large armory, as it was then called, or wardrobe, as we should now term it. There was moreover a corner cupboard, also richly carved, with a

glass door on two sides, showing a number of little knick-knacks selected with great taste, some ivory figures exquisitely cut, and a child's sampler of not the best needlework.

Suddenly the door opened, and, with a quick step, but so light that one could not hear a footfall, there entered a creature that seemed like a dream, or a fairy, or a wreath of morning mist with fancy to shape it into the form of a young girl. She could not be more than fifteen years of age; but yet there were traces of early womanhood in neck and shoulders and rounded limbs. But we may have to describe her hereafter, and here we only stop to speak of the look of strange surprise which opened the long, blue, deeply-fringed eyes more wide, and expanded the nostril of the delicate nose, and raised the arched eyebrow, and showed the pearl-like teeth between the rosy lips, as she beheld the pale and bloody figure of the poor lad lying upon her own bed. She stood for a moment in silent astonishment, and then was approaching slowly on tiptoe—as if her foot could have made any noise—toward the bedside, when a soft voice behind her said, "Lucette."

[42] She started and turned round, and the old syndic, who stood in the doorway, beckoned her into the passage beyond.

"My dear child," he said, "I have been obliged to give your room to a poor young lad who has been sadly hurt, because it was the only one where he could have perfect quiet. I will put you in the blue room on the other side, where you may have some noise; but I know your good heart will not let you feel annoyed at giving up your chamber for a day or two to him and our good Marton, who has to nurse him."

"I will nurse him myself," said the young girl, "or at least help Marton. Annoyed, grandfather? Could you think I would be annoyed in such a case as his? Poor fellow! I will go and speak to him." And, before the old man could tell her that it was in vain, she ran up to the bedside, and said, in a low, sweet voice, "Be of good cheer, young gentleman: we will nurse and tend you till you are quite well."

Her lips almost touched his ear as she spoke; and, whether it was that the soft breath fanned him sweetly, or that the sound of a woman's tongue had something that found a way to his heart when even hearing failed, Ned Langdale turned suddenly in his bed, murmuring, "Mother, dear mother, do not leave me."

CHAPTER V.

About nine o'clock in the evening the invalid wakened to a consciousness of existence; but how wild and strange a consciousness! His speech was incoherent, his eye vague and wandering. He seemed to make vehement efforts to recover the power of reason and thought; but it was all in vain. If in answer to a question he uttered a few connected words, the next instant all was confused and senseless in the attempt at a sentence; and, when Dr. Cavillac visited him at half-past ten, his pulse was beating as if it would have burst the artery, and his eyes were bloodshot and wild.

[43] "Perfect silence, absence of light, with diet and blood-letting," said the doctor,—“those are the only means to save him. Thank Heaven, he is finely delirious. He can neither understand nor try to answer any question. If he could but reason and talk, he were a dead youth. Now, mark me, syndic: let there be a finger on every lip; let everybody in your house be dumb for the next three days. If he speak, do not answer him. If he do not speak, keep silence. Give him the drinks I told you; and to-morrow I will bleed him again. In three days we shall know more, and probably at that time he will recover his senses, it may be for life, it may be for death; but all depends upon good nursing."

The prognosis of the physician was verified. At the end of three days Edward Langdale did recover his senses; but some events had taken place in the mean time which must be noticed before we follow his history further. We must, in the first place, begin with that most interesting personage, Master Pierrot, who is going to be introduced in a new character,—that of a philosopher. Although the press very generally assumes the form of majesty, and indulges in the plural number, probably in the proud consciousness of its sovereign power over the minds, and perhaps the bodies, of a certain number of human beings, it was with no such vain confidence that the last sentence began, "We must," &c. That formula was merely adopted to include you and me, dear reader, who, having to jog over a good space of country together, had better agree upon our line of travel before we set out upon each day's journey. It was, therefore, merely a sort of suggestion on my part that we should first look after Pierrot, and to be understood as implying nothing more.

Now, during the last few hours Pierrot had met with a number of severe mortifications,—those somewhat sharp lessons of life which sometimes do a man a great deal of good. In the first place, poor Master Ned had, in very plain language, told him that he was a coward when drunk, if he was a brave man when sober; and, as there was a certain consciousness in Pierrot's breast that there was a good deal of truth in the lad's assertion, of course the accusation was the more unpalatable. Secondly, the conduct of Clement Tournon showed him that one bad habit could deprive and had deprived him of the last scrap of confidence

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amongst people of any character; and, lastly, the refusal to let him attend upon his young master showed that even his fidelity and affection were doubted. Now, Pierrot was really an affectionate fellow, and this mortified him more than any thing else. It is probable that many a time in life, since by an evil practice he had lost wealth and station and consideration, Pierrot had resolved to cast the vice from him. He might have so resolved a hundred or a hundred and fifty times; but he had never kept his resolution. Never before, however, had any one doubted his qualities of heart; and on the present occasion, with a good deal of time to spare,—in fact, it was all to spare, as he sat in the kitchen or passages of the syndic's house,—he bestowed the golden superfluity upon thought. His mind was not naturally a weak one, though there is no denying that it had been weakened by intemperance; and it was now making a great effort.

[45] "So," he said to himself, "I am not even to be trusted in the boy's sick-room. Well, that is somewhat hard. No, it is not. The old man is quite right. He knows I am a drunken rascal, and thinks I am not to be trusted in any thing. Hang me if I have not a mind to make him think better of me. But it is of no use: I should only begin again. Why need I begin again at all? Master Ned knows me better than any of them; and he only requires me not to drink when there is any thing important in the wind. He knows I cannot help it at other times. But why cannot I help it at other times, if I can help it then? I can help it if I like; and, by Heaven, I will not drink any more, except when he gives me leave; and I'll ask him never to give me leave. So we will settle the matter that way. I do love that lad, though he gave me a shot in the leg to keep me from running away and disgracing myself. I did not drink one drop last night at the inn, because he told me not. I am mighty sick at my stomach, however. I wish I had a drop of brandy, just to settle it. I have a mind to go out and get just one gill to settle it,—only one gill. No, I won't; for then I should take another, and so forth. It shall not be said that my young master was lying sick and I went and got drunk. Let my stomach take care of itself; and, if it chooses to be sick, it must be so. I wonder if he will die, poor boy. He has a good heart, though he is as hasty as a tinker's cur, and as stern as a general. Marton," he continued, to the good woman who entered seeking something, "how is Master Ned?"

"Much the same, Pierrot," answered Marton. "The doctor says there will be no change yet a while."

"Marton, I am resolved not to drink any more," said Pierrot, in a solemn tone.

"Keep to it," she replied, with a laugh, but evidently with very little confidence. "Why, Pierrot la Grange, for the last ten years you have been forever at the flask. You were a very good young man before that, and well to do; ay, and a handsome man too. I have seldom seen a more personable man than you were then, before you took to that filthy custom of making a beast of yourself; but now your face is all over blotches, and your nose is so red you might fire a cannon with it."

"Well, well, you shall see, Marton," rejoined Pierrot. "I have taken a resolution, and fallen upon a plan by which I can keep it, too; and you may tell the syndic that I will drink no more. Why, just now, I thought to go out and get myself some brandy, with a spur rial—as he calls it—which Master Ned gave me, because I am sick at the stomach; but I resisted, and would not stir a step on account of my resolution."

"Ah! are you sick at the stomach?" said Marton, quietly. "Suppose I get you a little cloves and strong waters."

Pierrot evidently hesitated; but then he suddenly exclaimed, "Not a drop, Marton, thank you; not a drop. I was once sober for three whole days, and, I dare say, should have continued so, but that fellow Jargeau got hold of me and persuaded me to drink. It was his cue to make me drunk then. So those who know me will never ask me to take a drop, if they love me."

"That they certainly will not," said Marton, going away with what she had come to fetch.

[46] Her conversation with Pierrot had one good effect, however. She told her master that she really believed La Grange intended not to drink any more, not only inasmuch he told her so, but because he refused a glass of cloves and strong waters which she had offered him on account of his being sick at the stomach.

"Most likely sick because he has not had his morning's draught," said Clement Tournon. "However, encourage all good resolutions, and do not offer him any more. Marton, I will speak with him myself in the course of the day, and can judge better than you can."

The worthy syndic could not keep his promise, however. The day passed over, and he did not see Pierrot; for the town of Rochelle was in considerable agitation at that time, the events passing round it being sufficiently menacing to impress all minds with anxiety, but not sufficiently urgent to produce unanimity by the presence of immediate danger. Pierrot kept his resolution, however; and the day passed by without his having tasted any fluid stronger than water. The next morning, though he did not feel himself altogether comfortable, his nausea had departed, and he was more bold in his purpose. About ten he was sent for to speak with the syndic, who was much too wise a man to ask him questions which had any relation to brandy. Clement Tournon, however, examined him closely in regard to his knowledge of Edward Langdale, what letters he brought, when he had sailed

from England, whether the intimations Jargeau had received had been accompanied by no information of the young man's objects in coming to Rochelle.

"He had a long and stormy passage: that I know," answered Pierrot; "and as to Jargeau, if he had any information he kept it to himself, as he always does. But you can ask him himself, syndic. Whether the lad has any letters, you should know better than I do; for, if he have, they must be in his bags,—and you have had bags and keys too in your hands these two days, when I have never had either at all."

[47] "I pry not where I have no right," replied Clement Tournon, coldly. "No hand opens his bags while he is alive and in my house. As for Jargeau, he sees not matters as I do, or I would ask him for information. The Lord Montagu I do not know, though you say the youth is his page; and I cannot divine why that lord has sent him to me. Indeed, I heard his lordship was in France."

"But he is the great Duke of Buckingham's right hand," said Pierrot; "and perhaps Master Ned has been sent to you by the duke."

"I have some suspicion it may be so," answered the syndic. "I once had some diamond pendants made for him in great haste; and perhaps he wishes to employ me again."

"In making cannon-balls this time, perhaps, monsieur," said Pierrot, dryly; but, to his surprise, the syndic answered, quite calmly, "Perhaps so; for I am told that this morning at daybreak a fleet of ships-of-war was descried standing in toward Rochelle, and the people thought it was under English colors."

He looked keenly at Pierrot as he spoke; but the countenance of the latter at once showed that he had not been trying to deceive any one as to the amount of his knowledge; and he clapped his hands, exclaiming, "Hurrah! We shall have some stirring times again, then, and shall not have to lie here cooped up like rats in a trap, but have fighting every day, and——"

"Plenty of brandy," said the syndic, finishing the sentence for him.

"Not a drop, upon my salvation!" said Pierrot.

"Well, your salvation may a good deal depend upon your keeping that resolution," replied the syndic, "for a man does many things when he is drunk for which drunkenness can be no excuse, though it may be an aggravation. But hark! What is that? It was a cannon-shot, was it not? The fleet must be nearing the town. I must to the council. Well, you may go in and see the young gentleman. But mind, be as still as death. Say nothing to him; and, if he recognises you, and asks you any questions, answer shortly and quietly, and leave him. You said he was of gentle birth, I think. You are sure he is of gentle birth?"

[48] Though Pierrot might, and in fact did, think it strange that a merchant of Rochelle should lay such stress upon gentle—otherwise noble—birth, he assured the syndic, from what he had seen of the English, that all the household pages of British noblemen were selected from good families; and, while they were still speaking together, one of the goldsmith's apprentices came to call the syndic to the city council, telling him that a boat had just landed from the English fleet.

Clement Tournon called for his gown and chain; and, after giving repeated directions to Pierrot as to his demeanor in the chamber of Master Ned, and donned his robes in the man's presence, he proceeded to the town-hall, followed by two of his men.

The inclinations, if not the affections, of Pierrot were divided. He would fain have gone to the hall to know the news of the day,—news, as it proved, much more important than he dreamed of. But then again came the thought of his poor young master; and, being a conscientious man when he was sober, and sometimes a conscientious man even when he was drunk, he fancied it a duty to visit Master Ned. He soon found, however, that he could do nothing in the world for him. The lad's mind still wandered terribly; and, though he gave some indications of recollecting Pierrot, he asked him no questions, and called him "My Lord Duke." Pierrot might then have turned his steps to the hall, but in one of Ned's half-muttered speeches the name of Jargeau was uttered; and, remembering that personage would inevitably be at the place of meeting, the good man thought it better to wait for tidings till the syndic returned.

The news arrived soon enough for Pierrot's mortification, and immediately spread through the whole house. It was to the effect that the Lord Denbigh, in command of a powerful British fleet, had come to offer assistance to the town of Rochelle; that there had been a warm and even angry debate in the council, but in the end the anti-English party had prevailed, and all that Tournon and Guiton could obtain was, that a civil reply should be made to the English admiral, thanking him and King Charles for their proffered aid, but declining it on the score that *no previous intimation had been given to the citizens of the approach of a fleet to their port.*

[49]

CHAPTER VI.

"Sweet chimes the bell,
O'er slope and woodland pealing,
Mellow'd by distance to a tranquil sound;
Sweetly the rill,
Through moss-bank gently stealing,
Speaks peace around.

"Calm sinks the sun
Unto his golden slumber,
And folds the clouds around his radiant head:
Up springs the moon;
Her star-train without number
Say, 'Nought is dead!'

"All live again,
Although their life be hidden;
For the short space of earth's dominion here.
By Heaven's own voice,
The soul of man is bidden
To hope midst fear.

"All Nature's works,
Though into ashes turning,
Fill the whole heart with a consoling voice:—
Be ready, man!
And, with thy lamp still burning,
Watch and rejoice!"

So sang Lucette,—or, rather, such is a very poor translation of her song. At the best it was but an old ditty, composed probably by some of the early Protestants of France. It may have been written by Clement Marot, or his friend, the poet and printer, Lyon Jamets, for aught I know. It is so long since I have read the works of either that I have forgotten somewhat more than half of all their pens produced.

However, so sang Lucette in the chamber now assigned to Edward Langdale, while Marton sat beside her, knitting, and from time to time fixing her eyes upon the face of the invalid.

[50] It may seem strange that Lucette should choose such a time and such a place to indulge in music, though her voice was marvellously sweet and had been cultivated to a degree rare in those days, and though people who have sweet voices, well cultivated, and, moreover, the love, the spirit, the inspiration of music in them, are fond of breaking forth into song at very unseasonable times.

But, as it happened, it was not an unseasonable time, as Lucette herself explained to Clement Tournon. When she turned her head, after her song had ended, to take up her embroidery-frame, she saw the old syndic standing in the doorway, looking somewhat surprised to hear her voice then and there, but perfectly quiet and still. Without a word, she rose and noiselessly approached the door, saying, in a very low voice, "He is better. He has been speaking sensibly; but he grew drowsy after a moment and fell asleep quite calmly, murmuring, 'Sing to me, mother; sing to me,'—as if he did not well know where he was. So I thought it best to humor him."

"You did right, my child," replied the syndic, putting his hand upon her head, round which the light-brown hair with golden gleams upon it was wound in many a long, silky tress. "The doctor is below: I hear his step coming along the passage."

Why all doctors should have creaking shoes I never could divine; but it is clearly an idiosyncrasy. They cannot help it. Perhaps the leather gets affected by the close air of sick men's chambers; perhaps it becomes imbued with sighs and groans,—a novel sort of tanning, but one well calculated to give a creaking sound; or perhaps the doctors themselves carry so far the necessary precaution of warming their nethermost coverings that the material becomes too dry and cries out for very thirst.

However that may be,—and I will not venture to decide the question,—Dr. Cavillac's shoes did creak most lamentably; but they had no effect upon the slumber of the poor invalid.

[51] The doctor, the syndic, and Lucette spoke together for a few moments at the door; but Cavillac did not go in. It is likely that he was conscious of noisy feet. "It is critical," he said: "do not disturb him for the world; let him sleep as long as he will. Let him be well watched; and, when he wakes, speak low and gently to him; give him a few spoonfuls of good old wine, (for he will be as weak as a child,) and then let me know. You had better watch, my pretty Lucette, for there is no such good nurse as a young girl with a kind heart,—except an old woman who does not drink; and she is apt to have the rheumatism."

"But, doctor, Lucette must have repose, and these sleeps sometimes last very long," said Clement Tournon. "I must not; I am bound not to let fatigue affect her own health."

"I am not the least tired, dear father," said Lucette, with a bright look. "His first sensible word did me more good than a whole night's sleep. Do you think, doctor, that he will wake

in his right mind again?"

"Certainly, my dear," answered the other. "I am sure he will; but his recovery may be slow and will require much care."

"Then I will watch till he does wake," answered the beautiful young girl. "I will watch as hopefully as ever Egyptian did to hear the morning voice of Memnon."

"Listen to the little pagan!" said Cavillac, with a smile. "But I will tell you a better plan, my child. He certainly will not wake for some hours. You may see that by his great paleness. You go and lie down for a short time; then let Marton call you. Come with me, syndic: I wish to speak with you." And he drew the old man to the top of the stairs.

"Have you heard," he said, "that the cardinal has sent down a thousand men to complete the lines round about us? This is growing serious."

"It is indeed!" said Clement Tournon, with a very sad look; "and those rash men, either from obstinacy and over-confidence, or jealousy and perhaps treachery, rejected yesterday the offer of succor from England, and the fleet has sailed away."

"We should have had a hospital for fools long ago," said Cavillac. "It is the great want of the city. But there are other things to be attended to now. Send out everywhere for stores, my good friend, if you spend the last livre of the city money. Depend upon it, this cardinal will try to starve us out."

[52] "He cannot do that while our port is open," answered the syndic.

"How long will it be open?" asked the physician, with a very meaning look. "I have heard a whisper, my friend, that he will find means to close it, either by a fleet from all the neighboring ports, or in some other way. Look to it; look to it. There is less time to spare than the men of Rochelle fancy."

Thus saying, he left Clement Tournon meditating in no very hopeful mood over the state of the city, and the prospect, clear as a picture to his calm reasoning eye, of all those horrors that were but too soon to fall upon unhappy Rochelle. The house soon fell into profound silence: the hours of labor were over, the sounds of hammer, tongs, and file were still, and in about an hour Clement Tournon took his place by Edward Langdale's bedside, sending good old Marton to seek some repose herself. Twilight faded away into darkness; a little silver lamp was trimmed and shaded in the corner of the chamber, and two or three hours passed in silence, the good old man nodding from time to time, but never giving way to sleep.

At length the light step of Lucette was heard in the deep stillness,—it would not have been heard had there been the buzzing of a fly,—and, approaching the bed, she gazed and listened.

"He lies sleeping sweetly," she said to the old man. "How differently he breathes now! I can hardly hear him. Marton will be here in a minute. Leave him to us, father, and take some rest yourself."

"As soon as she comes," answered the syndic. "What is the hour?"

"The great clock has just struck one," answered Lucette.

"I was drowsy, and did not hear it," said the syndic. "Have the wine near, Lucette, and give him a spoonful at once when he wakes."

[53] He made a movement toward the other side of the room as he spoke, and Lucette took his place in the large chair; but hardly was she seated when a voice was heard from the bed which made her start. "Where am I?" asked Edward Langdale: "what has happened to me?"

"You are with dear friends," replied the sweet voice of Lucette at once. "You have met with a little accident, but you are recovering fast. Here; take a spoonful of wine. The doctor orders it."

"I will take any thing you give me," said the lad, "for I feel very weak."

"Hush! silence! silence!" said Lucette, in a low but cheerful tone: "you are to keep quite quiet, and take some wine from time to time, and try to sleep again. To-morrow you will be quite well, I doubt not."

So saying, she poured the wine quietly between his lips; but the poor lad could not refrain from saying, "That is very nice; and you are very kind."

It is probable he would have added "and very beautiful," if he could have descried in the dim light more than the faint outline of that fair face and form; but Lucette replied, "I shall think you very *unkind* if you say one word more, except to ask for what you want."

"You understand it better than I do, Lucette, I see," said the old syndic, in a whisper. "Woman, woman! for such tasks no hands are like hers! But here comes Marton, and I will leave you."

The youth gazed after him as he departed, and looked at Marton curiously as she moved

slowly about the room; but his eyes found something more satisfactory in the form of Lucette, although he could distinguish little except that there was something graceful and more of his own age before him, while from time to time she poured the wine between his lips. He was feeble, however, and inclined to sleep; and before good Dr. Cavillac, roused out of his bed, came to visit him, his eyes were again closed, and he had relapsed into slumber.

[54] It is one of the strange but frequent results of disease or of accident of any kind which affects the brain, to blot out, as it were, from memory all the events which have taken place within a certain preceding period. It is sometimes a long, sometimes a short, period, according to circumstances not very easily reduced to any rule. I have known a man lose a language with which he had been for years familiar, and remember one which he had long forgotten. I have known memory acutely distinct in regard to events which had occurred a month or two before, and a perfect blank as to those more recent.

Edward Langdale recollected nothing after a certain period, when he had sped over from the town of Antwerp to London, bearing intelligence from the Lord Montagu to the Duke of Buckingham, although he had perfectly recovered his senses and some degree of strength, on the day following that night when the delirium first left him. By degrees, however, confused images of after-things began to present themselves: his voyage from Portsmouth, the storms which had baffled and delayed his course, even the approach to Rochelle, came back indistinctly. It only wanted, in fact, the ringing of the bell to cause the curtain of oblivion to rise, and the whole scene of the past to be revealed before the eyes of memory.

There is nothing in the physical world at all like the sudden flash of illumination carried along the many links which bind event to event in a chain almost invisible, except the operation of the electric telegraph. One touch applied, establishing the connection by the smallest possible point, and thought—living thought—flashes on to its object, setting at naught time and space and obstacle.

The connecting touch in the case of Master Ned was destined to be the sudden appearance in his chamber of our friend Pierrot, who came in both to see his young new master and to speak with good Clement Tournon. The syndic held up his finger to the man as he entered, as a warning not to trouble the young gentleman with speech, for the lad was still extremely weak and could hardly turn in his bed. But the moment Edward Langdale beheld him, he carried his hand suddenly to his head, saying, "Pierrot la Grange! Pierrot la Grange! I remember it all now. Good Heaven! and I have been lying here so long—God knows how long—and forgetting the message to Clement Tournon! I must get up and seek him. Pierrot, get me my clothes. I must get up."

[55] "Lie still! lie still!" said the old syndic: "Clement Tournon is here, my young friend. I am he. But we can have no talk now, for the physician says you must still remain quite quiet and without agitation of any kind."

"If you be Clement Tournon," answered the youth, "it will agitate me more to be silent than to speak; but speak I must, if I die. Come hither, nearer, I pray you, sir. Bend down your head. Do you remember certain pendants of diamonds and the man you made them for? If so, give his name in a low voice."

"The most gracious Duke of Buckingham," said the syndic, in a whisper.

"Then he bids me tell you," said Master Ned, "that his brother-in-law, the Earl of Denbigh, will be here in three days with a puissant fleet, and he begs you to prepare the minds of the citizens to give him a worthy reception, for he hears you are somewhat divided here. I have more to say; but that is the burden of it all. Pray lose no time. Good Heavens! three days! How long have I been here?"

Clement Tournon's face assumed an expression of deep and even painful thought for one moment; but he replied, in a calm, well-assured tone, "Give yourself no uneasiness, my son. The whole has been settled, notwithstanding the accident that happened to you. We will talk about these matters more to-morrow. At present I must leave you, for I have business of importance to transact; but Marton will tend you carefully, and Lucette will come and sing to you, if you like it."

Do not let us pause upon the convalescence of our young friend; but for the present at least let us follow Clement Tournon's movements, which had some results at an after-period. He took his course straight to the city prison, into the dark mysteries of which we need not pry.

Every prison was in those days hideous, and this, like others, had its dungeons and cells, one hour's tenancy of which was a punishment hardly merited by aught but murder. There was, moreover, what we should now call a justice-room in the jail,—at least, a place where justice or injustice was administered, according to the character of the functionary who presided.

[56] Here Clement Tournon seated himself by the side of one of the other magistrates of the town, and Tom the sailor was brought before them. He was followed by one of his companions, and by the captain of the little vessel, which still lay in the port, while the two tradesmen who had witnessed the assault were likewise present. The faces of the two

magistrates were grave and even stern, and probably had Master Tom shown a swaggering and insolent air, such as he not unfrequently bore, they might have dealt hardly with him. But Tom was one of those men whom we not unfrequently meet with, and though apt to bully and even to fight when he thought there was some advantage on his side, he was easily cowed and depressed when he knew or believed that there were odds, or even equality, on the other side. Besides, he had now been kept for several days in what modern writers would call a loathsome cell, fed upon bread and water, and had no companion but solitude. Now, beef and good company are great promoters of swagger, and the absence of both had terribly reduced Tom's usual tone. He was indeed inclined to whimper, pleaded that he and Master Ned had quarrelled on board ship, that Ned had attempted to draw sword upon him, and that he himself had been drinking when he struck the blow. These excuses availed him little with the magistrates; and, strange to say, he found no support either from his captain or the man who had been his companion. The latter bore testimony that when he first laid hands on the lad's shoulder he told him "that he had got him safe on shore now, and would thrash him soundly;" and the captain merely said, "I trust your honors will liberate this man and put him in my hands. I warned him more than once on the voyage to let the young gentleman alone. I suspect he has done more mischief than he knows; and if you give him up to me I will put him in irons till I get home, and then make him over to those who will deal with him severely enough."

[57] "The young gentleman is in a fair way of recovery," replied the syndic, who understood the language in which the skipper spoke; "but a serious offence has been committed in the streets of the city of Rochelle; and we should certainly punish this man ourselves were it not for the honor and respect which we bear the King of England. Much mischief he certainly has done,—as those who sent Master Edward Langdale hither will probably know by this time. But, captain, if you demand the prisoner in the name of King Charles, and promise to convey full intelligence of all that has occurred to those who are best qualified to judge of the case, and moreover to give this man up to them, I will speak with my friend here, who understands no English, but who probably will agree with me that our reverence for your sovereign requires us to follow your suggestion."

The captain willingly promised all that was demanded, and sealed his assurance with an oath; and the prisoner was then placed in his custody.

"And now, captain, when do you set sail?" asked Clement Tournon. "The wind is now fair, and the weather fine."

"I cannot go before Master Ned tells me," said the captain. "My cutter is to be at his orders till he has done with her."

"I know not that he can yet write even his name," said the syndic; "but you can come up to my house, where he now lies, this evening, and if the physician permits he can speak with you."

"See what you have done, you d—d scoundrel!" said the captain, turning sharply toward Tom. "I will be up at your house, sir, by five, and hope the young gentleman will let me go, for I am tired of this voyage."

The following morning, at daybreak, the little craft got under way, bearing a letter in Clement Tournon's hand; and Edward Langdale remained alone in France.

CHAPTER VII.

[58] Oh, the calm lapses in the turbulent and turbid stream of life which Heaven sometimes graciously affords us,—the short breathing-spaces in the race,—the still pauses in the battle,—how sweet, how comforting they are! Such a pause had fallen upon the city of Rochelle and all its inhabitants. True, there were individual griefs and sufferings: the door of the closet with the skeleton in it can never be altogether shut. But to the city generally, and to its denizens generally, there was a lull in the storm. It was nowhere more pleasantly felt than in the house of good old Clement Tournon. He was a calm—a very calm—man; had been so all his life. He had met with sorrows which had touched him deeply; but he had borne them calmly. He had known pleasures; but he had enjoyed them calmly. He had mingled with angry parties, and seen strife and blood-shed; but he had been calm through all; and that very calmness—which, by-the-way, is one of the most impressive qualities in regard to our fellow-men which any one can possess—had won for him great reverence upon the part of his neighbors.

Young Edward Langdale, too, shared in the temporary tranquillity. "Sweet are the uses of adversity." It is a good text, and a true one also, if we use the adversity wisely; but sometimes we do not; and, although Master Ned had known more adversity than most youths of his age, we must acknowledge that he had found it all very severe, and had not had wisdom enough to discover honey in the stony rock. He had been hardened, sharpened, rendered stern, in the rough school through which he had passed. His character must have seemed to the reader somewhat harsh and remorseless; at least so I

intended it to appear. But he had now suffered a long and heavy sickness: his frame was still feeble; his activity, for the time at least, was lost; and some traits in his character which seemed to have been smothered by coarser things revived and shone out. There was a latent poetry in his nature, a love and appreciation of all that was beautiful, a sense of harmony, and a delight in music, together with those strong affections which are so often combined with strength of character. These, in the body's feebleness, asserted their power. Strange how the corporeal and the mental wage such continual warfare upon each other! But even at times when the bodily force and the strong will had possessed the most perfect sway, and given him command and rule over men much older and higher than himself, those qualities of heart and mind, though latent, had acted unseen to win affection also.

[59] Six days after his arrival in Rochelle, the little saloon in Clement Tournon's house presented as calm and pleasant a scene as ever the eye rested upon. There was the old man himself, with his small velvet cap upon his head; and there was Master Ned, leaning back in a large chair, with the hue of returning health coming back into his cheek,—always a pleasant sight; and there was beautiful Lucette, who had just been singing to the two, and who was now sitting on a low footstool, with her fair, delicate hand resting on the head of a lute. A beautiful silver lamp, with three burners,—modelled from those graceful lamps which we see in the hands of the Tuscan peasantry,—gave light to the chamber; for the wax tapers in two exquisitely-wrought candlesticks had been extinguished to save the eyes of Master Ned from the glare; and a water-pitcher and goblet, finely shaped from the antique and covered with grotesque figures, stood on a little table at the youth's left hand, to cool his lips, still dry and hot from his recent illness.

The eyes of Edward Langdale were fixed upon those specimens of the old syndic's art, and he was expressing his admiration of the delicacy and fineness of the designs, when Lucette observed, quietly, "He has much more beautiful things than those, Master Ned. I wish, father, I might bring and show him the pyx that was sent from Rome."

"Do so, my child," said Tournon. "And hark, Lucette——"

He whispered a word in the young girl's ear, and she left the room, but returned in a minute or two, bringing with her two objects in soft leathern covers,—one of which was a pyx, probably from the hands of Benvenuto Cellini.

[60] Edward took it from her hands and admired it greatly, gazing at the various curious arabesques with which it was decorated, and at the medallions displaying exquisitely-chiselled figures, while the old syndic untied the other cover, and took forth a large cup, or hanap, of pure gold, ornamented by a row of precious stones encircling it in a sort of garland, which again was supported by some beautiful sculptured figures. Master Ned rose feebly to lay the pyx upon the table, but the moment his eyes lighted on the cup he stood still, gazing at it as if sight had suspended every other faculty. "Good Heaven!" he exclaimed, at length, addressing the merchant, who was watching him closely: "where did you get that?"

"I bought it some four years ago, when I was in England," answered Clement Tournon. "Something seems to surprise you. Did you ever see it before?"

"See it!" exclaimed Master Ned. "Yes, often, my good friend,—ay, several times every year, since I could see any thing, till just four years ago last Martinmas. Every birthday—every festival-day—it was brought forth; for it must be the same. Oh, yes! Is there not 'Edward Langdale' engraved on one side of the foot, and 'Buckley Hall' upon the other?"

"There is," said the syndic; "and that is the very reason I told Lucette to bring it. I wished to ask you if you are any relation of those Langdales of Buckley Hall. Edward Langdale! The two names are the same."

"They are, indeed," said Master Ned. "That cup is mine, my good friend: at least, it ought to be,—it and much more which is now lost to me forever."

"If it ought to be, it is thine still, my son," said the old syndic. "Now, God forbid that I should withhold the rightful property of another! But tell us how all this happened. Let me hear what you can recollect of your own life and fate. I know something of Buckley Hall, for it was in Huntingdon that I bought that cup. I would not purchase it at first, because I thought it was stolen,—most likely from the court of King James, who was then at Royston; but the goldsmith who had it told me that he had bought it fairly from Master Richard Langdale, the owner, and showed me a receipt for the money. I would fain hear how all this happened."

[61] "Not to-night; not to-night," answered the youth. "The sight of that cup has shaken me much, my father; and to speak of those days would shake me still more in my weak state. To-morrow I shall be stronger, I trust; and then I will tell you all. I have often thought it would do me good if I were to talk over the whole of those sad things with some one; for they only seem to rankle and fester in the silence of my own bosom, and to make me reckless and ill-tempered. But I must get a little better and stronger first. Now I think I will go to bed."

He turned to go, but then paused, and, taking up the cup, gazed at it earnestly for several minutes, saying, "I was just nine years old when my father had my name engraved on it and

gave it to me on my birthday, bidding me never to fill it too full nor empty it too often."

"Wise counsel," said the old man; "but, if it be thine, take it, my son. I am not a receiver of stolen goods."

"No," said Edward Langdale. "You knew not that he who sold it had no right to do so; neither did he from whom you purchased it. Orphans are often wronged, Monsieur Tournon; but I ought not to have been wronged by him who wronged me. Well, to-morrow we will talk more of all these matters."

A little after nightfall on the following day, the same three sat together in the same room. There had been no music, however, that evening; and Lucette was leaning her fair head upon the old merchant's knee. Edward Langdale was evidently stronger and better,—though he said he had slept but little. Yet there was more color in his cheek and lips, and his face and air had more their usual character of bold decisive frankness, than on the preceding night.

"Now I will tell you my whole story," he said, "beginning with my earliest recollections. Indeed, there is not much to tell, and it may be done very shortly."

MASTER NED'S HISTORY.

"Amongst the first of my remembrances is the burning of my father's house. I recollect the house itself quite well; and a very handsome place it was. There were four great octangular towers at the corners,—one on the southwestern side, all covered with ivy, in which a number of cream-colored owls used to make their abode during the day sunshine. A deer-park surrounded the house, full of fern and hawthorn-trees, and at the bottom of a bank was the highroad, with the river brawling and rushing on by its side.

[62] "Of the interior of the house I do not remember much, although there is an impression on my mind of large rooms and furniture which had seen better days. Of the events which there took place I can recall nothing till the night of the fire,—the great fire, as it was called for many a year. And well it deserved the name; for in its progress it not only destroyed the house, but ate up the buttery, which was detached, and consumed the farm-buildings and stabling, in which were lost many fine horses and an immense quantity of agricultural produce.

"I remember on that night, the 18th of August, being startled out of my sleep by loud cries and shrieks and all sorts of noises,—especially a rushing, roaring sound, which frightened me more than all the rest. I was a boy about seven years old at the time; and sleep clings to one at that age like a tight garment, so that though I was as it were roused, and even alarmed, I was half asleep still. It was more like an ugly dream than a reality; and perhaps I might have lain down and fallen into sound slumber again, had not some one suddenly thrown open the door, rushed to the bed, and caught me up in her arms. I saw not distinctly to whose bosom I was pressed, yet I felt sure. Whose could it be but a mother's? She ran wildly with me to the door and there made a short hesitating pause, then dashed along the corridor through flames and smoke, ran down the stone steps, out of one of the back doors, upon the smooth lawn behind, and laid me down under a large mulberry-tree. Hard by were several persons, weeping and wringing their hands; but amongst them was my little sister, some three years younger than myself. 'He is safe! he is safe!' cried my mother. 'Run, some one, and tell Sir Richard.'

[63] "My father, who was at that time about forty years of age, joined us in a few minutes, kissed me and my mother, remarked that she was scorched a good deal and her beautiful hair much burned; but he left us speedily, and returned to see what could be done to save the valuable property in the house. I have been told since that he was evidently agitated and confused, and his orders contradictory, and that much more might have been saved if he had displayed more presence of mind. Corporeally, he was undoubtedly a very brave man, and had shown himself such; but he was not a man of ready action or strong determination. However, almost all the plate was saved, and some of the pictures, which were fine; but several boxes of papers of much importance, I am told, could not be found in the confusion of the moment, and were undoubtedly lost. Memory breaks off about that time; and I only remember that the whole house was burned, and the greater part of the walls fell in, with the exception of those of the ivy-tower, which were very ancient and much thicker than the rest. Even there the woodwork was all consumed, and the stairs fell, except where a few of the stone steps, about half-way up, still clung to the masonry.

"My father often talked of rebuilding the house; but I believe his finances had been previously embarrassed, and he had suffered a heavy loss. We went then to live at Buckley Hall, which had fallen to my mother from her uncle some two years before, and which was not many miles distant from the old house. It was a more modern building, with fine gardens, in stiff figures of all shapes, with urns, and fountains, and many quaint devices; but it had no deer-park, and I sadly missed the fern, and the hawthorn, and the wild broomy dells.

"My next remembrance is of being ill and confined to bed, and my mother singing to me as I began to grow a little better; and I recollect quite well her coming in one day, looking

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very anxious, and my asking her to sing, with all the thoughtless impatience of youth. Well, she sang; but the tears rolled down her cheeks; and when I was suffered to go out of my room I could find my little sister no more. I never saw her again; and she must have died, I suppose, of the same malady from which I had suffered. My mother's health waned from that hour, slowly,—so slowly as to be hardly seen to change between day and day,—but none the less certainly. Gentle and sweet, patient and uncomplaining, she would not burden any one even with a knowledge of what she felt. My father was all kindness to her and to me; but he was sometimes too light and thoughtless, I believe,—vowed that society would cheer her, and filled his house with company,—not always the most considerate or the most quiet. There was upon me, young as I was, an impression that my mother was not well, that she loved tranquillity, that noise disturbed her; and I did my best to keep still, and even silent, when I was near her. I would sit with her for hours, reading; for when we came over to Buckley we found a good teacher there, and I had rapidly learned to read. Then, when I could bear inactivity no longer, I would go out and get my pony, saddle him myself, and ride wild over the country, or wander about the gardens and think. I learned a good deal about this time; for my father was very expert in all manly exercises, and took a pleasure in teaching me, and the good parson of the parish—a very learned but singular man—took great care of my studies.

"At length, when I was about ten years old, the terrible moment came when I was to lose a mother. I will not dwell upon that sad time; but my heart seemed closed,—shut up. I cared for nothing,—loved nothing,—took no interest in any thing; and yet I was cast more than ever upon my own thoughts, for the good old parson, whose instructions might have afforded me some diversion for the mind, removed suddenly to a much better living, some fifteen miles distant.

"My father still gave me instruction in fencing, wrestling, the use of the broad-sword; but he gave them and I received them languidly. At length, one day, he said to me, 'Edward, you are sad, my boy; and it is time you should resume your studies. I shall be very lonely without you; but I think it will be better for you to go over to good Dr. Winthorne's, whom you love so well, and who, I am sure, will receive you as a pupil. We shall only be fifteen miles apart, and I can see you often.'

"I made no objection, for Buckley had grown odious to me: every thing there revived regrets: and in about a week I was quietly installed in the neat and roomy parsonage, the glebe and garden of which were bounded by the same stream which ran past the old house in which I was born. It had been there a brawling stream; but here, some ten miles farther down upon its winding course, it had become a slow and somewhat wide river.

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"I wish I had time to tell you how I learned, and what I learned, under the good clergyman's instruction. He had his own notions—and very peculiar notions—in every thing. Latin and Greek he taught me; but he taught me French and Italian too,—and taught them all at once. His lessons were very short, for it was his maxim never to weary attention; but he took especial care that my bodily faculties should not lose any thing for want of exercise. He would say that he had known very clever hunchbacks and very learned and ingenious lame men, but that each of them had some peculiarity of judgment which showed that a straight intellect seldom inhabited a crooked body, or a strong mind a feeble one. He would make me wrestle and play at quoits and cudgels with plough-boys, shoot with the gamekeepers of neighboring estates, ride my pony over a rough country and dangerous leaps, and himself lead the way. He was a devout man, notwithstanding, and was highly esteemed by his parishioners, and by a small circle of noble gentlemen, to some of whom he was allied and who were not unfrequent guests at the parsonage. All this went on for about nine months, a considerable part of which time my father was absent from Buckley, travelling, as they said, for his health, in Italy, where he had spent some years when quite a young man. At length, when he returned, I went home to pass some time with him; but I found him not alone."

"Had he married again so early?" asked Clement Tournon, with a look of consternation.

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"Oh, no!" replied Master Ned: "he never married again; but there was a young gentleman with him, some twenty-one or twenty-two years of age, tall, very handsome, but with a dark and heavy brow, which almost spoiled his beauty. He spoke English with a strong foreign accent, and had altogether the appearance of a foreigner. I naturally presumed he was a guest, and treated him as such; but it was evident that he was an exceedingly favored guest, and all the servants seemed to pay him the most profound attention. I know not why, but I speedily began to dislike him: perhaps it was a certain sort of patronizing air he assumed toward me,—not exactly that of an elder to a younger person, but that of a superior to an inferior. My father's conduct, too, was very strange. He did not introduce the visitor to me by name, but presented me to him, saying, 'My son Edward,' and during the rest of the day called him simply Richard. On the following morning I detected—or fancied I detected—the servants looking at me, watching me with an appearance of interest that almost amounted to compassion. They were all very fond of me, and each seemed to regard Master Ned—the only name I went by—as his own child; but when they now gazed upon me there was an air of vexation—almost of pity—on their faces, and once or twice I thought the old steward was about to tell me something of importance in private; but he broke off, and turned his conversation to common subjects.

"All this, however, was so disagreeable to me, that, after having stayed two days at Buckley, I returned to my old preceptor's house at Applethorpe, feeling more wretched than I had felt since the first sad shock of my mother's death.

[67] "The same night, after supper, Dr. Winthorne questioned me closely as to my visit, and asked what had caused me to return so soon. Whether he saw any thing in my manner, or had heard of any thing from others, I did not know; but I told him all frankly, and he fell into a fit of thought which lasted till bedtime. On the following morning my studies, my exercises, and my amusements were renewed with increased activity. There was something more I wished to forget, as well as the irreparable loss of my mother; and I left not one moment unemployed. It was now the month of May, and the season had been both cold and rainy; but I never suffered either cold or rain, either snow or sleet, to keep me within-doors; and no naked Indian could be more hardy than I was. At length, some warm skies, with flying clouds and showers, came to cheer us; and, with my rod in my hand, I sallied forth one morning early to lure the speckled tyrants of the stream out of the water. I walked on with good success for about two miles, and arrived at a shadowy reach of the river, where it lapsed into some deep pools, and then, tumbling over a shelf of rock in a miniature cascade, rushed on deep and strong toward the east. I have said I was early; but there was some one there before me. A powerful-looking man, of some four or five and twenty years of age, was wading the stream with a rod in his hand and a pair of funnel-shaped boots upon his legs. Where he stood, the water did not come much above his knees; but I knew that a little farther on it deepened, and the bed of the stream was full of holes, in which the finest trout usually lay; but the stranger seemed a skilful angler, and, I doubted not, knew the river as well as I did. Not to disturb his sport, I sat quietly down on the bank and watched him. He was not very prepossessing in appearance, for his features were large and coarse, and though there was a certain sort of dignity about his carriage, yet his form was more that of a man accustomed to robust labor than to the more graceful sports of a gentleman. However, as I was gazing, he hooked a large fish, apparently somewhat too stout for his tackle; and, to prevent the trout from getting among the roots and stones while he played him, the fisherman kept stepping backward, with his face toward me and his back toward the deep run and the pool. 'Take care! take care!' I cried. But my warning came too late: his feet were already on the ridge of rock, and the next instant he fell over into the very deepest part of the water. He rose instantly, but whether he was seized with cramp, or that his large heavy boots filled with water, I know not; but he sank again at once with a loud cry, and I ran along the ridge of stone to give him help. The stream was much swollen with the late rains, and even there it was running very strong, so that I could hardly keep my footing; but I contrived to get to a spot near which he was just rising again, and held out the thickest end of my rod to him. It was barely within his reach; but he grasped it with one hand so sharply as almost to pull me over into the pool with him. I got my feet between two large masses of stone, however, and pulled hard, drawing him toward me till he could get hold of the rock with his hands. His safety was then easily insured; and I only remarked two things peculiar in his demeanor: one was, that he never thanked me; and the other, that in all the struggle he had contrived to retain his fishing-rod.

[68] "'Can you not swim?' he asked, as soon as we had both reached the bank. I answered in the negative, and he added, 'Learn to swim. Please God, it may save your life some day. Learn to swim.' I offered to take him up to the parsonage that he might dry his clothes; but he refused, not very civilly; and then he asked my name, looking me very steadily in the face, without the slightest expression of gratitude for the aid I had rendered him, and no trace of either agitation or trouble from the danger he had run. 'You have kept your rod,' I said, 'but you have broken your line.'

"'I never let go my hold,' he answered; 'but, as you say, I have broken my line and lost my fish. Are you Sir Richard Langdale's son, the man up at Buckley?' I answered that I was, and in a few minutes after we parted. I did not forget his advice, however, for a part of every day during that summer I passed in the water, learning and practising the art of swimming, till none could swim better or longer. I have never seen that man since; but he has fully repaid my service by inducing me to learn that which has more than once been of great service to me.

"It was the month of October before I once more visited Buckley; and then my father sent for me. I found the same young man still there whom I had seen on my former visit; but now my father removed all doubt of who he was, by saying, 'Edward, it is time that you should know that this is your brother Richard,—your elder brother.'

[69] "I need not dwell upon the mortification and annoyance which this announcement caused me. I was very young, as you may know when I tell you that this occurred about five years ago, and, though of a somewhat sensitive character, I might have thought little of the matter after the first shock, had my brother's manner pleased me, had he shown kindness or affection for me. But, with a sort of presentiment of what he was to become, I disliked him from the first; and he repaid me well, treating me with a sort of supercilious coldness I could not bear. On the morning of the fourth day, when he had gone out fowling with a number of servants and dogs, I went into my father's chamber and announced to him my intention of going back that morning to pursue my studies with good Dr. Winthorne. Perhaps my tone was somewhat too decided and imperative for one so young toward his

father; but it certainly was respectful, and my father did not oppose my purpose. He merely spoke—almost in an apologetic manner—of my brother and myself, intimated that he saw my annoyance, and, attributing it to motives which had never crossed my mind, added, 'You will have fortune enough, Ned. You surely need not grudge your brother his share.' I did not reply; but his words set me musing, and, an hour after, I left Buckley and returned to Applethorpe. There, as before, I told my worthy preceptor all that had occurred, and he somewhat censured my conduct, but at the same time condoled with and comforted me. 'This young man,' he said, 'must be the son of an Italian lady, to whom, according to a vague rumor current about the time your father married your mother, he had been previously wedded in her own country. It was said her relations had separated her from him on account of his religion and had shut her up in a convent, where she had died of grief. What he said about your fortune being sufficient, alluded of course to the Buckley estate, which, being derived from your mother, must descend to you.'

"I never thought of fortune,' I answered, 'and should be glad to have a brother whom I could love; but I cannot like this young man.'

[70] "I had now seen my father for the last time in life. A quarrel, it would seem, took place between him and one of the gentlemen of the neighborhood, and about six months after the period of my visit they met and fought. Both were good swordsmen; and my father killed his adversary on the spot. He was much wounded in the encounter, however, and died some four-and-twenty hours after. Sir Richard, his son, had not thought fit to send for me; but, as soon as the news reached Applethorpe, Dr. Winthorne went over with me to Buckley. There a scene took place which I shall never think of without pain. My brother's whole thoughts were of the rich succession which had fallen to him. He had four or five lawyers with him, some from the country, others brought post-haste from London. He claimed the whole estates,—Buckley, and all that it contained; and his lawyers showed that, the estate having fallen to my mother after her marriage, without any deed of settlement having reserved it to herself and her heirs, it had passed in pure possession to my father, and descended to his eldest son. There was some dispute between him and Dr. Winthorne, who, with the village attorney, advocated my cause warmly; but in the end the good clergyman took my arm, saying, 'Come away, Edward: there are too many bad feelings here already: there will be more if we stay. Your brother, who strips you of your mother's fortune because she perhaps trusted too far his father and yours, cannot deprive you of Malden farm, which was left you by your great-uncle. Indeed, I will not believe that your father did not intend to do you justice. His last words to you implied it; and probably, Mr. Sykes, Sir Richard did make a will, which we must leave you to have produced, if there be one.'

"These last words were addressed to my firm friend, the village lawyer, who, though aged and a good deal deformed, wanted no energy. He had always loved my mother, and whenever I could I had sent him game and fish. I always see him when I am in England. But no will was ever found: proofs of my father's marriage to the Signora Laura Scotti were produced, and also of her death some five years before the marriage of my mother, and my brother Richard remained possessed of all that had once seemed destined for me. He found the property greatly encumbered, it is true, paid no debt that he could by any means evade, and, being naturally of a profuse and luxurious disposition, soon found it necessary to sell much plate and jewels, many of which, beyond doubt, were my mother's own. Among the rest must have gone the cup I saw last night. As for myself, the little farm of Malden was all that was left me, the annual income of which is not quite two hundred pounds a year,—enough, perhaps, for any right ambition; but I had been educated in high expectations, and I had received a shock which changed, or seemed to change, my whole nature.

[71] "One night, when we had been talking of these things, Dr. Winthorne laid his hand upon my shoulder, saying, 'Ned, you must make yourself a name and an estate. There are two courses before you: either pursue your studies vigorously for a few years, and then go to the university and push your fortunes in the Church or at the bar, or put yourself in the way of another sort of advancement, and mingle in the strife of courts and camps. You have talent for the one if you choose to embrace it; your animal qualities may fit you for the other. If the latter be your choice, among my noble kinsfolks I can put you on the entrance of the road; but you are not a boy who can remain idle. Think over it till to-morrow at this hour; and then tell me of your resolve.'

"My determination was soon formed. I could not make up my mind, especially with the feelings that were then busy in me, to devote myself to mere dry and thoughtful studies; and I chose the more active scenes. The very next night Dr. Winthorne wrote to the Lord Montagu, distantly related to his mother, and in about two months after I received the appointment of gentleman-page in his household, the only path now open in England to honor and renown. In this career I have met with many vicissitudes, and have learned much in a harsher and sterner school than that of good Dr. Winthorne. I have not suffered, I trust, in mind or in body, and, if my character has been hardened, I do believe the change took place, not in the four last years of action and endeavor, but in the few months of suffering and endurance which immediately preceded and followed my father's death. Let it not be thought, my excellent friend, that in any thing I have said I wished to cast a reproach upon his memory. I am sure that he intended to secure to me what by right and equity was mine, whatever mere law may say; but probably the duel in which he fell was

hasty; and it was a habit of his mind to put off both consideration and action as long as he could. Thought was a labor that troubled him, and he often would not see dangers because reflection upon the best way of meeting them would have been painful. As to my brother, I have never seen him again: I hear he has returned to Italy, there to spend what remains to him of his wealth. Thus, you see that, though that cup is mine by right, it is no more mine by law than the estate of Buckley, which has gone from me forever."

[72] The old merchant mused, and Lucette exclaimed, eagerly, that Sir Richard Langdale's conduct was cruel and unjust; but Master Ned answered, very mildly,—more so, indeed, than he might have done had not sickness softened him,—"There is much that is both cruel and unjust in the law; but, when I think of the contrast between my home before and after he appeared in it, and when I think of what my own heart was before and after he put his icy hand upon it, how he took from it its gentleness, and its kindness, and its confidence, I cannot but believe he has been cruel, and, though the same blood may and does flow in our veins, his is mingled with another stream, which is noway akin to mine."

"You must take that cup, Master Edward," said the syndic. "I cannot keep it in conscience. Every time I saw it in the cupboard, I should——" But his sentence was broken in upon, and all discussion stopped, by the entrance of Marton, introducing a stout man in plain travelling-attire, who was a stranger at least to Edward Langdale.

CHAPTER VIII.

The old syndic did not seem to know much more of his visitor than Edward Langdale; but he called him Master Jean Baptiste, and asked him what news from Niort.

"Nothing very good, monsieur," answered the stranger: "half a league more of the Papist lines is finished, and it is hard to get through. It was all done so quick and so quietly, no one knew any thing of it till the day before yesterday, when some troops and a large supply of flour were sent down to Ferriac."

"And where is the king himself?" demanded Clement Tournon, somewhat anxiously.

[73] "He is still at Nantes," replied the visitor. "But I want some talk with you, Mr. Syndic, when I can have it alone; and it must be to-night, too, for I have to go on by to-morrow at daybreak, if I can get a boat."

The old man at once raised a candlestick from the table and led the stranger into another room, while Lucette and Edward remained together.

Now, the most natural thing in the world for a young lad between sixteen and seventeen, and a young girl a year or two younger, when so thrown upon their own resources, would have been to make love, or, at least, to fall into it; and there was also a strong incentive in the gratitude Edward felt for all Lucette's kind nursing and all the interest which Lucette had taken in his illness and recovery. But the truth must be told. They did not make love in any of the many ways in which that article is prepared in any of the kingdoms of the earth. Moreover, they did not fall in love in the least. I am sorry for it; for of all the sweet and charming things which this world produces, that which is scornfully called calf's love is the sweetest and most charming. If it has really any thing to do with a calf at all, it is the sweetbread. Oh, that early love! that early love! how pure, and tender, and soft, and timid, and bright, and fragrant, it is! It is the opening of the rose-bud of life, which may in after-times display warmer colors, give forth more intense odor, but loses in delicacy and grace with every petal that unfolds. But, as I have said, the truth must be told. They neither talked of love nor thought of love, although Lucette was very beautiful and believed Edward Langdale to be very handsome. She merely made him describe to her the scenes in which his youth had been spent. She talked to him of his mother, too; and he told her how sweetly that mother had sung, and said to her that Lady Langdale's voice was very like her own; and then he besought her to sing to him again; and she sang to please him; and they fell into thought, and spoke of a thousand things more, in which the reader would take no manner of interest, but which interested them so much that, when Clement Tournon returned, they fancied he had been gone but a few minutes; and he had been absent an hour and a half.

[74] His visitor did not come back with him, for he had taken some supper and retired to rest; but the good old syndic's brow was gloomy, and the news he had received, whatever it was, did not seem to have been very favorable.

"To bed, to bed, Lucette!" said the old man: "we must not keep Master Ned up late o' night. He will soon have to go travelling again; and he must gather strength."

Lucette did not receive the intelligence that Ned must soon depart very sadly, though she would have very well liked him to stay. She laughed and kissed the old man, and ran away; but the syndic silently took hold of the youth's hand and prevented him from retiring till the bright girl was gone. "Stay a minute," he said, at length. "I have something to speak to you

about. How do you feel your strength and health to-night?"

"Oh, much improved," replied Master Ned. "I shall be as strong as ever in a couple of days."

"That is well! that is well!" said Clement Tournon. "And whither do you turn your steps when you leave Rochelle?"

"I have to traverse the whole of France, and even to approach close to Paris," answered Master Ned; "for the end of my journey, as far as I yet know, is to be at Dammartin. First, however, I must go to Mauzé, where, I hear, the Duc de Rohan and Monsieur de Soubise are to be found. I have letters for each."

The reply seemed to puzzle the old man a little, for he shook his head, saying, "It will not do."

"Have they left Mauzé?" asked Edward. "This illness has been very unfortunate."

"If you do not find them there, you will hear of them," answered the syndic. "What I mean is, you cannot get straight to Mauzé. Things have changed since you arrived, my son. The Papist troops are between us and Mauzé; and you will have to make a long deviation from your way and come upon the castle from the north."

[75] "So be it!" said Master Ned. "If we can but have a fair wind, we can get to Marans, and, running up the Sevres, reach Mauzé from the north. It is not much longer, if I recollect right. I would embark to-morrow morning, but I have still some preparations to make."

"You seem to know the country well, my son," said the old man, "and your scheme is a good one. But what preparations can you have to make?—not, indeed, that I would have you go too soon, lest your health should suffer. I should think as soon as you feel strong enough you will be all ready."

"Not quite, Monsieur Tournon," answered the lad. "I must follow my orders, and those I have are very reasonable commands. I have, as I just said, to cross three-quarters of France, which I could not do as an Englishman, since these last troubles, without a safe-conduct. One has been procured for me, however, from young Sir Peter Apsley, who obtained it in order to go to Geneva to study. He has changed his mind since, and I am to represent him; but, as there are mentioned in the paper a page and two servants, I must engage such followers of the most trusty character I can find. I have already got Pierrot la Grange, who is an adept at masquerading, and I did think of bribing Jargeau to accompany me; but I had some suspicions of him before I landed, and soon found that he is treacherous. I must therefore look for a man and a boy here to-morrow; and you must help me, my good father, for it is of much consequence that they should be trusty."

"They will soon be found," answered the syndic; "but I fear me you will be soon discovered, my son. This cardinal has eyes in every quarter, and almost, I might say, in every house. As to the page, I may have to think a little," and then he added, musingly: "Did pages wear long tunics, as in my young days, Lucette might do; but I doubt whether she would put on boys' clothes as they are worn now."

"Lucette!" exclaimed Edward Langdale, in a tone of unfeigned astonishment. "That would never do. She could not ride half through France at the pace I should have to go; and besides—But tell me, in the name of Heaven, could you part with her so easily and on such a journey?"

[76] The old syndic smiled faintly, saying, "I could and must part with her whenever it is for her good, my son; but I did not propose she should go with you farther than Mauzé, where you would have to find another page. There she must go before Saturday, as I will explain. Listen; for it is fit you should know all that is going on here, that you may tell it to those whom you are about to see. I will make it all clear to you, and then I will go and consult my pillow till to-morrow morning. The king and the cardinal are determined to crush out Rochelle. We have stood a siege here before, and may perhaps do so now,—though I do not think it, for Richelieu is not following the rash measures of those who went before him. He has been hovering over this devoted city like an eagle over a hare half hidden in the brushwood, and now he is ready to swoop. They say that he and King Louis have been stayed at Nantes by some troubles in the court; but nothing is neglected: day by day the troops are gathering round, and we are now wellnigh hemmed in by land. The sea is still open to us; but I have learned from a sure hand this night that the cardinal has gathered together a navy of small armed vessels in all the neighboring ports,—Rochefort, Marennes, Royan, Bourgneuf, Painbœuf, and others. They will soon be off our harbor,—on Monday next, they say; and though, thank Heaven, we have ships and good ones, yet in point of numbers we are nothing. The foolish men of what they call the French party refused, as you know, to give entrance to the Earl of Denbigh's fleet, which would have kept the sea open to us and insured us against blockade forever. But, as things stand now, I cannot expose a girl like Lucette to the horrors of a siege with probably no escape. Indeed, every useless mouth we can remove from Rochelle the better for us; and, besides, those who have a right have required me to send her out of the city without loss of time."

"Had you not better go with her yourself?" asked Master Ned.

"I will not run away from my post," answered the syndic. "I once could have struck a good blow in defence of my native city; and, though that is past, I can still aid her with counsel. Besides, where could I go? Nowhere but to England. I may send what gold I have got to that country, if I can find means; but my fate is with Rochelle, and Lucette's must lie far away. God help us! we are at a dangerous pass, my son; and the hunter's toils are tighter round us than some of our senseless citizens will believe. As to Jargeau, you cannot trust him. Of Pierrot I have doubts,—not of his honesty, for he is truthful and sturdy when he is sober, nor of his ability, for he is a thing we often see in this strange world, *a clever fool*,—shrewd enough in every thing that imports but little, but weak as water in matters on which his own fortunes and his soul's salvation rest. I doubt his power to abstain from a vice which has ruled him for ten long years. True, he has been sober ever since he has been here, and he promises sturdily; but, alas! my son, I have seen so many a drunkard fall away from all good resolutions with the first moment of a strong temptation that I wish you had a better follower."

"I will keep him sober," answered Master Ned, boldly. "He knows I am not to be trifled with. I think he has every inclination to reform but only wants the strength of mind. I will give him the strength. Many a man is feeble in some point till he has support, just as a pea trails upon the ground till we plant a strong pole by it. I will be his pea-stick, Monsieur Tournon. But as to another man and the page. If Mademoiselle Lucette only goes to Mauzé, and you will trust her with me, I will see her safe there if I get there myself, upon my honor; but I know not why she should have to change her dress, for the distance is so small from Maran's that—"

"You may be stopped and have to show your safe-conduct," answered the syndic. "You know not how rapidly this cardinal is drawing the net around us. But surely we can equip her so that she shall remain concealed and yet not shock her modesty."

"Oh, yes," replied Master Ned: "'tis still the mode with us to wear a loose, long, hanging coat over the justaucorps in cool weather; and this is cool enough. I have one in my bags, and they are so freely fitted that it matters not whether it be somewhat large or not. But what I fear is her long, beautiful, amber hair. No boy's head ever bore such a profusion,—though it is the custom now to wear it very long behind."

"We must have it cut," said the syndic, with as little reverence for love-locks as any Puritanical preacher of the coming epoch: "a woman may well yield her hair to save her liberty and her religion,—nay, perhaps her life. But we will talk more to-morrow, my son, and we had better both seek rest now and rise by dawn to-morrow."

The results of this conversation may easily be divined by the reader, whose business it is, in a novel as well as in a tragedy, to supply from his own wit or imagination all the little facts and circumstances which it may please an author to omit. Yes, dear reader, always recollect that you have your responsibilities as well as your privileges, your duties as well as your powers, and then if you and I do not understand each other it is not your fault.

The following evening, about seven o'clock, there assembled in the little saloon, the syndic, Edward Langdale, a strong, supple-looking man, of whom more hereafter, Pierrot la Grange, and a beautiful boy, apparently some two years younger, and much shorter, than Master Ned. He entered the last, dressed in one of the broad-brimmed hats of the day, a handsome doublet, and a loose black velvet coat with hanging sleeves. It descended nearly to the knees, and almost met a pair of large riding-boots, which, together with the hat and feather, and a small gold-hilted dagger on the left hip, gave the wearer a sort of cavalier look which accorded well with the character assumed,—yes, assumed; for a warm mantling blush that spread over Lucette's fair face, and the shy impulse with which she threw herself into the old man's arms, would have betrayed her sex to any one who was not in the secret. Every thing, however, was now hurry, for a good-sized fishing-boat had been engaged for a somewhat earlier hour; and, with a few words of admonition to Lucette from the syndic, and some directions to the men, the whole party set out for the port. Marton gave them egress, kissing Lucette tenderly as she passed the door; and in ten minutes Clement Tournon held the young girl in his arms by the side of the boat, taking one last embrace. He wept not, it is true; but he heaved a heavy sigh. Edward Langdale lifted her into the little bark, and, as the boat pushed off, he felt that tears had fallen upon his bosom.

CHAPTER IX.

Although there can be few things more pleasant to many of the senses with which our dull clay is vivified than to sail over a shining sea under a moonlight sky,—although the feeling of repose which emanates from rapid easy motion is then most sweetly tasted,—yet when we are in haste we would always wish the breeze to be favorable and full. We could bear a little more rocking of our sea-cradle did we but know that our progress was all the faster. In this respect, at least, Edward Langdale was not to be gratified that night. The wind, it is true, was not exactly adverse; but it was not quite favorable, and, moreover, it was light. The boat did not make three miles an hour through the water, and was obliged to take a

good stretch to the westward in order to avoid sands and shoals.

In the mean time, the party in the boat was arranged very properly: Lucette sat near the stern, and Master Ned next to her, with Pierrot on his left; while on the other side were the newly-engaged servant and two sailors. But Lucette was silent, and Edward thought it better for a time to leave her so, as tears—springing from what sources it is not worth while to inquire—were still flowing, and the youth heard every now and then a gentle sob. For his part, he talked a little to Pierrot, who told him that he had twice seen the good-man Jargeau that day, had honestly notified him of his dereliction of his service, and had returned him his two horses, as he, Pierrot, had been ordered. Jargeau, he said, had been somewhat supercilious, somewhat triumphant, had shown that he knew all about Master Ned's encounter in Rochelle, and its consequences, observed that it would have been better for the youth if he had followed good counsel, and had laughed heartily at Pierrot's own resolutions of temperance, which he tried hard to make him break on the spot.

[80] "I saw he had a great contempt for me, Master Ned," said the man; "but I showed him I could resist."

"He will laugh at you ten times more if ever you break your resolution," answered Edward Langdale; "and then he will laugh with some reason. Of course you gave him no cause to think we were going to-night?"

The man replied in the negative, and Edward—judging not amiss of the precise moment when comfort is most available—applied himself to soothe his beautiful young companion. It is a very delicate and even dangerous task for a young man of any thing short of sixty; and it would be vain to say that Edward Langdale did not perform the office of consoler warmly. The nature of the case inspired tenderness; the gentleness and care with which she had nursed him required it; and their very youth justified it. He called her "dear Lucette" several times; and he tried hard to prompt hope of a speedy return to Rochelle and a reunion with her excellent father.

At the latter word Lucette gave a little start. "You mistake, Edward," she said: "he is not my father, though indeed he has been a father, and more than a father, to me. But you are protecting an orphan, my friend. I have neither father nor mother living."

"Then is he your grandfather, as you first called him?" asked the youth. "I thought he was very old to have a daughter of your age."

"He is no relation whatever," she answered, gravely, "but is as dear to me as any parent could have been. It is a long story, which I may some time or other have an opportunity of telling you; but enough for the present that he has had the care of my education in Rochelle for some years, and has ever shown to me the affection of a father and won from me the love and reverence of a child. I weep to part with him; but I weep from many other causes. Rochelle has been to me like the nest to a young bird; and now I am going forth into a world where I am almost a stranger, to a fate that I know not, but which can hardly be a peaceful one. Let us not talk of it; for it is better not even to think of it. What will come must come; and I must bear all with patience."

[81] "Well, then, let us look at that beautiful sea," said Edward Langdale. "Is it not like an ocean of melted silver? Look there! Here comes a great wave curling over in the moonlight: now we rise above it, and it is past. So it is, Lucette, with the misfortunes of this world: they seem ready to overwhelm us; but with good steering and a strong mind we rise above them and leave them behind us."

"But who shall teach me to steer my boat?" asked Lucette, sadly.

Had it been a few years later in his life, Edward would probably have said, "Let me;" but he did not say it, and he was wise. He applied himself, however, with more earnestness than ever, to soothe his sweet companion and to wean her thoughts from subjects of pain or anxiety; nor did he do so without success. His mind was stored with the riches of much and very various study, and he found, too, that her young hours had not been employed in vain. She could talk with him of things which few of her age and her country could converse upon; and, to his delight, he found that she spoke English as well as he did himself, with hardly any accent, and with perfect facility. Thenceforward their conversation was carried on in his mother-tongue; and his mind easily saw the many advantages which might arise, should any impediment present itself on their journey, from their perfect acquaintance with two languages.

It was all very perilous for the two young people; and really, could it have been avoided, they should not have been placed in such a situation; but there are times and circumstances when proprieties must be forgotten and folks must take their chance or die. Now, the period was rapidly approaching when not a mouse could get out of Rochelle; and old Clement Tournon foresaw its coming. To take advantage of Edward's journey was all that was left for him; and that was almost too late. Besides, decorum came in with George the First, and little of it was known in the world at large before the time of William the Taciturn. Nevertheless, was it not dangerous to set two young souls, full of early life, and with all its passions and imaginations just budding, to sail over "the moonlight sea" together, talking a language unknown to their companions, with mystery and misfortune and interest on one side, and gratitude, compassion, and curiosity on the other? They did

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not, it is true, get out of that boat with the same feelings they carried into it; but then all these matters are progressive, except in Italy, and some parts of Spain, and two or three other countries I could name,—countries where people jump into love with their eyes open, or fall into it with their eyes shut. In England we slide into it. But, as I was remarking, all such things—with the exceptions already specified—are progressive; and there were several little accidents which helped the matter on. Lucette was cold, and Edward fastened the agrafes of the loose coat over her fair bosom; and then he wrapped a cloak round her; and then the wind shifted and the sea began to run very high, and he had to put his arm about her to keep her steady on the seat. Then, what between fear and headache, she leaned her brow upon his shoulder; and he had to comfort and reassure her the best way he could. There is something in animal magnetism, dear reader, depend upon it,—although I think it acts in a different way from that generally attributed to it.

But, to pause no more upon such discussions,—which are always very fruitless,—I must say their situation soon became very unpleasant, and even critical. The wind and the currents carried the little craft far to the westward of Marans, and the boat shipped many a heavy sea. She was good and stanch, however, and the sailors were fearless, hardy, and experienced; but that comforted poor Lucette very little, so that all her consolation was to cling through long hours to Edward Langdale and to ask him from time to time if there was any danger. At length, however,—just when, having run a good way to the northwest, they had contrived to tack and lay their course with a better wind toward Marans,—the sun began to rise, and Edward whispered, "Now we shall soon be there, dear Lucette."

[83] But he was mistaken. Expectation is always mistaken. There really seems a perversity about those ladies with the distaff and scizzors which leads them to spin the thread of our life with knots and tangles, to cut it short at the very moment of fruition, and—especially when they see any one foolish enough to calculate upon success—to ravel the whole skein into inextricable confusion. The boat could only approach the shore by continual tacking; and I would tell all the tacks she made, and how long each took,—but, unhappily, I know nothing of nautical matters, except that a ship has a head and a stern, as most other things have; that a fair wind carries people rapidly to port, and a foul wind delays them often a long time. The sun had passed the meridian at least three hours when the boat at last reached the mouth of the Sevre Niortaise, which would at that time float small vessels very comfortably. I know not what it will do now; for the sands upon the west coast of France have so encroached upon the domains of old Ocean that Hennebon was once within a short distance of the sea and is now actually an inland town, only to be reached by a post-road or a good long sail up the river Blavet. As good fortune would have it, however, and thanks to the paternal care of good Clement Tournon, there were plenty of provisions on board the boat; and the Sevre Niortaise received them less hungry than might otherwise have been the case. The ascent of the river as far as the spot where it was proposed to stop occupied two hours more; but all was calm now, and the change from danger to security is a great promoter of rash hope. The color came back into Lucette's face, and she and Edward Langdale talked gayly of the coming hours. At length they ran up to a little landing where a few houses, all occupied by Protestants, lined the shore, headed by a good-looking cabaret with white walls and a brush upon the top of a pole. The Rochellois boatmen were well known to the host, and his welcome was joyful; but when, after seeing Lucette comfortably lodged in a room by herself,—although the landlord seemed to think that too much care was taken of a boy who ought to take care of himself,—Master Ned proceeded to inquire into the facilities for reaching Mauzé, he found more serious impediments than he had expected. No horses were to be bought nearer than Marans, some three miles distant; and between the river and the chateau of Mauzé the host reported several large bodies of Catholic soldiers and workmen, whose conduct, according to his account, was not over-scrupulous. Horses, however, had to be procured at all events; for to reach the chateau if possible Edward Langdale was bound; and accordingly, with some hesitation, he despatched Pierrot la Grange to Marans, with a strong injunction to temperance. Pierrot's virtue was probably not very severely tried; for the wine—the only wine to be procured in that part of the country—was execrable; and brandy at that time, notwithstanding the proximity of Rochelle, found its way to Marans in very small quantities. At all events, toward ten o'clock at night he reappeared at the cabaret with the four horses and their equipments, as his young master had required, and a boy leading the two last-bought, while he himself, mounted on one, led another by the bridle.

[84] The landlord was conversing with the boatmen at the door, while Edward was calmly sleeping on a bench in the kitchen; but the former seemed to have received some intimation that the page was not exactly what he appeared, for he requested Pierrot in a whisper to tell his young lord that there was a minister in the hamlet, and that young people could be married there just as well as at Mauzé.

In about an hour the whole party were mounted and on their road, Pierrot having assured his master that he could guide him to Mauzé as well as any man born on the spot. Nor did he exaggerate his knowledge, but proceeded perfectly steadily and carefully, till at length the little bridle-path they followed lost itself in the moors which cover that part of the country.

The moon, however, was shining as brightly as it had done the night before, and there seemed no difficulty in finding the way; but the wide expanse before them looked solitary

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and cheerless with its gray shadows and stunted bushes and pieces of fenny swamp, while here and there rose a small clump of low rugged pines, or a deep pit obstructed the advance of the travellers. At the end of about two hours, Pierrot remarked, "We are not three miles from Mauzé now, sir, and we had better be a little careful; for, if there be any folks we have to fear, they must be about here." Hardly had he spoken when a line of lights came in sight, which Master Ned instantly understood to proceed from scattered watchfires; and, halting for a few minutes, he held a short council with his followers, in which their future proceedings were determined. The lights extended some way to the right and left; and it was conjectured that the lines which it was known the king's army were employed in constructing stopped at a certain point on one side or the other, leaving a passage round the extremity, by which the little village and its castle could be reached. The question only was which side was free, and Edward resolved to ride on in advance with one of the men and reconnoitre, leaving Lucette and the other man at the first sheltered spot they could find. One of the deep pits which I have mentioned was soon met with, and its edge, on the opposite side from that which the little party approached, was edged with a fringe of low wood, which concealed it well. A road which had been cut for the purpose of digging gravel—Heaven knows for what purpose the gravel itself was wanted, as gravel walks were few in that part of the country—led right into the pit; and along it Edward and his party found their way in. He lifted Lucette from her horse, and, being more considerate than most lads of his age, he paused to think which of the men he should leave with her. That was soon settled. The man he had hired in Rochelle was well known to Clement Tournon. His name was Jacques Beaupré, by-the-way; and the good syndic had guaranteed his honesty, adding, that he was a courageous man and witty. Now, Jacques had not uttered three words since he had been in Edward's service, and therefore of his wit the young gentleman knew nothing; but his honesty and his courage were much more important on the present occasion. Pierrot, Master Ned knew, could be trusted in all things but one; but there was much to be remembered. He himself might be taken; and, once delivered from the restraint of his presence, Edward naturally concluded that the bottle might have too great temptations for his worthy follower, and Lucette be left to the perilous guardianship of a drunken man. Jacques Beaupré was therefore left with Lucette. The bags were taken off the horses and deposited in his care, with orders to make his way to Mauzé, should any misadventure occur to Edward, and to place them and Lucette under the care of the Prince de Soubise. A warning was also given him to destroy, if possible, the bag which had a red cross marked upon it, in case he saw that he could not escape the Catholic army. It may be supposed that all these directions alarmed poor Lucette a good deal; but she did not give way to her fears, although she fully forgave Edward for making his parting embrace a little warmer than even the customs of that day justified.

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We are too apt in this world to make no allowance for the customs of different times and phases of society. Some fall into this fault from ignorance of any state of society but their own, with a vague idea of something having been strange in the customs of the Greeks and Romans and the people whom Mr. Hallam wrote about. Some who have read the chronicles of other times forget the minute particulars in their attention to more important facts. But believe me, dear reader, the times and the country, the climate and the water, do make very great difference in the notions which obtain regarding customs, and even morals,—ay, morals. Half the morals in the world are made by society,—and all the customs. I remember a Turkish ambassador, being present at a dance, and asking, gravely, "What does all that palming come to?" Since then the Turks have very generally left off their petticoats, and have acquired a good many new notions; but they still object to the "*palming*," and think its tendencies not desirable,—the Koran notwithstanding. However, the age of which I am now writing was a kissing age,—an age of *embrassades*. Everybody kissed everybody—on certain occasions; but it was specified that, in public and before witnesses, the kisses were to be bestowed on the right and left cheek, and not upon the mouth,—especially in the case of young gentlemen and ladies. Now, the dereliction of poor Edward Langdale was that his lips did not altogether confine themselves to the cheek of Lucette. Where they went, Heaven knows; but I do not. However, she forgave him; and I do not see why we should not do so too. I am sure I should have kissed her lips if I had had the opportunity; for they were rich, and soft, and full, and her breath was as fragrant as new-mown hay.

After that kiss, he jumped upon his horse again and rode away, leaving all his precious things behind him,—both those he had brought from England and those he had found in Rochelle.

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The title I have affixed to this book compels me to adhere to the adventures of Master Ned; but, as that night was one of critical influence upon his fate, I cannot finish its events at the fag-end of a chapter which is already somewhat too long for the reader's patience, and for the writer's too.

CHAPTER X.

Now, Edward Langdale was a very acute and intelligent lad before he touched the shores of France on that journey. He had learned more of the world and mankind in the few years

he had been page to Lord Montagu than many another youth does in a dozen. His previous education had fitted him for such acquisition; and the circumstances in which he had afterward been placed—circumstances which required the exercise of every faculty—had acuminated every faculty. But, strange to say, each sense seemed to acquire more acuteness after he left Lucette. He had no notion in the world how it was so. He thought of those valuable leathern bags of his, and of the letters which were in them, and of the chance there was of their falling into an enemy's hands. He believed that was all; but still, as the reader has a right to be let into all secrets, a vague, indefinite, misty idea of danger to Lucette mingled with all other considerations and sharpened every perception.

[88] With Pierrot by his side, and taking advantage of every thing which could screen his approach, he advanced as close to the king's lines as he could without being perceived. He then rode along, seeing groups of soldiers and sappers lying on the ground by their watchfires, without one man seemingly wakeful enough to have killed a rat had it invaded his quarters. The end of the line on the right was soon reached; but now there were evident signs of completed trenches and a more strict guard; and, retreating a little to get under cover of the trees, which had become both taller and closer in that quarter, he turned his course toward the left, where the lines tended toward the Sevre Niortaise. Still, nothing stirred; and at length Edward, to his great satisfaction, perceived the spot where the rapidly-progressing works had been abandoned at the set of sun, and where shovels and pickaxes and hatchets were piled up after the labors of the day. Beyond was a wide extent of moor and brushwood; and, after having gazed for a minute or two, he determined to push his horse far enough round to make sure that the passage was free before he went back for Lucette. His course was through some marshy ground broken by bushes. The last fire of the French lines was at a full quarter of a mile's distance, and every moment Edward became more and more convinced that the way was quite open and the passage safe. Suddenly, however, he checked his horse, making a sign to Pierrot to stop, and saying, "Hark!"

"Horse, on my life!" cried Pierrot.

"Coming up from the left," replied Master Ned. "Down, down! and amongst the bushes! Let the beasts take their own course. It may mislead them."

Each sprang to the ground in a moment. The horses, cast loose with a sharp blow in the flank, scampered across the moor, and the youth and Pierrot kneeled down amongst the shrubs. But the manœuvre was in vain. The moon was still shining brightly: they had been marked; and the pursuers but too plainly perceived that the two horses which scampered off were now without riders. There was a momentary search amongst the bushes, and then a hard hand was laid upon Master Ned's shoulder. It might have been a dangerous experiment at another moment; but there were so many soldiers round as to render resistance hopeless; and Master Ned rose quietly without uttering a word.

[89] It was a somewhat lawless age; and in lawless ages some men's fingers have a strange affection for other men's pockets. The worthy trooper, whose right hand still retained its grasp of Edward's shoulder, felt his left impelled by irresistible powers toward the spot where purses in those days were generally carried; but he suddenly found his wrist grasped with a strength which he had no idea lay in the slight-looking limbs of his prisoner, who at the same time raised his voice aloud, shouting, in the French tongue, "Officer! officer!"

The trooper had either miscalculated his distance from his companions, or Master Ned's powers of endurance; for, while he struggled to free his wrist from the clinging fingers which grasped it, half a dozen more soldiers came up, with a gentleman in a handsome buff coat, or buffle, laced with gold, who was evidently the leader of the band.

"How now, young man? how now?" cried the officer, regarding him by the moonlight. "What! resisting the king's authority?"

"By no means, seigneur," replied Edward, who still held the soldier fast by the wrist. "I am merely resisting plunder, which I know is not by the king's authority. This man's hand was in my pocket. His intention might be to take my purse,—which I should care little about, as there is not much in it, and I can get more; but it might be to take my safe-conduct, which I will not part with, but for proper examination, to any one."

"Ho, ho! a safe-conduct!" said the officer. "How dare you try to rob him, Guillaume Bheel? Let him go, this instant."

"I can't," answered the man, with a good-humored roar of laughter: "the young devil has got my wrist as tight as if every finger was a vice. My hand was not in his pocket; for, by St. Ann, he did not let me get it fairly in. I was only going to search him."

"Let the man's hand go, young gentleman," said the officer. "You mention a safe-conduct. Let me see it."

"It is here," said Edward Langdale, drawing forth a handsome gilt leather case. "I beg you to promise that it shall be returned to me when you have examined it."

"It shall, if I find it all in proper form," replied the other; "but, in the mean time, you will

have to go to the lines, for I cannot examine passes by moonlight. Some one see and catch the two horses. Have you found the other man? Ah, there he is. Catch the horses, I say."

[90] In the mean time he had opened the case and taken out the passport, which, when spread out in the pale light, showed all the appearance of an ordinary safe-conduct; and Edward, anxious to prevent any search for Lucette and her guard, observed, in a quiet tone, "You will remark that the paper covers more than myself and my servant; but, hearing that there was danger on the road to Niort, we left the others behind."

"Then tell me, sir," said the officer, gravely, "how came it, when you were furnished with such a safe-conduct as this, you attempted to pass the lines without showing it, and tried to hide yourself when you saw my party?"

"Oh, in Rochelle they tell very bloody tales of you gentlemen up here," replied Edward, laughing; "and I thought that at Niort I could show it with less trouble."

"Then you come from Rochelle, do you?" said the officer. "Probably you came over in Lord Denbigh's fleet?"

"No," answered the young man, boldly. "I came over before, in a merchant-vessel; but I was obliged to stay some days in Rochelle to hire servants and to get well; for I was ill there."

"Indeed," said the officer,—not in any tone of interest, but merely as one of those insignificant ejaculations which men employ to stop a gap when they have nothing else to say; and he continued humming some of the Parisian airs which are now technically known as *Pont neufs*, till the horses were caught,—which was not till after half an hour's ineffectual effort; for they had some spirit and some skittishness. Indeed, it might have been as well—under fear of the critics—to tell the reader that the part of the country which we are now treading is rather famous for the sale of horses, which, though not so good as the Limousin, are of the same race, very hardy and sometimes very fleet.

[91] At length the beasts were inveigled by some of the many methods of deceit which men use to entrap bipeds or quadrupeds; and, mounted on that which he indicated as his own, Master Ned, between two soldiers, was led to the end of the trench, followed by Pierrot, as well guarded, who had the good sense to keep his tongue under a rigorous rein. The two were civilly inducted into a small building constructed of unplanned boards, and, with a sentinel at the door, were left together while the officer went to examine the safe-conduct: at least, so he said. In truth, he went to show it to a superior officer.

Edward Langdale, however, took the opportunity, in a hurried manner, of indoctrinating Pierrot in regard to what he was to say and what not to say. He could have done it quite at leisure, it is true, for the officer was full two hours absent; but the time was occupied with various comments and discussions which might, under most circumstances, have been of great use. Man almost always makes calculations in vain. He stands upon a small point, unable to see an inch before his nose, while Fate is working in the background beyond his sight, weaving round him a web of fine threads, through which he cannot break, let him flutter as hard as he will.

At length the officer reappeared, with the passport in its case. He returned it to the young gentleman with a polite bow, saying, "Sir, your safe-conduct seems in good form, and signed by the cardinal himself."

There he paused for a moment, and Edward replied, "Then I suppose I am at liberty to proceed. Now you see, sir, how much better it would have been for me to ride on straight to Niort, where in half an hour I could have had a good supper and a bottle of wine."

"Your pardon, sir," said the other. "We can give you the bottle of wine here,—though all you can have for supper, I am afraid, will be some sardines, d'Olonne, and bread. But, as to proceeding, you will have to make a little turn out of your way and go to Nantes. You will have four soldiers out of my troop for protection,—merely for protection."

"As a prisoner, in short," said Edward, gravely. "I had thought the cardinal's name was more potent in France."

[92] "It is very potent," replied the officer, with a smile. "But he knows his signature better than we do; and the truth is, although the seal is certainly official, we had an intimation yesterday, about three o'clock, that a young English gentleman, with three attendants, would endeavor to pass the lines, and that it was necessary to stop him, as he was an agent of the enemy. You have but one attendant; but your pass says three, and you have yourself acknowledged that you have left two behind."

"This is the work of some private enemy," said Master Ned, gravely; for the situation was not at all pleasant. "The intimation, of course, came from Rochelle?"

The officer nodded. "Then," continued the youth, "you put faith in your enemies rather than in the signature of your own prime minister."

"Jargeau," whispered Pierrot. But the officer cut discussion short, saying, "I act under orders, gentlemen, and can only say further that you do not exactly go as prisoners, and may regulate your marches as you please. You can set out at once if you please, or you can

wait till daybreak."

"At once," said Edward, somewhat sternly: "the end of my journey is Geneva or Savoy, and I am anxious to get out of a country as soon as possible where even a regular passport does not protect one from detention."

"But the wine and the sardines?" said Pierrot.

"They can be brought while the men are making ready," replied the officer; and, with a polite bow, he left them still under guard.

The wine and the sardines d'Olonne were brought and rapidly consumed. Their horses' feet were heard before the door, and, mounting, Pierrot and Master Ned, with four soldiers accompanying them, rode away in the direction of Nantes. It is a long and rather dreary ride at all times, and to Edward it was particularly unpleasant, for he had to remember a fact which the reader has probably forgotten, namely, that people who took advantage without right of other people's safe-conducts were in those days very frequently hanged. Now, Master Ned had a mortal aversion to hemp. All depends upon the application of things. An old saw well applied is excellent, detestable when wrongly introduced. A Burgundy-pitch plaster on the chest is a capital remedy for incipient bronchitis, but has quite a contrary effect when applied to the mouth and nose. It is all the same with hemp. Used in rigging a ship, it is all very well; in the abstract it is a soft though somewhat tenacious fibre, which would not much hurt a fly; but when twisted into several strands and used as a tight cravat it is unpleasant, and often dangerous. In this light it was viewed by Edward Langdale; but he had run a good many hair's-breadth risks since he had been Lord Montagu's page, and the idea of the hemp did not exclude from his mind the idea of Lucette. (There are two "ideas" in the last sentence, which the verbal critics may call tautologous; but I will let them both stand, for it were well if there were as many ideas in most people's noddles.)

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However, as it is a very dreary road from Mauzé toward Nantes, and as the reflections of poor Edward Langdale were drearier still, I will not pause upon the details, but merely say that thought after thought followed each other through his head,—sometimes of the danger which he himself ran, sometimes of the dangers which surrounded Lucette, and sometimes of the chances of making his escape. This continued for some three hours, during which time the body was suffering hardly less than the mind. Barely recovered from severe illness, he had quitted Rochelle too early: he had since undergone the fatigues of a storm at sea, a long anxious ride, a short imprisonment, and now a three hours' journey, with little food and only one hour's sleep out of thirty-six, upon the banks of the Sevre Niortaise. As day began faintly to dawn, fatigue and drowsiness overpowered him; and twice he swung to the side of his horse as if he were about to fall.

The soldier who rode by his side, and who was well aware that his superiors had considerable doubt as to whether they were right or wrong in sending the young gentleman to Nantes at all, seeing his state, addressed him civilly, telling him that two miles in advance there was the village of Le Breuil Bertin, where he would find a good clean cabaret and could both have an excellent breakfast and repose for a few hours in comfort.

"I thought we were to go to Nantes as fast as we could," said Master Ned.

"Monsieur is the master," replied the man. "I was only told to see you safe to Nantes and show you all attention on the road. So I shall certainly take your orders as to where we shall stop, and how long. At all events, we must feed the horses at Le Breuil."

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"Well, then, I will stay and rest there," said Edward, very glad to obtain time for somewhat clearer and more composed reflection than the state of his brain had heretofore permitted; and at Le Breuil they accordingly paused.

In the two hundred and odd revolutions of the great humming-top which have since taken place, Le Breuil Bertin, which was then a very flourishing village, with a pretty church, a very tolerable inn, and, at a little distance, a royal abbey, has become a mere hamlet; but then the cabaret appeared a blessed haven of repose to Edward Langdale: every thing had a clean and smiling air, and the very sight was a refreshment. He ordered breakfast, which was in those days always accompanied by wine, and, though he ate little, he felt stronger for the meal. Then, after calling Pierrot apart and admonishing him in regard to brandy, he said he should like to rest for a few hours, and was shown to a chamber where was a bed of wool as soft as down. It is true that there was but one staircase leading to the room assigned him, and that, Le Breuil being built upon a gentle hill, and the inn upon the edge of the hill, the window had a fall of thirty feet below it,—quite as good, under all ordinary circumstances, as iron bars. But Edward did not meditate escape just then, and all he expected was thought and repose.

Weariness and wakefulness are sometimes strangely combined. "Too tired to sleep," say people very often; and they say rightly; but it generally happens—at least in my own case—that fatigue of mind has been added to fatigue of body when we cannot woo to our pillow "tired nature's sweet restorer." We have in short been spurring both horses so hard that their sides are sore. So it was with Edward Langdale. He could not close an eye: he could not think,—at least collectedly. His mind went rambling about, first to one subject of consideration, then to another, without resting upon any. This continued for about two

hours; but when the sergeant, corporal, luncce prisade, or whatever he was, looked in to see whether he would like to go to mass, the young gentleman was as sound asleep as he could be, and did not hear the opening or closing door.

Now, the soldier was a native of Le Breuil Bertin, and, moreover, he had been brought up a Protestant,—born a Protestant, I had better have said; for I fear me much that, both in regard to religion and politics, birth has a good deal to do with the matter. However, being but an indifferent controversialist, and meeting with a wise Catholic priest, and having some interest in the army, and the greater part of the population being of the Romish Church, he had four good reasons for being converted; and he was so. But the worthy man was mild in his apostasy, and, as a native of Le Breuil, did not care how long a gentleman, whether Huguenot or Papist, kept him there, nor whether he went to mass or conventicle.

Thus Edward was suffered to slumber undisturbed from nine till one, when he turned on his other side without waking, and then from one till six, when a little noise about the inn made some impression on his senses.

The sun by this time was so far down as to have left an eye of gray in the sky; but it was not yet dark; and Edward had just swung his feet over the edge of the bed, and was rubbing his eyes with a certain doubtfulness whether he would lie down again or not, when his door opened, and the soldier appeared, supporting a boy dressed in a loose black velvet overcoat, and asking, "Pray, sir, is this your page?"

Edward started forward at once and took her hand, answering, "Certainly. How came he here?"

The man was about to reply; but as he uttered the first words Lucette began to sink, and the color quite forsook her lips. Edward caught her in his arms before she fell and laid her gently on the bed from which he had just risen, saying, "Send Pierrot here, good sir,—my servant, I mean."

The man smiled slightly, but departed; and, before Pierrot appeared, Lucette somewhat revived, saying, in a low, faint voice, "I am so tired, Edward, and have been so frightened. I fear I may have betrayed you by my weakness."

"Get some wine, Pierrot!" exclaimed the lad, as the man entered. "Or stay you here, and I will see for it myself. Fear not, dear Lucette. All will go well."

They were vague words of comfort enough,—such as a man speaks when his only trust is in Providence; yet they comforted Lucette. And some water which Pierrot held to her lips did her good also; but, to tell the truth, that which revived her most was the reappearance of Edward Langdale. He brought wine with him,—the first he could find; but he could hardly pour out a glassful when the good mistress of the house entered and stayed his hand, saying, "Leave her to me, young gentleman. Do not be foolish. Your secret shall be safe with me, upon my honor,—if it be a secret; but all the world can see this is no boy. I have girls myself, and will treat her like a daughter." And, gently putting the two men out, she shut and locked the door.

CHAPTER XI.

"My good sir," said Edward Langdale, addressing the chief of the guard, whom he found conversing with two troopers whom he had not before seen,— "my good sir, I think it will be necessary for me to change my mode of travelling. I have just recovered from a severe illness, and am still weak. So much riding on horseback fatigues me, as you may see by my long sleep this day; and I would be glad if I could procure a coach. You can guard us as well, or better than if we continue as we have begun. Why are you smiling?"

The last words had a slight tone of irritation in them; for Edward had remarked a previous smile with which the man had brought Lucette into his chamber, and he had arrived at that point on the road to love where one feels vexed at the very thought of any reflection upon a sweetheart's name or character.

But the soldier answered, civilly, "I was thinking, sir, that if you can, being sick and weak, keep such a tight hold as you did last night upon Guillaume Bheel's wrist, what sort of a grip you must take when you are well and strong. But, as to a carrosse, there is none in the village, and we shall have to send to Aligre, or Marans, as it is sometimes called, to get one; and Aligre is three leagues off. However, we can very well stop the night if you please."

"Well, have the kindness to send for one," said the youth: "there is a piece of gold for the messenger, and I will pay the owner well. Let it be here early,—by daybreak, if possible; for I am anxious to arrive at Nantes soon, as I shall certainly be liberated from this sort of captivity there."

It were vain to deny that the arrival of Lucette, while it relieved his mind considerably in

one respect, embarrassed it considerably in another. Lucette was safe; but could he answer that she would continue so? What was he to do with her? What would become of her at Nantes if he were imprisoned there, or perhaps executed? All these questions he put to himself; and they were difficult to answer. Still, to treat the matter commercially, when he put down on the one side of the account all the difficulties and dangers, and on the other the happiness of knowing she was safe, and the delight of having her with him, he could not for the life of him think the balance was against him. But then it was evident that poor Lucette's disguise had not the effect of a disguise at all, and Edward was as thoughtful of her reputation as a prude. Oh, sweet delicacy of early youth, how soon thou art rubbed off in the grating commerce of the world! I fear me that it rarely happens—with men, at least—that the soft bloom remains on the plum a day after it is separated from the parent tree. Yet it was so with Edward still; for he had hitherto had to deal with the harder, not the softer, things of life; and his nascent love for Lucette rendered the feeling still more fine and sensitive. *Sequiter Deum*, however, could only be his motto; for at present he had no power over his own fate.

With these thoughts and feelings he returned to the door of the room where he had slept so long, and knocked for admission, which was given at once.

[98] "She is getting quite well now," said the good landlady, "but you will have to stay here to-night, for she is too tired to go farther."

Edward explained that he had sent for a coach, which could not arrive till the following morning, and, sitting down beside Lucette, began to converse with her in English, while the landlady continued at the table listening to the strange language, and apparently trying if she could make any thing of it. In that tongue Lucette, whose sweet lips had regained their color and her beautiful eyes their sparkle, told him all that had happened to her since he had left her,—how, with anxiety and fear, she had remained in her place of concealment hour after hour till near the dawn of day,—how good Jacques Beaupré had tried to console and comfort her in vain, till at length suspense became unendurable, and she had determined to go forth and try to pass the royalist lines herself,—how Jacques had remonstrated,—how she had persisted, and how she had not gone three hundred yards before she was challenged, stopped, and taken to the little house occupied by Monsieur de Lude, who commanded in that quarter. Her companion, she said, had disappeared at the very moment of her own arrest, and she did not know what had become of him. Monsieur de Lude, however, was an elderly man and very courteous, who asked her a number of questions.

"And what, in Heaven's name, did you tell him, dear Lucette?" asked Edward.

"Not much," replied the sweet girl. "I determined at once that I would speak no French; and, as he could speak no English, he gained nothing from me. At length he put pen and paper before me, and made signs to me to write down who and what I was. I then wrote that I was your page, who had remained behind you, being frightened, but who, repenting of my cowardice, had come on, thinking to overtake you. The old gentleman sent for some of his officers who knew a little English; and between them they made out what I had written."

"Did you write my own name, dear girl?" asked Edward, with some anxiety.

[99] "Nay," replied Lucette, "I wrote the name you told us was in your pass,—Sir Peter Apsley,—and I described you as well as I could. Then, to my great joy, I heard Monsieur de Lude say to the officers, 'I am afraid we have made a mistake in stopping him. That was clearly the cardinal's safe-conduct; and we must send the page after him. Richelieu dislikes too much as well as too little zeal; and, on my life, it is likely we shall be scolded for not having properly revered his signature.' I do think, dear Edward, I could have persuaded him to let us all go on our way, if I had dared to speak French to him; but, after having pretended not to understand a word, I was afraid."

Now, good casuists have clearly shown two things,—that it is perfectly justifiable to deceive on some occasions, and that we had better not do it on any. The present is a good elucidation. If ever a girl was justified in feigning, Lucette was so; but still she got nothing by it, except a long ride in the way she did not want to go, and she lost all the advantages of her little innocent trick by the very trick itself. So it seems to me, at least,—although there may be people who differ with me on the subject, and, if so, I beg to state that I will not enter with them into a further discussion of the subject, at least on paper.

One advantage, however, which neither Edward nor Lucette then knew, but which had accrued from her interview with Monsieur de Lude, was this: the officers had let the men understand that they were all very doubtful as to whether they had done right or wrong in ignoring the name of Richelieu—then becoming very terrible—written at the bottom of the safe-conduct, and that therefore the young gentleman and his suite were to be treated with the utmost respect and consideration. The soldiers who had escorted Lucette had communicated this to those who had guarded Edward Langdale, and the intelligence was not without a great effect upon men who knew that those who present themselves with agreeable intelligence find a good reception and often a reward, whereas those who come upon a blundering errand get kicks for their only recompense.

[100] To return to my story, however. I will not dwell upon the passing of that night. As far as Edward and Lucette were concerned, it passed as properly and as decently as possible; and, if any one suspects the contrary, it is the fault of his own imagination. The next morning, though not exactly at day-break, the coach—or carrosse, as the people called it—arrived from Marans, and all was soon ready for departure. Edward and his pretty page took their seats within. Pierrot, mounted, led one horse beside the carriage; one of the guards led another, and the whole cortège set out for Nantes at a brisk pace of three miles an hour, or thereabouts. There are other countries in the world where one can still go at the same pace; but, as Nantes was about ninety miles distant, it was very evident three days must be consumed in the journey. Now, it was very pleasant to Edward Langdale to sit side by side with Lucette, especially when, by way of emphasis to any thing of particular importance he was saying, he took her soft little hand in his; indeed, it often rested there quite tranquilly for full ten minutes; and, as he had no inclination to arrive at Nantes at all, he certainly did not hurry the horses. Youth has the power of removing evil days,—of multiplying the intervening hours; and the first part of the journey was very sweet to both, although the gloomy-looking Nemesis of Nantes was still before them. But, after Sevigné was passed, and Marans, where they only stopped to water the horses, the two young people began to think seriously—somewhat sadly—of the future, and to consider whether it would not be both prudent and possible to escape. Now, this change of thoughts and purposes probably took place from the simple fact of both being refreshed and reinvigorated by repose; but, certainly, things began to seem quite practicable to Edward, and even very feasible, which had before seemed impossible, or highly perilous. The country now became fertile in windmills, country-houses, and canals, and Edward proposed to get out and ride a little. Lucette gazed at him timidly with a "do-not-leave-me" look; but he explained to her that he was going to sound the leader of their escort, and she made no opposition. He was soon mounted, and rode forward with the good Bertinois, saying, in a gay tone, "I am not going to run away."

[101] The man made no reply till they were out of ear-shot of the rest; but then he answered, "If you did, monsieur, I should not try to stop you; but others might."

There was so much gained. "Perhaps the others may be out of the way at some place upon the road," said Edward, "and I dare say we might slip away easily without being noticed."

He looked keenly in the man's face as he spoke; but the soldier did not move a muscle.

"Perhaps such a thing might be done," said the man, after pausing for a moment or two. "We were not told to watch you very closely; and during one of the nights it would not be very difficult; but of course you do not intend to try."

"I am not very fond of going to Nantes," said Master Ned.

"Why?" asked the soldier, with an air of great simplicity.

"First, because it is out of my way," answered Edward; "secondly, because I have no clothes with me, and I should have to appear at the court; and thirdly, because probably before I get to Nantes my purse, which is not now very full, will probably be emptier by a thousand lives."

The reason last assigned seemed to have some weight with the man: "It is bad to have an empty purse," he said. "But come, sir, these cannot be your only reasons. I wish you would give one which might touch an honest man and a loyal servant of the king."

A bright thought struck Edward at that moment. He knew not whether the man was trying to entrap him into a confession of some sinister design, or whether in good faith he sought—as many a man will do—an excuse to himself for acting as he wished. Now, it was evident that Lucette's disguise was of no avail,—that the soldier himself knew that she was no page, and that the truth would be made manifest at Nantes. Riding closer to him, therefore, he said, in a low and confidential voice, "It is not for myself I so much care; but cannot you comprehend that I have got one with me whom I would not have discovered for the world?"

[102] "Whew!" cried the soldier, with a long whistle: "I see! I see!" and then, holding out his hand to Edward, he added, "Count upon me, monsieur; count upon me. I can manage the other men. But how happens it that neither of you have any baggage? Sapristi! you must have come away in a great hurry; and you are both very young."

"The baggage was left with my other servant, who stayed behind but was to follow soon. I trust it is at Niort by this time."

A conversation of an hour's length ensued; in the course of which Edward Langdale convinced himself that his companion was sincere in his professions; and at the end of that time he returned to the carriage, carrying with him hope nearly touching joy.

The party were now entering, or had entered, upon a tract of country singular in its nature, its aspect, and its habits. It is called *Les marais*, (the marshes,) and, as it may perhaps have something to do with our story, it must have a very brief description. This might be difficult to give, as I have never seen more than the extreme verge of the district; but, luckily, at my hand lies the account of one who knew it well, had passed long months there, and who lived much nearer the times of which I write. Thus he speaks:—"The inhabitant of the

marshes is taller than the inhabitant of the plain: he is stouter; his limbs are more massive; but he wants both health and agility. He is coarse, apathetic, and narrow in his views. A cabin of reeds, a little meadow, some cows, a boat,—which serves him for fishing, and often for stealing forage along the river-banks,—a gun to shoot wild fowl, are all his fortune, and his only means of subsistence. Exposed continually at his own fireside to all sorts of maladies, his constitution must be very strong not to give way entirely. His food is barley-bread mixed with rye, abundance of vegetables, salt meat, and curds. His habitual drink is the water of the canals and ditches,—a source of innumerable maladies. The agricultural proprietors, or great farmers, known by the name of Cabiners, (*cabaniers*,) lead a very different life, and do not deny themselves any of the comforts they can procure.

[103] "The inhabitants of this picturesque abode appear, at first sight, the most wretched of mankind. Their cottages of brush and mud are covered with reeds. Unknown to the rest of the world, upon a tongue of land of from twenty-five to thirty paces wide, they live in the depths of inaccessible labyrinths, with their wives, their children, and their cattle. The silence of these swampy deserts, which is only broken by the cry of the water-fowl, the mysterious shadow spread over the canals by the intertwined boughs above them, the paleness and miserable air of the people, that narrow border which seems to place an immense interval between them and all mankind, the sombre hue of the landscape,—all inspire at the first glance a painful and melancholy feeling, which it is difficult to get rid of. But, on penetrating into the interior, the freshness of these cradles, the meanderings of these water paths, the innumerable varieties of birds one meets at every step and which one meets nowhere but there, cause the first sensations to be followed by a feeling of peaceful retirement, which is not without its charm."

Such was the scene, or rather the country, upon which Edward and Lucette entered just as the sun was within half an hour of setting, when every little ridge or hillock cast a long blue shadow upon the brown moor, and the many intricate canals and little rivers acted as mirrors to the glories of the western sky, flashing back the last red rays, as if rubies were dissolved in the calm waters. It was a fine country to escape in.

CHAPTER XII.

As much consideration and caution were necessary in proceeding after the sun was set, as a young man requires on his first outset in a court. The darkness was as profound, there were as many unseen dangers, pitfalls, ponds, and swamps around; and, though the stars were all out and shining, no queenly moon was in the sky to light one on the long way.

[104] Night after night she was now rising at a later hour; and the beams which had cheered the course of the two young travellers on their sail from Rochelle would not be renewed ere their resting-place for the night was reached. At length, about eight o'clock, on looking from the portière of the coach, Edward thought he saw either a little mound or a heavy pile of building before him, and in about ten minutes the horses' feet clattered over the stone pavement of a court. The leader of the escort had gone on before; and now, as Master Ned and his fair companion alighted, they found the good soldier standing under a heavy stone portal, conversing with a man in a monk's gown.

"It looks like a prison," said Lucette, as she gazed up by the light of a lantern.

She spoke in a low voice; but her words caught the ear of the monk, who replied, "This is the Abbey of Moreilles, young gentleman. I will take you first to the strangers' parlor, and then will show you round the building, if you like; for your escort tells me you propose to go on by daybreak, and you should not miss the opportunity of seeing so famous an edifice."

Lucette replied that she was very tired, and should prefer to lie down to rest; but Edward caught eagerly at the proposal, from several motives. First, he was anxious to keep Lucette as far as possible from the monk's eye, and was even afraid that her sweet voice might betray her; and then he had his reasons for observing accurately every part of the building.

"Well, well, I will take you round in a minute or two," replied the monk; "but I must first see that some of the cells are ready, for this good gentleman tells me that you two young people are very devout, and would like best to sleep in cells where saints have lived and died in the odor of sanctity. Here, here is the parlor. Let me light a lamp. Most of the brethren have retired, for it has been very hot this evening. What changes of weather, good lack! Yesterday was as cold as Noël, and to-night it is as warm as St. John's."

While he spoke, he lighted a small lamp, with shaking hands, and then left the three in the parlor together, going himself to prepare the cells.

[105] "Now listen, young people," said the soldier, as soon as the monk was gone, speaking quick, but low: "keep ready and wakeful, and at three o'clock it shall go hard but you shall find a boat, with a man in it, upon the canal at the back of the abbey. Go with that man wherever he rows you."

"But how shall I find the boat, or the canal either?" asked Edward. "Remember, I have

never been here before."

"As we go round the building," replied the other, "I will show you the door which is always left open for the drones who sleep in this wing of the abbey to find their way to the church at matins. I will pinch your arm as we pass it. God wot! if they did not leave it open, their winking eyes would lead them into the canal. That old fellow must make haste, or we shall have my comrades with us; and it were better not till Master Page has gone to his cell. You had better give them plenty of drink, young gentleman, that they may stupefy themselves to-night and sleep heavily to-morrow morning. I have got two miles on foot to go to see a friend, but will be back in an hour or two. Ply them well while I am gone; but, mind you, keep your own head clear."

"But shall I find any liquor here?" asked Edward, in some surprise.

The soldier nodded his head, and pointed to a number of stains upon the table, saying, "I have had more than one roaring bout in this very room. Those stains were not made with water. Every thing can be had for money in a *moustèr*."

"But I had better give you what I promised before the monk comes back," said Edward,—the word *money* awakening many other ideas.

"Let me see how much you have got," said the man: "you will need some for your two selves; and, besides, there is that long thin fellow with a red face,—that servant of yours. Do not let him drink. Let us see."

[106] Edward took out his purse of doeskin, which now contained about seventeen hundred livres in gold. What between the purchase of the horses, and various expenses at the inns, the rest was all spent, though it was better furnished when he left Rochelle; and there was more in his bags, probably lost forever.

"That is not enough to give me a thousand livres," said the man; "but the three horses are worth something. That one you ride is a good one, and so is the young lady's,—the page's, I mean. Give me five hundred, and write me a promise of the horses in payment of the rest of the sums I have advanced,—the horses to be given up to me when you get to the end of your journey, which will be here, I suppose, but which they will understand as Nantes. That will give me a right to claim them."

[107] Now, it is quite possible that one, if not more, of my sagacious readers will be inclined to think that I have been drawing an inconsistent character. It is very true the soldier was a right generous and a kind-hearted fellow. He liked to do a good turn. He liked especially to help two young lovers,—by-the-way, he had been crossed in love himself, though his history would be too long to tell here,—and yet he was not unwilling to take money out of their pockets when they had little enough, and to secure their horses for his own advantage. It was very inconsistent,—very inconsistent indeed. But I have now lived a tolerable number of years in the world, and all my life I have been looking for consistent men, and have not found more than six at the utmost. The fact is, man is a bundle,—a bundle of very contrary qualities,—to say nothing of the mere absolute opposition of body and soul in the mass. There are packages of good feelings and packages of bad feelings; rolls of wit and rolls of dullness; papers full of sense and papers full of nonsense; a lump of generosity here and a lump of selfishness there; and all tied up so tightly together that in a damp and foggy world they sooner or later mould and mildew each other. Thus, if I hear of a great man doing a little action, or a wise man committing a foolish one, instead of crying out, "How inconsistent!" I say, "It is very natural." Now, if it be very natural everywhere, it is still more natural in France; for, having inhabited that beautiful country and lived amongst her gallant and intellectual people a great part of my life, I have come to the conclusion that the most varied creature upon the face of the earth *per se*—in himself, in his own nature and composition—is a Frenchman.

While the soldier has been making all his arrangements with Master Ned, and while we have been discussing the knotty point of his inconsistency, &c., the old monk, with the lantern in his hand, has been getting ready two cells at the farther end of the long corridor, and the troopers and Pierrot, together with the driver of the coach, have been taking care of the horses. But the monk, having the least to do,—for the furniture of a cell is not usually superabundant, nor its bed difficult to make,—returns first, and conducts Lucette to her sleeping-place, without the slightest idea that she is any thing but a very pretty boy; for his eyes are not very clear, and the lantern dimmer than his eyes, and the lamp upon the table duller than the lantern. Edward Langdale accompanied them to see her cell. It was next to his own,—a pleasant proximity; and, telling her he would presently bring her some refreshment, he left her. As he walked slowly back with the monk, he came upon the subject of some stronger liquor than water,—at which the old man looked shocked; but, upon Edward alluding to the stains upon the table, and bestowing a donation,—entirely for the abbey,—the ferocity of his temperance abated, and he ran to the refectory-man, or some other competent officer, with whom he shared his gains, and informed him what a generous young gentleman they had got under their roof. The supper did not suffer in consequence; but, while it was preparing, Edward and the soldier accompanied the old man through church and cloisters, passages and corridors. Neither gained much knowledge of architecture, or of the particular Abbey of Moreilles. I would advise no one who wishes to criticize that of Westminster to go there at night with nothing but a bad

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tallow candle in a dirty lantern; and, though I have it upon good authority that before the conflagration Moreilles was decorated with the most beautiful flamboyant arches, mouldings hardly surpassed in richness, and, moreover, twenty-six cluster-columns of prodigious height, each with an exquisite capital totally different from all the others, Edward saw nothing but dark vaults, masses of stone, and a door. But that door was all he wanted to see; and as he passed it the soldier gave him a good hard pressure on the arm. It was, luckily, within about ten paces of Lucette's cell.

However, on reaching the strangers' parlor, the little party found the troopers and Pierrot and the driver, and three more monks, and, what was more to the purpose, a table laid with several large pies and a quantity of barley-bread. The means of potation had not yet appeared, but tarried not long; and a meal ensued which I need not further describe than by saying that the pies comprised rabbits and wild ducks; and none of the unlearned can imagine what an excellent thing a wild-duck pie can be made by the mere process of skinning the ducks.

After a few mouthfuls, the leader of the guard rose and left the room, saying he must go and see his cousin, who, "as they all knew, lived hard by;" and the rest of the troopers set to serious work first upon some sour wine, and then upon some of that good or bad spirit which has crowned the name of Nantes with a certain sort of immortality. Poor Pierrot! it was a sore temptation for him, especially when his young master was gone to carry some refreshment to *the page*; but he resisted during the very short period of Edward's absence, and Master Ned's eye was a strong corroborative of resolution after his return. The monks tasted, at first shyly, and then more boldly; and Edward drew from them the important fact that there were very few brethren in the convent, some of them being absent on *quête*, some on leave. Moreover the abbey, he said, had never been very full, since the abbacy—as was so common in France—had been bestowed upon a well-known painter of Paris, a layman.

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There was some deep drinking that night; but still Pierrot, though he could have emptied the most capacious flagon there at an easy draught, maintained the combat against habit gloriously, till at length, just as the leader of the party returned, at the end of two hours, the good Rochellois, finding himself weak with the labor of resistance, retired to rest, after having received a hint from his master, which happily he was in a state to profit by,—happily indeed for him. "The primrose path to the everlasting bonfire" men have strewed in their imaginations with all sorts of sweet things; but, take my word for it, it is paved by *Example*,—that most slippery and dangerous of all asphalts. Luckily for him, the troopers did not care a fig whether he drank or not, and thus all he had to resist was the sight of outstretched arms and full cups; but he had something better on the other side: he had the warning of rolling eyes, and hiccoughing throats, and maudlin faces, and embarrassed tongues, which he had never seen before when he was himself sober enough to appreciate them fully. "Well, drunkenness," he thought, as he left the room, "is a very beastly thing, it is true."

The monks withdrew nearly at the same time; and I am well pleased to say that, although they had shown during that night, amongst the pies and the pottles, no narrow objection to either those carnal or those spiritual things which some castes of Hindoos call the "creature comforts of life," not one of them had an uneven step or an unsteady head. Probably they drank seldom; for those who drink often deprive themselves of the power of drinking at all,—soberly.

The coach-driver was soon under the table; and the troopers, though most of them, when the last drop provided was emptied from the flask, could make their way by diagonals to the dormitory assigned to them, were in a state which promised no early rising on the following day; and Edward and his friendly soldier parted about eleven o'clock, the latter merely saying, "We shall have a heavy storm to-night. The clouds are rolling up like distant mountains. But all the better for your purpose. Remember three!"

The consequences! Good God! How frightful a thing it is to consider what—under an overruling hand and will omnipotent—may be the consequences of the smallest deed we do. The consequences immediate, proximate, future! How many lives, what an amount of misery, how much damnation, may depend upon a light word, an idle jest, a sportive trick!

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Should such a consideration forbid us to act and do, to resolve and to perform? Far from it. Man is an active being, and his life is deeds. Each moment must have its thought or its action, or the whole is sleep; but the consideration of that strange thing, CONSEQUENCE,—that overruling of our deeds to ends that we see not,—should teach us so to frame thought, word, and act, that, be the consequences what they may, we may be able at the great end of all to say, boldly, "I did it in an honest heart." God himself is responsible for the result if man acts with purity of intent.

Not one man in that small room who had that night "sinned as it were with a cart-rope" ever saw the dawning of the morning; and it was a heavy thought to Edward Langdale for many a year after, "What share had I in this?" For himself, he took the little lamp which had been left for him, and sought the cell where his pallet lay. But he had no thought of sleep. As he went along the corridor, with the rays just gleaming upon the fretted stone-work, something like a flash reddened the dim panes of the painted windows, and some seconds afterward a distant roar was heard, as if of a heavy sea rolling along an extended shore. "It

will thunder," he said to himself; but he thought of it no more; and, opening the door of the cell, on the little table beneath the window appeared the missal and the skull and cross-bones—the *memento mori* of the cloister.

CHAPTER XIII.

[111] The table, the book, the pallet, the grinning emblem of death, and a little black crucifix hung up against the wall, were—with the exception of a large pitcher of very clear, cold water—all that the cell contained; and yet it was by no means without ornament, for each of those chambers looking to the western cloister had a window divided into two by a beautiful mullion and was garnished all round, even in the interior, with mouldings a foot in depth. The original small panes of stained glass were also there, but Edward could at first form no idea of the richness of the coloring; for, although the moon had now risen several hours, the face of heaven was black with clouds, and all without was darkness. About five minutes after he had entered the cell, however, the whole interior of the little room, where the feeble oil-lamp had only made the darkness visible, was pervaded by intense light, and an image of the stained-glass window was thrown upon the floor and opposite wall in colors the most intense and beautiful. Still, the thunder did not follow for several seconds; but when it did come the roar was awful. It seemed as if some one were pouring rocks and mountains in a stream upon the roof of the abbey, making the very solid walls and foundations shake. Edward drew forth his watch,—one of the rude contrivances of those days, but with the great advantage of having the figures on the dial plain and distinct,—and, holding it to the lamp, perceived it was a quarter past one. "Lucette must be awake," he thought: "she could not sleep through such a crash as that. I will wait five minutes and then go and call her."

In the mean time the flashes of lightning became more frequent, some followed by heavy thunder, some passing away in silence, till at length they grew so rapid in succession that one could not attach the roar to the flame. Edward's first knock brought Lucette, completely dressed, to the door; and he was surprised to see her cheek so pale. The thought of danger had never entered his own mind; but he clearly saw that she was much agitated. "You are not afraid, dear girl?" he asked: "it is but a little thunder."

"It is not fear, but awe, Edward," she said. "But is it time to go? I am ready."

"Not yet," he answered; "but we may as well stay here in the passage. If the storm should alarm the monks, and any one come out, we can say we are frightened too."

"Is not that some one crossing there?" asked Lucette; but almost as she spoke a sudden flash showed that what she took for a man was but a short pillar. Edward drew her closer to him and put his arm round her. She did not feel at all angry, but rather clung to his side. Fear is a great smoother away of all prudery; and, to say sooth, Lucette had very little of it to be planed down. The fact is, she was innocent in heart and mind as a young child; and innocence is never prudish,—nor is real delicacy.

"Ne fiez-vous a l'Angelus;
Mais craignez les bois et les orages,"

[112] says an old French song about two lovers somewhat similarly situated; but Edward and Lucette ran no danger from any thing but the lightning. It, however, was now really terrific. The clouds, crammed with electricity, were evidently directly over the abbey, and every instant the blaze was running across the windows, the various colors of which gave the flashes the effect of fireworks more brilliant than any that ever were constructed by the hand of man.

At length a sound, not the roaring roll of thunder, but an explosion, as it were, as if some mighty cannon had burst, shook the very ground on which they stood. Then came a moment's pause, and then a peculiar noise,—it might be thunder, or it might not, but it seemed more like the sound of stones rolling rapidly and heavily over each other and then falling from a height to the ground. The next instant a heavy bell began to toll, but ceased after three or four strokes had been struck, mingling strangely with a peal of thunder which was then echoing through the building.

A spirit of confusion now seemed to seize upon the abbey: the door at the end of the corridor was thrown open; monks were seen hurrying across, moving a little way up the passage and disappearing by another door. There were voices calling and screaming too, and Edward thought he could distinguish groans and shrieks; while ever and anon a little bell was heard ringing with a small, tinkling sound; and, in strange discord with all the rest, a solemn strain of music burst upon the ear whenever the little door on the left was opened.

Edward tried to ascertain from one of the passing monks what was the matter; but he could get no intelligible answer; and it was with infinite satisfaction that at length he saw Pierrot appear, coming toward them in haste.

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"The great tower has been struck, sir," said the man, in answer to his inquiries; "and Heaven knows how much of it has tumbled down over the other cloisters. One of the monks is killed, they say, and several other people are crushed under the stones; but, what is worse than all, just as they were ringing the great bell, they found out that the lightning when it struck had set the tower on fire, for the rope broke short off, and the end that came down upon the sacristan's head was burning. There is no hope of getting it put out; for some are carrying off the ornaments of the church, some are praying, some are singing, some are whipping themselves; and the best thing we can do is to get out to the bank of the canal,—if we can find the way; for, though the hour you told me is not quite come, we can wait there more safely than here, where we are likely to have the roofs and buttresses on our heads every minute."

Edward pressed Lucette a little closer to him and whispered something, to which she answered, "Anywhere you will.—Trust you? Oh, yes!" And, getting her large hat from the cell, Edward placed it on her head so as to conceal as far as possible her wonderfully luxuriant hair: then, leading her down the passage, opened the door which the soldier had pointed out to him. Instantly a flash of lightning crossed their eyes; but it served to show, though it lived but a second, the dull, heavy features of the Marais, with not one, but half a dozen, streams of zigzag lightning playing through the sky,—some, as the levin-bolt is usually represented, darting down to earth like a flaming javelin, others twisting into all shapes, and even running up, like fiery serpents disporting themselves in the horrors of the storm. What was of more importance, however, to Edward and Lucette, that flash displayed, close before them, one of those long rows of willows and ash-trees which in that part of the country denote the course of the larger canals, and also showed a break in the line of wood, where the monks probably went down to fish from their own boats.

All the noises of the abbey were now heard far more distinctly, the thunder notwithstanding; and through every window of the great church, with its tall square tower, might be seen a red, ominous glare. But onward Edward supported Lucette, with Pierrot feeling his way before them, till a few steps brought them to the very edge of the water. Two boats were fastened to the bank by chains; but there was no boatman apparent, and Edward and his good servant consulted for a moment, with a running accompaniment of lightning, as to whether it would not be better to unloose one of the skiffs and seek safety somewhere.

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"I can break the chain in a moment with a big stone, Master Ned," said Pierrot; "but, as we do not know where to go, we had better wait for some one to show us. Master George Brin, the good corporal, promised that some one should be here at two; and, depend on it, he will keep his word. Hark! I hear oars. It is not quite two yet; but you had better put the young lady under that ash-tree, for it is beginning to rain, thank God. That will soon put the thunder out; and pray Heaven it quenches the fire in the church, too! Those monks are good, simple souls and merry."

Not more than two minutes after he had done speaking, a boat came up quickly to the little landing-place, rowed by an elderly man, as far as Edward could see by the lightning, who carefully avoided touching the abbey boats, but, as soon as he backed his oars, looked round over the bank.

"Ah, there you are!" he said, in a tongue which, though it was not French at all, was a jargon quite understandable. "Get in! get in, quick! Here, young man, give me your hand." And, catching Lucette's arm, he lifted her in rather than aided her to embark. Edward and Pierrot followed, and without another word the boatman pushed off. It was all over in less than thirty seconds, and the boat had made some two hundred yards over the water, the man pushing her along with a pole, before he relinquished that instrument and sat down as if to resume his oars. The rain was now beginning to fall thick in heavy drops, and the boatman, as he pushed his bark along, had been scanning his party of passengers earnestly. "Here," he said, at length, dragging something large and shaggy from beneath one of the seats,— "here, you one in the large hat, put this on, or you will get wet. The sky may come down in drops without going through that."

"What is it?" asked Lucette, taking what the man offered, but not comprehending what it was.

"A *peau de bique*, to-be-sure," replied the boatman. "You are the girl that Georgy Brin told me of, are not you? I must not let you get wet; for he says you are weakly. 'Tis a bad business, anyhow!" And, with this sage reflection, he began vigorously to handle his oars.

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Edward aided his fair companion to envelop herself in the water-proof garment then and still common in that part of France; and the boat shot on rapidly under the branches of the trees, which may be said to have interlaced above them. For about a quarter of a mile all was darkness, but at the end of that distance the boatman began to look up toward the sky wherever a small patch of the heavens could be seen through the overhanging trees. Edward, too, saw from time to time gleams of red light upon the water; and it seemed as if the sky itself had caught fire from the lightning and would soon be in one general blaze. Another quarter of a mile brought the travellers to a spot where were two reed cabins and an open space of ground round them; and there the boatman lay upon his oars. All eyes were now turned toward the abbey, where a sight at once sad and grand presented itself. The top of the great square tower, like an immense altar, bore a pyramid of flame up to the

skies; and from every window and loop-hole issued forth a tongue of fire, licking the gray walls. The windows even of the church were painted in red upon the dark stone-work, whenever the cloud of smoke which surrounded the whole of the lower part of the building like a vast shroud suffered the masonry to appear.

"Alas for the poor monks!" said the boatman, with an unaffected sigh: "if they did not do much good, they did not do any harm; and we might have had worse people amongst us. That abbey has stood wellnigh four hundred years, they tell me; and it was never touched by lightning until now,—doubtless because they have given it to a lay abbot, and he turns all the revenues to the works of man which were devoted to the works of God. Well, we cannot help the poor souls." And, without further thought of the burning edifice, he plied his oars again, and the boat cut her way smoothly through the glassy waters, leaving long, fiery ripples behind her.

[116] Two miles more of hard rowing brought the party to a small farm, where two or three of the same huts of mud, bushes, and reeds appeared close together on the bank; and the rower paused before the largest of the humble edifices, calling, in a loud voice, to persons who might not be without ear-shot but who were certainly not within sight, to inform them that he would not be home till daybreak. "The rain is falling," he said, as if speaking to himself, "but the whole abbey will be down: that is clear."

He then rowed on, pursuing for some three hundred yards the larger canal; but at the end of that distance he turned into a very narrow and sinuous channel, where he laid down his oars and propelled the boat solely with the pole. The labor seemed hard, and the progress slow, and Edward took the occasion to ask quietly whither they were going.

"To La Caponnière, to-be-sure," replied the man. "Did you not know that?"

"No," replied the youth: "Monsieur Brin merely told me that he would procure me a boat at two o'clock to carry us to a place of safety."

"Well, here is the boat," answered the man, "and La Caponnière is a place of safety. There are no better people in the world than old Madame Brin and her sons and daughters. They are cousins of his, you know, and by this time they are ready to receive you. She was his cousin before her marriage, you know, and then she married his first-cousin, who left Niort in the time of the troubles; and so they are doubly cousins, you know."

But, as Edward did not know any thing about it, he thought it better not to show his ignorance, and resumed his English conversation with Lucette.

The voyage—for we cannot call that a journey which was performed at night upon the water—was somewhat long and fatiguing to the boatman; but at length,—it must have been at least four o'clock in the morning,—after turning and twisting, and sometimes grating against the banks, the boat reached a spot where suddenly appeared a small, star-like light from what seemed the window of a better house than any they had yet passed, which, skipping over various indistinct objects, rested more fully on a small skiff at the shore. Some one started up as they approached: their boatman threw him a rope, and they were speedily drawn up to the bank and moored.

[117] "Come this way," said the lad who had been waiting for them, holding out a great coarse hand to Lucette. "Here, mother; they are come." And, leading the poor girl on, followed by Edward, he conducted her through a little garden in which various kitchen-vegetables were more plentiful than flowers. Half-way between the house and the canal they were met by a goodly-sized dame of forty and a girl of some sixteen or seventeen, who took Lucette frankly in their arms and gave her a warm embrace. "So this is your young man, poor thing?" said the elder, looking at Edward; but then, immediately turning to the boatman, she inquired, eagerly, "What has been the meaning of all that red light out by the abbey?"

"There's no abbey by this time," answered the man. "But come, good dame, let us in to your kitchen-fire, if you've got one, and I will tell you all about it. We are all as wet as bull-frogs, except the girl; and I gave her my *peau de bique*."

Thus saying, he pushed past the rest and entered a large, roomy kitchen, well stored with every sort of salted and dried provisions, dependent from great racks suspended from the ceiling.

There a hearty welcome awaited the poor wayfarers: the fire, which had nearly gone out, was soon blown up into a cheerful blaze; warm soup was produced; and to Lucette the good dame of the house, though she weighed at least two hundred pounds, showed the tenderness and gentleness associated by poets and romance-writers solely with sylphlike forms and nymphlike graces. Her two good, buxom girls, who to very pretty faces added in form a promise of future extent worthy of the stock from which they sprang, joined in, somewhat more shyly, but with real kindness; and, for the first time since they left Rochelle, Edward and Lucette experienced that feeling of security which—to plagiarize a little—"wraps the whole heart up like a blanket."

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CHAPTER XIV.

The house in which Edward Langdale found himself on waking the next morning was evidently one of those belonging to what they call in France the *cultivateurs propriétaires*, and in the Marais the *cabaniers*, or farmers possessing the freehold of the land they till. He had been placed in a little room not larger than the abbey cell; but his bed had been most comfortable, and he might have slept late had not the youth whom they had found in the boat the night before, and who was a son of the good dame of the house, come in to ask how he had rested and to invite him to go to the farther side of the farm to shoot some ducks for breakfast. Edward did not neglect the opportunity, thinking that he might obtain some important information by the way; but the youth, though perfectly and even profusely communicative, could tell him little of any thing beyond the precincts of the *Marais*, because he knew little. They had heard, he said, from his cousin George, the night before, that at some hour in that night a young gentleman and lady who had run away to get married would come to their house for shelter and protection, which he bespoke for them particularly; and the good soldier had added many an injunction to secrecy and discretion. He had also asked that a boat might be sent with their neighbor Bonnet to the abbey wharf, with directions to take off the young gentleman and lady without saying a word.

[119] This was the amount of young Brin's foreign intelligence,—for such to him it was; and as soon as it was given he proceeded to describe and eulogize his mother's farm, which he had not quitted more than two or three times in his life, and which he seemed to think both the richest and most beautiful spot of earth. Rich indeed it was; but to explain its sort of riches I must have recourse to that old author whom I have already quoted. I must premise, however, that the spot on which Edward Langdale now found himself was just at the edge of what are called the dried marshes, where they join on to the *marais mouillans*, which, at the time I write of, were much more extensive than at present. The farm, then, of La Caponnière comprised a portion of both; and, as the *marais desséchés* have been already described from the account of an eye-witness, I may be permitted a word or two from the same source in regard to the *marais mouillans*. "All these marshes," says my author, "are not equally inundated; and, in consequence, all parts are not equally sterile. The highest parts [of the *marais mouillans*] are under water from the middle of October to the middle of June, and sometimes later. The lower parts never dry; and, to make something of them, they have been cut by innumerable canals, all communicating, and only separated from each other by earth-banks of from twelve to fifteen feet in width, piled up from the excavated earth of the canals. These earth-banks are of prodigious fertility, many of them planted with willows, ashes, poplars, and sometimes oaks; so that one is often astonished to see so vigorous a forest springing out of the middle of the waters."

The traveller then goes on to tell the uses these forests are put to,—how the fagots are sent to Rochelle and the Isle de Rhé, and how the trunks of the trees, cut into firewood and called *cosSES de marais*, are highly valued throughout the whole of the neighboring country, and burn better than any other trees. But, as the reader will probably never dabble in the cultivation of the marshes of Brétagne, he shall be spared the details. My author, however, goes on to state that the farms vary in extent from two hundred and forty to twelve hundred acres, and that each is divided by little canals into squares of about thirty acres, each canal being large enough to carry a small boat.

[120] Now fancy, dear reader, what an interminable network of water-communication these canals, each hidden from the other by trees and shrubs, must form; how impossible for any but one born and bred in the country to find one's way along there; how easy for any one acquainted with their involutions to baffle the most skilful pursuer, to lie hid from the eyes of the most clear-sighted enemy. The Minotaur did not feel himself more safe in the depths of the Cretan labyrinth than Edward Langdale after their morning's row; and Edward was more safe than the Minotaur.

"Here," he thought, "we may stay till all pursuit is ended and all suspicions forgotten, till dear Lucette has recovered strength,—and, perhaps, till I can communicate with Mauzé or Rochelle."

All very well as a matter of probability; but where any thing is joined together by mere tacks—as is indeed the case with the fate of every one,—and not alone with his fate for years or months, but for a single hour—it is much better to remember, before we make any calculation at all, what tacks may fall out or get broken and the whole piece of machinery tumble to atoms.

Edward Langdale could shoot a duck; and, though the birding-piece which the young farmer trusted to his hands was a single barrelled gun of rather primitive construction, and the shot merely bits of lead cut small, not a bird got away from him,—more to the admiration than the liking of his companion, who had fancied that he could display some skill in the eyes of one whom he believed to be city bred.

However, the boat was plentifully loaded before they returned; and the young farmer guided it back by a different course from the *marais mouillans* to the firm land near the house, pointing out to Edward, with an air of pride and satisfaction, six or seven woolly beasts upon a tongue of the *terrier*, and telling him they were sheep.

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At their return to the house they found the whole household up, with the exception of Lucette; but the result of their sport was very much commended, and one of the hearty breakfasts of the country was prepared. The living, indeed, seemed profuse, and, what though the cooking was for the land somewhat coarse, yet it was French, and therefore better than it would have been anywhere else in the same circumstances. There were ducks, and good bacon, and eggs, and fine fowls, and a ragout, and plenty of galette. Alas! there was no coffee, no chocolate,—nay, no tea; but there was excellent white wine of Logé, and there was as good red wine of Fay Moreau; for the age of hot stops had not yet arrived, and Noah's discovery blessed the land within ten leagues of them.

Lucette joined them before they sat down; and, for some reason, she blushed more at her boy's dress when there were women round her than she had done before; but her cheek soon became pale, and Edward thought, with some alarm, she did not look well. She assured him, however, that she merely suffered from fatigue.

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The meal was not concluded when several of the peasantry from the neighboring country came to La Caponnière in their boats, bearing with them tidings of the fire of the preceding night, and of various other serious accidents which had occurred during the great storm. Numberless trees had been struck and two men killed by the lightning; but the facts of most interest—at least to Edward and Lucette—were those connected with the destruction of the abbey. One of the visitors had come that morning from Moreilles, and of course was the oracle of the occasion. Two-thirds of the great tower had fallen, he said, crushing the dormitory and the southern cloisters. The whole church was seriously injured, the Lady chapel being the only part preserved; and, although the monks themselves with one exception had escaped unhurt, it was generally rumored, the good man said, that some five or six persons—either guests, or people who came to assist—had been crushed under the part of the tower which first fell. Who they were the peasant could not tell; but the mention of the sad fact set both Lucette and Edward upon the track of imagination. It was then for the first time that Edward perceived that Pierrot la Grange had not been at the breakfast-table. On inquiring for him, Master Ned was answered by good Madame Brin's son that his servant had gone with the man who had rowed them the night before, to inquire about the fire,—a very imprudent act as it seemed to Edward; and yet he had a good deal of confidence in Pierrot's tact,—which was not ill placed. About twelve, his long figure appeared in the kitchen; and now the whole details were given. They were interesting to the good Cabanier family, for the principal new fact was that Monsieur George Brin, their relative, was safe and well, and had set out for the lines under Mauzé. The other soldiers, he said, had perished, with the exception of one, who still lived, terribly mangled. He was so drunk when he left the parlor, Pierrot said, that he could not get to the assigned sleeping-place, but fell upon the stairs, where he still lay when the tower was struck. Thus, though sadly beaten by detached stones, he had escaped crushing by the great mass of masonry.

Lucette felt very sorry for the poor soldiers; for hers was a very kindly and tender heart. Edward gave them a passing "Poor fellows!" and at his heart wished he had not made them so drunk. But still, as a man's mind is always a more business sort of article than a woman's, he argued from the premises that all chances of further pursuit and detention were at an end; and thus, though the troopers were to be pitied, their removal from this scene of care was no misfortune to him.

Now, all this shows, or may be supposed to show, that Master Ned was not of a very sensitive or sentimental disposition. In truth, dear reader, it only shows that he had mingled a good deal more with the world than most lads of his age, and that time and storms had hardened the outer shell. There was much that was soft within,—not about the head, but at the heart. That very night proved it; for Lucette, after having been somewhat languid all day, was suddenly seized about seven o'clock with a violent fit of shivering, and Edward had to behold the marsh-fever in all its horrors. Good old Madame Brin took upon herself to be physician: indeed, there was no other within thirty miles, except the barber at Fontenay le Comte; and he could not be got at. The eldest daughter was to be head nurse; but Lucette had another and a good one. She had nursed Edward through a severe illness, and he was resolved to nurse her in return. Happily, they were good, simple people there, and had no false notions of proprieties and decorums, so that Edward had his own way; and it was very sweet to poor Lucette to take her tisanes of *écorce de chêne* and thyme-flowers from his hand, and to gaze into his eyes as he bent over her and drink in a better medicine from his looks than any up to that time discovered,—or since, to say the truth.

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Then, again, the household was a cheerful household. Though they lived in the midst of swamps and ponds and canals, like a family of frogs, there was nothing cold or chilly about them. Madame Brin had had the fever twice herself, she said: all her children had had it. She would soon get the dear little girl well; and a shake or two they thought nothing of in their country. Her poor dead husband had had hundreds of them, and died, drowned, at sixty and upward. The eldest girl and the young one, too, were also all kind cheerfulness; and Edward, who was certainly the most melancholy and apprehensive of the party, took care to hide that such was the case whenever he was in Lucette's room. When he was unwillingly away, his thoughts were very heavy; for, though it must be confessed they rested principally on his fair young companion, yet they would often turn to other subjects of care. Leave her amongst perfect strangers he could not,—he would not; but when he

considered that he had lost valuable letters, much money, much time still more valuable, and asked himself whether he should still find Lord Montagu at the place of rendezvous, where he should find him, what secrets might not have been revealed to the enemy by his losses, how much he himself might be compromised and his passage through France endangered by the discoveries which probably had been made, there appeared a very tolerable bundle of cares for one young pair of shoulders to carry.

Nevertheless, good nursing, and that skill which is given by experience, did their usual services to poor Lucette. The fits of fever were retarded, lessened, ceased; and at the end of a fortnight she could sit at the door in the sunshine and look out. Often would she now gaze up at Edward; and at length she summoned courage to ask, in English, "Is it not time we should go forward?"

It did require a great effort of courage to put that question, for, what between weakness and some other sensations, Lucette had got into a frame of mind which would have made it even pleasant for her to remain there in the Marais all her life,—if Edward Langdale had remained with her.

[124] There is always a good effect produced by looking difficulties and unpleasant things of all sorts in the face. We either discover some mode of getting rid of them, or else we learn to endure them. Very soon Edward and Lucette talked composedly over their future plans; and both agreed, with a sigh, that to proceed upon their journey as soon as she had recovered sufficient strength was unavoidable. They might both, perchance, have dreamed, and their dreams might have been somewhat wild; but with calm thought the sense of serious reality returned, and they felt that they must soon proceed together to part very soon.

"And when shall we meet again, Edward?" said Lucette, in a low voice.

Edward laid his hand upon hers, saying, sadly, "God only knows, Lucette. But I know and am sure we shall meet again. Till then, let us never part in heart. We cannot forget each other after all that has passed; and, oh, let the memory be as dear to you as it is to me, so that, when we do meet, it may be with the same feelings we now experience."

Lucette bent down her eyes, and there was a tear in them; but that tear seemed to Edward Langdale a promise.

This was the only word of love that passed between them; but there were other matters pressing for consideration. Neither of them knew the country round. Pierrot was as ignorant as themselves; and it was necessary to take Madame Brin not only into consultation but in some degree into their confidence. She was naturally a woman of strong sense; but she was wonderfully ignorant of the world beyond the Marais.

"This is a mad scheme," she said,—taking for granted all that she had heard from her cousin George, and never imagining that a corporal in the king's army could have been deceived. "You are both very young to run away and be married. Why, this boy can hardly be nineteen, and you, my child, cannot be more than fifteen; but, now you have been away so long together, it is the best thing for you. We can send for the minister to-morrow, and he can be here on Friday. But if you be Papists you will find the matter more difficult; for —"

[125] Edward cut her short by informing her of the fact that they were both Huguenots, and at the same time attempting to undeceive her as to the purposes with which they left Rochelle. He told her briefly the principal events of the last month, and besought her to aid them in reaching at least Niort, where the number of Protestants still remaining insured them the means of ascertaining where the principal Huguenot leaders were to be found.

All this sudden intelligence threw the good lady into a deep fit of thought. "So you do not want to be married?" she said, in some bewilderment.

"Not immediately," answered Edward, with a smile he could not repress. "But I tell you, my dear lady, I do wish to be married to Lucette as soon as ever she wishes to be married to me." Lucette looked at him almost reproachfully; but he went on to say, "Her relations have of course to be consulted first; and, as I undertook to escort her safely to them, I must do so before I can even pretend to her hand."

"Well, then," said the mistress of La Caponnière, after several minutes' thought, "there is no way for you but to go boldly to Nantes. They will never suspect you there. 'Those who are nearest to the cardinal are safer from him than those who are far off,' they say. His arms are so long that they do not easily reach what is close by. You can then easily go round to Niort, and thence where you like; but go to Nantes first; go to Nantes first. It is the safest place."

This suggestion required long and much consideration; but at length it was adopted, though the minor arrangements afterward devised removed a great many of the objections which at first presented themselves. Edward was to be transformed into a young farmer of the Marais, and Lucette to appear as his sister, while Pierrot assumed the garb of one of the peasants. It took two days to procure the long-waisted, square-cut coat, and wide breeches for Master Ned, and a similar but coarser dress for Pierrot; for tailors were not

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plenty in the Marais, and clothing-shops were none,—so that the wardrobes of neighbors were to be ransacked. Lucette was more easily supplied with the manifold petticoats and the white cap to cover her immense luxuriance of hair. Changes of apparel, provisions of many kinds, and good wine, were stored in a boat; and, after about three weeks' residence in that wild and strange but not uninteresting district, with two stout boatmen for their guides, Lucette and her companions took their departure from La Caponnière, and entered upon a tract perhaps even more desolate and intricate than that which they quitted. By Tallemont, by La Motte Achard, and by Logé, they proceeded on the *country-road*, as it was called, toward Nantes, and at the end of the third day they began to approach a city the glory of which certainly has departed, but the interest of which—a melancholy interest—remains.

Before I close the chapter, however,—a chapter devoted to quiet if not dull subjects,—I may as well say a few words—a very few—upon the actual state of France, and the changes which had taken place within the last five weeks, which were not without their significance.

Every day had seen La Rochelle more and more closely hemmed in by the royal forces. Slowly, quietly, but steadily, troops had poured into the Sevres and the Aunis, and the ports in the neighborhood of the threatened city had become crowded with small armed vessels. Invested by land, the citizens of Rochelle might have felt alarm if their fine port had been also subjected to blockade; but their own powerful fleets, and the certain aid of England, made them contemn the small though numerous ships of the enemy, and they never comprehended, till too late, that the gigantic mind of their enemy was then planning a vast undertaking destined to deprive them of all the advantages of their position. Their egregious confidence was perhaps further increased by a knowledge that the court of France, and, indeed, the whole country, was fermenting with plots against the man whom they had most to dread; and it is not at all impossible that they were more or less aware that the most formidable conspiracy which had ever threatened the power of Richelieu was upon the very eve of explosion.

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CHAPTER XV.

It was late in the afternoon of a bright, warm day, when three strangers to the city of Nantes took their way across the magnificent Cour St. Pierre,—one of the most beautiful public places in Europe,—somewhat hurrying their pace when they saw the number of gay groups with which that part of the town was crowded.

"This way,—this way, sir," said the seemingly tall, lean peasant, who carried a good-sized bundle on his arm. "I know the house exactly; and the sooner we are out of this the better."

"On my soul, a pretty little wench!" exclaimed one of a group of gay-looking gallants who were lounging about at the upper end of the square. "Let us take her from that young boor. My pretty maid, will you honor some poor gentlemen with your company to take a cool glass of wine?"

"Stand out of the way, sir, and let my sister pass," said Edward Langdale, in French, speaking as coolly as he could, for he knew the danger of a brawl in that place and at that moment.

"Ha!" said the other, with a cool stare: "though you speak mighty good French for a peasant of the Marais, yet I think we shall have to teach you some better manners, boy. Do you presume to push against a gentleman? This must give you a lesson." And he raised the cane he carried, as if to apply it to Edward's shoulders.

The lad's hand was instantly on the dagger concealed under the flaps of his broad-cut brown coat. But he had no occasion to use it; for, at the very moment when blood was on the point of being shed, a man of gentlemanly appearance, dressed altogether in black and without any arms, stepped in between Edward and his antagonist, saying, in a deep tone, "Hold!"

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The uplifted cane had nearly descended upon his head; but the moment the young coxcomb beheld the face of the intruder his countenance changed, the color came into his face, and he turned the descending blow away, though he could not stop it entirely.

"I have seen all that has passed, Monsieur des Louches," said the stranger in black: "be so good as to retire into the chateau. His Majesty, as you know, is determined to stop all insolent brawls. It will be my duty to report your conduct to these two young people as soon as I return; and you shall hear the result."

The young gentleman said something about his only having said a word or two to some peasants of the Marais; but the other cut him short, observing that the treatment of the peasantry by the *petite noblesse* was at that very time attracting the royal attention.

"Petite noblesse, sir! Petite noblesse!" cried Monsieur des Louches, with a face as red as fire: "do you call me of the *petite noblesse*?"

"Certainly," replied the other; "but, as you do not retire as I have told you, it will be better that you should go in a different manner. Guard!" And he raised his hand toward the bridge of the chateau, where two or three of the king's soldiers were standing.

Two of the guard instantly ran up; but, before they arrived, Monsieur des Louches was moving sullenly toward the gate, and the stranger in black, without taking any further notice of him, turned to those who had gathered round, saying, "Have the goodness to disperse, gentlemen. I will take care of these young people."

[129] The gay gallants of the French court might possibly have indulged in some merriment at the expense of the elderly gentleman who had taken a young girl out of their companion's hands; but there were at that moment some sinister rumors hovering about the city of Nantes, which a good deal depressed the courtly circle, although the courtiers endeavored still to keep up an air of sprightly carelessness, and sometimes, probably, overacted their part in public. On the present occasion, however, they dispersed quietly, one giving the good-day to the stranger by the name of Monsieur Tronson. As soon as the rest had passed away, the face of the stranger cleared, and, looking at Edward and Lucette with a good-humored smile, he asked, "And now, young people, where is it you want to go to?"

"To the Auberge du Soleil," answered Edward, using as few words as possible, for he remembered, perhaps a little too late, that his language and his dress did not correspond, and that, though his garb was that of the Marais, his tongue was not at all imbued with the jargon of its inhabitants.

Monsieur Tronson took no notice, however, and said he would show them how to find it; but, in walking slowly and soberly along, he began to chat about many things, asked if ever they had been in Nantes before, and not only proposed to show them some of the objects most worthy of attention in the place, but actually, as he admitted, led them a little out of their way to point out the crosses of Lorraine which had been scattered over one of the faces of the chateau when it was in the hands of the League. The cathedral, too, with its stunted towers and gigantic nave, he must needs show them; and he asked so many questions, waiting for replies, that both Edward and Lucette were forced to speak much more good French than was at all desirable.

At length a slight twinkle in their good companion's eye, and a little curl of the upper lip, led Master Ned to the complete certainty that they were discovered; and, taking a moment when M. Tronson, who seemed to be determined to know the whole party, was speaking with Pierrot, Edward suddenly bent down his head and whispered a few words in English to Lucette. "We are discovered, I fear," he said. "If any questions are asked, remember the words of the safe-conduct I showed you: tell how we were stopped in trying to quit Rochelle, and say that when the abbey was burned we escaped in a boat as best we could and came on here."

[130] Lucette was about to remind him that she could no longer pass for the page named in the safe-conduct; but Monsieur Tronson finished his brief conversation with Pierrot and turned to the young people again, saying, with his placid air, "Now we will turn this way, and you will soon be at your resting-place. So I suppose you two are the children of some good rich proprietors of the Marais, and have got leave to come and see the world now the court is at Nantes?"

"No, sir, we are not," answered Edward, with perfect calmness; for he had now determined upon his course.

"Then, in Heaven's name, what are you, young people?" asked their companion. "Yours are not peasants' manners, nor peasants' tongues; but let me tell you that it is somewhat dangerous to be masquerading here just now."

"Very likely, sir," replied Edward; "but we shall not masquerade long,—if we are doing so at all. As to who we are, I shall have to explain that to a very high personage shortly, and to ask him if he will suffer his name and handwriting to be set at naught. I shall not show him so little respect as to talk to any one else about the affair before I talk to him, as I must see him, if possible, before I quit Nantes."

"You are discreet," said M. Tronson, leading the way through a street which ran down to the Loire at the back of the chateau. "There, where you see that tall pole and bush, is the Soleil; but, if you would take my advice, you would choose another auberge. That is not fit for your station; and, besides," he added, with a shrewd smile, "you will find nobody there who speaks any thing but the *patois des Marais*; and I suspect that would puzzle you."

Edward persisted, however, and the next moment their companion stopped at the door of a heavy stone house of small size, the back of which must have nearly touched the ditch of the old castle. "Here I stop," he said: "you see the inn. Good-evening."

They gladly bade him adieu, and hurried on down the street, Pierrot thanking Heaven that they had got so well out of his clutches. "He is a spy, I am sure," said Pierrot; "but, if we order the coach we were talking of, to be at the door by daybreak, we can get through the gates and be off before he has time to get his orders."

"His orders from whom?" demanded Edward, in some surprise.

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"From the cardinal, to-be-sure," replied the other. "Do you not know that—" But by this time the three had reached the door of the Auberge du Soleil, and Edward had paused, not at all satisfied with the look of the place. There was an air, not exactly of discomfort, but of loose, disorderly carelessness about it which pained him to think of in connection with Lucette. She herself entered the passage without a word, but she looked sad and, as it were, bewildered; and the sallow walls, the dirty tiles of the floor, and various noises of singing and riot from neighboring rooms, did not serve to reassure her. Edward was at her side in a moment, and, laying his hand gently upon her arm, he said, "Lucette, this will not do. We must seek some other place."

The appearance of the landlord, who now presented himself, was not at all calculated to change this resolution; and, as he was somewhat inclined to be uncivil when he found that his guests were likely to go elsewhere, Edward left him to the management of Pierrot, and turned toward the door. There, however, he found, looking in, a servant in the livery of the court, with two men in military garb; and the former immediately saluted him civilly, saying, "I am ordered by my master to request your presence with the young lady and your servant."

"And who may be your master?" asked Edward, not at all liking the look of the guard.

"Monsieur Tronson, sir, secretary of the king's cabinet," replied the man.

"It is enough, sir," replied Edward: "we will accompany you if you will lead the way."

The servant bowed, and preceded them, and the two guards followed; but now Lucette and Edward found the great advantage of speaking two languages. Few were the minutes which they had to spare; but those few minutes were filled with words upon which, though their companions comprehended them not, depended their safety, and perhaps the life of one of them.

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"We shall assuredly be asked, dear Lucette," said Edward, "how you came first to travel with me as a page, and since then have resumed your woman's apparel. May I, dear girl, say, in case of need, that we sought to be married in a foreign land because our friends at home thought us too young? Your liberty and my life may be perilled by any other course."

"Yes, say so; say so," replied Lucette. "Good Clement Tournon told me twice that if the Catholics caught me they certainly would shut me up in a convent till I adopted their faith."

"But what name shall I give you?" asked the youth, just as they reached the door of the house into which M. Tronson had turned.

"Call me Lucette de Mirepoix," answered the young girl: "it is one of my names, so that I have a right to take it."

"This way, sir," said the valet: "Monsieur Tronson is in the castle." And, passing the door, he led the way through a narrow building which from the street seemed like an ordinary dwelling-house, but which in reality was merely a sort of outwork of the chateau, with which it was connected by a bridge over the fosse.

Edward saw the two guards following; but he merely said, with a cold air, "Are you taking us to prison, sir?"

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"No, monsieur; I am taking you to Monsieur de Tronson," replied the valet. "Please to step into this room." By this time they had passed the bridge and had taken some half-dozen steps along a dark passage through the thicker part of the outer walls; and, as the man spoke, he opened the door of a small room with one of those deep windows which almost formed another chamber within the first. The room was quite vacant, and, as soon as the travellers had entered, the servant left them with the door partly open, showing them the soldiers without as if upon guard. Poor Lucette trembled a good deal, but she lost not her presence of mind; and another hasty consultation took place between herself, Edward, and Pierrot, in the course of which their plans were finally settled,—as far as any plans can be settled when the events against which they are provided are still uncertain. They remained undisturbed for some five minutes, and then the servant reappeared with some glasses, a bottle of apparently very old wine, and a page carrying some cakes and comfits on a salver. These were hardly placed on the table and some seats drawn round, when Monsieur de Tronson himself appeared with a smiling countenance, and desired his young friends to sit down, as if they were honored guests. "Retire, and wait without," he added, turning to the valet and page: "we can serve ourselves. Take that good man with you, and see that he be well attended to. Now, Monsieur Apsley, have the kindness to taste this wine after I have helped the young lady, and tell me whether you could find any as good at the poor little cabaret where you were inclined to bestow yourself. My auberge is the best of the two, believe me."

"While we are treated with so much courtesy, sir," replied Edward, filling his glass. "But may I ask what has led you to believe that my name is Apsley?"

Monsieur de Tronson, who was pressing some of the confectionary upon Lucette, did not answer for a moment, but then, turning round, said, with his usual placid smile, "What was that? Oh, how I knew you? Why, my good sir, we have been expecting you for some time. His Eminence has letters for you, and very nearly a thousand crowns in gold, which a good

man, called Jacques Beaupré, brought in about ten days ago. How I know you? Why, my young friend, do you suppose any thing is unknown at this court?"

He paused and looked straight in Edward's face. But the young man had passed through scenes which had given him a resolute firmness of character not easily discomposed; and he answered at once, without a change of countenance, "True, you may have known that Sir Peter Apsley was about to visit Nantes,—though that could be but a guess, for I did not intend to come this way till I was compelled; but it must have been a still shrewder guess to lead you to suppose a young man dressed as a peasant of the Marais to be an English gentleman."

[134] "Guesses are good things," said Tronson: "in fact, almost every thing that man knows, or thinks he knows, is a mere guess. But, when we have good hooks to hang them on, we can shape them almost into certainties. You have heard of birds who when they hide their heads fancy their whole bodies hidden. Now, my young friend, when next you want to hide yourself in a peasant's dress, take the air as well as the garb; have something of the patois, and do not speak English to a fair companion when there are sharp ears near. Our good friends of the Marais speak little English, and when they walk they carry their shoulders round, and their heads somewhat slouching,—so." And he imitated the air of one of the peasants so well that even Lucette could hardly refrain a smile.

"Besides," continued their companion, "you hinted that you wished to see the cardinal before you quitted Nantes. Now, putting a good number of other facts to those I have just mentioned, it was easy to divine that you were the personage Jacques Beaupré was in search of."

"True," replied Edward; "and probably I should have taken more care if I had wished to be concealed much longer. But, as you say, sir, I must, if possible, have the honor of seeing his Eminence the prime minister. When do you think I can be so favored?"

"It will be somewhat difficult just now," said the other, with a much graver countenance than he had hitherto borne. "The cardinal is full of very serious and painful business. Certainly you cannot see him to-night."

"Then," said Edward, in a firm and confident tone, "we had better retire and seek some good inn, and I can send and crave an audience to-morrow."

"Nay, you will have to wait close at hand and snatch your audience when you can get it," replied Monsieur de Tronson,—adding, laughingly, "my auberge is the best for your purpose, depend upon it. But tell me, Monsieur Apsley, why did you disguise yourself at all, when, I have been told, you have a proper safe-conduct?"

"You mean, sir, why we put on Breton dresses?" replied Edward. "That was done for the best reason in the world:—because we had none other fit to wear. My whole baggage was lost, and one of my servants stopped, when it pleased some good officers near Mauzé to turn me from my straight road and send me toward Nantes. I trust Master Jacques has brought our clothing with him. If not, we must purchase more."

"I cannot tell," replied Monsieur de Tronson, gravely: "all he did bring is in the hands of his Eminence."

[135] A consciousness that what the man had brought might prove his destruction, perhaps, induced Edward to imagine that M. Tronson laid a particular emphasis on the words "in the hands of his Eminence;" but still he lost not his coolness, and he replied, "Well, then, we had better proceed to our inn,—if you will recommend us to one; for that we saw but now will certainly not suit us. It is growing dusk, and I shall scarcely have time to-night to purchase clothing fit to appear in before the cardinal."

As he spoke, he rose; but the secretary of the king's cabinet repeated what he had before said:—"This is the best auberge for your purpose; and I will send for one of those tailors who always follow courts to relieve you from your unseemly attire. The young lady, too, had better have other clothing. That, too, shall be attended to."

Edward now saw that nothing but a direct question would bring forth the truth as to whether he was to consider himself a prisoner or not; and he put it much in the same words as he had used to the officer near Mauzé.

"You have been very discreet with your answers, my young friend," said Monsieur Tronson, still smiling: "let me advise you to be as discreet with your questions. But I can excuse a little anxiety, and therefore tell you that you must look upon yourself as a prisoner or not, just as you please. You will not be treated as such further than being lodged in this chateau, with a slight hint that you had better not try to leave it till you have seen his Eminence. If you will give me your word as an English gentleman not to make the attempt, you shall have all the liberty possible, and you shall be only like one of your good English lords kept in-doors by a fit of gout. You shall have as good a table at least as any auberge here could furnish, and you will save money by living at the king's expense. But if you do not make me that promise I am afraid there must be such things as keys sent for, and a turning of locks which might be disagreeable to the ear."

"I understand, sir," replied Edward, "and, of course, make the promise; but I certainly did

[136] not expect that when I came here furnished with a pass from his Eminence, it would imply so little."

"Let me see the pass," said the secretary, somewhat abruptly: "have you it with you?"

"Yes, it is here," answered Edward, drawing it forth. "As it is my only security in the present unfortunate state of affairs between the two countries, I have taken care not to lose that."

Tronson took it from his hand and carried it to the window to see better, saying, after he had gazed at it for a minute or two, "Yes, it is in due form. That is the signature of his Eminence, beyond all doubt. Here are mentioned Sir Peter Apsley, a page, and two serving-men. Am I to presume that mademoiselle is or was the page? Why, here are no end of transformations, it would seem."

People talk of blushing like a rose,—a very bad figure indeed. Roses do not blush. Their gentle color knows no sudden change. The soft emotion of the heart which sends the tell-tale blood into the cheek they never feel, but, as an image of eternal health, keep the same hue unchanged. No: Lucette blushed like the morning sky when, conscious of the coming of the sun, the whole face of heaven grows rosy and more rosy.

"May I ask you, sir," continued the secretary, "if you are married to this young lady? is she your wife? is she your sister?"

"Neither, sir," replied Edward,—"neither as yet. She may be some day my wife: till then she is to me as a sister. But, Monsieur Tronson, if I am to submit to interrogatories at all, I should prefer that they be put by his Eminence the cardinal himself."

"One more, and I have done," said the secretary. "How happens it that you two have been so long on the road? Could you find no means of coming to Nantes sooner?"

"If you know the time we have spent on the road, sir," replied Edward, "you should know likewise that Mademoiselle de Mirepoix's illness detained us."

[137] "Mademoiselle de Mirepoix!" said De Tronson, with an air of surprise: "this is altogether a somewhat strange affair. But, as you say, it will be better all reserved for the cardinal himself. But as Mademoiselle Mirepoix is neither your wife nor your sister, Sir Peter, it will be necessary to place her under a lady's care while here."

"But," said Edward, fearing a longer and stricter separation from Lucette than he had calculated upon; but Monsieur de Tronson cut him short, gravely. "No buts, my young friend. It must be now as I say," he replied. "Wait here, mademoiselle: I will send some women to you in a few minutes. You, sir, follow me, and I will show you your apartment."

Resistance, of course, was not to be thought of; but Edward could not part from Lucette coldly, and, before going, he took her in his arms and kissed her warmly, whispering in English the first real words of love which had yet been spoken between them. "Love me, Lucette," he said; "love me, whatever befalls."

The tears rose in her beautiful eyes; but it was a moment when she felt there could be no coyness. "I do; I will," she murmured.

"Ho! ho!" said the secretary, with a smile: "is it so far gone?" And he led the youth from the room.

Passage after passage seemed to Edward to be placing a terrible distance between him and her he loved, and cold and dreary appeared, and indeed was, his walk through the palace of the king. At length, however, Monsieur de Tronson opened a door at the foot of some steps, and there, in a short sort of long vestibule, appeared the first human beings they had seen since they quitted the room of the secretary. The first person they beheld was the valet whom Edward had before seen; but at the other end of the corridor, near a heavy iron-plated door, was a guard with a halberd on his shoulder.

"The room is quite ready, sir," said the valet, addressing Monsieur de Tronson, and at the same time opening a door on the right. "I lighted the fire, as the chamber has not been occupied since Monsieur de Laval left."

[138] "That was well," replied Tronson; "and you will remember to attend diligently upon this gentleman and see he has all he wants. You can put his own servant a bed in the dressing-closet, and let a tailor be sent for as soon as may be. And now, Monsieur Apsley, I will leave you for to-night. You can, when you desire exercise, take your walk in this passage and the neighboring rooms on that side; but a gentleman so well educated will, I know, remember that this is a palace, and not carry his peregrinations too far. On that side your walks will be impeded by the sentinel. Can I send you a book or any thing to amuse you?"

"If you have got a copy of Homer or Horace," said Edward.

Monsieur de Tronson shook his head with a laugh. "I fear you are too learned for us," he answered; "but I will see, and send you something, at all events. The room looks cheerful enough, does it not? and in the daytime there is a fine view over the Loire. The moon is late to-night. You had better bring more candles, Guillaume." And, with these words, he left the

young Englishman, who, though the room was indeed a cheerful one and bright with lights and a warm fire, could not but feel that he was a prisoner.

CHAPTER XVI.

[139] The first sensation in Edward's heart was certainly that of the loss of liberty. The next was of the loss of Lucette. But then came many unpleasant recollections; and not amongst the least unpleasant was the remembrance that he might very likely have incurred the loss of life. To take a false name, to enter a country with which his own was at war, with a false passport, to come, from a town actually in rebellion against her king, into that king's camp, and to be the bearer of letters to his enemies,—all gave him very much the character of a spy. Edward did not like his position at all; he did not like the steps which had led to it; he did not altogether like his own conduct. Yet what could he have done, when ordered by those he was bound to obey? He would do it again, he thought, if the same circumstances were to come over again; and yet to be hanged in a foreign country as a spy was a matter for which not all the orders of all the princes or potentates in the world could offer any consolation.

He had walked some fifty times up and down the room, the simmering of his heart and brain acting upon him like the boiler of a locomotive steam-engine, when an ecclesiastic entered with some books, and spoke a few words of bad Latin to him, to which Edward replied in so much better Latinity that the good man speedily beat a retreat.

Then came the tailor; and a tailor is always a relief, except when he makes garments too tight, or makes them too loose in one place for the purpose of making them too close in another. But this tailor was really a great man in his way; and he did succeed in amusing Edward's mind in a slight degree by the importance he attached to his calling and to every one of its accessories. He also estimated very highly his own station in that calling. He told Edward that although he had not the honor of clothing his Majesty,—because all the world knew he was very careless in his dress,—yet he made for all the handsomest young noblemen of the court. He himself, he assured his listener,—and he dropped his voice while he spoke,—had *composed* the dress in which the poor Count de Chalais had been arrayed on the very day of his arrest.

"Indeed!" said Edward. "Is he arrested? What are they going to do with him?"

"They will cut off his head, to a certainty," said the tailor. "Though he was the king's greatest favorite, his Eminence was his greatest enemy; and the enemies of the cardinal never escape."

This was such cold comfort to Edward Langdale that he brought the subject back to the matter of his own clothing. "I shall want one suit as soon to-morrow as possible," he said; "for I trust I shall have an early audience of his Eminence; and of course I cannot present myself before him in this garb."

"Of course, of course, seigneur," said the tailor, with a look of horror: "that would be as good as a confession. Of what may your lordship have been guilty to assume such a dress?—high treason?"

[140] "I hope not," said the young man: "at least, if I have committed *lèse-majesté*, it must have been in my sleep. But what about the clothes, my good friend? Can I have them?"

"Assuredly, seigneur; assuredly," answered the man. "I have a beautiful *haut-de-chausses*, and a *pourpoint*, which will fit you exactly: they are in the best taste,—philimot velvet, opened with blue, and silver points. They were made for poor Monsieur de Courmerin; but he never had the opportunity of wearing them, for he put off doing so for one single day, and that night he was arrested and his head cut off before the end of the week. They will suit you perfectly. But the cloak I must make myself. I will keep the workmen up all night, sooner than disappoint you, however. You had better trust the whole arrangement to me,—the boots, the collar, the hat; and then all will correspond."

Edward readily agreed to the proposal; and, merely stipulating for a certain price, as his funds were running short, he dismissed the tailor, whose conversation had a certain ominous croak about it, which was all the more painful from the frivolities with which it was mixed.

Not ten minutes more passed ere supper was brought in,—good fare and excellent wine; and perhaps of the latter the poor youth did take more than he usually did, from a feeling that something was needful to raise his spirits. He felt more compassion that night for the faults of Pierrot la Grange than he had ever known before; but he did not follow his good servant's example, drinking not enough even to have the effect desired.

After supper he felt more melancholy than before; and that sensation increased as all noises died away in the castle and in the neighborhood, and the dull gloomy ripple of the Loire was the only sound that broke the stillness. The air of the room seemed oppressive to

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him. He looked at the door, and wondered if the last time the valet had gone out he had locked it; and he walked toward it and opened it. All in the corridor was as he had seen it before,—the guard at the door on the right, with his halberd on his shoulder, and two lamps burning pendant from the ceiling. The air seemed less oppressive there; and Edward determined to go forth and take his walk without, as he had been permitted. He turned to one side, and then to the other, without any notice being taken by the soldier, till once, approaching within some five paces of the iron-plated door, the man drew himself up, and, in a stern tone, told him to keep off. Edward retraced his steps, and passed up and down several times, till at length the door at the other end of the passage opened, and a tall, fine-looking man, in a large cloak, with hat and feathers, and a small silver candlestick in his hand, appeared, and walked straight toward him. The stranger's eyes were bent upon the ground, and at first he did not seem to see the youth; but, when he did, he stopped suddenly, and gazed at him from head to foot.

Edward walked quietly on, and passed the other without taking much notice, though he thought his stare somewhat rude. At the end of the corridor he turned again, just in time to see the stranger opening the iron-plated door with a key, while the guard stood in a statue-like attitude before him, with presented arms. When the door was opened, the light of the candle served just to show the top of a flight of stone steps, and all the rest was darkness. The door shut to with a bang the next moment, and the youth pursued his walk, feeling it would be impossible for him to sleep for some hours to come. Well nigh an hour went by, and the young Englishman was returning to his room, to try at least to sleep, when that heavy door opened, banged to, was locked, and the stranger, whom he had before seen, again passed him. This time, however, his head was borne high, and there was a strange look of triumph on his face; but he was evidently in haste, and, though he fixed his eyes upon Edward with a gaze that seemed to pierce through him, he paused not an instant, but passed on.

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Why he could not tell, but all this excited the youth's imagination. There was something strange in it, he thought. Who could that man be to whom the guard paid such respect? It could not be the king, for Louis was not so tall, and had no such commanding carriage. It might be some high officer of the royal prison; and that door, with the dark stone steps beyond, might lead to the ancient dungeons, where many a prisoner, in ancient and in modern times, had awaited, *au secret*, as it was called, judgment or death.

"Such may soon be my fate," thought Edward; and, with that pleasant reflection, he re-entered his chamber, and, casting off his clothes, lay down to rest. It was long before sleep came; and then troublous dreams took from it the character of repose. He felt himself, in fancy, in the hands of the hang-man: the gibbet was over his head, and on a scroll fixed to his breast was written, in large letters, "A spy!"

Then, again, his dead body was lying in a chapel, and close by, at an illuminated altar, appeared Lucette, with a bright train of fair girls, just about to give her hand to a cavalier much older than herself, whose face bore a strange resemblance to that of the man who had twice passed him in the corridor, and with a start he awoke, crying, "She is mine!"

It was already day; and but a few minutes went by ere Pierrot presented himself. "I have seen Jacques Beaupré, Master Ned," he said, "and I trust all is safe. That fellow is shrewd; and he vows that he has not said a word. He escaped the troopers at Mauzé, found his way to the castle, and gave up the bags to Monsieur le Prince de Soubise. The prince opened them without any ceremony, took out a letter to himself, read it, and then sent him on with one of the bags, telling him to find you out at all risks. He was stopped immediately he reached Nantes; but he vows, even to my face, that he only knows you as Sir Peter Apsley; though I heard good old syndic Tournon call you by your right name to him himself. He says that the prince put several letters into the bag with the money and the clothes; and there is the only danger."

"How did you contrive to see him?" asked Edward, abruptly; for he feared every moment to be interrupted.

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"Why, sir, there are various sorts of detention," said Pierrot: "there is imprisonment *au plus grand secret*; there is imprisonment *au secret*; there is simple arrest and imprisonment; there is *surveillance*; but there is nothing more. Now, as you, Master Ned, are simply under *surveillance*, they have left me, as your servant, to roam about as I please; and I made the best use of my time. Jacques Beaupré, I found——"

But, as he spoke, Monsieur de Tronson's valet entered, to tell Edward that breakfast would be served to him in a moment, and began to set the room in order. Edward tried to get rid of him, perhaps too apparently; but he did not succeed. In vain the young gentleman hinted that the tailor had not brought the clothes he had promised. The man replied, coolly, that he would seek him as soon as the breakfast was served; and, before there could be any further question upon the subject, two lackeys and a page appeared. Before the breakfast was carried away, the tailor was in the room; and before Edward was fairly dressed in his new apparel, Monsieur de Tronson himself appeared, and sent every one from the room,—Pierrot amongst the rest.

"I come to tell you," said the secretary, "that his Eminence will receive you at ten o'clock;" and then, after a short pause, during which he seemed to think deeply, he added, "If you

will allow me, sir, as a friend, to advise you, you will deal in every thing frankly and sincerely with the cardinal. Men are often much mistaken as to his character. Deceit and trickery upon the part of his enemies have of course made him suspicious; but candor is soon perceived by him, and always appreciated."

"I really do not know to what you particularly refer," replied Edward; "but I shall certainly answer any questions his Eminence chooses to propound to me truly."

"That is well," said the other, somewhat dryly. "But will you answer me one question? Is not Mademoiselle de Mirepoix a near relation of the Duchess de Chevreuse? Reply frankly, I beg of you."

"I do not know," answered Edward, at once. "I only know that she is connected with the Prince de Soubise, and——"

"The same, the same," said his companion, interrupting him. "That is rather unfortunate; for neither Madame de Chevreuse nor the prince are in good odor at this court."

[144] "The cardinal, I am sure," answered Edward, "is too generous to make a young girl who has never offended him suffer for the faults of others who have."

Monsieur de Tronson made no reply, but soon after left the young Englishman, merely saying, in a warning tone, "Remember: be frank."

Edward then proceeded to finish his toilet; and it cannot be denied that he felt more lightsome and at his ease in his new apparel. Still, he could not help revolving the coming interview; and, with that most foolish though common practice of us poor mortals in difficult circumstances, considering the answers he might make to questions which might never be asked. He would have given much for five minutes more of private conversation with Pierrot; but that worthy appeared no more, and for the simple reason that he was not permitted to leave the room to which he had been taken to breakfast. An hour thus passed in anxious and solitary thought, and then a man, in a black robe something like that of the verger of a cathedral, opened the door and summoned him to the presence of the cardinal prime minister. Edward answered nothing, but merely bowed his head and followed. He was conscious that he had felt some weakness; but, now that the all-important moment had arrived, he nerved himself to bear all firmly, and the very effort gave a dignity to his whole person which well accorded with the handsome and graceful dress he had assumed.

CHAPTER XVII.

We must leave Edward Langdale for some half-hour, and carry the gentle reader with us to another part of the old Chateau of Nantes. No one can venture to say that we have not adhered to him through good and evil with the tenacity of true friendship; but we must now either turn to a different personage and another scene, or embarrass our after-narrative with that most ugly beast, an explanation, which so frequently in romance and poem follows the most brilliant heroes and most beautiful heroines like an ill-favored cur.

[145] In a fine long room with windows looking upon the Loire, about half-past ten o'clock in the morning, was a gentleman between forty and fifty years of age,—nearer the former than the latter period. The chamber was well tapestried, and furnished with chairs scattered about in different directions, and a large table a good deal to the right of the occupant of the room. A smaller table was close at his hand, covered with papers and materials for writing, which he was using slowly and deliberately, sometimes carrying his hand to his head as if in thought, and then again resuming the pen and writing a line or two. In person he was somewhat above the middle height, with straight, finely-cut features and hair very slightly mingled with gray. The face in itself was somewhat stern, and the small pointed beard and mustache gave somewhat of a melancholy look; but on that morning the expression was cheerful,—nay, even good-humored; and the hand that held the pen was as soft and delicate as that of a woman. His dress was principally scarlet, as that of a high ecclesiastic of the Romish Church; but above all he wore a light dressing-gown of dark purple trimmed with sable. Such was Richelieu as he appeared in 1627; and those who have been accustomed to associate his name with nothing but deeds of blood and tyranny might well feel surprised could they see the bland expression of that noble countenance, that smooth white hand, and, still more, could they look over his shoulder and perceive that what he was writing was no grave despatch, no terrible order, no elaborate state paper, but—some verses,—grave, indeed, but neither sad nor stern.

The door opened, and the cardinal laid down his pen. Monsieur de Tronson paused, as if for permission to advance, and Richelieu beckoned him forward, saying, "Come in, Mr. Secretary; come in. I am enjoying a space of leisure after so many busy and anxious days. Till one, I have little to do and less to think of."

"Your Eminence will allow me to remind you," said Tronson, advancing and standing by his side, "that this morning you appointed the hour of ten to see that young English

gentleman."

[146] "True," said the cardinal. "I have not forgotten." And he pointed with his hand to the larger table, on which lay one of Master Ned's unfortunate leathern bags; adding, "What do you make of the case? Think you he is the person he represents himself, or, as our hard-headed friends before Rochelle will have it, a spy from England?"

"The passport is evidently signed by your Eminence," answered Tronson; "and the young man himself has the manners of a gentleman of distinction. He is highly educated, too,—a profound Greek and Latin scholar: so says Father Morlais, whom I sent to have some conversation with him. He is somewhat bluff and abrupt in his manners, it is true, as most of these islanders are; but still his whole demeanor strikes me as dignified, and even graceful. He can be no common spy, your Eminence: that is clear; and if Buckingham has chosen him for an agent he has chosen strangely well."

"As to his learning," replied Richelieu, "that signifies little. Many a poor scholar is willing to risk his neck in the hope of promotion. We have employed such ourselves, my good friend. Then, as to dignity of manner, it is easily assumed. But his abruptness and *brusquerie* offer a different indication. It requires long habit to know when to be rude and harsh, when soft and gentle. How old did you say?"

"From eighteen to nineteen at the utmost," said Tronson: "he appears even less."

"Well, but this girl who is with him?" asked the cardinal: "what of her?"

"That seems easily explained, monseigneur," replied the secretary, with a smile: "she is, it would seem, of high family,—related to Monsieur de Soubise on the one side," (the cardinal's brow became ominously dark,) "and to Madame de Chevreuse on the other."

For an instant Richelieu's brow became darker still; and, with uncontrollable vehemence, he exclaimed, "Ah! she has escaped me, as she thinks; but she will find that I forget not my enemies,—nor my friends, Tronson,—nor my friends," he added, with one of those subtle smiles which had at least as much of the serpent in them as the dove.

[147] Tronson turned a little pale, for that peculiar smile was known at the court by this time, and it was not supposed to be favorable to those on whom it was bestowed. But the secretary was too wise to notice it; and he merely asked, "Who has escaped, your Eminence?—this young lady? She was safe in the castle not an hour ago."

"No, no, man; no," answered Richelieu. "I mean Madame de Luynes,—Madame de Chevreuse, Tronson. Have you not heard? She quitted Nantes at daybreak this morning for Le Verger. Strange!" he continued, speaking to himself: "'twas only last night; and yet she must have heard enough to frighten her. Can the king betray himself and me? She must have learned something. What is the girl's name, Monsieur de Tronson?"

"Lucette du Mirepoix, she says," replied the secretary.

"Lucette de Mirepoix du Valais," said the cardinal, slowly and thoughtfully: "the same,—the same, Tronson. Do you not remember there was much contention, some six years ago, between Madame de Luynes and this scheming rebel Soubise, about the guardianship of this very girl? There the duchess was right, for she would have brought her into the bosom of the Church; but Soubise was too quick for her, and sent the child away,—perhaps to England, to make sure she should be brought up in heresy. But my fair duchess shall find me worse to deal with than Soubise. But you said just now," he continued, in a calmer tone, "that all could be easily explained. What did you mean, my friend?"

"Merely that her travelling with this youth is a problem easily solved," answered the secretary. "Last night, when they parted, there were some warm kisses passed,—not at all fraternal, your Eminence; and, putting those gentle signs in connection with some words and rosy blushes, I conclude that they are bent on matrimony. Probably they have found difficulties at home, and, as is not unfrequent with these English, they have gone off together."

"Is the young man of noble birth, think you?" asked the cardinal, thoughtfully.

"Not of high rank, even amongst the English," answered Tronson: "his very name shows it."

Richelieu smiled, but this time it was a bland and pleasant smile. "We will punish her," he said, speaking to himself,— "punish both!"

[148] "But, your Eminence, if the safe-conduct be yours, as I think, and the young man be really what he pretends, you will hardly—"

"Hand me that leathern bag and the knife," said the minister, interrupting him, and seemingly paying not the slightest attention to the secretary's words. "And now," he continued, when De Tronson had obeyed, "let the youth be brought to me; and have the girl taken to the adjoining room, ready to be brought in when I require her: see that no one converses with her, my excellent good friend."

The secretary bowed his head and withdrew, repeating to himself, "My excellent friend!—I have someway offended him. His words are too kind!" But then, after a moment's thought,

he murmured, in almost the same words which Richelieu had used a minute or two before, "Can the king have betrayed me? If so, he has betrayed himself too; for God knows I advised him solely for his benefit."

[149] Louis XIII. had now been on the throne of France about sixteen years, and Richelieu had not been actually of the king's council more than three; but both had been long enough before the world's eyes for men to have learned that a king could betray his best friends from fear or weakness, and that a minister could be most gentle in manners when he was the most savage at heart. Richelieu was fond of cats, and perhaps learned some lessons from his favorites. However, in the present instance Tronson guessed rightly: the king had betrayed him to his powerful minister. The night before, nearly at midnight, the cardinal had carried to the king the confession of the unhappy Count de Chalais, drawn from him in his dungeon by the minister himself,—perhaps—nay, probably—by the most unworthy artifices. In recompense for an act which put an end to one of the monarch's painful fits of hesitation, Louis revealed to Richelieu the names of those who, in the confidence of loyal friendship, had opposed some of the minister's favorite schemes; and Tronson was one. Thus, he had guessed right. Whether Richelieu had guessed right likewise no one can tell. That Louis had communicated the confession of Chalais to some of his inferior confidants, who had warned Madame de Chevreuse to fly, is very probable; but most improbable that he had warned her himself. She was the friend, companion, counsellor of his unhappy queen, and was hated by himself as well as by his minister. The king's hatred, however, was merely the reflex of his hatred for another. The enmity of Richelieu was more personal and of long standing. When Marie de Rohan had married the Constable Duke of Luynes, the now potent cardinal had been but a petty agent of the queen-mother; and he had been treated by the proud woman with some contempt. Again, in appearance the king, the constable, and all the ministers had solicited for Richelieu the cardinal's hat from Rome, but he had discovered that Luynes secretly opposed what he publicly asked; and he attributed this treachery to the suggestions of the duchess.

When, after the death of her first husband, Marie de Rohan married the princely Duc de Chevreuse, and Richelieu rose rapidly to the height of power, the enmity between them was no longer concealed, except by the courtly varnish of external politeness,—and, indeed, not always by that.

[150] Thus, when sitting there in his apartments in the Chateau of Nantes, there was perhaps no one in France whom Richelieu desired to mortify and humiliate personally more than Marie de Rohan, Duchess of Chevreuse:—no, not even her distant relatives the Prince de Soubise and his brother the Duc de Rohan, though both had opposed the royal forces in the field, and the reduction of both to submission was essential to his policy. For them he had some respect, and no individual enmity; but toward her there was a rancor which prompted to any act that would sting rather than destroy. At that time even Richelieu had cause to follow the course which had been pursued by Luynes, and to avoid carrying resentments too far. He was not yet so firmly seated in power that, if he made great enemies, he might not be thrown aside by a fickle king. Otherwise it might seem strange that he dared not follow the same bold course against Madame de Chevreuse which he soon pursued against the unfortunate Chalais, and later against Montmorency and Cinq Mars. But, as I have said, his fingers were not so tightly fixed round the staff of command that he could venture to assail in front the mighty houses of Montbazou and Lorraine, while Vendôme and Condé were already his enemies. It was perhaps meditation upon subjects such as these that occupied the minister's deepest thoughts while he opened with a sharp penknife the leathern bag which De Tronson had brought him, took out several letters, cut the silk, and read the contents; for he did all with an absent air. But Richelieu's mind was one of those which can carry on two processes at once,—one deep, intense, and mighty, the consideration of vital questions, the other the mere observation and recognition of objects—for the time, at least—less important. He seemed to pay little attention to those letters; yet not one word escaped him, and when he had done he replaced them in the bag and cast it behind his chair, but within reach of his hand. He then took up, from the little table close by, the paper on which he had previously been writing, and was reading over the verses, when the door opened, and an exempt of the court appeared, looking at the minister with a sort of inquiring air. Richelieu bowed his head, and the man, stepping back, but holding open the door, introduced Edward Langdale and retired into the ante-chamber.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Edward Langdale entered the presence of the cardinal firm and upright; and, to say the truth, now tricked out with all the taste and ornament which the skill of a French tailor of the reign of Louis XIII., and the short time allowed for the operation, permitted, he was as handsome-looking a youth as you could easily see in this world of ugly hearts and indifferent faces. His air was perfectly calm and well assured, but not presumptuous; and the easy grace with which he carried his hat with its long plume in one hand, and the velvet case with the passport in the other, was not unnoticed by the cardinal, who was accustomed to observe slight indications and to draw his inferences from them,—not

[151] exactly taking for granted that they meant what they seemed to mean; for there was many a man in France and at the court who affected well more gayety than the lark when his heart was full of anxiety and sorrow, many a one who assumed a grave solemnity who within was as light a bubble as ever floated down the stream of time. But often he drew inferences the most opposite from the outside indications, and saw evidence of the pinchbeck in the fresh glitter of the gilding.

Richelieu did not make any motion to rise, but, pointing to a seat near him, he bent his head calmly, and said, "Be seated, sir. I am glad to see you in Nantes. How long is it since you arrived?"

"Yesterday evening, my lord," replied Edward, "I reached the city, having been delayed by several causes during many days. Indeed, it is probable I should not have visited this city at all had not some of the royal officers refused to recognise my safe-conduct."

"Perhaps they did not recognise your person," said the cardinal, softly, continuing to gaze at the young Englishman with a keen and scrutinizing look. "But I think, Monsieur Apsley, I must have seen your face somewhere before."

"That cannot be, may it please your Eminence," replied Edward, frankly. "I never had the honor of beholding you till now."

"You speak French with great purity," said the minister. "Did you never reside in this country?"

"I visited it some time ago, but did not remain more than a few months," the youth replied; "but I studied the language long in my own country, and spoke it continually with those who spoke it well."

"Well, indeed!" said Richelieu; "but they tell me you are learned in many ways, and doubtless you have given attention to our poets,—superior, in refinement at least, to any that the world can boast. Let me have a sample of your taste. What think you of these lines just sent to me by a young poet? The hand is inexperienced, but I think the head is good. You can read the language, of course." And he handed the lines to Edward, who, confounded by what was passing, took the paper and gazed at it for a moment in silence.

[152] Then, feeling that such silence might be dangerous, he proceeded to read the verses aloud, with good emphasis and a graceful delivery:—

"Who on the height of power would stand must be
Hard as the rock to those who dare his arm;
To the indifferent, cool; and tenderly
Treat the young faults of those who mean no harm.

"The sunshine warms the serpent in the brake:
Then crush his head while lasts his sleeping hour,
Nor wait till, fresh envenom'd, he awake.
There still are snakes enow where there is power."

Whether he discovered by the similarity of the writing with the signature of the safe-conduct that the verses were the cardinal's own, or that he thought he saw some allusion to the minister's situation which discovered the author, I know not; but there were particular passages which he dwelt upon in reading; and the minister smiled approvingly, saying, "Well! exceedingly well, Monsieur Apsley. The poet loses nothing on your lips. Think you the verses good?"

"Very good, your Eminence," replied Edward. "Were the arrangement of the lines somewhat different, they would make an excellent speech in a tragedy."

"Ha! say you so?" said the minister, apparently well pleased: "I will give the author that hint. He has some small merit, and may perhaps hereafter aim at higher flights."

"He has chosen a high subject now, sir," replied Edward, "But, by your pardon, I did not come here to read poetry, however good, but to request your Eminence to recognise my safe-conduct and to let me go forward on my way."

Richelieu's brow became a little shaded. "So fast!" he said, as if speaking to himself, and then demanded, "Where do you wish to go?"

"First to Niort," answered Edward, boldly, "where I was going when I was stopped, and then, by Paris, into Switzerland."

The cardinal paused and gazed at him for a moment in silence, and then replied, "There are previously several matters to be inquired into. I trust we are here in France too courteous

[153] to stay any gentleman travelling through our country for purposes of mere pleasure or instruction, though there may be matters of enmity, and even war, between the two nations. I trust we are too honest to give a safe-conduct and then to deny its efficacy. But spies we hang, young gentleman."

The words sounded chilling upon Edward Langdale's ear; but he knew that a moment's silence might be destruction, and he replied, at once, "I am no spy, your Eminence; and,

whatever I may have done that is indiscreet, I came not to examine or report, and never will, any thing I see in this country. It is as safe with me as with yourself, lord cardinal."

"Then you acknowledge you have done indiscreet things?" said Richelieu.

"Probably," answered the young man: "who has not? But, still, I am no spy."

"Of the character of a spy there may be many definitions," answered the minister; "and modern codes do not exactly limit themselves to the Hebrew interpretation of the term, to wit, that he is a person who goes out to see the nakedness of the land. But, that apart, we must know the meaning of what the letters in this bag contain." And, stretching back his hand, he took the wallet and drew out a letter, while Edward observed, as calmly as he could, "I am not responsible, your Eminence, for what those letters contain. I know not the contents of any one of them, but merely took them as requested to persons in France with whom the writers had no other means of communication."

He spoke the truth; for he had not seen and did not know the contents of any one of the letters he had borne across the channel, except that to the good syndic Clement Tournon, which announced the speedy arrival of Lord Denbigh's fleet.

[154] Richelieu paid no apparent attention to what he said, but read from the letter he held in his hand: "'To the most mighty Prince the Duc de Rohan. These will be given to you by one in whom you can put all confidence. Yield him all credence in what he shall tell you on the part of a true friend.' 'To his Highness the Prince de Soubise. Monsieur: Let me commend to you most highly the bearer, a young English gentleman of good house, true, faithful, and worthy of all credit. He ought to be the possessor of great estate; but I assure your Highness that his merit is above his fortunes, and that the dearest trust you have you may confide to his keeping.' Signed with a large B. All the rest, sir, are of the same tenor,—without due signature, and in vague terms. What is the meaning of this?"

"Probably the writers foresaw," replied Edward, who had determined on his course, "that the letters might fall into the hands of your Eminence, and, knowing themselves not your friends, might not wish to make you my enemy."

"Bold, upon my life!" exclaimed Richelieu, in a tone of surprise.

"But true!" said Edward. "I much wish to see the Duc de Rohan or the Prince de Soubise, upon matters totally unconnected with those letters; and when your Eminence gives me permission to proceed I shall seek them instantly."

"When I give permission," said Richelieu, somewhat scornfully; "but well,—'tis very well. Sir, these letters are very suspicious, and would well justify the detention of the bearer. But I must ask some more questions. What seek you with Messieurs de Soubise and Rohan, two noblemen in arms against their sovereign?"

"My lord cardinal, my business with them is private. Those letters are suspicious or not, as they may be viewed: they are not criminal; and though, as you shall determine, they may perhaps justify my detention, yet I assure you once again I knew not their contents until this moment. You must be the judge of your own conduct. I know my own purposes, and can safely say my only object in seeking to see those two princes is one with which your Eminence has no concern."

[155] "I *am* the judge of my own conduct, young gentleman," answered the minister, in a not ungentle voice. "But see you here. Sir Peter Apsley has been represented to me as a good, lubberly youth, whom his relations and guardians are fain to send to foreign lands to see if he can gather some grains of sense and learning amongst more quick-witted people. Now, here we have a young man well read, ready and quick, of a fine taste, and speaking many tongues. This is suspicious too,—unless indeed you have visited some shrine and the saint has worked a miracle."

"My lord cardinal, it would befit me ill to bandy words with you," replied Edward: "I should but fare the worse. Your qualities are not unknown in England; and, having said all I can rightly say, I would not willingly try to match my wit against yours."

"I know few who could do it better for your age," said the cardinal, perhaps remembering still with pleasure the youth's praise of his not super-excellent verses. "But now to another theme. Who is the girl that is travelling with you, first as a page, then in the habit of a peasant-girl? Your paramour, I trust, she is not."

The cheek of Edward Langdale glowed like fire. "You wrong us both, even by the thought, lord cardinal," he said, although Richelieu had spoken the last words with a somewhat threatening brow. "You have heard me avow that I have been perhaps guilty of some indiscretion; and I wish to Heaven she had never come with me; but I could not dream of wronging an innocent girl who has trusted entirely to me, and should think my love for her but a poor and false excuse were I to do so even in thought. As to her being with me, your Eminence may surmise many motives; but, believe me, all were honest."

"I am willing to suppose it," answered the cardinal, mildly. "You wish to marry: is it not so?"

Edward bowed his head.

"And you fear there may be difficulties raised by her family?" continued Richelieu, in a tone of inquiry.

"Many," replied the youth.

"Perhaps there is a difference in rank," suggested the cardinal.

"It may be so," answered Edward; "but yet I am a gentleman, and all my friends have been so, as far as we can trace the house."

"Well, we shall hear what she says herself," answered the minister, ringing a small silver bell.

[156] The exempt immediately appeared at the door, and the cardinal bade him call Mademoiselle de Mirepoix from the neighboring room.

It is to be feared that Lucette was not a heroine. Her step was tottering, and her face pale, when, after a pause of one or two minutes, she entered the cardinal's presence. But the dress she now wore, rich and in very good taste, not only displayed the young beauties of her face and form, but made her look several years older than she really was. Edward, conscious of what she must feel, bent his eyes to the ground for an instant as she entered, but the next moment, with a sudden impulse, advanced, and, taking her hand, led her toward the minister.

Richelieu was evidently struck with her appearance: it was something very different from what he had expected to see, and the disappointment was a pleasant one. With dignified politeness he rose to meet her, and led her himself to a seat, saying, "I am glad to see you, mademoiselle. I trust you rested well last night?"

Lucette raised her eyes with a look of surprise at the unexpected kindness of his tone, and a warm blush passed over her cheek, while she replied, "I did not sleep at all, my lord: I was too much frightened."

"Nay, be not frightened here, my child," replied Richelieu, in a fatherly tone. "I must ask you a few questions, to which you must give me sincere answers; but it will soon be over. To the bold and daring, men in my position must be stern and harsh; but the timid and submissive will only meet kindness and protection. First, then, tell me, what is your name?"

"Lucette de Mirepoix," answered the beautiful young girl, in a low voice.

"De Mirepoix du Valais?" inquired the minister.

"The same," said Lucette, looking up again with some surprise.

"Now let me hear if you have ever been in England," said Richelieu, fixing his dark eyes upon her.

"Yes," answered Lucette, at once. "I have been in England for several years."

[157] "Do you know why you were sent there?" asked the cardinal. "Surely this is a richer and more beautiful land than that cold, foggy island."

"Oh, no!" cried Lucette, eagerly. "It is true, I know nothing of the land of France except about Rochelle; but nothing can be more beautiful than England."

"And you would gladly marry an Englishman?" said Richelieu, with a smile. Lucette blushed deeply, but answered nothing, and the cardinal went on:—"You have not yet told me why you were sent to England."

"I do not personally know," answered Lucette; "but I have heard that a lady—I think, called Madame de Luynes—claimed me as my nearest relation, and that my other friends did not choose to give me up to her, which the law might have forced them to do if she could have found me in France."

Richelieu smiled. "That is a mistake," he said. "We would have found means to frustrate such an attempt. Do you know if she still persists in her purpose?"

"Oh, yes," answered Lucette, quickly: "at least, so I have been told. They said that she had power enough in England, through the Duke of Buckingham, to have me given up to her, even there. That was one reason why I returned to France."

"And not to wed this young gentleman?" said the cardinal.

Lucette blushed again, and was silent.

"But you love him, and are willing to wed him?" continued Richelieu, seeming to take a pleasure in the rosy embarrassment his questions produced.

Poor Lucette! It was indeed a painful moment for her; but she felt that her own fate, and that of Edward also, depended upon her words, and, with her eyes bent down, and her face all in a glow, she answered, in a low but firm tone, "Yes." Then, springing up as if she could bear the torturing interrogation no longer, she darted across, cast herself upon Edward's bosom, and wept.

[158] "Answer enough, methinks," said Richelieu, speaking to himself. "And now, daughter," he continued, gravely, "only two more questions, and I have done. But your answers must be frank and open. Did your good friends in La Rochelle know and consent to your travelling alone with this young gentleman disguised as a page?"

"Oh, yes!" sobbed the poor girl: "they themselves proposed it. They knew they could trust to his honor, and so could I. But we were not alone; we had servants with us; and—and—"

"Enough," said Richelieu. "Monsieur de Soubise, you are a confident man."

These words might have shown Lucette that she and the cardinal had been playing in some sort at cross-purposes; but they were spoken in a low tone, and in her agitation she did not hear or take notice of them.

"Now for the last question," said Richelieu: "but you must first resume your seat;" and, taking her hand, he led her back to her chair. "Tell me,—and tell me true, my child: have you ever heard that young gentleman standing opposite to you called by any other name than Sir Peter Apsley?"

It was a terrible blow to poor Lucette. She had been educated in truth and honor; a lie was abhorrent to all her previous feelings and thoughts; and yet, if she told the truth, she knew or believed that she was condemning one whom she now felt she loved more than any one on earth, to an ignominious death. She turned deadly pale, and raised her eyes to Edward's face, as if seeking counsel or help.

Edward gave the help without a moment's hesitation. Stepping quickly forward so as to stand immediately before the prelate's chair, he said, "Ask her not that question, my lord cardinal. Neither make those sweet honest lips utter a word of falsehood, nor force them to betray a secret she thinks herself bound to keep. I will answer for her. She *has* heard me called by another name; but I could not have come into this country without obtaining the passport of Sir Peter Apsley,—a young man of my own age and height,—who had given up the intention of visiting France. My name is Edward Langdale, son of Sir Richard Langdale, of Buckley, of as good and old a family as his whose name I took."

[159] Richelieu gazed at him coldly, without the least mark of surprise. "You have tried to deceive me," he said; "but you could not. It was a dangerous experiment, sir. And, now, what have you to say why the fate you have sought should not fall upon your head?"

"Not much, your Eminence," replied Edward; "and all I have to say is written here." And, as he spoke, he stretched forth his hand and took the verses he had before read from the small table at the cardinal's right hand, and repeated the first stanza:—

"Who on the height of power would stand must be
Hard as a rock to those who dare his arm;
To the indifferent, cool; and tenderly
Treat the young faults of those who mean no harm.'

"That is all I can plead in favor of forgiveness."

"And you have fairly won it," said Richelieu, gravely; "but it shall come in such a shape as perhaps you do not expect."

The words were ambiguous, and the cardinal's look was so cold that Lucette's heart fell. She hesitated a moment, and then cast herself at Richelieu's feet, murmuring, "Oh, spare him, my lord! spare him! He has told you the whole truth now."

"Whatever becomes of me," exclaimed Edward, "for God's sake, give not up this dear girl to Madame de Chevreuse."

He had touched the key-note; but it only served to confirm a half-formed purpose in the great minister's mind. A smile spread over his face, which was then eminently handsome, and, first turning to Lucette, he said, "He has told me the whole truth, has he? Still, he will be all the better of a safe-conduct in his own name. Shall I put in the page and all, young gentleman?" Then, ringing the silver bell again, he ordered the exempt, who had still waited without, to carry the passport of Sir Peter Apsley to one of his secretaries and bid him make a copy, substituting the name of Edward Langdale for Peter Apsley. "And hark," he continued; "bend down your ear."

The man obeyed. Richelieu whispered to him for a moment or two, and the exempt retired, closing the door.

[160] Still, Edward Langdale did not feel altogether at ease as to the fate of Lucette. The smile upon the cardinal's lip when he proposed to "put in the page and all" evidently marked the words as a jest; and Richelieu now sat silent for several minutes, gazing upon the ground, as if still somewhat undecided.

At length he looked up. "Monsieur de Langdale," he said, pointing to the leathern case, "that belongs to you. It shall be sent to your room. In it you will find nine hundred and eighty crowns of gold, all told. Moreover, you can take the letters: I trust to your honor as a gentleman not to use them against the king's service. Your safe-conduct will be here in a

few minutes; but, before I sign it, I will put the sincerity of yourself and this young lady to one more test."

He paused, and looked at them both gravely for a moment, adding, "You have given me to understand that you wish to unite your fates. You have travelled so long together unrestrained, that, whether your families consent or not, it is desirable, for the lady's sake, that there should be a sacred bond between you. I now ask you both, are you willing to plight your faith to each other at the altar?—now,—this very hour?"

Edward's heart beat high, it must be owned, with joy, although there were many other emotions in his bosom; and perhaps at that moment he regretted the loss of property which was rightfully his, more than he had ever done before.

Lucette bent down her eyes with a face suffused with blushes; but, when the cardinal again demanded, "What say you, Mademoiselle de Mirepoix?" she took his hand and kissed it for her sole reply.

"With joy, my lord," answered Edward. "But will our marriage—both under age—be valid without the consent of relations?"

[161] Richelieu smiled. "Their consent you must obtain hereafter," he said; "but, in the mean time, I will make your union so firm that no power on earth or in hell can break it. By the power which the Church has given me, I will sweep away all obstacles. But remember, sir, for the time you separate at the altar. You may indeed convey Mademoiselle de Mirepoix to either the Prince de Soubise or the Duc de Rohan,—not as your bride, but with the same respect you assure me you have hitherto shown her. You must promise me, as a gentleman, to return here, and confer with me, as soon as you have seen the young lady safe under the protection of one of her two cousins. Tell him—whichever it is—that in the peculiar circumstances of the case the cardinal prime minister has judged it imperatively necessary that you should be married, and has himself seen the ceremony performed; that for two years you leave your bride with him, but at the end of that time you will claim her and take her, and that all my power shall be exerted to give her to you. He will find me more difficult to frustrate than Madame de Chevreuse."

"The gentlemen your Eminence was pleased to summon," said a servant at the door; and the next moment a number of different persons entered the room, amongst whom the only one known to Edward and Lucette was Monsieur de Tronson.

"Gentlemen, by your good leave, you are called as witnesses to a marriage," said Richelieu. "You, Monsieur de Bleville, have the kindness to take note in double of all the proceedings: there is paper. Go on to the chapel: the almoner is there by this time: I will follow in an instant. You will find two ladies there, I think. Tronson, stay with me for a moment. Monsieur de la Force, you are of good years: give Mademoiselle de Mirepoix your hand."

The crowd passed out, carrying with them Edward and Lucette, both feeling as if they were in a dream. Richelieu extended his hand gravely to Monsieur de Tronson, saying, "You see, De Tronson, even I can forgive."

The secretary pressed his hand respectfully, saying, "Those you do forgive, if they be generous and wise, will never offend again. But I understand not this matter, your Eminence."

[162] "Not understand!" cried Richelieu, with a laugh. "Did I not say I would punish them both?—not these two pretty children, for I do believe I make them happy,—but the proud Duchesse de Chevreuse and the rebellious Prince de Soubise. What will be in the heart of Marie de Rohan when she hears that the heiress, on whose guardianship she had set her heart to strengthen herself by her marriage into some powerful house, is already married to a poor English gentleman? What will be in her heart, Tronson, I say? Hell! hell! To Soubise—if he submits,—as submit he must—we can make compensation. But there is much to be done, Tronson, and I must leave it to you to do; for in an hour I must be on my way to Beauregard, where I expect a visit from Monsieur this evening. First, these two lovers must set out to-night for Niort. Let a coach well horsed be ready for them. Then they must have some aged and prudent dame to bear them company; and next, a good sure man must keep his eye on the lad till he returns here, which will be in a day or two."

"Then does your Eminence still suspect him?" asked De Tronson.

"Suspect him? No, man, no: I know him!" answered Richelieu. "This is Edward Langdale, page to my Lord Montagu,—a brave, bold, honest, clever lad, who shall do me good service yet, without knowing it. He is going to join his lord somewhere on the frontier, or in Lorraine or in Savoy, doubtless with tidings from Buckingham,—though there be no letters from the gaudy duke amongst those he carries. I like the lad, and, were it possible to gain him—but that cannot be. Now, let us to the chapel. You see to the rest; I have but time to dispose of Madame de Chevreuse's fair ward, and make all so sure that she must fret in vain."^[1]

CHAPTER XIX.

The state of France at that time was curious, and worthy of a short description. It shall be very short, reader, for I am aware how tiresome such details are to three classes of people,—to those who know every thing, to those who know nothing, and to those who want to "get on with the story." But it will save us a world of trouble hereafter, and spare us the use of that bad beast, Explanation, which is always trotting with the wrong leg foremost.

In England, the Wars of the Roses, the salutary severity of that great king, Richard the Third, the avarice of his successor, the tyranny of the eighth Henry and his two daughters, had swept away the exorbitant power and privileges which the feudal system had conferred upon the high nobility. But in France not even the wise rigor of some of her kings—not even the sanguinary struggles of the League—had effected nearly so much. Indeed, the termination of the wars of the League had wellnigh undone what had previously been accomplished toward restricting the inordinate independence of the nobles; for Henry IV., after having conquered his enemies, was obliged to buy them, and to make concessions which would have rendered the sceptre powerless in any hand less mighty than his own.

When the knife of Ravallac placed Louis XIII. on the throne of France, troubles of various kinds succeeded, which not only weakened the royal authority but impoverished the kingdom; and at the moment when the Cardinal de Richelieu laid his strong hand upon the reins of government, the weak monarch, feeling his own incompetence, had fallen almost into a state of despair from the troubles and dangers around him. But the words of an author who wrote while despotism still existed theoretically in France will give us a good picture of the ideas of the day, though we may not coincide with him in his conclusions.

[164] "Louis," says the writer of whom I speak, "to excuse the timidity of his council, did not fail to repeat the statements made to him every day about the weakness of his kingdom, and to assert that by a firmer course he would run the risk of bringing wars upon his hands which he could not support. The prelate [Richelieu] overthrew all these objections, by showing the young monarch the resources of France,—her immense population, the bravery of her inhabitants, the fertility of her soil, the abundance and variety of her productions, her beautiful forests, her quarries, the riches of her mines,—above all, her wine and her salt, gifts of Nature which other nations are obliged to come to her and ask for; her rivers almost all navigable, so favorable to internal commerce; her happy position between two seas, favorable to external; the strength of her frontiers, defended by rivers and mountains, natural ramparts, or by cities which a little art would render impregnable; in fine, the very constitution of her government, which gave to a single man the power to put all these resources in action by one word and in one instant.

"Richelieu then proceeded to assert that the principal cause of the depression of France amongst the nations was that she tolerated various religions in her bosom, and doubtless he had determined to root out that evil; but there was another which he clearly saw, but concealed from the king, and against which he afterward waged a continual war, by art, by arms, and by the axe: this was the independent power of the nobles, which, in fact, gave all its strength to religious faction."

In that day, every high noble had his city or his castle, which he did not scruple, on slight pretexts, to garrison against his sovereign, and very often resisted the royal troops with so much success as to force the monarch to purchase his submission. Such was the case, but two or three years before the time of which I write, with the Marquis de la Force at Montauban; such the case with the Count de Coligni at Aïgues Mortes. A marshal's baton, a large sum of money, the government of a province, the revenues of an abbey, were the reward of acts which Richelieu resolved should in future be rewarded by exile or the axe.

[165] A report of the surprise of one of these feudal fortresses at this very period gives a vivid picture not only of the state of France in a time of profound peace, but of the strength of the castle itself. "They [the citizens of Château Renard]," says Monsieur de Fougeret, in his *Relation*, "obtained possession with the armed hand on the 27th May, 1621, at four o'clock in the afternoon, of the fortress called the Castellet, which commanded their town, and in which the lords of Chatillon had kept a garrison for the last twenty-five years. The walls were four toises and a half in thickness; and there were within many chambers, casemates, prisons, dungeons, cellars, a well, ovens, hand-mills, battering-pieces, falconets, powder, ammunition of every kind, and a private subterranean passage to come and go under cover all about the said fortress, all terraced within."

Instead of attempting to remedy this state of things, Louis had recognised and acted upon the system which he had found in existence, and about this time, in the case of Richelieu himself, not only permitted him to maintain a guard of musketeers, but gave him the town of Brouage "as a place of surety."

To strike at the root of such a system of legalized rebellion at once was impossible; but the cardinal had resolved to make his master, or his master's minister, King of France in reality as well as in name, to curb and humiliate the high nobility, and in the end to make them servants instead of rulers of the state. To effect this, the first step was to strike them with terror, and, although the name of Richelieu had already become redoubtable to many, to

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make it a word of omen to all. The first acts of a terrible tragedy arranged for that purpose were actually passing before the eyes of the court at the time when Edward Langdale arrived in Nantes. The Duke of Vendôme, the governor of the province of Bretagne, and his brother the Grand Prior of France, were both already prisoners in the castle of Amboise,—a place full of the memories of cruelty, treachery, and crime; and Marshal Ornano was in the prison of Vincennes. Chalais—once a great favorite, and still Master of the Robes to the King—was in the dungeons of Nantes, waiting trial and judgment by an iniquitous and illegal tribunal. No victims could have been better chosen for the gods whom Richelieu sought to propitiate: Vendôme and the Grand Prior were natural sons of Henry IV. and half-brothers of the actual monarch. The one humbled himself completely before the minister, and issued out of prison stripped of all his offices and property, and reduced to the revenue of a simple and even needy gentleman. The Grand Prior conceded nothing, confessed nothing, and died in prison. Ornano also died a captive, exclaiming, almost with his last breath, "Ah, cardinal, what power thou hast!" But the Count de Chalais was the choice victim, reserved for the most conspicuous sacrifice. Of the high house of Talleyrand-Perigord, grandson of the great and terrible Montluc, held up to envy by the favor of the king and the high dignities to which he seemed treading a rapid course, the news that he was arrested, thrown into a solitary dungeon, forbidden communication with any one, to be tried by a high commission, spread that air of fear and gloom over the court and city which Edward Langdale had remarked on entering Nantes. No one knew how far the conspiracy extended; no one knew who was next to fall. All were aware, however, that the number of noble gentlemen and ladies under suspicion was immense, and that the king's own brother himself trembled at the consequences of his rash acts and purposes. A pause of hope came in the midst of all these disquietudes. The commission had sat once, presided over by Marillac, the lord-keeper; and it began to be whispered that the prisoner had defended himself so well, had cast so much suspicion upon the documents produced against him, and had shown so clearly that the graver parts of the accusation were utterly improbable and probably false, that even the fickle king, whose affection he had long lost, expressed convictions in his favor. But that same day, in the darkness of the night, Richelieu's chamber was left vacant; that same night a muffled cavalier passed Edward Langdale and descended to the dungeons; that same night the jailer gave the stranger admission to the cell of the unhappy Count de Chalais; and that same night the king was roused to receive the cardinal, bearing him important intelligence.

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Previous to that hour, Richelieu had been restless, imperious, anxious, irritable: the first proceedings of the commissioners had brought him, evidently, any thing but satisfaction; but a strange change came over him in a few hours. When De Tronson visited him on the morning of the day succeeding his mysterious interview with the prisoner Chalais, he found him calm, placable, even sportive. The mind was evidently at ease: he had slept, he said, like a child: some great object was accomplished,—some mighty triumph gained,—some move on the wide chess-board made which insured the game. There had been a moment of apprehension, a moment of danger: if he failed against Chalais, the fabric of his power, the cement of which was hardly dry, would tumble about his ears. But Richelieu was not destined to fail. He had taken the necessary course, however terrible, however unusual, however strange; and now he could not only repose in peace, but he could be as playful as his cat.

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The cardinal's equipage had been ordered for his beautiful house of Beauregard, not far from the walls of Nantes, at one o'clock; and he set out for that place at the exact hour. Shortly after he was gone, the Duke of Anjou applied to see him at his usual apartments in the castle. The air of the king's brother was somewhat troubled,—not greatly, for he thought he had assured himself that the rumor of Chalais having made some unexpected confession was false. The duke was, as all the world knew, timid and feeble, and less personally brave than his brother; and the very first reports of a confession made by Chalais, which he feared might compromise himself, had induced him to see the king and ask his permission to go for a few days to the sea-side to recover his health. Louis, with his habitual hypocrisy, caressed his brother, whom he hated, but told him he must apply to the cardinal for the permission he required. The manner of the king was so gentle and so smooth that Gaston of Anjou was quite deceived. He mounted his horse within the hour, and, followed by a gay and brilliant company, rode out for Beauregard. Richelieu had watched his coming from the window, and met him at the top of the great stairs. He conducted the prince into his private cabinet, and then begged him to be seated, himself standing in the presence of his sovereign's brother.

"Monsieur le Cardinal, I am anxious to go to the sea-side for a short time," said Gaston, "and my brother has no objection; but he requires first that I shall obtain your consent."

"How does your royal Highness propose to travel?" asked the minister.

"Oh, quite simply," replied the prince; "in fact, *incognito*."

"Would it not be better for your Highness to wait," said Richelieu, "at least, till your marriage with Mademoiselle de Montpensier has taken place? Then you can travel as a prince."

That marriage had been the central point of all the plots and intrigues of the court for months. Richelieu, knowing the volatile and intriguing spirit of the prince, as well as his

wild ambition, had determined that Gaston should wed a French gentlewoman, whatever wealth she might bring him, rather than a princess who would insure to him the dangerous support of foreign aid. Chalais and his party had opposed such a union; Gaston had joined them; and round this simple opposition, Richelieu had woven a web of mingled facts and falsehoods which was of a far stronger texture than the young duke fancied at that moment.

"If I wait till I am married to Mademoiselle de Montpensier," said the Duc d'Anjou, "I shall not get to the sea-side this summer, at least."

"Why so?" asked the cardinal. "Why cannot the marriage take place in a few days?"

"I do not feel well," said the prince, who did not venture to say he would not conclude the marriage at all: "I am ill, and would rather regain my health before I marry. The sea-air will do me good."

The serpent-smile came upon Richelieu's lips again. "Oh, I have a prescription," he said, "which will cure the malady of your Highness very rapidly."

[169] "How soon?" asked the prince, in a hesitating tone, not liking that smile, which he had seen before.

"In ten minutes," answered Richelieu, "for it cannot take long to act." And, opening his portfolio, he took forth a paper all written in a hand which Gaston knew too well. There, before his eyes, all apparently in the writing of the unhappy Chalais, was a confession of a treasonable conspiracy against the king and the state, in which he himself, Gaston of Anjou, and the young Queen Anne of Austria, were implicated by name. How much was really written by Chalais, how much had been added by the cardinal's skilful secretaries, has never been known; but Gaston was conscious that he was lost if he did not make his peace. After a moment of stupefied astonishment, he agreed to the proposed marriage,—agreed that it should take place immediately; but then, remembering his high position as brother of the reigning monarch and heir-presumptive to the throne, he began to make conditions,—demanded some security for the life, at least, of his friend and partisan Chalais.

But the terrible words which had long been hanging on the cardinal's lips were spoken at last, when the prince proposed some stipulations. "Perhaps," he said, "in the position in which your Highness now stands, it would be better to content yourself with the promise of your own life and liberty."

The young duke stood like one stupefied. The audacious idea that he—he, Gaston of Anjou—might possibly be brought to trial, condemned, executed, or sentenced to perpetual imprisonment, was spoken with calm civility, with courtly reverence for his high rank, but in a tone so cold, so grave, so determined, as to show that it was not unfamiliar to him who uttered it. A vague impression of the character of the man with whom he had to do—no definite perception, no clear insight into his character, but a sort of instinct, which seemed given to him on a sudden for his preservation—took possession of Gaston of Anjou. He yielded at once and entirely. A faint, hypocritical effort in favor of the unhappy Chalais, which Richelieu well knew how to parry with soft words and half-promises, was all that the selfish prince ventured to attempt. Toward himself, however, the minister showed himself unbounded in liberality. Dukedoms, Government posts to the amount of a million of revenue, were promised and given on the marriage of Monsieur with Mademoiselle de Montpensier; and the contract was sealed with the blood of Chalais. It was a part of Richelieu's system.

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Vialart, Bishop of Avranches, a contemporary, remarks that the great minister was accustomed, in dealing with those nobles who had any real pretensions, to grant them even more than they could rightly claim; but, if they showed themselves insensible to such conduct, from that moment he had no mercy on them. It was a part of his system, also, to teach one to betray another. The weaknesses of the men with whom he had to do served him as much as their strength.

The art of fathoming the characters of those who surround us, and the science of applying their strong qualities against our enemies and using their weaknesses against themselves, is the great secret of ambition. By it, every usurper has risen to power; by it, most have maintained themselves in authority; and when they have fallen, it has been more frequently by a mistake in the character of others than by want of force in their own. It may seem a Machiavelian axiom; but, had I the wisdom of the great Florentine, I should not be at all ashamed of being compared, even in one short passage, to that wise, virtuous, much-misunderstood man. The axiom, however, applies as closely to nations as to individuals. It resolves itself simply into this:—Who knows a nation best will rule that nation best. We have a thousand illustrations of the fact; and Richelieu certainly knew the French nation—that is to say when speaking of those times—knew the nobility, as well as man could know them,—in the mass, and individually; and, whenever it suited his purpose to be stern, he knew no pity, showed no compassion; whenever there was no object in severity, he was kind, or gentle, or sportive.

The well-known anecdote of Boisrobert and Mademoiselle de Gournay, when the former induced Richelieu to bestow upon the good old poetess, first a pension of a hundred crowns

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for herself, then a pension of fifty crowns for her chambermaid, then a pension of twenty crowns for her cat, and, lastly, a pistole for each of the cat's kittens, shows to what extent his good-humor could be carried. On the other hand, the fate of Chalais, Montmorency, Cinq Mars, De Thou, Marillac, and a host of others, gives fearful evidence of his relentless vengeance. At the period of which I write, however, the harsher points of his character had not fully developed themselves: perhaps they were not fully formed; for the minister whom we see represented on the stage, at this very period of his history, as an old and almost decrepit man struggling with an imaginary conspiracy, was really only forty-two years of age, and vigorous in body as in intellect.^[2]

CHAPTER XX.

The marriage-ceremony of Edward Langdale and Lucette de Mirepoix du Valais was over. Act was taken, as it was then sometimes called, of the fact, signed by the bride and bridegroom and by all present; and Richelieu's own name stood first in the list of witnesses.

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Every one well knows that in those days clandestine marriages took place frequently between persons very young, and also that the omnipotent power of the Romish Church was not uncommonly called in to dissolve a rite which the Church itself pronounced a sacrament. But the presence of Richelieu as prelate, cardinal, and prime minister was enough to secure the union of Edward and Lucette against any machinations of unconsenting friends in the courts, either civil or ecclesiastical. But the great minister left nothing undone to prevent the possibility of such a result: not a word was omitted which could render the ceremony binding; and Spada, the pope's nuncio, himself, was easily induced to give his formal sanction to an act which recognised to a certain degree the authority of the Romish Church and struck a heavy blow at one of the greatest Protestant leaders.

But a few words were spoken by the cardinal to the young bridegroom after the marriage; but they seemed to be important; for, though they were for the most part uttered in a whisper, all those who were still around heard the question, "Do you promise me, upon your honor as a gentleman?" and Edward's reply, "I do, most solemnly."

"Now, De Tronson," said the cardinal, "give our young friends an hour or two to compose their minds after so much agitation, and then forward them, as I directed, to wherever they may find the Prince de Soubise or his brother."

In five minutes after Lucette was left alone with her young husband, his arms were thrown around her, and her blushing face and tearful eyes were hidden on his bosom.

"Have we done right, Edward?" she said, after some pause.

"It was the only thing left for us to do, my love," he answered, kissing her tenderly. "And yet, Lucette, I fear it may not be so much for our happiness as it would seem. I foresee that your great relations will make every effort to annul our marriage or to keep us forever separate."

"That they shall never do, my love,—my husband," said Lucette, warmly: "they may separate us now; doubtless they will: but the time must come when I shall be my own mistress; and whenever that time does come, and you desire it, I will go to join you anywhere,—as, indeed, I am in duty bound to do."

"Then, my own dear girl," said the youth, "this marriage is not a forced union on your part, but as full of love and willingness as on mine? Oh, speak, Lucette!"

"Can you doubt it, Edward?" she answered. "I only feared for a moment that our own feelings might have led us to seize upon the cardinal's proposal too eagerly for our duty and respect toward others; but, on reflection, I think we could not avoid it. It was our only chance of safety."

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"I think so too," answered her young husband. "But yet it is almost cruel of the cardinal not to have carried his kindness one step further, and suffered me to take you with me, as my wife, wherever fate may lead me. But yet, dear girl, perhaps he was wise. We are both too young."

"But, if we are too young, is this marriage binding? Can they not break it?" asked Lucette, with a look of apprehension which was of very sweet assurance to Edward Langdale.

"Oh, no," he replied: "the cardinal made sure of that. I could see he took especial pains at every point of the ceremony, that there might not be a flaw now nor a quibble hereafter. Did you not remark how he corrected two words in the act with his own hand? They cannot break it, Lucette,—except, perhaps, with your consent."

"That they shall never have," replied Lucette. "Oh, Edward, let us both swear to each other never to consent that this contract shall be broken between us. Let us do it solemnly; let us

go down upon our knees before the God who sees all hearts, and be married again by our own holy promises."

As she spoke, she knelt, holding the youth's hand in hers, and, carried away by her simple love, he knelt beside her; and, with the confidence of early youth, they repeated the vows of everlasting faith to each other, and solemnly promised never to consent to a dissolution of their union, but each to seek the other at the first call.

Had Lucette known more of the world and worldly things, had her heart or her thoughts been less pure and spotless, Edward might have had a difficult task that day; for the cardinal had bound him by a promise similar to the injunction which the King of the Genii imposed upon Prince Zeyn Alasnum in the book which has enchanted all young and imaginative brains. But her innocence saved him from all suspicion of coldness; and the very undisguised love with which she rested on his bosom or received his kisses—warmer though not more affectionate than her own—spared all explanation, and gave to hope all the coloring of joy.

[174] But they had much else to discuss,—how to communicate with each other when they were separated, how they were to act toward the Prince de Soubise when they found him, what they were to tell and what they were to conceal. Just let the reader sit down and fancy all that could and might be said by two people who had passed through so much during the last few hours, who had so much to pass through still, who were so strangely situated, who knew so little of each other and yet who loved each other so well, and his imagination will supply much more of their conversation than I am skilled to tell. That conversation lasted long. One hour went away after another: they were left totally alone; (and for that, too, Richelieu had his reasons;) and two o'clock had passed ere any one disturbed them. Then a servant came to announce to them that their mid-day meal was served in an adjoining chamber, and they proceeded thither, with feelings very strange:—happy, and yet not fully; composed, in comparison with their feelings not many hours before, yet agitated; with warm hope for the future, but many a bewildering doubt and some apprehension.

But the first sight that presented itself on entering the little hall where their dinner was served gave matter for fresh thought to Edward. As to Lucette, her thoughts had employment enough: she was married; she was a wife, and one act of the life-drama of a woman was over: the curtain was down for the time.

[175] But there, on two sides of the table, each behind a chair, appeared Pierrot la Grange and Jacques Beaupré; and Edward's dinner was rendered tedious by his anxiety to learn from the latter the particulars of his escape near Mauzé and all that followed. While the court laquais was in the room, of course nothing could be said; but the man soon delivered the party from his presence, retiring as soon as the dinner—which was somewhat meagre—was over and the dessert placed upon the table. Pierrot had, indeed, before the man left the room, boldly apologized to his young master for not returning to him that morning, saying plainly that he had been stopped by the servants of the chateau. "I hear, however," he added, with a smile and a reverence, "that all has ended happily; and I beg humbly to offer my congratulations to monsieur and madame." Jacques, in his grave way, and the laquais, with courtly fluency, added their compliments upon the occasion; and Edward felt his scanty purse under tax.

"And now, Jacques," he said, as soon as they were free from the presence of the stranger, "tell me, as quickly and succinctly as possible, what has occurred since we last met."

[176] "Why, sir, what happened to me can be little to you," answered the man: "suffice it I got through a small hole in the lines when my young lady stuck in a large one. I reached the Chateau of Mauzé easily, bags and all, and, as you had ordered, went straight to the Prince de Soubise. I found the whole party there ready to break up, for the Papists were getting too many for them in the neighborhood,—the prince and duke having but three hundred men with them, while the enemy had three thousand round about. Monsieur de Soubise roared like a cow that has lost her calf when he heard that you and Pierrot were in all likelihood captured, and still worse when he learned that mademoiselle was certainly in the hands of the enemy; but the bags seemed a great consolation to him, and he plunged into them for refreshment as a tired man does into a cool river. He took out all the letters and papers, and fingered the gold and counted it; and then he read a letter which had his own name on it, and looked at all the rest one by one. Some he put aside, and the others he returned to the bag again with the money, and he and Monsieur de Rohan, with two or three others, went into the window and talked together for full half an hour. At the end of that time they came back and opened the other bag; but they seemed to have no great love for a frippery; for, finding there was nothing in it but purpled shirts and laced collars and some suits of clothes, they soon shut it up again, and then told me I must come with them, for Mauzé was likely to be turned into a rat-trap. As I had found by this time there was very little cheese in the trap, I was as glad as any one to get out, and we travelled for two days, having a brush now and then with the king's soldiers. Sometimes we had a little the better and sometimes a little the worse; but we contrived to get through all in the end, and we also made three prisoners. From them Monsieur le Prince learned that you had been sent to Nantes and that mademoiselle had been sent after you; and thereupon he proposed to me to follow you, taking with me your money and such letters as he said could do no harm. I was to inquire for you diligently but quietly; and his Highness told me of several places in

the town where I certainly should find friends, and perhaps information. Well, sir, I made my conditions, as all wise men do. I stipulated for a good horse, and for leave to go round by Meile and St. Maixens, (for we were by this time at a good farm hard by St. Jean,) and for money enough to carry me there and bring me back, and a little to spare. All this was granted, and I set out. But in one of the places where I was certain to find friends in Nantes, the good folks were so very friendly that they thought I should be better lodged and fed in the chateau, and therefore let his blessed Majesty or some of his people know that I was in the city inquiring for one Sir Peter Apsley, who was soon to arrive. Thereupon I was brought up here with my bag by two archers and an exempt; and here have I been entertained at the royal expense ever since."

"But you have not been a prisoner?" asked Edward. "Pierrot told me you were at liberty."

[177] "You have seen a mouse just after a cat has caught it, sir?" said the man. "I was just in that state. I underwent a good mumbling in the shape of an examination when first I came, and then I was told I was set free because Sir Peter Apsley was under the cardinal's particular protection; but, whenever I tried to go a hundred yards, pat came a paw upon me; and I fully made up my mind that, like poor madame mouse, I was only to be played with till I was eaten up. But at length I heard you were here; and last night I was chewed up in another examination; but I always took refuge in utter ignorance. I only knew that you had arrived at Rochelle in a merchant-ship,—not in Lord Denbigh's fleet, for that they asked me particularly; that, you and I being both anxious to get out of that God-forgotten place, I had taken service with you, as you wanted another man, having but one attendant and a page; that you were neither very tall nor very short, neither very brown nor very fair; that you spoke some French, but more English, looked for a beard with good hope, and were altogether a personable young gentleman about nineteen."

"You did me more than justice, Jacques," replied Edward. "However, you have acted well and discreetly; and I trust all present danger has passed away."

"Ah, sir," replied the man, "danger is always present. Neither you nor I can tell that twelve hours ago you were in greater peril than you are at this moment."

"Good Heaven! what does he mean, Edward?" exclaimed Lucette, turning pale. "What new peril does he speak of?"

"None, madame, in particular," replied Jacques Beaupré. "My father was killed by the fall of a beam on the celebration of his wedding-day. My uncle served under King Henry the Fourth, and fought in ten battles, but died from running a nail into his foot. My eldest brother was a sailor, and saw many a storm, but was drowned while bathing in the Sevre Niortaise; and by the time that I was twenty I had learned that in this world there is no such thing as danger, no such thing as security, and that the only way to be happy is to be ready at all times and fearful at none."

"A good philosophy, upon my word," said Edward. "But now our thought must be, where we can find Monsieur de Soubise."

"You might as well try to ride in a carriage after a hawk," answered Jacques: "he is here and there and everywhere in a day. But Monsieur de Rohan you will find more easily. He is probably at St. Martin des Rivières, the little castle which, just in the fork of the two rivers, can be defended by a handful against an army."

"There, then, we must go," said Edward. "But it is strange, dear Lucette, that we have seen no one for the last three hours. I thought Monsieur de Tronson said he would rejoin us."

[178] Edward little knew the multitude of events which were passing within the sombre walls of that chateau,—some great, some small, but all tending more or less to the promotion of those mighty results which were now marching on in France, all full of deep personal concern to the various personages around him, and amongst which the fate of himself and his Lucette was but as a petty interlude, which could excite nothing but a transient feeling of interest or amusement.

Half an hour more went by; and then was heard the sound of many feet passing along through some chamber near. At the end of above five minutes the door opened, and Monsieur de Tronson led in an elderly lady habited as if for a journey.

"Madame de Langdale," said the secretary of the cabinet, addressing Lucette, "Madame de Lagny, with whom you passed last night, will have the pleasure of accompanying you and Monsieur de Langdale on your journey. The carriage has been ready for an hour; but, the council having sat later than usual, I could not leave my post. Monsieur will do me the honor of accompanying me to his chamber below, where I will put him in possession of his money and his safe-conduct, together with his baggage, while you prepare for travelling, which, as it is, must, I fear, be protracted into the night."

Edward followed him down several flights of steps, conversing with him, as he went, upon the arrangements for their journey, telling him that he feared from his servant's information they would be obliged to proceed beyond Niort to St. Martin des Rivières, and that, consequently, at least two days more than he had calculated upon must pass ere he could fulfil the promise he had given to return.

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But De Tronson seemed thoughtful and absent; for, in truth, he had just come from a painful scene,^[3] and, although he heard, and answered all his young companion said, it was by an effort, and evidently without interest.

All the arrangements were soon made, however. Edward's property was restored to him; the tradesmen he and Lucette had employed were paid; and then the secretary led him to the little court, where stood one of the large clumsy carriages of the day with four tall horses. A stout man on horseback was also there, holding by the rein the horse which Jacques Beaupré had ridden to Nantes, and, as no beast had been provided for Pierrot, he mounted beside the coachman. Lucette and her companion were already in the vehicle, and, with a kind adieu from M. de Tronson, Edward took his place beside them, and the vehicle rolled on.

CHAPTER XXI.

It was a beautiful evening in July, the sky flecked with light clouds just beginning to look a little rosy with a consciousness that Phœbus was going to bed. They cannot get over that modest habit; for, although they have seen the god strip himself of his garmenture of rays and retire to rest every day for—on a very moderate calculation—six or seven thousand years, they will blush now and then when they see him entering his pavilion of repose and ready to throw off his mantle. There is much pudency about clouds. All other things get brazen and hardened by custom, but clouds blush still.

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It was a beautiful evening in July when the carriage which contained Lucette, Edward, and Madame de Lagny arrived in sight of the chateau of St. Martin des Rivières; but, when they did come in sight, how to get at it became a question of some difficulty. There, on a little mound, stood the building,—not large, but apparently very massive and well fortified,—within a hundred yards of the confluence of two deep and rapid rivers, the passage of each commanded by the guns on the ramparts and on the keep. No bridge, no boat, was to be seen, and for some time the party of visitors made various signals to the dwellers in the chateau; but it was all in vain, and at length Edward Langdale resolved to mount the good strong horse of Jacques Beaupré and swim the nearest stream.

Educated in a city, it was not without terror and a sweet, low remonstrance that Lucette saw her young husband undertake and perform a feat she had never seen attempted before; but Edward, though borne with his horse a good way down the stream by the force of the water, reached the other side in safety, and his companions could see him ride to the draw-bridge and enter the castle.

During some twenty minutes nothing further could be descried; and then, at a point where one of the outworks came down to the river, what I think was called in those days a water-gate was opened, and a boat shot out with two strong rowers.

Edward Langdale himself did not appear; but one of the boatmen walked up to the carriage and informed the ladies that his lord, the Duc de Rohan, would be happy to receive them in the chateau, but that the carriage and the men must remain on that side of the river, as the boat could only contain four persons and none other could be had.

"Ah, that is the reason Monsieur de Langdale did not return for us," said Madame de Lagny, with whom Edward had become a great favorite. "I was sure he had too much politeness to send servants for his lady if he could come himself."

A few minutes passed in placing Lucette's little wardrobe in the boat, and then, with a heart somewhat faint and sad, she followed Madame de Lagny to the water-side, remembering but too acutely that on the opposite bank she was to be received by persons who, however near akin, were but strangers to her, and there, too, very soon to part from him whom she was not now ashamed to own to herself she loved better than any one on earth.

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The boat shot off from the shore, and though carried so far down by the force of the current that the water-gate could not be reached, yet after some hard pulling the shore was gained, and the two ladies turned toward the drawbridge over which they had seen Edward Langdale pass. Madame de Lagny looked toward the great gate, but the young husband did not appear. In his place, however, was seen a stout middle-aged man, with hair somewhat silvered, and his breast covered by a plain corslet of steel. There were two or three other persons a step farther under the arch; and Madame de Lagny whispered, "That must be the duke himself. But where can Monsieur Edward be?"

Lucette's heart was asking her the same question; but by this time the Duc de Rohan was advancing to meet her and her companion, and in a moment more he was near enough to take Madame de Lagny's hand and raise it courteously to his lips.

"You have come to a rude place, madame," he said, "and among somewhat rude men; but we must do what we can to make your stay tolerable."

"Oh, my lord duke," replied the lady, with a courtly inclination of the head, "I must away as soon as possible. I am expected back at the court directly. But where is Monsieur de Langdale? I do not see him."

"He is in the chateau, madame," replied the duke; "but he has been telling me so strange a tale that I have judged it best, before he and this—["girl," he was in the act of saying; but he checked himself, and substituted the words "young lady"]—before he and this young lady meet again, to have from her lips and from yours what are the facts of the case. Pray, let us go in."

"The facts of the case are very simple, my lord," replied the old lady, with some stiffness. "Monsieur de Langdale is the husband of this young lady, formerly Mademoiselle de Mirepoix, whom you do not seem to recognise, my lord duke, though she is your near of kin. He married her in the presence of the cardinal and the whole court."

"More impudent varlet he!" exclaimed the duke, angrily. "And you, mademoiselle,—what have you to say to all this fine affair? Why, you are a mere child! This marriage can never stand!—without any one's consent! It is a folly!"

[182] "Not at all, duke," said Madame de Lagny. "Pray, recollect, sir, that Madame de Rambouillet was married at twelve,—I myself at sixteen. Madame is nearly fifteen, she tells me; and, as to the marriage not standing, you will find yourself much mistaken. The man who made it is not one to leave any thing he undertakes incomplete, as you will discover. They are as firmly married as any couple in the land, and that with the full authority of the king, which in this realm of France supersedes the necessity for any other consent whatever. She is a ward of the crown, sir; and her father having died in rebellion is no bar to the rights of the monarch."

"Madame, I beseech you, use softer words," said the duke, in a calmer tone. "My good cousin De Mirepoix died in defence of his religion, without one thought of rebellion, and really in the service of his Majesty, whose plighted word had been violated not by himself, but by bad ministers who usurped his name. Make room, gentlemen. This way, madame. We shall find in this hall a more private place for our conference."

So saying, he led the way into the large room in the lower story of the keep, and there begged Madame de Lagny to be seated. Lucette he took by the arm and gazed into her face for a moment, saying,—

"Yes; she is very like. Here, take this stool, child: we have no fauteuils here. Now, answer my question. What had you to do with this marriage? Did it take place at his request or yours?"

Lucette's heart had at first sunk with alarm and disappointment at the harsh reception she had received, having little idea what a chattel—what a mere piece of goods—a rich orphan relation was looked upon amongst most of the noble families of France. But the very harshness which had terrified her at first at length roused her spirit; and, though she colored highly, she replied, in a firm tone, "At neither his request nor mine, my lord."

"Ah! good!" cried the duke. "Then neither of you consented? The marriage of course——"

"We did both consent," said Lucette, interposing. "Did he not tell you the circumstances? Did he not give you the cardinal's message?"

[183] "He told me a good deal, and he said something about the Eminence; but, by my faith, I was so heated by the tale that I did not much attend to the particulars. Let me hear your story, mademoiselle. What did the cardinal say?"

"My lord, we had been stopped near Mauzé by some of the royal officers, and sent on under guard toward Nantes——"

"Oh, I know all about that," interrupted the duke. "What have you been doing since? I trust, not masquerading about Nantes dressed up as a page; though, by my faith, ladies are now getting so fond of men's clothes that they will soon leave us none to wear ourselves. Why, there was my good cousin De Chevreuse, with her young daughter, rode across the country, both in cavaliers' habits, and, finding no other *gîte*, stayed all night with the good simple curé of the parish, who never found out they were women till they were gone. Well, where have you been, and what have you been doing, since that affair at Mauzé?"

"The Abbey de Moreilles was burned by lightning, my lord," replied Lucette, whose cheek had not lost any part of its red from De Rohan's language. "We escaped into the Marais, where I was taken ill of the fever common there. As soon as I could travel, we went direct to Nantes, intending to come round at once and seek for Monsieur de Soubise. In consequence of his having sent a man with some of my husband's baggage to that city, we were discovered and arrested."

"Your husband, little child?" exclaimed the duke. "But go on; go on. What happened next?"

"I was separated from Edward, who had treated me with the kindness of a brother," said Lucette.

"Ay, I dare say," again interrupted De Rohan;—"with something more than the kindness of

a brother."

[184] "For shame, Monsieur le Duc!" said Madame de Lagny, sharply. "You said very truly just now that we had come to a rude place and amongst rude men. If the cardinal had known what sort of reception this poor lady would meet with, I am sure he would have followed the course Monsieur de Tronson hinted at and given her up to Madame de Chevreuse. There at least she would have been treated with respect and kindness."

At the mere name of Madame de Chevreuse the duke's countenance changed. Without knowing it, good old Madame de Lagny had touched a chord which was sure to vibrate in the heart of any of the Rohan Rohans as soon as one of the Rohan Montbazons was mentioned; and after a moment's pause the prince answered, with a very much less excited air, "His Eminence acted courteously and well in not giving up my fair young cousin to a lady who has no right to her guardianship, who was her father's enemy, whose conduct is not fit for the eyes of a young girl even to witness. But tell me, mademoiselle, what was the message his Eminence sent to my brother to account for his conduct in bestowing—in attempting to bestow—your hand upon an unknown English lad, who may be of good family or may not, but who is no match for any one of the name of Rohan?"

"He said, sir," answered Lucette, "that we were to tell you or the Prince de Soubise, whichever we might find, that, under the peculiar circumstances of the case,—by which, I presume, he meant our having travelled so long together,—the cardinal prime minister had judged it imperatively necessary we should be married, and had himself seen the ceremony performed; that for two years Edward should leave me with you, but that at the end of that time he should claim me and take me, and that all his Eminence's power should be exerted to give me to him. He added, in a lower tone, 'They will find me more difficult to frustrate than Madame de Chevreuse.'"

"That is true, as I live!" said the duke. "But yet this is hard. Why, girl, it will drive my brother Soubise quite mad,—if he be not mad already, as I sometimes think he is."

[185] "His madness will not serve him much against the cardinal," said Madame de Lagny, dryly. "But, my lord, we must bring this discussion to an end, for it is growing dark, and I and Monsieur de Langdale must be treading our way back to Nantes. He is but, as it were, a prisoner upon parole; and I promised my cousin De Tronson I would make no delay."

"Madame, in all the agitation and annoyance this affair has cost me," said Rohan, "I have somewhat, I am afraid, forgotten courtesy. I ordered refreshments for you, indeed, as soon as I heard of your coming; but I did not remember to ask you to partake of them. They will be here in a moment."

"We can hardly stay," said the old lady. "But I beg, sir, you would let Monsieur Edouard be called, both to accompany me and to take leave of his wife."

The duke bit his lips; but after a moment's thought he answered, "Pray, madame, take some refreshment. As to this lad, he may come and wish her good-bye; but no private interview, if you please!"

The old marquise was a good deal offended at all that had passed, and it was not without satisfaction she replied, "Oh, I dare say they have said all to each other they want to say, Monsieur le Duc. They have had private interviews enough since their marriage to make all their arrangements. Is it not so, dear Lucette?"

But Lucette was weeping, and De Rohan, with a cloudy brow, quitted the room.

In a few moments some refreshments were brought in and placed upon the table, and the duke appeared, accompanied by Edward Langdale. The youth's look was serious, and even angry, but that of De Rohan a good deal more calm. "Sit down, monsieur, and take some food," said the latter as they entered; but Edward answered at once, "I neither eat nor drink in your house, sir. I did you and your family what service I could, honestly and faithfully; and—because, under force I could not resist, and to save myself and your fair cousin from a fate which you would not have wished to fall upon her nor I wish to encounter for myself, I yielded to a measure which God and she know I never proposed when it was fully in our power—you treat me with indignity. You much mistake English gentlemen, sir, if you suppose that such conduct can be forgotten in a few short minutes."

[186] "By the Lord!" said De Rohan, with a laugh, "it is well you did not meet with Soubise; for you might have had his dagger in you for half what you have said."

"Or mine in him, if he had insulted me further," answered Edward, walking toward Lucette and taking her hand.

"A pretty bold gallant," said the duke, with a smile. "Madame de Lagny, I pray you, do more honor to my poor house than your young friend."

Now, it must be confessed, the good old lady was hungry; and hunger is an overruling passion. The duke helped her to food and wine, and then, having done what second thoughts had shown him was only courteous to a lady, he turned, under the influence of the same better thoughts, toward Edward, who was still talking in a whisper to Lucette, while she, on her part, could hardly answer a word for weeping.

"Young gentleman," said De Rohan, holding out his hand, "do not let us part bad friends. Remember, first, that if there be any validity in this marriage it is always better to keep well with a wife's relatives; and, secondly, that one of my house, above all others, may well feel mortified and enraged at an alliance which under no circumstances we could have desired or sanctioned. Recollect our family motto,—'*Roi ne puis; prince ne daigne: Rohan je suis;*' and pride is not so bad a thing as you may think it now. If it be pride of a right kind, it keeps a man from a world of meannesses. As to this young lady, I will take care of her, and, now that my first fit of passion is past, will treat her kindly. Be sure of that, Lucette; for I have even got a notion, by some bad experience, that a portion of love is no evil in the cup of matrimony. However, the question of this marriage must be a matter of consultation between my brother Soubise and myself, and the lawyers too; for I will not conceal from either of you that Soubise, who has more to do with the business than I have, will break it if he can."

[187] Edward took the proffered hand; but he only replied, "His Eminence the cardinal said that he had made it so fast there was no power on earth or in hell to break it. But that must be determined hereafter, my lord duke. At the end of two years I will claim my wife. In the mean time, where is Monsieur de Soubise?"

"Go not near him! go not near him!" said De Rohan. "By my honor, there would be bloodshed soon! He is at Blavet, I fancy, now, on his way to England; but I will write to him this night, and, if possible, you shall have his answer at Nantes. You must not expect any thing very favorable to your pretensions; but, whatever it is, it shall be sent."

"My lord, if I might ask one favor, I would do it," said Edward. "It is this. From what you have yourself said, and from what others have told me, I infer that Monsieur de Soubise is of no very placable nor temperate disposition. He himself has had some share in producing both what you look upon as a misfortune and what had nearly proved the destruction of Lucette and myself, by sending—with very good intentions, doubtless, but I think very unadvisedly—letters and other matters to the very residence of the court, which betrayed our coming to his Eminence the cardinal. Had that not been done, we should in all probability have passed without question, and I should have been able to restore this dear girl to her relations as Mademoiselle de Mirepoix. As it is, my wife she is and must remain; but I would rather that she was under your care than that of the prince, for she has this evening suffered too much for an event, which she could not avoid without dooming herself and me to destruction; and I would fain that the same or perhaps more should not be inflicted upon her from another quarter. Lucette will explain to you much that I have not time to tell, for I see Madame de Lagny has risen, and it is growing so dark that I fear we must depart."

"I can promise nothing," said the duke, "but that I will do my best."

Thus saying, he turned toward Madame de Lagny, who by this time had some lights on the table before her, and addressed to her all those ceremonious politenesses which no one knew better how to display, when not moved by passion, than the Duc de Rohan.

[188] In the mean time, Edward and Lucette remained at the darker side of the room; but, had it been the broadest daylight, their natural feelings would have suffered little restraint. The contrast of Edward's love and tenderness with the cold harshness of her own relations made all her affections cling closer round him than ever, and she hung upon his breast and mingled kisses with his, while the tears covered her cheeks and sobs interrupted her words. "Oh, Edward," she said, "I wish to Heaven that I were indeed but the grandchild of good Clement Tournon, of Rochelle, as you once thought me! We might be very happy then."

Mingled with his words of politeness to Madame de Lagny, the duke had been giving some orders to his own attendants; and at length he said, "Now, young gentleman, it is time to depart. Madame is ready."

One last, long embrace, and Edward advanced to the side of the duke. He did not venture to look at Lucette again, but followed Rohan and Madame de Lagny closely into the outer hall, thence through a small court and a *place d'armes*, in each of which were a number of soldiers fully armed, and then by a covered way to the water-gate, to which point the small boat had by this time been brought round. There was still a faint light upon the river; but a lantern had been placed lighted in the bow of the boat, and in a few minutes the old lady and her young companion were landed on the other side. One of the boatmen lighted them up to the carriage, and Edward, after bestowing a piece of money upon the man, took his seat beside Madame de Lagny, who gave orders to proceed toward Nantes, stopping, however, at the first auberge where any thing like tolerable accommodation could be found.

[189] "Ah, poor Monsieur de Rohan!" she said, with perhaps not the most compassionate feelings in the world. "He is much to be pitied; and, indeed, he ought to feel, as he said, that some love in marriage is a very good ingredient. He ought to know it by experience; for his own good-for-nothing dame cares not, and never did care, for him; and it is the common phrase in Paris that she has so large a heart she can find room in it for everybody except her husband. Why, I know at least ten lovers she has had besides the Duc de Candale, who is more her slave than her lover, and who"——

Just at that moment, the horses having been put to, the coachman gave a sharp crack of his the whip, the coach a tremendous jolt, and Madame de Lagny brought her story to an end, somewhat to the relief of her young companion.

CHAPTER XXII.

For the first time in life—and it was very early to begin—Edward Langdale felt that loneliness of heart which parting for an indefinite time from one we dearly love produces in all but the very light or the very hard. He had never loved before; he had never even thought of love; but now he loved truly and well. He might not indeed have loved even now, for he and Lucette were both so young that the idea might not have come into the mind of either; but their love had been a growth rather than a passion; and, as the reader skilled in such mysteries must have seen, it had been watered and trained and nourished by all those accidents which raise affection from a small germ to a beautiful flower. First, she had nursed him so tenderly that he could not but feel grateful to her; then she had been cast upon his care in dangers and difficulties of many kinds, so that deep interest in her had sprung up. Then, again, she was so beautiful, in her first fresh youth, that he could not but admire what he protected and cherished. Then she was so innocent, so gentle, so ductile, and yet so good in every thought, that he could not but esteem and reverence what he admired. Then had come his turn of nursing, and the interest became warmer, more tender; and at length, when the mere thought of stating, in order to account for their companionship, that they sought to be married first entered the mind of each, it let a world of light into their hearts, and the whole was pointed, directed, confirmed, by the sudden ceremony which bound them together. They had promised at the altar to love each other forever, and they felt that they could keep their word.

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But Edward, as he rolled along by the side of Madame de Lagny, could not help asking himself painful questions: "I shall love her ever," he said to himself; "but she is so young, so very young,—a mere child! Will her love last through a long separation? will not her feelings change with changing years? does she even love me now as I love her?"

Luckily he asked himself the last question, for it went some way to answer the others to his satisfaction. There had been something in her embrace, in her kiss, in her eyes, in her clinging tenderness, which told him that she did love as he did; and he, feeling, or at least believing, that he would love still, however long they might be separated, learned to credit the sweet tale of Hope and believe that she would love constantly too.

Nevertheless, he felt very sad; and yet he exerted himself eagerly and successfully to make the journey pass as pleasantly as he could to poor Madame de Lagny, who, though she had not undertaken her disagreeable task out of any affection to either Edward or Lucette, but merely in obedience to the wishes of Richelieu, had learned to love both her young companions, and had taken their part sincerely in the discussion with the Duc de Rohan. She was both a keen-sighted and a clear-minded old lady; and she saw well the gloomy sadness of Edward Langdale, and understood its cause; but she saw likewise that he was making every effort to show her courteous attention; and no old women are ever ungrateful for the attention of young men.

For three days the weary journey back to Nantes continued; and in that time the good marquise contrived to store the young Englishman's mind with many of her own peculiar apothegms, some good and some indifferent, but all the fruit of much worldly experience grafted upon a keen and sensible mind.

"Never despair, my son," she said. "Many a man is lighted on his way by a candle; nobody by a stone. Of a misfortune you can remove, think as much as you like; of a situation you cannot change, think as little as possible. If you have a marsh to go through, gallop as fast as you can; and, if you have a heavy hour, fill it with action. A wasp will not sting you if you do not touch it; and we do not feel sorrow when we do not think of it."

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Such were a few of the old lady's maxims, and one of them struck Edward Langdale's fancy very much. "If you have a marsh to go through," he repeated to himself, "gallop as fast as you can; and, if you have a heavy hour, fill it with action." He thought that the next two years would indeed be a marsh to him, and he resolved to gallop through them as fast as he could. But there was one sad reflection which he could not banish, one point in his situation which gave him anxiety rather than pain. He knew not how to hold any communication with his young bride. He was well aware that every effort would be made to prevent it. Lucette had been once sent to England to keep her out of the hands of the Duchesse de Chevreuse: where might she not be sent now? Her two cousins Soubise and Rohan were constantly roving from place to place, and there was as little chance of any letter from him finding her as of any news of where she was reaching him.

The old fable of Midas telling his misfortune to the reeds is founded upon a deep knowledge of human nature. Man must have some one to share the burden of heavy thoughts, and Edward told his to Madame de Lagny. The old lady was better than the

reeds, for she whispered consolation. "I can help you but little, my son," she said; "but, if you could attach yourself to the cardinal, he could help you a great deal. However, I will do the best I can for you and the dear child your little wife. If you want to write to her, send your letter to me at the court, wherever it is, and the letter shall reach her sooner or later. I will find means to let her know that she must send hers to me likewise, and they shall reach you; if you will keep me always informed of where you are."

[192] Edward not only pressed her hand, but kissed it; and not five minutes after, when they were within ten miles of the city of Nantes, a man came riding at full speed after the carriage, drew up his horse at the great leathern excrescence called the portière, and asked, in a brusque tone, if Monsieur Langdale was in the coach.

"Yes; I am he," answered Edward. "What want you with me?"

"A letter," replied the man. And, handing in a sealed packet, he turned his horse's head and rode away.

It was still early in the day, and the youth, breaking open the letter, read the contents. They ran thus:—

"MY LORD AND BROTHER:—

"On the wing for England, I have received your letter. Tell the insolent varlet that he shall never see her face again, the devil and the pope and the cardinal to boot, or my name is not
"SOUBISE."

Edward's brow became fearfully contracted, and he muttered, "At the end of the earth."

"Show it to me! show it to me!" exclaimed Madame de Lagny, who was not without her share of woman's curiosity. "What is it makes you look so angry, my son?"

Edward handed her the letter, and she read it with attention, but not with the indignation he expected to see. On the contrary, she seemed pleased and amused. "Let me keep this," she said. "Methinks that Monsieur de Soubise may find the triple alliance of the devil, the pope, and the cardinal to boot somewhat too much for him. The cardinal alone might be enough, without two such powerful auxiliaries. But let me keep it. It can be of no value to you."

"Oh, none!" answered Edward. "Keep it if you will, madame. But the Prince de Soubise shall find that, if he have a strong will, I have a strong will also; and, if he have some advantages, we have youth and activity and resolution."

"And the Cardinal de Richelieu," said Madame de Lagny, emphatically: "he is not the man to leave any work incomplete, nor to be bearded by any one. However, we must be near Nantes by this time. Now let us consider what your course is to be when we arrive."

[193] The good marquise then proceeded to indoctrinate her young companion with all the forms of a court, which, though not so rigid as they afterward became,—for Louis XIV. was the father of etiquette,—were sufficiently numerous and arbitrary to puzzle a young man like Edward. He found that, although he had once by the force of circumstances won easy access to the cardinal prime minister, he had now various ceremonies to go through before he could hope for an audience. To call, to put down his name and address in a book, to see principal and secondary officers, and to give as it were an abstract of his business, were all proceedings absolutely necessary, Madame de Lagny thought, before he could see the cardinal; and Edward, with a faint smile, asked her if she did not think it would be better for him to commit a little treason as the shortest way to the minister's presence.

"Heaven forbid!" cried the old lady. "But in the mean time you must go to an auberge near the chateau, where his Eminence can find you at any moment." And she proceeded to recommend the house of an excellent man, who had been cook to poor Monsieur de Lagny, and now, she assured Edward, kept the very best auberge in Nantes.

[194] At length the city was reached, and the coach drove straight to the castle, where Madame de Lagny took a really affectionate leave of Edward and retired to her own apartments. The young Englishman then proceeded to inquire for Richelieu, found he was absent at a small distance from the town, and, having written his name in a book, betook himself to the inn which his travelling-companion had mentioned. In the court of the castle he had seen no one but a guard or two and some servants at the door of the hall. In the great place there was hardly a human being to be seen,—no gay cavaliers on horseback or on foot, no heavy carrosse with its crowd of laquais. At the other side of the square, indeed, near the end of the little street which led toward the dwelling of Monsieur de Tronson, was a group of workmen; and another larger group just appeared beyond some buildings close by the river-side. But, altogether, the whole town had a melancholy and deserted look. A sort of ominous silence reigned around, too, which Edward felt to be very depressing to the spirits, especially in a country celebrated even then for the light hilarity of its population.

The inn, however, was fresh-looking and clean, and the landlord, who soon appeared, although he was not at the entrance as usual when the coach stopped, was the perfection of a French aubergist,—as polished as a prince, and full of smiles. While Pierrot la Grange and Jacques Beaupré stayed by the carriage, at their master's desire, to take out the little

sum of his baggage and to bestow a small gratuity upon the coachman, the host led his guest up to a large, somewhat gloomy chamber floored with polished tiles, recommended his fish—the best in the world—and his poultry, which he asseverated strongly were the genuine production of Maine, and took the young gentleman's pleasure as to his dinner.

He had hardly gone when the two servants appeared, bringing various articles; but their principal load was evidently in the mind. The face of Pierrot, which temperate habits had not yet improved in fatness, though it had become somewhat blanched in hue, was at least three inches longer since they entered Nantes; and Jacques Beaupré, always solemn even in the midst of his fun, was now not only solemn, but gloomy.

"I wish we were safe out of this place, sir," said Pierrot, shutting the door after him. "It is a horrible place!"

"What is the matter?" asked Edward: "the whole town looks sad, and you both seem to have caught the infection."

"Did not the landlord tell you, sir?" said Jacques Beaupré. "I thought landlords always told all they knew, and a little more. But I suppose he has lived long enough near a court to keep his tongue in his mouth, for fear somebody should cut it out."

"The matter, sir, is this," said Pierrot: "the poor young Count de Chalais, who was confined in the dungeons close under the room where they put you, has been condemned to die this morning,—they say, for a few light words."

"Indeed!" said Edward, with a somewhat sickening memory of the dangers he himself had seen: "that is very sad. But probably the king will pardon him."

[195] "Oh, not he," answered Pierrot: "they say the poor countess, his mother, has moved heaven and earth to save him, without the least effect. His head is probably off by this time."

"No, no; that cannot be," rejoined Jacques: "did not the boy tell us that the two executioners had both been spirited away?"

"Yes, but he said that a soldier—a prisoner—had been found to undertake the job," answered Pierrot. "Oh, it is a bad business, Master Ned! They say the queen herself has been brought before the council, and the Duke of Anjou threatened with death, and half the court exiled, and the cardinal in such a humor that——"

"That every one as he walks along is feeling his ears, to be sure that there is any head upon his shoulders," added Jacques Beaupré. "Would it not be better for you, sir, to go to that good Monsieur de Tronson, and be civil to him, and make as many friends as possible?"

Edward paused in thought for a moment, and then replied, "That is well bethought, Beaupré; for though I think I have nothing to fear, yet in common courtesy I owe my second visit to one who has been so kind to me. I will go directly. Let the landlord know that I may be a little later than I mentioned at dinner."

[196] Edward put on his hat and went out into the place, taking care to mark particularly the position of the auberge, that he might not be forced to inquire his way in a town where so many dangers lurked on every side. The road to Monsieur de Tronson's house was easy; and, crossing the square, the young gentleman directed his course toward the end of the street where, when passing in the coach, he had seen a crowd of workmen, who were still gathered round a spot about a hundred and fifty or two hundred yards in advance. On approaching nearer, Edward caught sight of a platform of wood raised some eight or ten steps from the ground. He could only discern a part, for the people had gathered thickly round; but, though he had never before seen the preparations for a public execution, it flashed through his mind at once that this was the scaffold on which the unhappy Chalais was to suffer. To avoid the terrible scene, he turned toward the left; but, just as he was approaching the end of the street, a shout came up from the water-side and a dull rushing sound from the southeast. A large crowd poured into the square from both sides; and before Edward could escape he was caught by the two currents and forced along to within thirty yards of the scaffold. He tried to free himself and force his way out, but a warning voice sounded in his ear.

"Be quiet, young gentleman," said an elderly man close by, speaking in a low tone. "This young count has to die, and, if he be your best friend, take no notice. Suspicion is as good as proof here just now. Look where he comes!"

Edward turned his eyes in the direction to which the old man was looking, and beheld a sight which was but a mere prologue to the horrors that were to follow, but which could never be banished from his memory. Surrounded by a body of guards came a tall, handsome young man, without his cloak, as if he had been torn from his dungeon unprepared, but still showing, in such habiliments as he did wear, all the extravagant splendor of the times. By his side, with her hand passed through his arm, as if to support him, and pouring a torrent of words into his ear, was an elderly lady in a widow's dress. Her face and carriage were noble and dignified, though lines of past grief and present anguish were strongly marked upon her countenance; but when she lifted her eyes toward the scaffold, and beheld there a stout, bad-looking man leaning on a large, heavy sword, a sort of spasm passed over her features.

"That is his mother," whispered the same voice which Edward had heard before.

Behind the mother and the son came the confessor, a dull-faced, heavy monk; and then a good number of guards, and one or two men in black robes,—probably exempts, or other inferior officers of the court. But the eyes of Edward Langdale were fixed upon the mother and her son; and the thought of his own dear mother gave him the power—I might almost call it the faculty—of sympathizing with the noble-minded woman, to a degree that made the whole scene one of actual agony.

[197] "I wish I could get out," he said, speaking to the old man, who was jammed up against him: "this is horrible. Can you not make way?"

"Try to force your way through the castle-wall," replied the other, cynically: "you have but to see a man die, young gentleman."

"Ay, but how?" said Edward.

"By the sword," said the old man: "it is an interesting sight,—much better than by the cord. I have seen every execution that has taken place in the city for twenty years. Perhaps I may see yours some day. They are fine sights,—the only sights that interest me now; but this is likely to be a bungled business, for the old countess there bribed both the executioners to get out of the way, and this fellow does not understand the trade. He is paler than the criminal. See how he shakes!"

Edward raised his eyes for an instant and saw the unhappy mother supporting her luckless son up the very steps of the scaffold,—not that he wanted aid, for his step was firm and his look bold and frowning. There was a fearful sort of fascination in the sight; and the lad gazed on till he saw the last embrace taken and the young count make a sign and speak a word to the executioner. Then he withdrew his eyes, till, a moment after, there was a shrill cry of anguish and a murmur amongst the crowd; and he looked up again only to see the wretched young man, all bleeding, leaning his wounded head upon his mother's bosom.

The executioner had missed his stroke. Again and again he missed it. He complained of the sword: a heavier one was handed up to him; but still his shaking arm refused to perform its hideous office, till, after more than thirty blows,^[4] the head of the unhappy young man was literally hacked off, almost at his mother's feet.

The noble woman raised her hands and her eyes to heaven, exclaiming, "I thank thee, O God, that my son has died a martyr and not a criminal!"

[198] The last acts of the terrible drama Edward did not see. He felt as if his heart would burst with the mingled feelings of indignation and horror which all he had beheld awakened; and after the second or third blow he kept his eyes resolutely bent down, till the pressure of the crowd relaxed as the spectators of the bloody scene began to disperse. Then, sick at heart, and with a strange feeling of hatred for the world, he turned his steps back to the inn. He was in no mood for conversation with any one.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was eleven o'clock on the following day when Edward Langdale appeared at the door of Monsieur de Tronson. The laquais said he did not know whether his master was visible or not, but he would see; and, leaving the young Englishman in an ante-chamber, he went in and remained some five minutes. At his return he asked Edward to follow, and introduced him into the bed-chamber of the secretary, who welcomed him, he thought, rather coldly.

"I hear, Monsieur de Langdale," said De Tronson, "that you have accurately fulfilled the injunctions of his Eminence and your word. That, my good cousin, Madame de Lagny, has told me; but I think you should have been here earlier."

"It was my intention, sir," replied Edward, seating himself in a chair to which the secretary pointed, near that in which he himself sat, wrapped in a large dressing-gown, by the fire, though it was the month of July.

"After having left my name in the ante-chamber of his Eminence, I went to my auberge for a few minutes, and then came out, with the intention of paying my respects to you; but I was stopped by a great crowd of people and forced to witness a dreadful scene, which rendered me incapable of holding any rational conversation with any one."

[199] "Ha! you were there!" exclaimed the secretary, suddenly roused from the sort of listless mood in which he seemed plunged when Edward entered. "What happened? Tell me all. But first shut that door, if you please. I am ill, or I would not trouble you; but it is well to have no listening ears in this place, whatever one has to say."

Edward closed the door, and, although unwillingly, detailed all that he had witnessed of the execution of the unhappy Chalais.

De Tronson was moved far more than the young man expected. He put his hand over his eyes, murmuring, "Poor lady! Unhappy young man!" and Edward thought he saw some tears steal down his cheek. "I call God to witness," he exclaimed, at length, "that I had no share in this affair! Though my relations with Monsieur de Chalais were very slight, I would have saved him if I could,—saved him from himself, I mean."

He sank into silence; and, to change the conversation, Edward said, "I would have been here earlier this morning, but I thought you would probably be at the council."

"There will be no council to-day," replied the secretary, shaking his head: "we are all made sick by this affair. It has been like one of those epidemic blasts that sweep over the marshes, filling every one they touch with fever. I did not know you had waited on his Eminence: that was what I alluded to,—not a mere formal visit to me. That was all well; but you had better let him know that you are here. I know not that he will see you; but you must show every token of respect—especially just now."

"Shall I go to his apartments, then?" asked Edward.

"No, no," said De Tronson, with somewhat of the petulance of illness: "call a servant."

The servant was soon called, and De Tronson bade him go to the apartment of his Eminence. "Seek out one of his secretaries," he said, "and, if you cannot find one, ask for his chaplain. Request him to present my duty to the cardinal and tell him that Monsieur de Langdale, the young English gentleman he knows of, is with me, waiting his Eminence's pleasure. Say I would have come myself, but I am ill of fever."

[200] The man retired and was absent only a few minutes ere he returned with the simple words, "His Eminence cannot be interrupted to-day." Edward heard the reply with regret; for time was passing away, his journey was just beginning when those who sent him imagined it was ended, and his funds were diminishing every hour. But, even while taking leave of Monsieur de Tronson and expressing a sincere hope that he would soon be better, a servant in purple livery entered, and, bowing to Monsieur de Tronson, announced that his Eminence would see Monsieur de Langdale.

"Go, go! quickly!" said De Tronson, in a low voice; "but be careful." And Edward followed the attendant from the room.

"Now for my fate," thought the young man, as he crossed the little bridge over the moat. "Such scenes as that of yesterday harden rather than soften. Methinks I could meet death more easily now than I could have done four-and-twenty hours ago. Yet why should I think the cardinal wishes me ill? He has been kind to me, however cruel he may be to others. But why should I call him cruel? I know nothing of that young count's guilt or innocence; and the horrid accessories of his fate were certainly none of the minister's devising."

Thus thinking, he followed through the long passages of the castle till he came to a door where stood one of the cardinal's guard, and there the servant paused and knocked. A page opened it, and to his guidance Edward was consigned. He was then led through an ante-room, and then through the room where he had seen Richelieu before, to another smaller chamber, where he once more found himself in the presence of the man whose life and power were so often in the balance, but whose will in reality, from that time forward, was fate in France.

[201] Richelieu, though habited in clerical garb, was in what may be called half-dress, and the *robe de chambre* which he wore above his cassock was of bright colors and a mere mundane form. His pointed beard, or royal, as it was then called, with the dark mustache and the rich lace collar, which might have suited any gay cavalier of the court, also had a very lay appearance; and at once it flashed across the mind of the young Englishman that he had seen him somewhere in another costume. Where, for an instant he could not recollect; but he had not half traversed the room before the magic power of association brought back a night not more than a week before, when, walking in one of the corridors of that very chateau, he had met a man descending to the dungeons in which the unhappy Chalais was confined; and that man was before him. He shuddered when his mind instinctively combined the visit of that night with the scene of the day before; but in the look and manner of the cardinal at that moment there was nothing to inspire awe or indicate any cruelty or even harshness of character. His face was grave,—very grave; but with a mild gravity much like that of the famous bust which is, perhaps, the only good likeness of that extraordinary man. In his hand was a book,—the famous Imitation of Christ; but he had let it drop upon his knee when the door opened; and one who did not know him would have said, to see him, "There is some calm student of theology a little disturbed by being interrupted."

"Come in, young gentleman, and take a seat," said Richelieu, as the page closed the door. "You have kept your word well with me, I find."

"I always try to do so, my lord cardinal," replied Edward, seating himself near the minister.

"Lord cardinal!" said Richelieu, with a faint smile: "that is English, and somewhat Roman too. But what matters it? You heretics from the other side of the sea sometimes give us a lesson about dignities. Eminence! Any man can reach that title of right in other paths

besides the Church, if he be wise, and brave, and firm,—ay, firm: he must be firm! Many a man who might be great, by some small weakness in his own nature yielded to, even once too often, mars all the results of higher qualities. Well, you have returned, as you promised; but you have come at a time when we are all sad,—very sad. I thought I would not see any one this morning, but take counsel with the only happy ones,—the dead. However, on second thoughts, I resolved to admit you, as you had performed your part of our bargain well, and your last conversation pleased me."

He spoke in a sort of meditative tone, and, when he stopped, Edward had nothing to reply but, "Your Eminence is gracious."

[202] "Not so," answered Richelieu: "I am not gracious. I was not formed so by nature. I can be kind, I think, to those who love me,—affectionate, merciful; but graciousness implies some tenderness, and I am not tender. Nay, not even tender to myself; for I declare to Heaven that, did I find in my own heart the weakness that would yield right and justice to prayers and tears and entreaties, I would pluck out that heart and trample it under foot!"

His tone was somewhat vehement, and his eye sparkled; but after a moment or two all was calm again; and he asked, even with a smile, "What think you, young gentleman, men will say of me hereafter?"

"I have neither wisdom, your Eminence, nor experience sufficient to divine," answered Edward; "neither can any one say till a period, I trust, far, far distant."

"You mean when I am dead," said Richelieu. "Who can say how soon that may be? How long can a poor human frame bear the labors, the anxieties, the cares that I undergo,—the struggle against factions, the struggle against oneself, the crushing out of sympathies, the resistance of all kindly feelings, the endurance of ingratitude, falsehood, treachery, the malice and the envy of the many, the undeserved hatred of not a few? Happy the monk in his cloister! happy the ecclesiastic in his chair! Miserable, miserable is the man whom either personal ambition, or idle vanity, or the desire of serving his country, leads to the thorny paths of state or places on the tottering pinnacle of power!"

"Thank Heaven!" said Edward, interested deeply, "there can be no chance of my ever having to verify the truth of what your Eminence says."

[203] "Who can tell?" rejoined Richelieu. "I have seen many rise to high place with less opportunity than you. I myself,—did I ever think at your age of being seated where I am now? You have talents, daring, firmness. Ambition grows like a worm upon a leaf, destroying what supports it. The moth may have laid its egg in your heart even now; and in ten years hence you may be what you dream not. But let us talk of other things. I am sorry you have come here just now, young gentleman."

"May I presume to ask why, my lord?" said Edward.

Richelieu paused thoughtfully for a moment, and then raised his keen dark eyes to the young man's face. "To answer you fully I must say what ought to flatter you and what cannot do so. You have pleased me; you have high qualities which I esteem; I think you will be faithful to any one to whom you attach yourself; and you have talents and courage to serve him well. But your mind is not clear enough, your experience is too little, your prejudices too great, for you to judge sanely of acts which have lately been done here. In bidding you return after your late journey and see me before you went farther, I wished to gain you to my service,—not by bribes, not by promises, but by winning your esteem and showing you friendship; and I can be a good friend. What is it that passes over your brow? I thought so: you judge I can be a deadly enemy also. Sir, I tell you, on my life and on my faith, I know no enemies but those of France. I have endured much, but I have never struck a blow but for the best interests of my king and my country. Even that young man who perished yesterday, had he not warning sufficient? Had I not passed over follies without number? Had I not forgiven designs against my own power and life? They were nothing so long as the safety of France was not involved. But when his pertinacious treason went into schemes to bring foreign troops into the land, to overthrow a mighty policy, to thwart his sovereign's will, to shake his throne, ay, and, perchance to touch his life, what were mercy but folly? what were clemency but treason?"

"I presume not, your Eminence," said Edward, bewildered by a conversation so strange and unexpected, "to judge even in my own heart of your conduct in circumstances of which I know nothing. I will own that a great part of the scene I was yesterday forced to witness struck me with horror; but even now, as I passed the bridge, I said to myself, 'I know nothing of that young man's guilt or innocence; and the dreadful accessories of his death were certainly not of the cardinal's devising.'"

[204] "You did me that justice, did you?" said Richelieu, with a well-pleased look: "let me tell you, sir, there is many a man in France who will deny it to me. Ay, it was horrible, they tell me. But I had naught to do with that. Did I steal away the executioner of the court or of the city? Did I have any share in any of the details left to the common justice of the land? Inexorable I was bound to be, even to a mother's prayers and tears, though they wrung my heart. This court—this turbulent and factious court—needed an example; a traitor deserved a traitor's death. Both have been given; for there was not one mitigating circumstance, not one palliation or excuse. Death was his doom; but God knows, could I have spared one

additional pang to his poor mother or to himself, I would have done it."

"Indeed, I believe you, my lord cardinal," replied Edward, moved by the apparent sincerity of the minister and the warmth and fire with which he spoke.

"And yet," said Richelieu, more calmly, "were it to be done over again, I would do it: nay, I will do it; for, though the medicine be strong, the malady of this land of France cannot be cured by a single dose. I will advise my king, as I have advised him, to show no mercy to persisting traitors. Let the blame fall on me: I care not. But save France!"

When men high in power have been forced into severe and terrible measures by motives which seem to them perfectly sufficient at the time, they sometimes feel a doubt when the execution of their purpose is over, and, though they may scorn to make a defence before the world, they will seek out some individual, however insignificant, who will listen while they plead their own cause,—apparently to him, but in reality to themselves. They will go over again all the reasoning, state all the motives afresh, which at first carried them forward, in order to prove to conscience that there was in the deed none of the selfishness which each human sinner of us all knows too well is in his own heart. Such, doubtless, was the case with Richelieu at the moment when the visit of Edward Langdale gave him the opportunity of justifying the death of Chalais to a foreign and impartial ear.

[205] There might be a little deceit in this,—self-deceit; but in his eagerness, in the strong current of his language, and in the earnest vehemence of his manner, there was much that struck, ay, and captivated, his young companion. Let any one suppose himself in the presence of Cromwell or Cæsar,—and Richelieu was little less, if at all,—hearing him defend his most doubtful actions, and motive his most ruthless course, and they can conceive the sensations of Edward Langdale. Edward compared the cardinal to neither; but he knew that he was in the presence of the greatest and most powerful man who had yet appeared in that age,—a man famous for stern discretion and unfaltering firmness of purpose,—and that some strong and terrible emotions within him had led him to pour forth in his presence views, principles, purposes, but dimly discerned by any one at that time. It was a somewhat awful confidence Richelieu placed in him; and when the minister paused the youth knew not what to reply, but repeated, mechanically, not knowing why, the words, "Ay, save France!"

Richelieu gazed at him for a moment with his bright eyes, full of thought. It is known how, like most great men, he was somewhat superstitious, and, forgetting probably that he had himself used the words a moment before, he answered, "Young man, that is my oracle. Save France! I will, if it be in me, though a thousand heads should fall, and my own the last,—though it should cost a river of blood and a river of tears. I will save France. I will put her upon the pinnacle of countries, where she ought to stand; and after my day men shall say of her, 'This is the great leader of the nations, in arts, in science, and in arms.'"

He stopped and gazed into vacancy, as if he already saw the beautiful future of which he spoke, and then, as if feeling that the vehemence of his feelings had carried him beyond his usual reserve, he composed his countenance; the fire of the eye went out; the features, which had been much moved, became calm and still; and the phantasmagoric light which had covered his face with great images passed away, leaving almost a blank behind.

[206] "Let us talk of what we were speaking about a few minutes since," he said, not losing the expression of sympathy and admiration which had come upon young Langdale's face. "I was referring to the possibility of your attaching yourself to me, and meriting and meeting higher honors and distinction than there seems any likelihood of your obtaining in your own country. I offer you no unworthy incentive, for, if I understand you, you are incapable of being moved by such; but I offer you my friendship. Have I not given you the best proof of it?—not by bestowing on you the hand of a noble French heiress,—that is nothing,—but by speaking to you as Richelieu rarely speaks to any one,—by showing you the things that lie within this bosom?"

Keen and acute as the young Englishman had become, he saw that he was perhaps in more danger now than he had ever been before; that he was standing on the edge of a precipice, and that the very confidence which the cardinal had accidentally placed in him was only the tottering stone which might fall and hurl him over the brink. Habitual boldness came to his aid, however. "Let me recall to your Eminence," he said, "that England and France are at war." A slightly scornful smile, at what he thought a subterfuge, curled Richelieu's lip. "I assure you, sir," continued Edward, earnestly, "that, were such not the case, I would grasp eagerly at an offer which can be rarely made to any one. I fear not danger, though I know your service might be dangerous, (pardon my plain speaking.) But on that score I should have no apprehension; for I am convinced that if that service proved fatal to me it would be by my own fault. But what your Eminence wants is one who will be faithful and true to you. What would you think of me if, at the first prospect of somewhat higher fortunes, I were not only to abandon my country, but to leave those who have treated me most kindly, educated, trusted me? Would not all the good opinions you have entertained of me vanish? Would you not view me as base, treacherous, worthless? Could you ever confide in me, esteem me more? Should I thenceforward be the man you want?"

[207] "There is some truth in what you say," said the minister, slowly. "Yet, after what has passed, there may be something to consider. Are you aware, young gentleman, that I know

more of you than I have seemed to know?—that I know all?"

"Yes," answered Edward, at once: "I have seen that some time. I know that if you were to hang me on that tree the world would hold you justified. But I do not think you will do it."

"Pshaw!" said Richelieu, "I care not for the world. But what makes you think I will not do it?"

"Because your Eminence has shown me the principles on which you act," said Edward; "and such a deed would not be within those principles. If you hanged me now, it would be because I refused to serve a country at war with my own,—not because I came into France under a false name and with the safe-conduct of another."

"Good," said the cardinal, "and true! But you forget another reason,—or from the idle babble of the day you may have learned to believe it not a good one: you do not mention that I promised to let you go on to your journey's end."

"I had forgotten it," said the lad; "but there might be many an excuse, or I may say reason, for passing over that promise. You may have learned more since you made it."

"Young man, do you wish to be hanged?" asked the cardinal, with a smile.

"Far from it, monseigneur," said Edward, gravely; "but I wish to act honestly and bravely. I told your Eminence that my only motive for not grasping eagerly at your generous proposal was, that France and England are at war, that if I now took service here you yourself could never trust me, and that I should feel myself unworthy of the trust of any one."

[208] "That objection may be sooner removed than you imagine," said Richelieu. "Your gilded butterfly—your Buckingham—cannot flaunt it in the sunshine forever. Already he has plunged his monarch into difficulties which may, and will, produce sad consequences hereafter. An unnatural war of a brother-in-law against his wife's brother, for no reasonable cause, cannot long please the people of England. The Parliament—that handcuff of kings—is already screwing the bolt tighter; and we may leave it safely to compel a peace before your journey to the east is over. I will exact one promise from you, which keep as I keep mine. It is the only condition I put to your safety. Go on your way. Serve your lord faithfully: I will take no umbrage at that: then return to France as soon as you hear that peace is concluded between our two countries;—nay, I know you will return, for there is a lure you will not miss to follow, my young hawk; but come to visit me, and have your best hopes confirmed by serving one who can reward as well as punish. Do you promise me this?"

"I do, most readily," replied Edward, "and most gratefully thank your Eminence for kindness I have perhaps not deserved."

"You have deserved better by refusing me just now," said Richelieu, "than you would have done by yielding. I could *not* have trusted you. Go to, now. Men say that everybody must obey me, or I am a fiend. You have judged better of the Cardinal de Richelieu."

"You gave me the means of judging, my lord," said Edward; "if all men had the same, perhaps——"

"They would misconstrue me," said the minister. "But one thing remember: If, in an open and unguarded moment, I have been led to show you thoughts and feelings I do not usually suffer to appear, as you are a man of honor, you will keep them to yourself. Breathe not one word to any one of aught that has passed here. Say not to Lord Montagu, or any one, Richelieu says this, or, Richelieu said that. By this I will test your discretion."

"I will not forget," said Edward; "but, if I hear any one assail your Eminence's motives, I may be permitted, surely, to defend them by the means you yourself have afforded me."

[209] "Let my motives take care of themselves, young man," said the minister, sternly. "You may say that the cardinal treated you well,—kindly, liberally,—and, although he had every right to stop you, sent you on to Lord Montagu, though he knew your errand and his. Compliment his lordship for me. And now farewell. I will to work. My spirit was somewhat crushed with care, anxiety, and thought; but I am better for this conversation."

Edward rose to retire, but the cardinal made him a sign to stay, saying, "I forgot to ask what reception you met from the fiery Soubise."

"I did not see the prince, my lord," replied Edward: "he had gone to the sea-coast. But we found the Duc de Rohan at Deux Rivières, and he was fiery enough. He calmed his passion before I left, however, and promised to convey what I had said to his brother, which he did, as I know by a letter sent after me by that nobleman himself."

"Ha! De Rohan is a good man, and might be a great one," said Richelieu: "he will be a loyal subject before two years have passed. As for Soubise, he is weak and full of passions. What said his letter?"

"It is in the hands of Madame de Lagny, my lord," replied Edward; "but I think I can repeat it word for word;" and he did so without omitting a syllable.

Richelieu listened attentively; and at the words, "Tell the insolent varlet that he shall never

see her face again, the devil, the pope, and the cardinal to boot," he laughed low, remarking, "We will dispense with the devil, and need not trouble the pope: but the cardinal says you *shall* see her face again; and she shall be your wife in the face of the whole world, or my name is not Richelieu. One of the two brothers shall sign the contract, or both shall rot in exile. Now, fare you well, my young friend. The time is not far distant when not even a Huguenot prince shall dare to name me, or the pope either, in such company. Have you money sufficient?"

"Enough till I can get more, I thank your Eminence," replied Edward.

[210] He would have made the same answer if he had possessed much less; for he would not have had any man say that he had received a livre from the cardinal, had it been to save him from starving. He was turning to depart; but the memory of all that great but terrible man had done for him within the last few days came flashing across his mind, and he paused, saying, with true emotion, "I will make no professions, my lord cardinal, but this: Your great and extraordinary kindness shall never be forgotten as long as Edward Langdale lives." Richelieu waved his hand, but with a well-pleased look, and the youth retired.

"I have heard of such long memories before," said the minister to himself. "Well, we shall see."

CHAPTER XXIV.

What say you to a quick ride and a short chapter, reader? We have stood wasting our time too long with cardinals and secretaries and courtiers. Let us set out on our journey toward Paris, with three strong horses, each under the saddle, two stout men, and a young lad, who, ride as hard as they will, still keeps ahead of them. They are not troubled with much baggage; but they have good long pistols at their saddle-bows, swords by their sides, and eke daggers in their belts.

The apparel of the two men had nothing remarkable in it. Each had the common slashed and laced pourpoint with the short cloak of the times, and their lower limbs were clad in that very peculiar and ugly garment, between trousers and breeches, which distinguished the epoch of Louis XIII. The boots, like a pair of gigantic funnels, however, covered not only the foot and ankle, but the whole of the lower part of the leg, and hid in a degree the monstrous *chausses*. The young man was dressed with somewhat greater taste and richness; and there was something in his air and his wondrous horsemanship which would have distinguished him at once from his two followers without the accessories of dress. In vain his horse—which he had bought in Nantes for a mere trifle, on account of its vicious propensities—darted to the right or left at every suspicious object, reared, plunged, and kicked; not all its efforts could shake him in the saddle for a moment: in vain the brute galloped at full speed when he was only required to trot; the youth only whipped and spurred him the more, till at length the fierce beast, finding that he had indeed got his master on his back, yielded with a good grace; and by the time the party reached Ancenis he was as quiet as a lamb.

[211] But, though Ancenis is a pretty little town, and the fare is good and the wine by no means bad, Edward Langdale was not inclined to lose time by the way. One hour for refreshment was all that was allowed for man or horse, and then on again they went toward Angers. It is true that Angers is somewhat more than fifty miles from Nantes, that the road in those days was not remarkable for its excellence, and that a broiling July sun had shone upon the travellers from break of day till night; but Edward saw with his own eyes that the horses were well cared for; and all was prepared for departure early the next morning. Here, however, for the first and only time during the journey, the safe-conduct was demanded by an officer of the governor. All was in order, however; no suspicion was entertained, and on the little party went, to Svette, Duretal, La Fleche. The sweet little valley of the Loire passed with all its beauties unseen; and, after two hours' repose at La Fleche, Fouletourte, Guecelard, and Le Mans were reached. Nearly one-half of the journey between Nantes and the first place to which Edward had been directed was now accomplished; but the horses—especially the two ridden by Pierrot and Jacques—showed evident signs of fatigue, and it was found necessary to have their shoes removed and give them somewhat more time for repose.

Edward could not reach Chartres upon the third night, as he had hoped; but reflecting, with some apprehension, that if one of the horses were to fall sick he had not funds sufficient to purchase another, he proceeded more quietly to Nogent le Rotrou, where he paused for the night before the sun had gone down.

Now, the dear but hasty reader has come to a conclusion that I have been engaged in writing an itinerancy, rather than a romance or a true history. But in this he is mistaken; for it was necessary to mention two little incidents which befell Lord Montagu's page on his way toward Paris; and one of these occurred at Nogent le Rotrou. It was therefore requisite

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to show that Edward got there; for an incident cannot happen to a man at a place where he is not. It was necessary, also, to explain how he arrived at that place later by some eight hours than he at first expected; for, if he had been able to continue the same galloping pace with which he set out from Nantes, the incident would not have happened at all.

At Nogent, the young Englishman—as is the case with most Englishmen—had looked to the accommodation of the horses in the first instance, and, having seen that they had a good dry stable, that the saddles were taken off and that they were well rubbed down, he directed them to be walked up and down before the house for a few minutes; when, to his consternation, he perceived that one of them was going somewhat lame. It was the horse ridden by long Pierrot la Grange, and one of the best of the three; and a consultation in regard to the poor animal was held immediately. One proposed one thing, another another; but, none being particularly skilful in the veterinary art, and as Edward did not choose to trust to a common blacksmith, it was determined to rest upon cold water applied to the lame foot and fetlock, and the horse was led back to the stable.

The inn was a neat little auberge, and the landlord a fat, well-doing, clean-looking sinner as ever shortened a flagon or lengthened a bill. He promised worlds in the way of edible refreshment, trout and crayfish from the Huisne, pigeons from his own dove-cot, and capons equal to those of Maine; and, while all these delicacies were in preparation, Edward took post before the door, standing beside the tall pole with a garland upon it, which in those days appeared at the entrance of many a little cabaret in France.

As he thus stood, in not a very happy mood, two new travellers on horseback trotted up. Their dress was coarse, and evidently not the costume of any part of France that the young gentleman was acquainted with; but that which attracted his attention more particularly was the lameness of one of their horses, who limped much after the fashion of Pierrot's beast, but a great deal worse. The riders dismounted, and one of them, passing him, gave him "*Bong jou*," in a strange sort of *patois*. Edward advanced to the side of the other, who was holding the beasts, saying, "That horse seems very lame, my good friend."

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"Oh, it is nothing," answered the man, in the same sort of jargon as that of his companion. "He'll be well before morning: we are *maréchaux de chevaux*, and will soon set him right. You see us go away to-morrow: he not lame then."

Shortly after the horses were led into the stable, and the young gentleman's dinner was announced; but, before partaking of any of the good things, he followed the two strangers, and found that they were provided with all the tools of the blacksmith and all the oils and essences of the veterinary surgeon of that day. "Let him cool, and then we see," said the master, speaking to his companion; and the whole party adjourned to the *salle-à-manger*. Five more hungry men never sat down to dinner, if they might be judged by their consumption of food; but all the other guests, and the landlord more particularly, remarked that the two last-arrived strangers ate none of the admirable crayfish. Now, when at a house of public entertainment you eat none of the especial dish of the place, it is not only an affront to your host, but an insult to his country. The landlord shook his head and declared the men must be some outlandish cannibals, for they neither spoke French nor ate crayfish. In this conclusion nobody gainsaid him,—not even the two men themselves, who did not seem to understand, but finished their dinner and went to attend to the lame horse.

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Now, it may seem very strange in the author to entertain a reader with a lame horse, with which, though fully as good as a dead ass, that reader seems to have nothing on earth to do. But I declare it is neither for the purpose of filling up a vacant chapter, nor in any spirit of perversity,—such as frequently seizes every writer,—nor from a desire to delay till I have made up my mind how to proceed, nor from any caprice, that I pause upon that lame horse. On the contrary, it is a piece of genuine, serious history,—in fact, the only pure and dignified piece of history in this whole book,—mentioned by authors of high repute, and confirmed by a long train of consequences, which involved at least the three next years of Edward Langdale's life in their network; and so the fate of that lame horse cannot be omitted. With one of those sympathetic movements of the mind which we can neither direct nor restrain, and which lead us on the course of destiny whether we will or not, the youth felt a personal interest in that lame horse,—was not one of his own horses lame?—and he went to the stable to see the treatment the animal was to undergo. Need I pause to tell how one of the uncouth travellers took off the shoe, examined the foot, poured some fluid which he called oil of vipers into the hole left by one of the nails, wrapped an old rag round the hoof, and did sundry other beneficent acts to the affected part? No: suffice it to say that he seemed to treat it so skilfully, and with so much of that decision which continually passes for skill and nine times out of ten has as good a result, that Edward determined he should try his hand on Pierrot's horse also.

The immediate result was relief to both the beasts, and when their several riders mounted next morning no sign of lameness was visible.

The score was paid, and Edward with his party rode away first; but they had not gone half a mile before they were over-taken by the two blacksmiths, who seemed to desire company on the way, which they accounted for by telling the companions of the young cavalier that they were wandering Savoyards, who, having some skill in horse-medicine, had come to France, made a little money, and were returning to their own country to live upon the fruits of their toil.

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Now, Savoy is a fine country, and the people are a very good people, very much like other people who live amongst rocks and stones,—not quite so wise as serpents nor so innocent as doves. "Poor, patient, quiet, honest people," says Sterne, "fear not. Your poverty, the treasury of your simple virtues, will not be envied you by the world, nor will your valleys be invaded by it." Now, why I quoted this author in regard to Savoy was simply because the most interesting account of any country is always given by a man who knows nothing about it. He has such a wide field to expatiate in! There are exceedingly good people in Savoy, and exceedingly good people come out of it; but there is a tolerably large minority as cunning and as selfish as I ever met with. Now, Edward Langdale had few prejudices upon the matter. He had never seen a Savoyard before, or one who pretended to be so; but he had heard a good deal of their "simple virtues," and, therefore, if the balance leaned either way it was in their favor. But somehow the faces of his two new companions did not please him, and he said not a word of the probability that he would himself be obliged in the end to direct his steps toward their mountain-land. Indeed, with a remarkable degree of discretion in one so young, he had kept his own two immediate followers in ignorance of that and many other facts, and they went like lambs to the slaughter with their heads hanging down, and thinking the journey somewhat long, but without the slightest idea where it was to end. When they had reached Chartres, however, he had to make many inquiries as to his further course; and, though he conferred with the landlord of the Ecu Royal himself, Pierrot la Grange stood provokingly near, and it is probable—for his ears were long and sharp—he heard every word that was said, and drew his own conclusions.

The two Savoyards, or whatever they might be, had adhered to Edward and his two companions with the tenacity of a bramble-shoot, and Edward had no objection to their accompanying him a stage or two farther; but, as he was now coming to one of the dangerous passes of his expedition, he determined to cut them loose at the end of the first thirty miles. Those thirty miles, however, were destined to be performed slowly and with difficulty.

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The morning, when they quitted Chartres, was bright and beautiful; a pale pink tint was in the sky, varied by brown clouds with golden edges; but ere they had half crossed the rich plain which lies between Chartres and Maintenon the rain began to fall, and a deluge poured down from the sky, rendering the roads wellnigh impassable. Still Edward rode on, passed Maintenon without stopping, and first drew bridle at Rambouillet. It was then beginning to grow dark, for the progress made had been very slow, and every man in the party was drenched to the skin. To go farther immediately was out of the question and not exactly suited to Edward's plans. Indeed, what between fatigue and a sudden change in the weather, the face of Pierrot la Grange had become very blue, his limbs shivered, and his teeth chattered. Dinner—or rather, as they called it, supper—was soon served, and the young gentleman so far relaxed his stern rule as to order some bottles of good wine for his drenched companions, bidding Pierrot himself partake. The long man looked somewhat doubtfully at his master, but the temptation was too strong, and the fatal cup approached his lips. Edward soon left the party and went out to make some inquiries. No one attempted to follow him, for the room was warm and comfortable, and mirth and conviviality reigned.

Pierrot's first cup was the Rubicon. It was but wine, it is true; but he had drunk nothing but water for wellnigh two months, and the first draught made him feel so comfortable that the second, and the third, and the fourth, and the fifth were added in rapid succession. His tongue, which had been marvellously still for many weeks, was unloosed, and the unruly member did its part in setting free every thing that was a secret, or which he thought was one. In five minutes he was in full career, and by the time that Edward returned—he had not been absent half an hour—the two Savoyards were made aware that the young gentleman had probably gone to inquire his way minutely to Dampierre, the place of retreat of the Duchesse de Chevreuse. "For," said Pierrot, "he was asking about it at Chartres; and the people there could not give him half the information he seemed to want."

On their part, too, the Savoyards were wonderfully free and confidential; and the only one who retained his full discretion was Jacques Beaupré, who was remarkably taciturn, and kicked Pierrot's shins under the table,—a hint which he did not choose to take.

The entrance of Edward Langdale instantly silenced Master Pierrot, however, for he was not in the least drunk. In the ladder of inebriety there are many rounds, and he had only reached the first, which with him was always talkativeness. But Edward looked grave, for he had heard much speaking, with Pierrot's voice predominant; and, when the host entered to inquire whether the guests would take some more wine, the young gentleman's "No" was uttered in a tone that went home to his follower's consciousness.

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"What a fool I am!" thought Pierrot. "If it had been brandy, now, instead of wine, I should have been drunk again to a certainty."

The following morning at an early hour the whole party were once more in the saddle, and the two Savoyards were ready as soon as the rest, seeming to think that they had fixed them-selves upon the young gentleman's party. Edward examined the priming of his pistols before he set out, and ordered his followers to do so likewise; but, as the day before had been rainy, the precaution excited no remark, and the day's journey was begun.

Four or five miles only had passed, however, when, at a spot where a road branched off

through the forest to the left, the young Englishman suddenly drew in his rein and turned to the Savoyards, saying, "Here, my good friends, we have to part. That is your road, and this is mine."

The two men seemed much surprised, and even ventured to remonstrate, commending highly the safety and sociability of travelling in company, and magnifying the great advantage it would be to him to have two such skilful smiths and horse-doctors in his train. They offered even to wait for him, if he had business on the road, and to attend to his horses without pay.

But Edward Langdale was peremptory. "You said you were going to Savoy," he remarked. "The only way to get there is to follow the road before you. Moreover, it will be safer for you to go in other company than mine; for I am subject to fits of choler, and apt to shoot people if they offend me, as that good gentleman, Monsieur Pierrot la Grange, can inform you."

"Ay, that he is!" exclaimed Pierrot. "I have got the bullet in my leg now."

The two men looked at each other in astonishment, and made some exclamation in a language which Edward did not understand, but which did not sound like any species of Italian.

"Ah!" said Jacques Beaupré, solemnly, "it is a sad infirmity he has. I always ride on the right side of him, for he does not aim so well on that side as on the left."

[218] The two men smiled; but a slight movement of Edward's hand toward his pistols soon restored their gravity, and he added, "Take my advice. Go on your way, and let me see you go, for I do not choose to be followed."

A shrug of the shoulders and a shake of the rein was their only answer, and they rode away along the highroad before them.

Edward watched them for some distance, and then turned into the smaller path on the left. "I do not like those men," he said, speaking to his followers. "Both their countenances are bad; and, as for the taller one of the two, I am certain I have seen him at Nantes. I think it was in the court of the chateau, the day we set out for Deux Rivières."

"I think so too," said Jacques Beaupré. "He is too ugly to be forgotten easily; and, as for their tongue, I think it is Basque. I once heard that language spoken; and theirs is much more like it than Savoyard."

Poor Pierrot was conscience-stricken, and heartily wished his tongue had been cut out before it had run away from his discretion on the preceding evening; but he kept his own counsel, and Jacques Beaupré had too much of the laquais' spirit about him to tell of a companion before he was found out.

The day was dull and gray, but not actually raining, and the road was muddy and heavy to travel; but the forest was soon passed, and at the end of two hours Edward judged, by the descriptions he had received, that he was entering the vale of Chevreuse. Hidden in a dense shroud of mist, it did not indeed look beautiful to his eyes, as he had been led to believe; and, in some doubt, he stopped to ask a peasant, whom they overtook driving an ox-cart, if the Chateau of Dampierre was near.

"Why, there it is, seigneur," said the man. "Dame! don't you see it?" And, looking forward, Edward caught a faint sight of some towers and pinnacles rising over the distant trees.

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CHAPTER XXV.

Two large gates of that fine hammered iron which is now rarely seen, twisted into leaves and flowers and coronets, with gilding here and there, and the arms of Chevreuse and Montbazou let into the centre, shut the small park of Dampierre from the road. They seemed indeed to offer no ingress to any one, for Edward rang the great bell at least half a dozen times before any one appeared; but then a man walked slowly down the road from the chateau itself, and examined the strangers through the filagree-work of the gate as he came. At neither of the two lodges at the sides of the gate was there the least sign of life.

The man, who seemed an old servant, however, and who carried a large key in his hand, applied it to the lock without asking any questions, and Edward, before entering, inquired if Madame de Chevreuse was at the chateau.

"I do not know," replied the servant, in an indifferent tone. "A good many people rode away the day before yesterday, and I have not seen her since; but, if you ride up, they will tell you there."

Edward accordingly rode on, and, though the distance was not more than three hundred yards, he perceived that his coming had created more sensation at the chateau than at the

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gates. There were heads at several of the windows, and two or three men came forth upon the terrace and watched the approaching party. Edward rode slowly to give time for a full examination; for, from all he had heard at Nantes, he could very well conceive that the fair duchess might be inclined to stand somewhat upon her guard before she admitted strangers. Dismounting before the chateau, he gave his horse to Jacques Beaupré to hold, and advanced toward one of the servants at the door, who showed no disposition to advance toward him, inquiring if the duchess was at Dampierre and would receive him. "Come in, sir," said another servant, who had just come down the steps. "Go up that staircase and turn to your right through the first door. You will soon find somebody who will inform you."

Edward obeyed, thinking the manners of the Chateau of Dampierre somewhat strange, it must be confessed, but being perfectly prepared to follow the old adage of doing at Rome &c. The stairs were wide and low-stepped, of dark polished oak, with richly-ornamented balusters; and the walls of the staircase were covered with rich pictures both of Italian and Flemish schools. At the top was a broad landing-place or vestibule, with doors all round; but, following the directions he had received, the young Englishman opened the first on the right and entered a splendid saloon, where, seated in a great arm-chair, was a lady of gorgeous and dazzling beauty, with a little girl of some seven or eight years old at her knee, nearly as beautiful as herself. The eyes of both were fixed upon the opening door with a gay look of expectation; and the moment that Edward was fairly in the room the little girl ran forward, sprung up, and kissed him. The beautiful lady followed and kissed him likewise, laughing gayly as she did so.

It was certainly a surprise, though not a very disagreeable one, and Edward would not have objected to go over the same scene again; but, fancying there must be some mistake, he said, "I beg pardon for my intrusion. I imagine, madame, that you have—happily for me—taken me for some one else, by the honor you show me. I am merely a page to Lord Montagu, whom I hope to find here."

"No mistake at all, monsieur," said the gay lady. "It is a vow, sir,—altogether a vow,—which I and my daughter made, to kiss the first gentleman that came to relieve our solitude; for my magnificent lord has chosen to take himself away with all his people, and we have seen no faces but those of the old servants for two whole days. It was a vow, sir, we accomplished; but, even had it not been, I suppose I am not the first duchess who has kissed a page, and probably I shall not be the last."

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"Heaven forbid!" said Edward, entering into the humor of the hour, "if all duchesses' kisses are as sweet. But I presume I am in the presence of Madame de Chevreuse, for whom I have a letter."

"Well, well," said the bright, reckless woman, "sit down here beside me and tell me more. So you are my friend Lord Montagu's page. He has expected you long, and told me all about you. How happened you to linger on the road? Now, I warrant you met with some pretty little maiden, and could not tear yourself away till you had beguiled the poor thing."

Edward took the seat to which she pointed beside her own chair, and proceeded to tell her all he thought necessary to account for his long delay, but without alluding in any way to Lucette. The explanation was somewhat long, and the duchess listened listlessly, sometimes gazing at his face, sometimes looking down at her own beautiful hands and shifting the rings about in an absent manner. Edward, as was customary at that period, nourished two locks of dark silky hair, twisted into those long pendent curls which brought forth at an after-period the famous puritanical tirade upon "the unloveliness of love-locks;" and, a little to his surprise, as he went on he felt the fair duchess's hands busy with the curls and twisting them round her fingers. Suddenly, however, she started, exclaiming, "What am I about?" and Edward innocently thought she was shocked at the familiarity into which a fit of absence had betrayed her. Not a bit of it; and he was soon undeceived.

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"Surely I saw two attendants with you as I was looking from the window," she continued; "and I have totally forgotten the poor men and the poor horses. Run, my child, and tell Paton, the Savoyard, to have the men and horses monsieur brought here taken care of; and bid somebody carry his baggage to the chamber Lord Montagu had, next to mine. It is strange, you will think," she continued, as her daughter tripped away: "I have not a soubrette in the house, nor any woman but the old housekeeper and my own girl; but I came away from Brittany in such haste, not knowing whether I should be suffered to come away at all, that the fewer people I brought with me the better. Now let me hear the rest, and give me the letter you mentioned,—after which you shall have some food."

Edward had little more to tell, except the execution of poor Chalais, and the permission given him by Richelieu to pursue his journey. The first he touched but slightly, as the common rumor of something more than the mere relations of friendship between the unhappy count and Madame de Chevreuse had reached him; but the duchess would hear all, and for a time she seemed greatly moved, although her love was so very minutely divided that there could be no great portion for any individual lover. At his account of his last interview with Richelieu,—which was somewhat lame, from there being various circumstances which he felt bound to keep back,—Madame de Chevreuse mused.

"The cardinal has some object," she said: "in fact, he always has. It was not for your good

mien he let you go on, depend upon it,—though you are a handsome boy, I do not deny, and if the fox had been a woman I could have understood his favor for you better,—though probably he would then have kept you with him, as I intend to do."

"Indeed, madame," replied Edward, "I fear my duty requires me to go on immediately, if, as I gather from your conversation, Lord Montagu is not here. I need not tell you how much I should like to stay."

[223] "Why do you not add something about bright eyes and beautiful lips, &c. &c. &c., in true page style?" said Madame de Chevreuse; and then, giving him a playful box on the ear, she added, "Were not you told to take my orders and follow my directions, sir? It was so explained to me; but I see I have a great deal to teach you yet. You will have to wait till the day after to-morrow. Here; listen; put down your head." And as Edward obeyed she brought her rosy lips so near his ear that the perfumed breath fanned his cheek. "To-morrow night," she whispered, "I shall have news of Montagu, and the day after, perhaps, I shall find it convenient to take flight for Lorraine myself. The neighborhood of the court is somewhat dangerous for me; and my head looks prettier upon my own shoulders than in the hands of the executioner. In the mean time, you have to stay here and console my daughter and myself. We live the life of two nuns just now: you know how nuns live, I dare say,—young nuns, of course, I mean. And now, let us talk of any thing but business: you have to amuse me, and I have to be amused. I do not much care how."

I think it may be as well to drop for the present the further conversation of the gay young duchess and her still younger companion. She had all her life been famous for free speaking, and a little celebrated for free acting; and, had it not been necessary to show something of the life and manners of the times, I might have been tempted not to bring her on the stage at all,—although, in writing the adventures of Lord Montagu's page, Edward's visit to Dampierre could hardly be left out. It must be remembered, however, that, though somewhat more beautiful, more gay and witty, than most of her courtly compeers, Marie de Rohan was but a type of French society at that time. Few of the high dames of that day were at all more virtuous than herself, although she had the candour—or the impudence, as it may be—to make very few pretensions.

She had said that she had many things to teach Edward, and certainly hers was not a very good school for a young lad; but he learned there more perhaps than she imagined, and in the midst of her light coquetries the sweet pure image of his Lucette came up to his mind, like the odor of a fresh flower in the midst of some scene of revel. He thanked God with all his heart that she whom he loved had never been subjected to the guardianship of such a woman; and he even felt pained that the poor young child her daughter should be witness to the reckless levity which the mother displayed. There is a holiness about childhood; and the heart of every man not impious revolts at the very thought of any thing which can profane that shrine of innocence.

Edward dined well; for the Duc de Chevreuse was one of the most luxurious—the French writers call it splendid—of the nobility of the day. He is reported at one time to have ordered six magnificent coaches merely to try which was the easiest; and he was not a man to have any of his many houses at any time unprovided with a good cook.

[224] After dinner is the time for sober but not heavy chat: the most persistent of appetites is satisfied; the blood has something to do in the process of digestion, and frolics less freely than at other times; and the brain itself turns hard work over to the stomach, and neither sports like a young horse set free from harness, nor lies down to sleep like an ass upon a common. The Duchesse de Chevreuse went to lie down upon her bed and rest after dinner, as was then common; but, as was fully as common, she asked the young Englishman to come and sit beside her. There were no triclinia in those days, nor *chaises longues*, nor sofas; and, although piles of cushions had been introduced into a few houses by those who had served against or with the Turks, they had not found their way into the Chateau de Dampierre. Her conversation was much more sober, however, than it had been in the earlier part of the day; and from it Edward learned that Lord Montagu had talked to her much about him, had told her his whole history, and had even left with her a purse of five hundred crowns for his use, expressing a conviction that some unforeseen accident had delayed him on his journey and might have exhausted his finances.

"He seemed to take a vast deal of interest in you," said the duchess, "and made me long to see you. But, Monsieur Langdale, this conduct of his Eminence of Richelieu toward you puzzles me, and to my mind augurs little good. Tell me: did any thing particular happen to you on the road? Did you meet with any of the cardinal's people? Are these two men you have brought with you sure and faithful?"

The remembrance of the two strangers who had endeavored to force themselves upon him, instantly recurred to Edward's mind, and he related the whole adventure.

"Spies! spies, on my life!" cried the duchess. "I trust they did not discover you were coming here?"

"Not from me," answered Edward Langdale; "for I suspected them from the first."

"Ah! then you have learned to suspect betimes," said the duchess; "and I dare say you suspect women as much as men,—though we are more sincere by half. I say not we are

more faithful, for men are so unfaithful that we should lose at that game; but we show more openly what we feel, and therefore are more true. Now, tell me: were you ever in love, Monsieur Langdale?"

Thus she rambled on, with less gayety, and less familiarity, perhaps, than before dinner; but there was a sort of languor about her, a soft sleepiness, which was perhaps more attractive, especially to a young man. One of the greatest charms of that extraordinary woman was her infinite variety. Was it now a desire merely to coquet with a young and handsome lad? Was it only with the purpose of amusing a vacant hour or two? Was it without purpose at all, and that she simply gave way to the passing feelings of the moment and with listless carelessness left the results to chance—I know not; and probably she herself and Edward Langdale were the only persons who ever knew.

Authors will get into difficulties sometimes, dear reader,—will come to sticking-places where they find it as difficult to go back as to wade through. The only way in such circumstances is to take a great jump; and, thank Heaven, the horses we ride are equal to any leap.

The next morning Edward and the duchess and her daughter met at breakfast; and Madame de Chevreuse, if not in great spirits, was cheerful and gay, and full of plans for passing the day pleasantly. She would go and show the young Englishman the grotto and the rocks; they would kill a stag in the adjoining forest; they would visit the *curé* of Chevreuse, and astonish the good man,—a sport which she by no means disliked: but while they were arranging all these schemes on the open space before the chateau, a courier was seen riding up from the gates, and when he came near he handed the duchess two letters.

The blood left her cheek as she read, and, instantly drawing Edward aside, she said, "We must part at once. You go on as fast as possible to Gray. Wait there two days, and, if you hear no more, ride forward to Turin. As for myself, look here." And she put a paper into his hand. It was a copy of the decree banishing her to Lorraine, there to remain upon her own estates till the king's further pleasure.

"Order your horses quickly," she said. "Then come to my chamber for the sum Montagu left for you. Glimpses of sunshine! glimpses of sunshine in this April-day life! and then dark clouds and heavy showers."

In an hour, Edward Langdale rode away from Dampierre. He was grave and silent. What was in his heart who can tell? but he certainly did not view the world more brightly, or feel more confidence in human nature, than he had done before that short visit.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Edward Langdale rode on from place to place, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, as the condition of the roads and the nature of the country required; and, strangely enough for a journey in those days, neither accident nor adventure befell him. One thing excited his curiosity and suspicion, however. At Trapes, where he passed the first night after leaving the house of Madame de Chevreuse, when he had finished his supper and was just retiring to rest, he caught for a moment, on the somewhat darksome stairs, one glance of a face he thought he had seen before. He could not identify it, indeed, for it was lost as soon as seen; but it instantly carried his mind back to his adventure with the two Savoyards, and he felt almost sure that face belonged to one of them. But neither of the two strangers appeared the next morning; and Pierrot and Jacques both assured him that their horses were not in the stable.

There are faces that haunt us both in night and daydreams; and Edward was almost led to believe that one of these spectres of the imagination had taken possession of him; for twice or three times before he reached Gray that face again crossed him for a moment, and always when no one else was present who could confirm or remove his suspicions.

Those were not pleasant days to live in; and it is a very difficult thing for any one born in and accustomed to the bad comfortable modern days to realize those *good old times*. Espionage was then a great science, an honorable profession, practised by great dignitaries and men of high degree. Words brought men's heads to the block, and thoughts often conducted to a prison. There was no need of overt acts: intentions were quite sufficient; and friends and foes were so continually changing places that no one could tell that the thoughts uttered in the confidence of familiar intercourse would not be brought forward a few days or weeks later to lead one to the dungeon and the rack. Yet it is wonderful, unaccountable, how freely and daringly men spoke their mind,—how the grave condemnation, the witty lampoon, or the hideous libel, was disseminated without ceremony. Men laughed and had their heads chopped off,—and would have laughed still if they could have been fixed on again, I do believe; for nothing seemed a warning or a restraint.

Edward, however, born in a country where neither the reign of the Tudor nor of the Stuart

had been able to crush out the spirit of liberty, loved not to be watched; and there is always something more alarming in the indefinite than the definite danger. He could not divine what was the object of the two strangers, if, indeed, they had any object, in thus persisting in following him. The cardinal had lacked no opportunity of detaining him at Nantes, or of arresting him on his journey, if he had thought fit; and yet he could not clear his mind from suspicion till he reached Franche Comté and found himself beyond the power of the French minister.

[228] It may be necessary to remind the reader that Franche Comté was not annexed to France till the year 1668; and at the time of which I now write the important town of Gray was a fortified place, consisting of the city on the high ground strongly walled, and a suburb on the bank of the Saône, defended merely by a small battery. For a long period of troublous times, so frequent had been the visits of French exiles to Lorraine, Burgundy, and Franche Comté, that safe-conducts or passports from one country to another were very generally dispensed with in the country and in open towns; but in fortresses some trouble was experienced; and it is probable that the directions which the Duchesse de Chevreuse had given Edward Langdale to stop in the faubourg were intended to guard against his detention. The inn which she had named to him was good, however,—perhaps better than that in the upper town; and the appointed two days of Edward's stay passed dully but not unpleasantly. The horses were refreshed and the two men none the worse for the repose. For Edward himself, too, perhaps two days of thought were beneficial. Every man, in the toil and tumult and hurry of the world, requires some moment to pause and consider his position, to decide upon his future course, to apply the lesson of past errors, to take breath as it were amidst the bustle of existence. Edward was like a stout swimmer who had been suddenly plunged into a torrent, and was likely to be carried away by the flood which for the last three months had been whirling confusedly round him; and those two days at Gray were like a little island of dry ground where he could rest and scan his way to the opposite bank, avoiding the rocks and eddies which might impede or destroy him. It is a quaint old proverb, but a true one, that "a man who does not look clearly before him will often have to look sadly behind him;" and happy is he who has both the will and the time to do so.

Those two days then with Edward passed in almost uninterrupted thought; but at last the night of the second day came, and yet neither message nor letter had arrived. Supper had been eaten, and the horses had been ordered for daybreak on the following morning to proceed to Turin, when, toward nine o'clock, the landlord brought in a scrap of writing, asking Edward if that was intended for him. It was addressed in English,—“Master Edward Langdale,”—and underneath was written, “Join me at Chambéry or Aix. I shall be there from the twenty-ninth till the first.”

No name was signed, but the writing was Lord Montagu's; and the landlord, on being questioned, said the paper had been given to him by a courier from Arnay le Duc going to Vesoul, who had gone on his way as soon as he had left it.

[229] Now, Edward's knowledge of geography was considerable, and, as far as France and England were concerned, minute; but he had at Gray got somewhat out of his latitude, and the landlord had to be consulted as to the road to Aix and Chambéry. The good man was learned upon the subject, however, knew every inch of the road, he said, and could find his way in the dark. It was true, he added, that it was rather a wild way, and carriages could hardly go one-half the distance; but, as the gentleman had horses, it would be easily managed. He must first go straight to Dole, then from Dole to Lons-le-Saulnier, from Lons-le-Saulnier to Bourg or Nantua, and thence to the Pont du Sault. After that, he said, came Bellay and Aix and Chambéry; but there the traveller would have to ask every step of his way. It was a five days' journey, he remarked, and, ride as hard as you would, it would take four and a half.

Edward did ride hard, and the first part of the way was overcome in a much shorter space of time than the good host had anticipated; nor was it till the party had passed Bourg that any thing like difficulties occurred. It is as pleasant a ride in fine weather as any one can take, for the roads are now good and the scenery exceedingly picturesque without being fatiguingly grand; but neither Edward nor ourselves have any time to pause upon the beauties of nature. The roads, however, were then in a very different condition from that which they now display; and, indeed, the wonder-working eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have done more for few countries than for the districts lying between the Jura and the Rhone and Saône.

On the twenty-seventh of July, Edward Langdale and his party were within one short day's journey of Aix, and the early morning when they set out was fresh and beautiful. The hot summer sun was shaded by the rocks and forests, and the air was cooled by the mountain-breeze. As he was earlier than the first of the days named by Lord Montagu, the young traveller suffered his horses to proceed leisurely. But in this he made a mistake. Man always wants more money and time than he calculates upon; and nobody can tell what the want of an hour or a guinea may bring about.

[230] As every one knows, the country which Edward had now to traverse is a land of rocks and mountains, of rivers and lakes. Not three miles can be passed without encountering some stream or torrent hurrying down to join the great Rhone; and at every mile, as the road then went, was some steep ascent or descent, flanked with rugged cliffs, sometimes

covered with dark forests, sometimes naked and gray, with immense masses of stone impending over the traveller's head without the root of a single tree to bind them to the crag, while high up in front the Mont du Chat was seen from time to time rearing its rugged front and seeming to close the pass. About one o'clock, over the edges of the hills some heavy clouds were seen rising, knotty and dull, and of a deep lead-color, except where the sun tipped their edges with an ochrey yellow. The wind was from the northeast, and the clouds were coming from the south. But they did not heed the breeze, which soon began to fail before them.

"Let us ride faster," said Edward: "the road is good here." And on he went, keeping his eye on the heavy masses, but fearing no greater inconvenience than a wetting. He had never travelled in Savoy before. However, by quick trotting he saved himself and his followers for about two hours; but by the end of that time the sun was hidden and great drops began to fall. Then came the thunder echoing through the hills, and then a complete deluge. Every thing turned gray, and the old castles which strew that part of the country could hardly be distinguished from the rocks on which they stood.

Two more hours were passed by the travellers under an overhanging shelf of rock, which afforded some shelter, not only to themselves, but also to their horses. But at the end of that time the rain had had the effect of loosening some parts of the cliff, and several large masses of stone began to fall, giving them warning to retreat as soon as possible.

[231] The thunder was now more distant and the flashes of lightning farther apart; but the rain continued to fall, not so heavily, but in a dull, incessant pour. There was nothing to be done but to ride on, and, even then, but slow progress could be made; for the roads were cut up in a terrible manner, the smaller streams were swollen so as to be well nigh impassable, and here and there the way was nearly blocked up by piles of rock and gravel. Night was rapidly coming on; no human habitation was in sight except a scattered old tower here and there, and that in ruins.

At length, just as the sun sank, a more formidable obstacle than ever presented itself. Where the road took a rapid descent between some high rocky ground on the right and the Rhone in flood upon the left, just at the spot where one of the branches of the Guiers joins the larger river, an immense mass of rock, undermined by the torrent, had fallen across the mouth of the stream, which, thus blocked up, had flooded the whole road. By the side of the water, gazing disconsolately at the rushing and whirling current, was a group of men, some four in number. It was too dark for Edward to distinguish who they were at any distance, but when he came nearer he perceived his two old friends the Savoyard blacksmiths, and two laborers of the country, whom the fall of the rock and the consequent inundation had, it seemed, cut off from their own cottages on the other side.

"Ah! bon jour, bon jour, seigneur!" said one of the blacksmiths, who had dismounted, and was holding his horse by the bridle: "we came all along the road with you, after all, but we kept out of your way for fear of your pistols. Here is a pretty pass! We shall not get over to-night, these men say."

"Can we find no place of shelter this side?" asked Edward, whose suspicion of the two men had been greatly abated by finding they had quietly pursued their way to Savoy. The blacksmith shook his head.

"I saw an old castle about half a mile back," said the young Englishman: "it was not far up the mountain."

"All ruined! No roof," replied the other. "Ask them yourself."

But Edward could not make either of the peasants comprehend a word he said. "We must do something," he remarked. "It is growing darker every moment, and it would give us some sort of covering, were it but under an old arch. Hark! there are horses coming on the other side. Those men will be into the torrent if they do not mind." And, raising his voice, he shouted aloud to warn the horsemen, who were dashing on at furious pace from the side of Aix.

[232] The wind set the other way, and the roaring of the water was loud, so that it is probable his shout was not heard, for the next moment there was a plunge into the water and then a loud cry for help.

Edward sprang instantly from his horse and advanced to the very verge of the stream.

"For Heaven's sake, Master Ned, for Heaven's sake, do not try it!" cried Pierrot, catching his arm.

"Here, take the horse," said Edward, sharply. "Let go my arm."

A flash of lightning came at that moment, faint, indeed, but sufficient to show him a horse carried away toward the Rhone, a horseman who had pulled up just in time upon the other brink, and a man struggling in the water and trying to hold by a smooth mass of fallen rock, just in the middle of the torrent, about twelve yards from him. He paused not to consider, but ran as far as he could up the water, dashed in, and swam with all his strength toward the drowning man, whom he could just distinguish. Borne down by the current, he drifted right to the rock, calling aloud, in French, "Do not touch me, and I will save you!"

Such warnings are usually vain. The man's first effort was to clutch him; but Edward was prepared, and kept him off, catching him tightly by the back of the neck. We have said that he was a good and practised swimmer; but neither skill nor strength would probably have carried him across that small space of twelve yards against that powerful current. But Jacques Beaupré caught sight of him, and exclaimed, "Here, Pierrot, catch my hand. Let us all be drowned in company." And, running in till the water reached his shoulders and almost carried him off his feet, he contrived to grasp Edward's arm and pull him on till he could touch ground.

The young lad was almost exhausted, for the man, of whom he had never loosed his hold, had struggled to the last to grasp him, and the few moments since he had left the rock had been all one confused scene of strife amongst the dark and eddying waters.

[233] "Here; let me take him, sir," said Jacques: "if ever a man's life was nobly saved, it is his." And, throwing his brawny arms round the stranger, who struggled still, he carried him on to the road.

Edward paused for a moment, as soon as he could resist the stream, to draw breath, and then slowly joined the rest. They had laid the stranger down on the bank, and for a moment or two he remained quite still, though his panting breath showed that his life was in no danger.

"Here, moosoo, take some of this," said one of the blacksmiths, pouring some spirit out of a bottle into the stranger's mouth: "you owe that young seigneur something; for if he had not been here you would have been out of Savoy by this time."

"I know it; I know it," said the rescued man, faintly. "Where is he? which is he?"

"Look! look!" cried Pierrot: "there is a light up there, in one, two, three windows. That must be in the old chateau which these fellows said was all in ruins. Let us go up. We shall none of us ever get dry here, it is raining so hard."

"Are you able, sir, to walk up to that castle?" asked Edward, speaking to the stranger, who had now raised himself upon his arm. "I fear your poor horse is lost beyond all hope."

"Let the fiery brute go," said the other, petulantly: "if he would have obeyed the rein I should not have been in this plight. I will try to accompany you in a moment. But what castle is that? It must be Groslie, I think."

He did not speak very good French; but, calling to one of the Savoyard peasants, he addressed him in his own language, of which he seemed to have a perfect command.

The good man instantly began to speak fast and gesticulate vehemently; and, translating as best he could the language of signs, Edward concluded that the Savoyard was trying to dissuade the gentleman from going to the old chateau he had seen.

"What does he say?" asked the young Englishman: "he seems unwilling we should go."

[234] "Oh, he talks nonsense," answered the stranger: "he will have it that the place is haunted, and says that no one is ever seen there by day, but that those lights appear from time to time at night,—smugglers, more likely, or coiners; but we are too many for them to do us any harm." As he spoke he raised himself slowly upon his feet and said to the friendly blacksmith, "Give me some more of those strong waters, my friend. I will pay you well for them."

The man readily supplied him, and he professed himself ready to proceed; but the two peasants could not be induced by any means to accompany the rest. One of the blacksmiths, however, produced a lantern and candle from the packs which each carried behind his saddle, and the party set out, not without fresh remonstrances from the boors.

"If they be devils, we do not fear them," replied the stranger, and then added some directions which probably referred to the servant, who had been able to stop his horse in time and remained on the other side of the torrent.

The peasants seemed to treat the stranger with much respect; but even when, by the aid of a flint and steel, the lantern was lighted, it was impossible for Edward to discern more of the other's person than sufficient to satisfy him that he was a man of distinguished appearance, tall and well formed though slight, and clothed as one of the higher classes.

The ascent was somewhat laborious but not long, after they had once discovered the right road; and about twenty minutes brought the party to an old bridge and gate under a deep arch. By the faint light of the candle, which was by this time wellnigh burned out, the place looked fully as ruinous and desolate as the peasants had represented it to be. The rugged outlines of some of the towers showed that much of the masonry had fallen, and the key-stone of the arch and a large mass of rubbish only left room for the horses to pass one at a time. Still, however, the light they had seen from below continued to stream from three windows in a great, dark, shapeless mass of buildings, and the approach of the new-comers did not seem to have been discovered by the persons within, if there were any.

[235] "Stop a moment," said Edward, pausing under the arch. "As we do not know what sort of persons we shall find within, it is well to be prepared. The priming of my pistols may be

damp, though the holsters are made as tight as possible." And, standing under the shelter of the walls, he took the weapon from his saddle-bow, threw the powder out of the pans, and primed them anew. He then took the very useful precautions of ascertaining that no water had entered the barrels and that the balls were still in their places.

"Ay, he has got two lives there," said Pierrot, keeping close to his master; and then, fastening the horses to some chains which hung about the bridge, the whole party advanced toward the building in which the lights were seen. A low and narrow door admitted them to the foot of a small stone stair-case, and, lighted by the blinking lantern, they began to ascend. They had hardly gone half-way up—Edward with one pistol in his belt and the other in his hand—when they heard a clear, merry peal of laughter; and, somewhat hurrying his pace, lest the little candle should go out before they reached the object of their search, the young Englishman reached a little ante-room with a door on the opposite side, through the large key-hole of which a ray of light streamed out upon the floor.

The door was thrown open without ceremony; but the scene which the interior of the large hall or chamber presented was what none of the party expected. Seated round a table, on which were the remains of an abundant meal, with plenty of wine, and sundry papers and maps, was a party of gentlemen, richly dressed, with the exception of one who occupied the top of the board and who was habited as an ecclesiastic. A gentleman on the abbé's right hand was in the very act of speaking with some gesticulation when the door was flung open; but he instantly stopped. The party at the door stopped, also, in much surprise, and each group gazed upon the other for a moment in silence.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

The hall was lighted by three large sconces hung against that part of the wall nearest to the table; but still the extent of the chamber rendered the light feeble, except immediately under the burners. It cannot be said that the appearance of Edward Langdale and his companions was very prepossessing. Edward himself wore his hat and plume, which had been thrown off before he plunged into the water; but his dress was soiled as well as wet. The stranger whom he had saved was in a still worse plight: his hat, of course, had been lost in his struggle with the torrent, and his forehead and part of his face were covered with dripping locks of long black hair. His sword, which had remained in the sheath, was the only distinguishing mark of a gentleman about him. Pierrot and Jacques Beaupré looked far more like bravos than the followers of an English gentleman of those days; and the two ill-favored blacksmiths, one armed with a half-extinguished lantern and the other with a sledge-hammer, did not add to the beauty or respectability of the group.

No wonder, then, that several of the gentlemen at the table laid their hands upon their swords; and the one who had been speaking advanced a step or two, exclaiming, in a threatening tone, "What is this? What means this ill-mannered intrusion? Who are you, sirs, and what seek you here?"

"Shelter from the storm, and food, if it can be procured," said Edward: "we know not upon whom——"

But, before he could finish the sentence, the gentleman to whom it was addressed started forward and caught him by the hand, exclaiming, "What! Ned, my boy! How came you to seek me here?"

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"I did not seek you here, my lord," replied Edward, "and, to say truth, if I had known you were here, I should not have come. I was on my way to Aix to join your lordship, according to your commands; but the road is impassable. Some of us have been half drowned; and, though this is a desolate-looking place, we said, 'Any port in a storm.'"

"But who are these gentlemen with you?" asked Lord Montagu, still speaking in French, but running his eye somewhat doubtfully over the group of five persons who had advanced some way from the door.

"Those two," answered Edward, in the same gay tone, which was generally affected by pages of noble houses,— "those two are my servants, or rather your lordship's, the renowned and reformed Pierrot la Grange and the facetious Jacques Beaupré. Those two—the one with the lantern and the other with the hammer—are two respectable blacksmiths and horse-doctors, who have joined themselves on to me and mine and did good service in curing one of my horses. They profess to be Savoyards returning to their own country."

"They shall be welcome," said Lord Montagu, smiling,— "most welcome, for I have no less than five good horses sick of some distemper at Chambéry. But who is the other,—that gentleman who seems half drowned?"

"He was half drowned a few minutes ago, my lord," replied the youth, "and so was I; but he will probably tell you more of himself if you will ask him. His horse leaped with him into the

river, and it was a hard matter to get him out."

"I hold it but courteous in these bad times," said Lord Montagu, "to follow the old knightly rule and ask no stranger any questions,—before he has cut your throat; and therefore we will invite him to sup, and leave him to explain himself. He seems a gentleman."

[238] "Yes, my lord," was all Edward's reply; but a very peculiar expression crossed his countenance as he uttered those three words, which, had Lord Montagu seen it, might have caused more inquiry. That nobleman, however, had turned to speak for a moment with the gentlemen who had been seated with him; and he then advanced to the stranger, inviting him courteously to be seated and take some refreshment, and expressing sorrow for the accident which had befallen him. He also bade the other four sit down and eat; and, there being no place for so many at the table, filled as it was, most of those who had already supped rose and gathered together at the end of the board, Edward taking his place amongst them without touching any thing.

Lord Montagu introduced him to the rest in kind terms, saying, "My page and young friend, Monsieur Edward Langdale, Monsieur le Prince de —, Monsieur le Comte de —, Monsieur l'Abbé Scaglia, the Duke of Savoy's prime minister. We came here on a little party of pleasure, Ned, and sat long over our cups, in truth, hardly hearing that the storm was still going on. Come, my good youth, sit down and eat. You must be well weary of all the adventures which the fair duchess writes me you have gone through. Eat, boy! eat!"

"Your pardon, my lord," said Edward, gravely: "I will take a cup of wine here standing: that is all. I have much to tell your lordship."

"By-and-by, by-and-by," said Lord Montagu, "we shall have plenty of time and plenty to talk of. Well, drink if you will not eat."

Edward Langdale advanced to the table, filled himself a goblet of wine, and returned with it to Lord Montagu's side. Before he could raise it to his lips, however, the stranger whom he had saved from drowning turned round his head, saying, with a polite smile, "Let me have the pleasure of drinking with you, young gentleman, in memory of the service you rendered me. I do not know your name, though your face is very familiar to me."

A dark cloud gathered upon Edward Langdale's brow, and he answered, not sharply, but with stern, cold bitterness, "I neither eat with you nor drink with you, sir."

The stranger started up with his face all on fire, and exclaimed, with his hand upon the hilt of his sword, "Do you mean to insult me, sir?"

"I mean to tell you, sir," said the youth, boldly, "that I am Edward Langdale,—your father's son; and that you have robbed me of that to which neither he nor you had any right,—my sweet mother's estates."

[239] "Robbed? robbed?" cried Sir Richard Langdale, furiously drawing his sword.

"Ay, robbed,—swindled, if you like it better," said Edward. "Put up your sword, or sheathe it here," he continued, throwing his arms wide open and exposing his chest. "I do not fight with my brother."

The other rushed upon him like a madman.

"What is this? what is this?" cried the Abbé Scaglia, running forward.

"Back, madman!" exclaimed Lord Montagu, seizing Richard Langdale by the collar.

Pierrot la Grange also darted forward and tried to push between. But all were too late. Edward fell to the ground with a heavy fall, and his brother withdrew his sword all dripping with blood.

The burly blacksmith advanced toward him with his hammer raised in the act to strike him on the head, exclaiming, in very good French, "The murdering villain! He has killed the man who saved his life at the risk of his own, not an hour ago!"

But Lord Montagu caught his arm, saying, "Stand back. This must be inquired into by justice. No more slaughter here. Sir, give up your sword! You are a prisoner."

"Aid, all men, to arrest him!" cried the Abbé Scaglia. "I command you in the duke's name!"

Sir Richard Langdale moved not a muscle, but stood gazing at the fallen form of his brother with a face as pale as marble and bloodless lips. Such sudden changes of feeling will often take place in terrible circumstances. When the dreadful deed, prompted by the fierce fire of passion, is once done, we know all its horrors; but not before. The consummation is like the lightning-flash upon a corpse, showing every ghastly feature more livid and frightful from the remorse-like glare that darts across it. Suddenly he started, raised his hands to his head, tearing his long black hair, and exclaiming, "Curse the lands! Curse the riches!"

[240] "Here!" cried Lord Montagu, "take him away, you two. Guard him safely, but do him no hurt. You stout fellow, aid us to raise this poor lad, and let us see if nothing can be done for him. On my life, I would as soon have lost my brother!"

"Let me tend him, sir," said the blacksmith with the lantern: "I have cured many a horse as bad hurt as he; and a horse and a man are much the same thing."

"Not quite," said Lord Montagu, who even at that moment could not altogether resist the joking spirit of his times and his party. "Heaven! how he bleeds! Gentlemen, he was the noblest lad—the promptest with hand and head and heart—I ever saw. Poor Edward! can we do nothing for you?"

As he spoke, they raised the youth and laid him on the table, and the blacksmith tore open his vest. The movement seemed to awaken him a little; and, probably with thoughts far distant, he exclaimed, in a faint voice, "No, never! no, not with life!" But the rough hands stayed not their work; and, after gazing for an instant at his wounded side, the man turned to his companion, saying, "Ivan, run down and bring up the pack, quick! We can stop this bleeding. Do you not see? it does not jerk. Then, if none of the vitals be touched——"

"A hundred crowns if you save him till we can get to Aix," said Lord Montagu.

"I think I can save him altogether," said the man. "The thing is, people will not treat man as if he were a beast; and so they kill him. Man and beast are only flesh, and all flesh is grass."

[241] But it is needless to discuss or to display any further the views and principles of Edward's somewhat rough doctor, or to detail the treatment he underwent. There was the usual amount of bustle and confusion, and the much talking and the recommendation of many remedies which could not be procured and would have done no good if they had been there. Suffice it that the bleeding was soon stayed, and that Edward recovered from the fainting-fit into which the wound, probably penetrating some very sensitive part, had thrown him. The blacksmith by no means wanted mother-wit, and his treatment was probably based upon the sound principle of merely aiding nature. The lad spoke a few words, and they tried to impose silence upon him; but he would not hold his peace till those around assured him that no one had hurt his brother and that he was safe in another chamber.

All Lord Montagu's anxiety seemed to be to get him to Aix; and he went out himself and sent out more than once to see if the storm was over. Luckily for Edward, it continued all night and part of the next morning; I say luckily, for the hands in which he was were probably better calculated to bring about his recovery than any which could have been found in a small town in Savoy, as medical science went in those times.

In the mean while, the party assembled made themselves as comfortable as they could in disagreeable circumstances of many kinds; and the heavy tread of Sir Richard Langdale was heard through the night beating incessantly the floor of the room above. Toward morning that wearisome footfall ceased, and Lord Montagu, who sat by Edward's side and was still awake, said to himself, "That poor wretch has found sleep at length. Now, which is the happiest?—he, or poor Ned here? I would rather be that boy than the man who has killed his own brother. They say that Edward saved his life, too, not an hour before. Very likely! He is fit for any gallant act. Heaven! what must that man's thoughts be?"

Soon after, the Abbé Scaglia roused himself in the corner where he had ensconced him, and, moving quietly up, talked in a low tone for some twenty minutes with Lord Montagu. They then roused the rest of the party who had been supping there, and went down into the court-yard, where they found the horses of Edward Langdale and his companions. Their own were hidden in one of those deep vaults under the great tower which were common in most feudal castles, especially in border-districts, as a safe and silent receptacle of stolen cattle and horses.

Though it was still raining, most of the party mounted and rode away, promising to send up a litter and a surgeon as soon as the road was passable. Lord Montagu himself said he would remain with the poor lad, and reascended to the chamber where he had left him.

[242] All was silent there: the wounded youth had fallen into a sleep which seemed calm, and the two blacksmiths were nodding beside him. The English nobleman then went up to the floor above, where he found Jacques Beaupré asleep across the door, and Pierrot sitting up, but rubbing his eyes as if he had not been long awake.

In answer to the nobleman's questions, Pierrot detailed all that had occurred upon the road, and dwelt upon the gallant conduct of his young master. "He little thought," said the man, "that he was risking his own life to save the very man who would kill him. But I have often heard say that it is unlucky to rescue a man from drowning. As to this man in here, sir, I believe he is mad; for he has been walking about all night,—sometimes talking to himself, sometimes groaning as if his heart would break. I had better wake him, perhaps."

"No, no! Let him sleep if he can," said Lord Montagu, quickly. "Well may he groan! Pray Heaven neither of us may ever have such cause, my man. When you hear him move, get him some wine. There is still some down-stairs. Till then, let him alone. If he sleeps, it is the best thing for him."

Thus saying, he went down again, and, finding every thing as before, approached the window and gazed at the morning light, still pale and blue, spreading up from the

mountain-edges into the rainy sky. After about half an hour, Edward turned painfully and asked for some water. His lord gave it to him with a kindly word or two, and the blacksmiths woke up and examined the wound. They seemed satisfied with its appearance, and one of them said, loud enough for Edward to hear, "He will get well, sir."

Oh, what a blessed thing is hope! Those few words were a better balm than any druggist could have supplied. They brought with them, too, the thought of Lucette; and, beckoning to Lord Montagu to hold down his head, he whispered, "If I should die, my lord, I beseech you to write a few lines to the old Marquise de Lagny, to tell her the fact. She will be with the court of France, wherever that may be."

"No, no; you will get well, Ned," said Lord Montagu, in a cheerful tone. "I do not intend to part with you yet. But now you must positively be silent if you would not increase the evil."

[243] Some four or five hours passed. The rain cleared away, the sun broke out, and Lord Montagu looked anxiously from the windows which were turned toward the road, in expectation of the promised litter. All he could see, however, was a large party of Savoyard peasantry working hard, apparently, to remove some obstruction from the highway.

He was still gazing forth, when Pierrot appeared at the door, and, finding all still, beckoned to him.

"My lord," he said, in a low voice, when Montagu had joined him, "I can hear nothing of that man above, nor Jacques either. He could not get out of the windows; and I should not wonder if he has hanged himself."

Lord Montagu started and instantly ran up-stairs, thinking the conclusion at which Pierrot had jumped not at all improbable. He opened the door gently and looked around. The sun was shining full into the room, but Sir Richard Langdale was not there. The only thing that could indicate the mode of his escape was a pair of large riding-boots, very wet, which lay on the floor; and it is probable that, opening the door cautiously while the two men were asleep, he had stepped lightly over them and then gone down the stairs.

"What a thing is the love of life!" thought Lord Montagu. "This man would rather live miserable than risk the grave. However, I cannot be sorry; and I believe poor Ned will be glad."

He entered the room below as silently as possible; but Edward, who had heard his rapid step running up the stairs, turned his head, asking, "Is there any thing the matter above?"

"Only that your brother has escaped," said his lord.

"Thank God!" said the young man, with a smile. "Pray, do not pursue him, my lord."

"I will not," replied Montagu: "make your mind easy, Ned."

"Here come some people with a litter up the hill," said one of the blacksmiths.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

The *auberge*, the *cabaret*, the *gîte*, were the usual places of repose for travellers in the reign of Louis XIII., as they had been under that of his father, Henry IV. Some change, indeed, had taken place in point of comfort and refinement; and even before the epoch of Louis XIV., which was now rapidly approaching, many an auberge was a very comfortable and luxurious dwelling. But there was another roof, which, in those days, afforded in Catholic countries—and even now afford, on the less frequented lines of travel—a more peaceful and little less comfortable or luxurious resting-spot than the houses of public entertainment. This was the large monastery, the abbey or the priory of any of the hospitable orders; and in Savoy these were peculiarly numerous, as their splendid ruins still attest.

Alas that in the march of what we call improvement so much that is good is swept away! Many undoubtedly were the vices and the evils which had crept into the Romish Church; great, we Protestants believe, was the corruption of her faith; but the time will come when the whole world will own that to that Church we owe a debt of gratitude for arts, institutions, faith itself, preserved, and will regret that in the fanatical zeal of religious innovation the good and the bad were promiscuously crushed together.

With the men who bore the litter sent by the Abbé Scaglia was a surgeon of some eminence, who strongly advised that the wounded youth should be carried to the Abbey of St. Pierre rather than to a noisy inn in Aix. It was but a mile from the city, he said: the air was pure and fine, and the attendance of the sisters, who were of an order of charity, would be worth more than that of any nurses who could be found in the town. They were the servants of God; the others were the servants of Mammon: and no one could doubt which would do their duty best.

[245] His reasoning was conclusive; and Edward Langdale was accordingly carried to the abbey and kindly received.

No need to dwell upon his illness. It was severe, but it was not fatal; and, by the reader's leave, we will advance six days in our story and look into the chamber which had been assigned him in the hospital-part of the building. Lord Montagu sat by his bedside with a cheerful look, and the young man was already able to raise himself upon his arm and listen to or answer questions. His noble friend had passed the intervening time, as he had proposed, at Aix, and his days were full of business and excitement; but still he had found leisure to ride out each day and visit his page.

"Well, Ned," he said, "you are now in a fair way. The surgeon tells me there is no doubt of your recovery now, if you have even tolerable prudence; so I shall leave you for a day or two and go to Turin. I trust you will be able to travel shortly after I come back; for I have wanted you much during your long absence, and shall want you more now. There is Henry Freeland; he is stupid as an ass; and then George Abbot, who has sense enough when you give him three hours to think over what he has to do, is as slow as an elephant."

"I was indeed very long on my journey, my lord," replied Edward; "but I can assure you I could not help it. One unfortunate accident after another detained me, as I have partly told you."

[246] "Ay, Madame de Chevreuse wrote me all that," said Montagu. "You were ill from a knock on the head at Rochelle. You are too quick, my boy, and, I dare say, brought it on yourself; but I would rather have a ready hand and a ready head than a slow heart and a dull understanding. It was unfortunate, it is true; for it gave an excuse for sending away Lord Denbigh's fleet. But that was all a pretext. We understand these Rochellais well; and they will quarrel amongst themselves till they lose their city. Then you were caught by this great cardinal and detained by him. You must tell me all about that by-and-by. It is a marvel he hanged you not; and you must have managed him skilfully. But tell me about these two blacksmith horse-doctors you had with you. They say they met you on the road at Chartres, and that you would have none of their company."

"They say true, my lord," answered Edward. "I liked not their faces, and I wished to ride alone. Besides, I had seen one of them, I am sure, at Nantes, in the court of the castle; and I feared he might be one of the cardinal's people. But, as he is here in Savoy, whither he said from the first he was coming, I was probably mistaken. However, it is always better to be sure of your company."

"Oh, they are honest fellows," said Lord Montagu; "and, as I am continually wanting a smith, I have engaged them both to go with me as far at least as Liege. If they were the cardinal's men they would not go out of the cardinal's reach."

It may be necessary to explain that in those days, in Europe, men were much in the same state as travellers in Hindostan at present. Each servant you had with you had his specialty, and the train of a man of means and retinue consisted of a dozen more persons than any one now requires. It is true that at great towns you could find artificers of all sorts, ready to repair your coach or shoe your horses, or perform any services which the accidents of the road might require; but, if one of those accidents occurred between great town and great town, you might have to travel twenty miles with a lame horse or a broken vehicle, unless you had some one with you capable of rectifying the mischance upon the spot. Poor men were obliged to submit to such inconveniences, but the rich were prepared against them; and, as Lord Montagu's object was haste, and that rapidity of movement which is the best concealment, he very naturally desired to guard against all impediments.

[247] The object of that nobleman in the long journey which he was even then taking was to forward the great schemes of one to whom he was devoted with a warmth and sincerity of attachment very rare even then, rarer still now. The famous Duke of Buckingham, favorite of two kings, and ruler for a time of both king and people, was a man of great and daring enterprise, of bold and courageous action, but of small foresight and of less discretion. Unfortunate in action, from causes which he often could not control, he was great in purpose and even obstinate in resolution. The fault was generally a want of capacity for detail, and a miscalculation of the means in his power as proportioned to the end he had in view. For the first time in life, however, he had now considered his steps well and devised each move on the political chess-board accurately. Whatever were his motives, (none has discovered them, nor, perhaps, ever will,) his present object was to humble France and to raise England at her expense; and, while he himself prepared eagerly for a war in which he was not fitted for command, his most intimate friend and confidant, Lord Montagu, was intrusted with the execution of that great political scheme which is the only bright point in Buckingham's career as a statesman. His task was, in the first place, to unite every discontented person and party in France against the crown, to combine Huguenots with dissatisfied Catholics, a turbulent nobility with a turbulent people, and to disunite the powers, wherever they might be, which supported the throne. But in the next place came the still more important part of the scheme. It was to bring together all the foreign enemies of France, a discordant and heterogeneous body, and to direct their efforts in one concentrated torrent against a kingdom already distracted by internal feuds.

Few men could have been better fitted for these tasks; but in some respects Lord Montagu

was wanting. He was somewhat too confiding; though politic, he was not sufficiently reserved; though clear-sighted, he was not observant of small particulars.

[248] Hitherto he had been successful in all he had attempted; and now, by Edward's bedside, he spoke with some satisfaction of all he had done:—how he had remained in France in despite of the terrible minister who then already ruled the destinies of that great country; how he had passed from house to house and castle to castle, giving consistency to plans and direction to purposes which had previously been vague and undefined; how he had obtained written assurances of co-operation and support from many of the most powerful nobility and the most influential factions in France; how his efforts in Spain and Lorraine and Savoy were all on the eve of triumph.

"Here," he said, "I have met with more difficulty than I expected. The court of the duke is divided. Many of his advisers have been gained by Richelieu, and a number of the chief nobility are attached to an alliance with France. It was to strengthen the hands of our friend the Abbé Scaglia, and to commit irrevocably to our party many of the most influential of these nobles, that we held the secret meeting in the old Chateau of Groslie, where you found us so unexpectedly. Your coming was not, in truth, inopportune; for all was settled, and further discussion would have done harm rather than good."

"I am glad your lordship has been so successful in great matters," said Edward, "while I have been so unsuccessful in smaller ones. Indeed, though I cannot trace my want of success to any fault of my own, yet I cannot help feeling that my failure to accomplish any thing that was intrusted to me must have shaken your lordship's confidence in me. Either I must have been stupid, or most unfortunate,—which is perhaps worse."

"Nonsense, lad!" said Lord Montagu. "Many of the most successful men I have ever known failed in their first efforts: some failed for many years. There is in circumstance, my good youth, a dead weight which no human strength can overcome. We sent you to France because you were likely to pass where no man of riper years and known reputation could have made his way; but we were well aware that you had difficulties to contend with which were sure to try you hard and probably might frustrate all your efforts. But you have not wholly failed. You have been delayed, impeded; but you have made known the views of England where it was necessary they should be known, and you have brought me intelligence of the state of preparation of his Grace of Buckingham, which was most important at the present moment."

"Indeed, my lord!" cried Edward, with a look of extreme surprise. "The cardinal minister opened all the letters and read them in my presence, and I heard no such intelligence."

[249] "Look there!" said Montagu, taking a letter from his pocket and holding it up before the young man's eyes. "You thought that there was nothing on that sheet but what is written in black ink; and so did Richelieu; but he did not and could not discover all that is told in those orange characters unless he had possessed the secret, only known to three persons, of the liquid which brings out the characters from the apparently blank paper. It is only a marvel, my boy, that you passed at all. We hardly expected it; but you have passed, and, though delayed upon your journey, have brought me this intelligence in time. This cardinal is very shrewd; but there are people as shrewd as he. This news will hurry the movements of Savoy, Lorraine, the empire; and yet he had this letter in his hand and suffered it to pass."

"No thanks to me," said Edward; "for I knew not what was in it."

He was in a somewhat desponding mood, and inclined to undervalue his own services; but he could not help seeing that papers had been put into his hands which, unknown to himself, must have led him to an ignominious death if they had been discovered; and, for the time at least, he felt sick of political intrigue. There are moments; even in the midst of the bustle and turmoil, the eagerness and the excitement, of this world's objects and ambitions, when a consciousness of the excellence of perfect truth and plain sincerity comes upon us, and we feel that if all men would but follow the pure and plain injunction of the Savior, and do unto others as we would they should do unto us, we should be happier here as well as hereafter. We excuse to ourselves our own acts by the actions of others. We say, "We must fight our adversaries with their own weapons." We would be ready to follow the gospel precept if others would follow it; but each man has the same apology, and no one will commence obedience.

But Edward felt that it did not befit one so young to discuss ethics with his lord; and, changing the subject, he inquired, "How long did your lordship say you would be absent?"

"Some seven days," answered Lord Montagu. "And, from what the surgeon says, I judge you will be able to travel about six days after. I have work here for at least that time."

[250] "I trust so, my lord; for I certainly feel my health improving," said the young man. "But I wish your lordship would take those blacksmiths with you,—though they treated me well and kindly,—perhaps skilfully too: I can feel grateful to them, but cannot bring my mind to confide in them."

"Why, what is the matter with them?" asked Montagu, bluffly.

"I know not, my lord," said Edward; "but they have both bad faces,—a cunning and a double look."

"Pooh, pooh! prejudice!" said Lord Montagu. "They are mighty good folks. Why, they have already cured two of my horses, which the people here could make nothing of. You are sick and whimsical, boy. Now, tell me: how long did you stay at the Chateau of Dampierre? The fair duchess does not mention that fact; but she seems mightily smitten with you."

"But a day and a night, my lord," replied Edward, not without a slight flush of the cheek. "She received a command from the court to retire to Lorraine, and a letter—I presume from your lordship—arrived the same day, telling me to go to Gray."

"No need of reasons," said Montagu, somewhat shortly. "Well, have you heard that your somewhat unkind brother has succeeded in making his escape?"

"No; I have heard nothing, my lord," replied Edward. "You assured me he should not be pursued."

"Not so," answered Montagu. "A few words make a great difference, young man. I assured you I would not pursue him,—not that he should not be pursued; and the Abbé Scaglia, as in duty bound, ordered an immediate search for one who had attempted such a crime in his presence. It has thus far been unsuccessful, and I think will prove so altogether."

"Has nothing at all been heard of him?" asked Edward.

[251] "Very little that can be at all relied upon," replied Lord Montagu. "The servant who was with him when he so rashly leaped his horse into the river was apprehended and questioned. He says that Sir Richard was on his way to Lyons when the accident occurred; but on that road no trace of him can be discovered. A peasant declares he met with a man of an appearance like his, without boots, hat, or sword, wandering along the mountain-paths toward *Les Echelles*, and a little boy says he saw the same person at a distance; but this is all that has yet been discovered."

"I would fain beseech the Abbé Scaglia to drop all pursuit," said the young man; "but I fear they will not let me write. It is useless to seek for him now that I am, as they say, recovering; and, moreover, my lord, I think I was myself a good deal in fault. My words were rash and intemperate. I could not have borne them myself had I been in his place."

"They certainly were not very sweet," said Lord Montagu, with a laugh; "and I will tell the abbé what you say, Ned. But you will soon be well, I do trust, and then this affair will terminate of itself."

The conversation was not prolonged much further; and Lord Montagu left his young friend to the care of Pierrot and Jacques Beaupré and the attendance of the good sisters. Every kindness was shown him. The room in which he had been placed was large and airy; the sunshine and the sweet summer air came streaming in at his window, and day by day his health improved; but still illness is ever tedious, and the hours passed heavily along. Thought was his only resource; but, for a young man of his character, thought—even enforced thought—is a blessing. The adventure which had so nearly closed his life was not without its good results. He reproached himself for the harsh words he had uttered and the harsh feelings he had entertained toward his brother, and he resolved to nourish better things in his heart. The five or six preceding years and the events they had brought with them had all had a hardening tendency; but, one by one, during the few last months, softening lessons of various kinds had disciplined and entended without enfeebling his spirit; and on the sixth day after Lord Montagu's departure Edward rose for an hour or two from his bed of sickness, a very different being from him whom we first introduced to the reader.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

Every thing is irrevocable. The word spoken, the deed done, is registered in that book of fate from the page of which no solvent can blot it out. Nay, more: every word or action, however small, has some effect on all that surrounds it; and that effect is often quite out of all proportion to the cause. It is hard for the narrow, slippery mind of man to conceive and hold fast the fact that a pebble dropped into the Atlantic produces a ripple which is more or less felt to all the Atlantic's shores: yet it is a fact. The eye may not be keen enough to detect it ten yards from the spot where the stone displaced the waters; but, though unseen, it exists. It may be crossed by counteracting causes, but still it acts upon them while they act upon it; and it has its effect,—permanent, persisting, never ending.

It is the same with man's actions. Deeds done a thousand years ago are affecting every one of us now; and Julius Cæsar has more to do with a common-councilman of the city of London than that common-councilman ever dreams of.

We have seen that Edward Langdale had little to do but to think. The surgeons would not

let him read. He was enjoined to speak as little as possible, for there was a shrewd suspicion that the sword which wounded him had passed through, or very near, one of the lungs. But he employed thought to good purpose,—to calm all angry feelings, to quench repinings, to humble himself to God's will. He was naturally led by this train of thought to follow, in reference to his own case, some of the fine threads out of which the great network of cause and effect is wrought.

[253] "Why should I be so angry with my brother?" he thought. "If he had not taken from me my property, what a different creature I should have been!—a country squire with a pack of hounds; a justice of the peace some day, to hear old women's complaints about robbed orchards and violated hen-roosts! I should never have been Lord Montagu's page; I should never have met with dear, dear Lucette. Sweet girl! where is she now? Does she think of me still? Does she ever regret the indissoluble bond that binds us together?"

Then the train of thought became somewhat more gloomy. He recollected that for two long years—how sadly, sadly long they seemed in prospect!—he was not to see her. And what might happen in the interval? All means, all arts, would be used to induce her to forget him, to break their union, perhaps to make her love some other; and he felt for an instant, as he thus pondered, the little, sharp sting of jealousy,—the most poignant of pangs.

The world has always been full of tales of woman's fickleness, and Edward had heard them,—tales in which her firmness and her truth are often forgotten altogether. But speedily came better thoughts and nobler confidence. Lucette was full of gentleness, was of a tender, loving nature, he knew; but he thought he had remarked, in the various scenes through which they had passed,—scenes well calculated to try a young girl to the utmost,—a strength, a constancy of purpose which bade him trust.

"She will not abandon me," he thought. "She will not bestow that love upon another which was first mine,—is mine by right. Dear, beautiful girl! there is truth and enduring love in those clear, liquid eyes. Oh that I could see her again but for one moment! Oh for one embrace, one kiss!"

[254] The day declined, and night came on. They brought the invalid the scanty supper that was allowed him, and, an hour or two after, Pierrot came to take away the light; for Edward, who had slept very lightly for several nights, had expressed a wish that the night-lamp and the good folks who had hitherto watched him might be withdrawn. He thought he should rest better, he said, if he were quite alone and in darkness. He was not mistaken. From ten till twelve he slept more soundly than he had done for many days. He heard the abbey clock strike twelve, however, but it was but a momentary interruption of his slumber; and he was turning round to sleep again, when the door of the chamber creaked a little upon its hinges. The room was large and the windows well shaded; but, as Edward lay with his face toward the door, he could see a gleam of moonlight partly interrupted at the door-way, and he gazed to discover who was coming in. The figure was small, the garments those of a woman; and the youth thought, "One of the good sisters, to see if I am sleeping well. She means it kindly; but I wish she had not come."

Unwilling to have any conversation, he shut his eyes again and affected to be still asleep; but the door was gently closed, and then a light footfall crossed the floor. It stopped near his bedside, and then a hand lightly touched him; for the room was very dark, and probably the visitor, whoever it was, did not see any thing distinctly.

"This is strange," thought Edward: "the sisters commonly have a lamp with them."

The stranger paused where she stood, and seemed to be gazing down upon the spot where he lay; and then she quietly crossed the room to where a small crack between the blind and the wall showed a very narrow ray of moonshine. She quietly and softly pulled back the blind a very little farther, so as to admit the slightest possible light into the room, and then returned to the bedside and gazed down again. A moment or two after, Edward felt the pressure of a cool, delicious kiss upon his cheek. He could affect sleep no longer, and opened his eyes; but it was in vain. He could neither see the face nor distinguish the garments of his visitor; and, stretching forth his hand, he caught her dress, saying, "Who are you? what is it you seek?"

She answered not; but, kneeling down by his bedside, she threw her arms round him, covering his lips and brow with kisses; and he thought he felt a warm drop or two fall from her eyes upon his cheek.

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed the young man, raising himself on his arm; "who are you? What is this? I should know that kiss; but I do not—I cannot believe in such happiness. Tell me, tell me who you are!"

[255] She put her soft cheek, wet with tears, close to his, and whispered, "Dear, dear Edward! Who am I? Who but your own Lucette,—your own wife? And did you know my kiss? Never, never forget it, Edward." And she kissed him again and again, as if she would fix the soft pressure of her lips upon his memory forever.

"Never! never!" he said, putting his arm round her. "But am I in a dream? I cannot believe that this is a waking truth."

"Lie down," said Lucette, "and do not be agitated, dear husband; otherwise I must leave you. It is no dream, though it seems almost as much so to me as to you. I thought you would forgive me for waking you; and I could not be so near you, and you ill and wounded, without one word of affection before we go on. I am afraid it was cruel and wrong, when you were sleeping so calmly. But tell me yourself that you are better,—that you are getting well. The good sister who told me all about your wound said you would soon be able to ride out. They are all anxious about you here; but who can be so anxious as I am?"

"But tell me more, dear Lucette," said Edward, disobeying her, and still holding her to his heart. "How came you in Savoy? how came you here? how did you find your way hither?"

"I came on with the family of Monsieur de Rohan," answered Lucette. "He judged it best we should all quit France for a season and go to Turin or Venice, while he endeavored to deliver Rochelle; and when we arrived here the first thing the nuns told us was of the young foreign cavalier who lay wounded under their care. When I heard your name, I seemed for a moment to have no feeling in my heart, no thought in my brain; but I soon recovered. I got the good sister who attends upon you to tell me all; and, by prayers and entreaties and the gold cross I used to wear, I induced her to bring me here, telling her that you are my husband,—my own wedded husband. But I promised her, Edward, not to agitate you or talk to you too much, and only to stay five minutes."

[256] "Oh, stay, Lucette! stay!" said Edward, forgetting all consequences. "Dearest girl, do not leave me! Lord Montagu will be back to-morrow. Must you go on to Turin?"

"Remember your promise to the cardinal, Edward," she answered. "I must remember mine to good Sister Agatha. If I break my promises to others, you will not believe mine to you,—although I fear I have already somewhat failed, and agitated you more than I intended."

"Five minutes have not passed yet," said the youth, feeling that she was about to rise from her knees, where she had hitherto remained. "Oh, no! it is but an instant since you came, dearest! Another kiss, dear Lucette. Could I have had them before, I should have been well ere this." He took another, and not only one; and, between, he told her he was really better, and would soon be well, and that he would try some means to see her soon, and at the end of two years would seek her as his wife, whoever might oppose; and she on her part promised that he should not seek in vain, but should find her ever ready to go with him to the ends of the earth.

But the five minutes were certainly outstayed; and Lucette's heart was reproaching her, and Edward was thinking how he could ever part with her, when the door opened again, and Sister Agatha came in to remind the poor girl of her promise.

[257] It was a hard parting,—harder, perhaps, than it had been before; and many another word had to be spoken and many another kiss to be taken ere they could separate. Sister Agatha was no restraint upon them, and, to say sooth, entered into their feelings with sympathies not altogether consistent with her vows. What they said she could not understand, for they spoke in English; and, though she had a certain portion of French and a good deal more of Italian, the rich Anglo-Saxon tongue was to the good old soul a most harsh and unintelligible jargon, and she wondered that such pretty lips as Lucette's could pronounce the hideous sounds. The five minutes were lengthened to half an hour after her arrival, for Lucette felt she was breaking no promise when the person to whom it had been made was present and not an unconsenting party; but in the end Sister Agatha insisted that they should part, asking Lucette in a reproachful tone if she would kill the poor young man.

"I have been selfish," said Lucette, rising from the edge of the bed where she had been sitting; and, kissing him once more, with a long, tender, lingering kiss, she left him.

Thus they parted, not to meet again for a longer period than they anticipated. They could hardly be said to have seen each other, for Sister Agatha had left her lamp at the door, and the ray of moonlight which Lucette had let in was very faint; but that interview, short as it had been, was something for memory to fix upon during many months.

The first effect upon Edward Langdale was what Sister Agatha had dreaded. It had agitated him much, and for more than one hour after Lucette had left him his heart beat and his brain throbbed, and sleep deserted him as if she never would return. But the reaction was balmy. He had met her again; he had held her in his arms; he had tasted once more the honey of her lips; and there was a sort of superstitious feeling about him as if a bad spell had been broken. He had felt a dread till then that some old rhyme he had heard in his young days was to be verified in his own case. It was somewhat to the following effect, though I know not if memory retains it rightly:—

"They had met, they had loved, they had parted,
And met no more till both were broken-hearted."

It had haunted him, that old distich, ever since he left Lucette under the care of the Duc de Rohan; but now the vision was dispelled. They had met again, and his Lucette loved him still as warmly, fondly, as he could wish. It was a dexter omen; and, with more faith than ever Roman augur possessed, he interpreted it to forebode future happiness. Joy, however, is wakeful as well as sorrow; and, even after the first effect of agitation and excitement had passed away, he lay sleepless and thoughtful, but very, very happy. He remembered many

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a word he could have wished to have uttered, many a question he would willingly have asked; but the great question of the heart was answered. She loved him still unchanged; and Edward was at a time of life when hope and trust were sure to rise out of such assurance. Gradually fatigue and exhaustion did their work upon the body, and, through the body, upon the mind. Had there been trouble in the spirit, he might, and probably would, have slept a few minutes, from mere weariness, to wake speedily with irritation, if not fever. But the heart was at rest; and as soon as his eyes closed he slept like a wearied but happy child, calmly, profoundly, long, and only woke some three hours after every other person in the abbey. His look was relieved, his color better, his eyes more bright. During that night he had made the first rapid stride toward convalescence.

Oh, if physicians would but take pains to discover whether the malady lies most in the mind or the body, what cures might be performed!—if they could but find the medicine! But happiness is a mithridate so compound and so fine that, search over the world, you will find few places where it can be procured, and never—alas! never—pure and unadulterated. That villanous serpent has left his slime on every thing.

The whole day Edward Langdale waited impatiently for the return of Lord Montagu; but he waited in vain: Lord Montagu did not appear. Another and another day passed: still he was absent. Young men calculate not the many impediments which lie between design and performance. "He could easily do this; he might easily have done that," is the constant cry; when in truth it would have been impossible for the person spoken of to have done any thing more than he did do. The smallest thing in the world overthrows the grandest scheme, frustrates the most positive assurance. Is it accident,—that refuge of the destitute? Is it not rather the quiet intervention of that ruling Power which, foreseeing all man's acts, bends the results to the accomplishment of his own predetermined purposes?

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Edward Langdale was impatient. Strength was returning fast: when he coughed, his handkerchief came from his lips unstained with blood; his wound was nearly healed, and he longed to pursue his career of active exertion. But he did not know that the Duke of Savoy had been out to kill deer in the mountains, and that Lord Montagu was forced to wait his return. In the mean time, however, he rose earlier each day. He went out; he roamed round the abbey; he visited the city; and the only thing which retarded his complete recovery was his impatience. He was eager to get on,—too eager. He had always been too eager; but there was a great difference between his eagerness now and that of former years. Hitherto he had been moved only by the vague, aspiring hope of youth,—so often disappointed till the frost of age and the chill of adversity have withered the plant and blighted the flower and destroyed the fruit under the bud,—the hope of doing some-thing great in life. Now he had a more definite object, a clearer purpose. It was Lucette.

CHAPTER XXX.

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The expression of Lord Montagu's face when he at length rejoined his page at Aix was calm and well satisfied, cheerful, but not particularly gay. Yet Edward, who had enjoyed many opportunities of witnessing the effect of various emotions upon him, clearly perceived that he returned with full success. Had his mood been merrier, the page might have doubted; had he been full of the playful wit or the light jest which distinguished the cavaliers of those days, the youth might have supposed there was disappointment under the levity; but that quiet and composed demeanor he knew meant success. Their first meeting was at the inn where Montagu had lodged while previously at Aix; for the youth had gone down each evening for the last two or three days to watch for his arrival: but on the night in question his lord had ridden into the town some half-hour before the time he was expected; and when Edward entered his chamber he was sitting with a book in one hand and a spoon in the other, lightly running over the pages, and from time to time taking a spoonful of soup flavored with those delicious truffles of Savoy which have often kept kingly couriers running between Paris and Turin.

"Ah, Ned!" he exclaimed, as soon as he saw the lad. "You have recovered wonderfully soon: a little pale still; but that is natural. How say you? can you ride forward three days hence?"

"Whenever your lordship pleases," answered Edward. "I am only eager to get on; and this inactivity does me more harm than all the exercise in the world. I am quite well, my lord, and only a little weak."

"Do not be impatient," answered Montagu, with a smile. "We cannot go on just yet. Oakingham is ill now, poor fellow! I have ridden too fast for him; and he broke down during the last stage, and has gone to bed. So I am without any one to write my letters for me to-night."

"Can your lordship trust the task to me?" asked the young man.

"Oh, trust you? Certainly, Ned," replied the other. "But will it not hurt you?"

Edward expressed his readiness; and the letters were written, full of that well-satisfied

confidence which in this world is so often destined to disappointment. Fate is no better than a fine silk stocking, in which one stitch or another is sure to run down ere we have taken a dozen steps in the ball-room of the world: well if it be not rent from top to toe! There are no key-stones in the architecture of our designs; and, if a pebble slips, woe be to the whole edifice!

But we are getting a little ahead of the story, or, at least, foreshadowing conclusions which should be reserved in solemn secrecy for the moment of their occurrence.

The letters being written, one of the noble lord's grooms was called up, furnished with money and directions, and departed to bear the missives to their several destinations as rapidly and as carefully as he could.

[261] "There goes another," said Montagu. "That is the fifth courier I have sent off this week. Upon my word, Ned, if it had not been for your coming with two lackeys and two blacksmiths I should soon have been without any train at all. But you seem not to love your two blacksmiths, my boy. What has set your face against them? Have they lamed your horse, or found you out in a love-affair with the landlord's daughter, cheated you of two *livres Tournois*, or eaten the only fish upon a *jour maigre*?"

"None of all those great offences, my lord," replied Edward. "They are good smiths; I have not been fortunate with mine host's daughters; their charges are compassionate to youths without experience; and no trout that I know of has slipped off my own hook. But one of them I am certain I saw in the court of the chateau at Nantes; and I like not the countenance of either."

"Pshaw!" said Lord Montagu. "Do you give way to the superstition of physiognomy? Why, cut me across the nose with the back-handed blow of a spadron, and you make a marvellous ill-favored fellow out of a gay gentleman who has not been thought unpersonable. Nonsense, nonsense, Edward! The best nuts have the roughest shells. The diamond itself is but like a pebble-stone till it is cut and polished. And where in the fiend's name should either of these two poor devils get ground down or burnished?"

"Well, my lord, I say not a word against them," answered Edward. "They told a true tale, it seems, as to their journey. To me they were wonderfully kind when I was hurt. Neither do I mind mere ugliness: that is God's doing; and it may be as a warning to others, or it may not: I cannot tell. But there is a sort of look—an expression—which men beget in themselves by their habitual acts or thoughts, which is a great truth-teller, I think. Now, these men look cunning. Each of them squints, too, more or less. One cannot see whom or what they are looking at."

[262] Lord Montagu broke into a gay laugh. "As if every man," he said, "should be condemned who does not square his gaze by line and rule. Out upon it, Ned! If ever you fall in love, you will need an astrolabe to measure the exact angles of your beauty's lustrous orbs. Why, some of the best men in England squint like a green parrot. More lucky they, if they can see both sides of every thing at once. But I will show you a man to-night who shall come up to even your ideas of perfection. He ought to be here about this hour. Oh, he is a marvel of beauty and grace!"

Thus saying, he knocked hard with the hilt of his dagger upon the table, and one of the servants of the inn appeared. "Show in the illustrious Signor Morini whenever he comes," said Lord Montagu: "we must not keep so great and amiable a personage waiting."

"He is here now, monseigneur," answered the servant.

"Well, conduct him hither," answered the English gentleman, "and tell my servant to give you a bottle of that delicious Italian wine which I sent on from Turin. Three Venice glasses, too, must be brought, and a small plate of sugared peaches."

The waiter retired, and, a moment or two after, one of the most singular figures entered the room that Edward had ever seen. It was that of a man, not old, but past the middle age, dressed in the height of the fashion, beribboned and belaced, with a long rapier by his side, which would have touched the ground had it even been borne upon the thigh of a tall man. But Signor Morini was not a tall man: on the contrary, he was certainly not more than four feet two or three inches in height, with a back bent into the shape of the bow of a double-bass. He was thin, too, and his face—with the exception of the eyes, which were large and lustrous—was of that peculiar ugliness which is frequently seen in the deformed, the features all packed together and looking as if they had been pinched to get them into a smaller space.

No consciousness of ugliness appeared in his demeanor, however,—no timidity, no shyness. He entered with the strut of a bantam-cock, while his rich but short cloak, borne out by the round of his back so as to hang far off from his person, afforded no bad image of the tail of the bird. He saluted Lord Montagu with ceremonious respect, and stared at Edward Langdale with an unwinking gaze which was almost insolent, smoothing down the little sharp tuft of sandy-colored hair which adorned his chin in the form of what was then called a royal, with an air of ineffable puppyism.

[263] "Ah, my lord," he said, in French, "you see I kept my word and was at Aix two days before

you. But who is this young gentleman? I do not know him. He was not in your suite at Turin, I believe."

"This is my young friend and gentleman, Monsieur de Langdale," answered Lord Montagu, with much assumed politeness. "Let me present him to you, Signor Morini. He is a philosopher like yourself, and deals, as you do, in the great science of physiognomy, though of course his youth places him far behind you in knowledge."

Edward and Morini exchanged bows and salutations, the latter either not at all perceiving, or not appearing to perceive, that there was a vein of jest running through Lord Montagu's politeness which might not have been very flattering to his vanity. "Ha! a philosopher!" he exclaimed. "I am right glad to see any one who, in these degenerate times, devotes himself to the only great, pure, and noble pursuits on which the mind of a man can expatiate. What is the particular science to which you have most addicted yourself, young gentleman? What have you lately been studying?"

"Nothing," replied Edward, almost inclined to be rude. "My lord does me too much honor in calling me a philosopher."

"Nay, nay," said Montagu, laughing: "if I may judge from letters I have received, and from what you yourself have told me, you have been lately studying much,—fair ladies' hearts and prime ministers' heads,—Ned. He has quite captivated a duchess and smoothed down a cardinal. But what he means, learned signor, is, that, having been badly wounded by a sword which let rather too much daylight into the dark chamber of his chest, his only study was to get well again."

"Did you anoint the blade?" asked Morini: "the blade should always be anointed at the proper hour of the moon. Had I been here he would have been well in a few days."

"Probably," said Montagu, gravely; "but we had no one but poor, ignorant surgeons, who forgot the precaution you mention."

[264] "Ah, they are stupid and hard-headed creatures," replied the other: "they never consider that man is composed of an animal and an ethereal part indissolubly linked together, each depending upon the other, and both affected by higher influences. The sympathies which exist between all created things they take into no account. The compelling powers of the whole heavenly host upon the human frame, upon every part thereof,—upon man as an animal, upon man as an angel, upon man's whole fate and destiny, upon his mixed and separate natures,—are mere visions to them; and the time will come, my lord, when this mere material view will prevail over all the earth: intelligence—spirit—will be superseded, and engines will be invented to do the work of mind as well as matter. Where was your wound, young gentleman?"

"Here on the right breast the sword entered," answered Edward; "and it went out here, just under the shoulder."

"A dangerous wound!" replied the little man, gravely. "None but a brother's hand could have inflicted that wound and the sufferer survive."

Lord Montagu and Edward both started; but Morini went on, without seeming to perceive their surprise. "Nature abhors," he said, "such acts, and often frustrates them. The crime of Cain—the first and most terrible the world ever saw, the origin of death, the eldest-born of evil—is repugnant to every thing animate and inanimate. Fibres and tissues join which seem rent apart forever, and humours flow of themselves, nerves act without cause, all to repair the consequences of the terrible act, while thunders fall to prevent it and rocks to hide it. But what is written up there must be,—shall be; and it is possible this very wound, given by a brother's hand, may work great changes in your life."

"I trust it will," said Edward.

"But how did you know it was so given?" asked Lord Montagu.

"By the simplest of all means," replied Morini: "from knowing it could be given in no other way."

[265] As he spoke, he turned round sharply, for the door behind him opened suddenly. It was but two of the servants of the inn, bringing in the wine and the Venice glasses; and their coming so laden was certainly not at all unpleasant to the learned signor, who did full justice not only to the wine but to the confections also. While the party regaled themselves, the conversation wandered to many topics,—some of little, some of much, interest, with variety always agreeable. Indeed, Morini, who undoubtedly led, did not suffer it to rest long upon any subject. He spoke of several of the most celebrated people of Europe, of that and of the preceding age. He had seen King James, he said, shaking his head. "I did think," he said, "that homely sovereign would never have died a natural death, for he certainly brought a dark and bloody cloud over the royal house of England. But you will remark, my lord, I could never obtain clearly the particulars of his nativity; otherwise I could not have been mistaken. However, the aspects in the horoscope of his successor are more unfavorable still, I hear."

"Now, Heaven forefend!" said Lord Montagu, warmly: "he is a right noble monarch, and,

though the commonalty do fret and storm, he is too strong and firm for them to shake him. But what say you of the great and gallant Duke of Buckingham, signor? There is a man born to success and honor."

"His star has passed its culminating-point," said Morini: "there is something dark and sad behind. His life cannot be long. Perhaps he may die upon the battle-field in this new war; but I think it more likely he will receive his death in a private encounter. He is hot and fiery, they say. Such a thing is probable."

Montagu shook his head. "Few things less probable," he said: "there are not many men in England who would venture to call Buckingham to the field; and, though his is so free and noble a spirit that he would very likely consent to meet any one of gentle blood, yet he would not willingly offend the king by such rashness."

"Well, 'tis a foolish practice," said Morini, changing the subject,— "ay, and a barbarous one too, my lord. We derive it from the worst and rudest times of history. Who ever heard of a Roman or a Greek fighting a duel? Yet they were brave men, those ancients."

"Yet you go well armed, signor," said Lord Montagu, pointing to his long rapier, with a smile.

[266] "It is good always to be prepared," answered the other. "Besides, this rapier has many qualities and perfections, for which I value it. The blade is true Toledo, the sheath wrought by Jean of Cordova. Then the hilt, you see, is of silver, exquisitely cast by Cellini's own hand. Did you ever see a more graceful group than the two figures which compose it?—a warrior putting his hand to his sword, and a young girl with her arm round his neck pressing the weapon back into the sheath,—types of courage and moderation. The dagger is a curious relic of the feudal times,—a kill-villain, as the young Genoese nobles used to call it. We have no such handiwork as that now, my lord," he continued, as Montagu examined the weapon. "'Tis curious how arts and sciences are lost, and how, whilst mankind deem they are making great progress, they are falling back in one path as much as they are advancing in another."

Edward Langdale went round to Lord Montagu's side and gazed at the workmanship of the sword and dagger over his shoulder, murmuring, as he did so, "Beautiful, indeed!"—much to Morini's satisfaction.

"You seem to be a judge of such things, young gentleman," said the Italian.

"But little," said Edward: "my father, indeed, had some fine specimens of art which he had brought over to England from this country; but any one who sees a beautiful and graceful figure, well executed, must know and admire it."

"Your pardon! your pardon!" cried Morini. "The eye and the taste both want educating. Had you not seen and admired those objects of your father's, you would probably not have discovered the beauty of this. If you stay long in Aix, I can show you some other things well worth your observation."

"My stay depends entirely upon my lord," replied Edward; "but I think if he have no further commands I must retire to the abbey, for it is late."

"I will accompany you part of the way," said Morini, rising.

[267] "Nay," said Lord Montagu, "you forget you came here for a special purpose, my good signor. Edward can go; for, though he has faith in physiognomy, he has none in astrology, I believe; but you must stay with me a little longer. Come early to-morrow, Ned, and bring your two men with you."

"It is wrong, my lord," said the Italian, "very wrong, to put full faith in an uncertain science and refuse it to a certain one. But I will convince him in a moment before he goes home. Come hither, young gentleman, and let me speak a word in your ear."

Edward went round to the side of the table where he was still standing, and bent his head a little. Morini dexterously placed himself between the young man and his lord and slipped a folded paper into his hand, whispering, "Read when you get home."

"Are you now convinced?" continued the Italian, aloud; but Edward, while bending down his head to listen, had kept his eyes raised thoughtfully to Montagu, and he saw—what the other had not seen—that his lord was not unaware of what had passed. He kept the paper in his hand, however, and took his leave; but, determined that, if needful, Lord Montagu should know the contents of the paper that very night, he called for a light at the foot of the stairs. He found a note in his hand, neatly folded, and tied with silk. It was addressed to him, and, on opening it, he saw a few lines beautifully written in a woman's hand, and, at the bottom of the page, "Lucette."

All other thoughts were gone; and he hurried to the abbey to read in a less exposed place.

CHAPTER XXXI.

[268] "MY BELOVED HUSBAND:—I think you will be glad to hear of me after my leaving you so shortly a few nights since. We have reached Turin in safety, and without accident; but it was a weary journey for me, as every step took me farther from the place where I wished to remain. We are going on to Venice in three days, and there I am to be placed with a Madame de la Cour, a cousin of the Duc de Rohan, and a distant relation, I am told, of my own. I am glad of it, for I cannot love the duchess. I trust this to the care of an Italian gentleman going to Aix. He passes for an astrologer; and Madame de Rohan, who is very superstitious, receives him with great distinction. She would fain have had him draw the horoscope of all the household, and we each had audiences apart. But I could tell him nothing of my own birth,—neither date, nor time, nor place. He, however, contrived to draw from me, before I well knew it, something of my history, and has promised to take this and deliver it to you secretly, if I write it quickly. He knows Lord Montagu, and is to join him at Aix. Perhaps I have been imprudent to tell him any thing; but his questions were so artfully shaped that I knew not how to answer; and I cannot resist the temptation of sending you these few words, to let you know where I am and where a letter will find me. Whenever a change occurs, I will try to find means of letting you know, in order that when our long period of separation is over you may be aware where to find your
LUCETTE."

Such were the lines upon which Edward's eyes rested as soon as he reached his room in the abbey; and, though very simple, they gave him matter for thought during one-half of the night. That thought was all sweet; but on the following morning other considerations suggested themselves. He felt certain that Lord Montagu had seen Morini slip the paper into his hand; and there had been so much and such unusual confidence between the master and the page that Edward shrank from the idea of its being shaken even by a suspicion. Yet he could not resolve to put the note into Montagu's hands. Lucette's love had something sacred in it in his eyes, and, with the shyness of early affection, he could not bear the idea of even a jest upon the subject. He thought long while he was dressing: the servants came and went, and he had almost forgotten to tell them to follow him to the town, when Pierrot himself brought the matter to his mind by mentioning Lord Montagu's return as a rumor of the abbey.

[269] The youth then set out for the city on foot, without having at all settled how he should act in regard to Lucette's letter. It is extraordinary how trifles sometimes embarrass us more than matters of deep moment. He had faced Richelieu himself, conscious that life hung upon the caprice or the accident of a moment, without half the hesitation he now felt. He did at last what he might as well have done at first,—left the direction of the matter to chance; for chance, unfriendly on most occasions, generally supplies us with an opportunity of acting rightly in embarrassing circumstances, if we have but the wit to take advantage of it.

When Edward entered Lord Montagu's room, he found the learned Signor Morini already there, with some papers, covered with strange characters, on a table between him and the English nobleman. Montagu gathered up the papers quickly and spoke to his page, without any allusion to the subject which principally occupied the young man's thoughts. His speech seemed somewhat dry, however, and Edward saw that the Italian gazed at him with meaning looks. A sudden thought struck him as Lord Montagu turned the conversation with Morini to some common topic, and, waiting till there was a momentary pause, he said, "By-the-way, Signor Morini, where did you leave the lady from whom you brought me a note last night? Had she gone on toward Venice?"

The Italian changed not a muscle, but replied, deliberately, "Yes: she went in the morning. I set out in the afternoon."

"Ho, ho! Signor Morini!" cried Montagu, laughing: "so you condescend to be Venus's messenger, do you?"

"Well may your lordship say Venus," replied Morini; "for a more beautiful little creature never rose from the sea or brightened the land. But your lordship will bear me witness that I betrayed no secrets. It was the young gentleman himself."

"I have betrayed no secret," said Edward, gayly, for he felt relieved. "Lord Montagu has never seen the young lady,—does not even know her name; and there is no cause why I should conceal that a lady has written to me."

[270] "A young lady!" said Montagu, thoughtfully. "Now I have it. The Duchess of Rohan was at Turin; she had with her a cousin or a niece,—as pretty a little creature as I ever beheld. Ha, Edward! so you took care on your long journey to guard yourself against the charms of the innkeepers' daughters. Now I understand a good deal. And pray, Ned, how much of the time you consumed is to be attributed to the attractions of this pretty fair one?"

"Not a moment, my lord," replied Edward,—“unless it be that when she was stricken with the fever of the Marais I stayed with her a few days, rather than leave a lady confided to

my care amongst a people almost savage and in a rude country. I might perhaps have forced my way on more quickly had I been alone; but by that time I had accepted the charge; and I will ask your lordship if I could have refused to see a lady of high rank safely to the Duc de Rohan or the Prince de Soubise, her relations, when the only alternative was for her to be shut up in Rochelle during the horrors of a siege, and when the task was pressed upon me by those who had nursed me tenderly and saved my life by their care. All we contemplated at first was a journey of a few hours; but would your lordship have left her when a series of unfortunate mishaps had cast her, sick and in danger, upon the care of perfect strangers? Could you have left any woman?"

"Perhaps not, Master Ned," said Lord Montagu, laughing,—“especially if she were as young and as pretty as the lady I saw. The only question is why you did not tell me all this before. Concealment between friends is a bad thing, Edward, and in this case might breed a suspicion that you had been trifling your time away with the pretty girl who is now sending you love-letters."

"I did not even imply that the letter was a love-letter," replied Edward; "and, moreover, ___"

"I will return to your lordship in an hour or two," said Morini, rising and approaching the door: "at present I have some business."

"I was going to say," continued Edward, resuming the subject which he had dropped as Morini spoke, "if your lordship would consider, you would see that I have not yet had time to tell you one-half that has happened to me."

[271] "Well, well," answered Montagu, good-humoredly, "no need of any excuses, Ned. I do not doubt you. Young men are young men, all the world over; and you have fewer of their faults and more of their best qualities than any one of your age I ever met with. Besides, your conduct this day would clear away all suspicions of your frankness, if I had any. I saw that crouch-backed Italian give you a billet secretly last night; and, had you concealed the fact from me, I might have thought it had reference to an intrigue more within my competence than a love-affair. But you spoke of it frankly, and that cleared my mind; for, to say truth, I had some doubts——"

"Not of me, I trust, my lord?" said Edward, somewhat mortified.

"No, not exactly of you," replied Montagu, thoughtfully, "but great doubts of that man. Do you know who he is?—or, rather, what he is?"

"I know nothing of him, my lord," replied the youth. "I never saw him or heard of him till last night."

"And yet he knew all about your having been wounded by your own brother. You will make even me believe in occult sciences," answered Montagu.

"That piece of knowledge is easily accounted for," said Edward. "He learned that from Lucette. She stayed at the abbey with Madame de Rohan as they passed, heard all my story from the good sisters, and, in her anxiety to write to me, suffered him to draw the facts from her."

"Oh, it was from Lucette, was it?" asked Montagu, with a smile. "Well, that explains all, and without any secrecy, if you are sure it is so."

"She speaks of it in her letter," answered Edward, "and blames herself for indiscretion. But your lordship asked me but now if I knew what Signor Morini is. What can he be but a well-read quack?"

"He is something more than that," replied Montagu, lowering his voice. "He is a most cunning intrigant. He is more than that. He is an agent of the Cardinal de Richelieu; and I could not be certain that the note you received last night did not contain strong inducements for you to betray me."

[272] "He would be a bold man to offer them to me, my lord," replied Edward, warmly; "but there was nothing of the kind. The possibility of such a thing, however, forces me to do what nothing else would have induced me to think of,—namely, to show you the letter. There it is, my lord. In regard to all that concerns myself and the writer, I must beg you to ask me no questions. If there can be found in it any thing that affects your lordship, interrogate me, if you will; and I will answer all frankly."

Montagu looked at the address of the letter, and, perhaps, had some desire to see more; for where is the breast without some share of that small vice called curiosity? but he returned it unopened, saying, "I am quite satisfied, Ned. But you must understand: we are living in an age of intrigue. Each man is playing a game which has no laws. And in cases where the strong arm of power cannot reach—where no soldiers or sailors can be employed—friends, acquaintances, attendants, pages, must be gained to obtain this or that advantage for an adverse politician. You know not how widely this is practised,—how many devoted confidants of great men are also the confidants of their bitterest enemies,—what hosts of spies surround every man in eminent station. You know little of all this; but in France and Italy the evil system is carried further, deeper, lower than anywhere else; and it was very

natural for me to suppose that this man, whom I know to be an emissary of Richelieu, should attempt to seduce you, and to find it hardly possible to suppose that when Richelieu had you wholly in his power he did not personally aim at the same object. The thought never struck me till last night; but then it flashed across my mind vividly, and would seem to explain how he let you go so easily."

Edward smiled bitterly. "This is somewhat hard!" he said. "And thus, my lord, my good fortune in escaping safe from a most perilous situation has shaken your trust in my honesty?"

[273] "Not at all," replied Montagu: "he may have attempted you without success, or you may have promised him, in order to save your neck, what you did not intend to perform. I do not believe that you would really betray me for any consideration: on my soul I do not!—no, not for life! But tell me, Ned; in your conversation with that Eminence, did he never desire you to write him of my movements, or perchance to send him some of my letters, or copies thereof, or give him intimation of whom I correspond with?"

"No, my lord! no!" replied Edward, warmly. "He never did. He never hinted at or insinuated such a desire. Your name was never mentioned but once or twice in the last interview I had with him. Then he said, so far as I can recollect his words, 'You may say to Lord Montagu that the cardinal treated you well,—liberally,—and, although he had every right to stop you, sent you on to Lord Montagu, though he knew your errand and his. Compliment his lordship for me!' This was the only time that your name was mentioned, my lord; and till toward the close of that interview I did not know that his Eminence was aware I was attached to your household."

"That is strange!" said Montagu, gravely. "He knew your errand and mine, and yet let us both go forward! We form a different estimate of his character in England."

"At the risk of making your lordship still suspect he has gained me," said Edward, "I must say that I cannot but believe the cardinal has many high and noble qualities. Some evening—perchance the time may come again—when I may be permitted to pass a few hours in calm conversation with your lordship, as in days of yore, I will repeat, as nearly as I can remember, all that passed between his Eminence and myself. You will then see why I think so highly of him. But now I cannot conceive why, knowing this man Morini as you seem to know him,—an agent of Richelieu, a spy, and a charlatan,—you suffer him to hang about you, and give him the opportunity of tampering with your servants or perhaps even stealing your letters and despatches. I cannot believe that your lordship has any faith in his pretended science."

[274] Montagu looked at him for a moment with a somewhat doubtful smile. "As to my believing in his pretended science, as you call it," he said, "I neither altogether believe nor disbelieve. There is such a thing in the world as a state of doubt, Ned,—a state where assent is not given nor dissent entertained. But what is this pretended science you speak of? Astrology has a very wide meaning, though circumscribed to its mere etymological sense it seems very narrow. But even in that sense I see not why it should be rejected altogether. Are not the stars mere creatures of God, obeying his will, following his impulses? Were they created for some purpose, or for none? Various men will tell you that their functions are this or that. Now, the astrologer says they are the real handwriting on the wall of heaven, announcing to those who can read them the fate of nations and of men. Writing in stars! What a magnificent thought! I have heard men object that those golden characters are so few and the human race so numerous that the several fortunes of all men could not be written by them. But such people forget that the motions of the stars are infinitely complex, that the relative position of every star to every other forms a new combination and may foreshadow a different event to each one of those born under their influence. Thus, if the human race be protracted to eternity, or the numbers now existing be multiplied by myriads, the various positions of those bright characters to each other in the course of time would be more than sufficient to indicate the fate of every man that ever can be born. I say not that they do indicate, but that they may. These things must always remain doubtful till repeated verification gives more convincing proof. I hold my mind open to receive or to reject; but, in the mean time, I do not neglect opportunities of obtaining means for forming a just opinion."

Lord Montagu might be in some degree amusing himself by puzzling his young companion, or he might not; but there can be no doubt that a great portion of the well-educated and many of the greatest men of his day believed at least as much as he seemed to believe of judicial astrology. Indeed, no picture of those times would be correct which did not display this peculiar aspect of the human mind. The great reformers of science had not yet appeared, or were little known; and the mind of Bacon itself was but beginning to have its influence in leading the minds of others into the course of truth and certainty.

[275] But Edward Langdale had a great fondness for the definite, not original,—perhaps, for he was of a somewhat poetical disposition,—but acquired by the rubbing and chafing of the hard world; and he returned pertinaciously to his point. "However that may be, my lord," he said, "I cannot believe that your desire for opportunities of judging on these abstract points can be the cause of your giving such opportunities to a man whom you believe to be an enemy and a rascal. You must have some other motives for tolerating the Signor Morini about you, and appointing to meet him here, than a desire to test the science of astrology."

What they are I cannot divine."

Montagu laughed. "Thou wilt be satisfied, Ned!" he said. "That man is better here than at Turin. Do you understand me? He is better under my eye than intriguing unobserved at the court of Savoy. He may tamper with my attendants, but I am upon my guard; and I would rather that he tampered with them than with the duke's counsellors. To me he can do little harm while I am forewarned and forearmed against him; but he might do much to the cause of England if he were left with a hesitating court to plant a word here and a purse of gold there as they might be needed. Yet what I said about astrology is true, and this very man's firm belief in it rather tends to make the balance in my mind lean that way; for he is keen, philosophical, worldly, learned."

"But does he really believe firmly in it?" asked Edward. "Is it not with him a mere cloak and a pretence?"

"He has suffered it to lure him here," answered Lord Montagu, "when no other inducement would have brought him. He will allow it to keep him here three days longer, when in truth he is all anxiety to hurry into France and tell the cardinal what he has discovered. I have played him as your skilful angler plays a lively fish. Once his ruling passion discovered, I have led him by it where I wished. It was like a ring in a bull's nose, which he was forced to follow, with or against his will."

"Then does your lordship propose to stay three more days in Aix?" asked the page.

[276] "Ay, or till I receive one more note from Scaglia," answered Montagu. "Then all will be settled irrevocably: Signor Morini may bestow himself where he will, and we may do so likewise. You are impatient to hurry on, I see. Impatience is youth's quality, deliberation is man's; and so, my boy, you must keep your wishes tranquil, for I certainly shall not put spurs to mine."

"Of course, my lord, I must only follow where you lead," answered Edward, gayly. "I dare say your lordship believes I should bear the delay more patiently in Venice, and I will not deny the fact; but I suppose there is no time to go thither ere we depart."

"No, no, Ned! no!" replied Montagu. "I will not trust you near that little siren again while we have business in hand,—at least till you learn the great art of the present day, to let love and policy go hand in hand and yet never let the former impede the latter."

"A difficult task," said Edward.

"Ay," answered Montagu; "and those who try it and miss often find a bloody pillow. But here comes Morini again."

Edward immediately took his leave, and retired to obtain a chamber for himself in the inn, where he could meditate over the conversation which had just passed. It was satisfactory to him that his connection with Lucette had been acknowledged. He had previously shrunk from the thought of all mention of the subject to Lord Montagu, with the sensitive timidity of early love; but now the ice was broken, and he feared no more. But one point in that conversation was very painful to him. He saw that, if Montagu did not absolutely suspect him, his lord's confidence, which had hitherto been unbounded, was shaken. It was in vain Edward said to himself, "These great men are bound to be suspicious." There was a voice within him which always added, "At all events, he ought not to suspect me."

[277] His musings were not suffered to continue long uninterrupted, however. Pierrot and Jacques Beaupré soon arrived with the horses. The two junior pages of Lord Montagu—Henry Freeland and George Abbot—came to see him, and he himself had to visit the chamber of Mr. Oakingham, a companion of Lord Montagu's, who was travelling with him in no very well-defined capacity. Oakingham was still ill from over-fatigue, and Edward sat with him for some time, trying to amuse and soothe him. Thus passed the greater part of the morning, and the two following days were fully occupied by preparations for departure; but the thought that Lord Montagu confided in him less still rankled in Edward's mind. He thought he perceived evidences of doubt in many things where perhaps no doubt existed; and he said to himself, more than once, "I cannot bear it long." The time, however, was rapidly approaching when, according to the custom of those days, Lord Montagu would feel it incumbent upon him to provide for his young friend, either in the army or at the court; and Edward resolved to wait and be patient as long as it was possible.

CHAPTER XXXII.

From Aix to Ramilly and Geneva was all safe enough. From Geneva through Franche-Comté, as I have before explained, had no perils; but a small piece of country in Lorraine and Bar, where the road ran along the frontier of France, and, as some statesmen and geographers asserted, actually crossed it and passed through French territory for at least three miles, was in reality the perilous part of Lord Montagu's journey.

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That nobleman, however, seemed to consider himself very secure. He had so recently almost bearded the lion in his den with impunity, he had with such reckless freedom gone from one part of France itself to another without being stopped, that he thought there would be little risk in approaching a remote and somewhat poorly-peopled frontier or passing over a small space of debatable ground. He did not know, or he forgot, that the keen eyes of the fearless and unscrupulous French minister had been opened to his proceedings; that Richelieu had assumed a more bold and stern course of policy than ever; that personal hatred—perhaps, as some assert, personal rivalry—rendered it necessary for the cardinal to know in order to frustrate the efforts of his magnificent though very inferior adversary on the British side of the channel; and that no price, no labor, no violence even, would be considered too much which would place the designs and operations of Buckingham before the cabinet of France. He rode gayly, therefore, on his way,—though, in order not to attract too much attention, he sent forward several of his English attendants by a different road to meet him at Metz, and kept with him only Mr. Oakingham, Edward Langdale, a valet, and the two blacksmiths, with an ordinary groom.

This little party, on the evening of a beautiful autumnal day, rode along with tired horses through the little wood of Mirecourt, issued forth upon the side of the dry calcareous hill to the west, and looked anxiously for some place of rest. No one was well acquainted with the road; the horses were heavy-laden, for each besides his rider carried a heavy valise and two bags in front; and the whole morning had been passed in going up and down hill through an arid and almost deserted country. Some scattered houses, and then a nice clean village and a small but neat country inn, all gathered together in a little dell shaded with trees, at length gladdened the eyes of the weary travellers; and Lord Montagu, as was his custom, applied himself to make his sojourn comfortable for the hour, leaving his followers to enjoy themselves as best they could. He laughed and joked with the pretty Lorraine landlady as with her own hands she laid the table for his dinner; he took out a book from his valise, and, with his feet upon one chair and his body on another, rejoiced in the ease of a new position, and, when his dinner at last came, ate with moderation but good appetite, and called a glow of satisfaction into the cheek of his hostess by pronouncing it the best meal he had ever tasted.

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In the mean time, Mr. Oakingham had taken some refreshments and gone to bed; the valet had remained in the room with his lord, to serve him at table; the blacksmiths and the groom had gone to the stable; and Edward Langdale seemed the only unquiet spirit of the party. He ate but little; he drank less; he sat down; he rose up; he went out several times, either to the front of the house or the back; he visited the stable three times; he made many inquiries of the people of the house regarding the neighborhood and its inhabitants; and at length, instead of retiring to bed, he leaned his arms upon a table and his head upon his arms, and apparently went to sleep. People came and went, but he did not move; one of the girls of the inn spoke to him, but he did not answer; and it was near eleven o'clock before he changed his position. At that hour he rose and walked quietly to the back door of the inn, which looked into the stable-yard. The moon was shining near the full, and two men were standing near the stables talking together earnestly. As soon as he appeared at the door, they went round to the back of the low wooden building; but Edward had caught sight of them, and he walked straight to the stable and looked in. Most of the tired horses were resting quietly in the stables; but one, though disencumbered of packs and burdens, was saddled and bridled and tied up to a pillar.

Edward examined the animal well, to make sure of whom it belonged to, then quietly re-entered the inn and went straight to the room of Lord Montagu. He knocked at the door, and Montagu's voice told him to come in.

"Ah, Ned!" said his lord, "I have not seen you to-night."

"No, my lord," replied the youth: "I have been watching some things which I dislike."

"A very unsatisfactory employment," said Lord Montagu. "But what is it, good youth? You look gloomy, and your face is full of meaning. Are the Philistines upon us?"

"I do not know, my lord," replied Edward; "but I fear they soon will be. I do not like those two blacksmiths, my lord. They are bent upon some mischief, depend upon it."

"Oh, the old story!" said Montagu. "What is it now, Ned? Do they squint the other way, perchance?"

Edward was mortified; but he answered, respectfully, "No, my noble lord, but the same way as ever. I feel sure they are spies upon you and intend to betray you the very first opportunity."

"Indeed!" said Montagu, now somewhat roused. "But the proofs, Master Ned,—the proofs."

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"Absolute proofs I cannot give," said Edward; "but their conduct is so suspicious that I cannot believe them honest. I beg your lordship's excuse while I detail what I have observed during the last ten days. You can then judge for yourself. These men affect to speak a *patois* almost incomprehensible; but I have detected them speaking as good French as you or I more than once. Together they talk a language I do not at all understand; but good Jacques Beaupré says it is Basque. I am certain it is not Savoyard. At Geneva, one of them wrote a letter and sent it off by a courier who was going to France. During the last

two days' journey they have been making as diligent inquiries at every inn, as to the neighborhood, as if they had to direct the march."

"Pooh! that is all nothing," answered Montagu: "don't you think a blacksmith may have a sweetheart to write to, as well as yourself, Ned? And the poor devils, who have to find their way back, may well inquire about the roads."

"Well, my lord, I have but little more to say," replied Edward. "All day they have been looking curiously at every chateau we passed, even at five miles' distance; they have lagged behind all along the road, and stopped more than once to talk with the peasantry they met; and two hours before we arrived here I saw one of them give a piece of money to a lad, who set out incontinently over the fields."

"Ha! that was strange," said Montagu, thoughtfully. "What more?"

"Some three or four hours ago," continued the young man, "the taller of the two despatched the hostler somewhere. I could not learn where; but I heard him say, distinctly, 'Remember, tell him at eleven o'clock; not before eleven!' I have waited and watched ever since, and the scoundrel is now in close conference with a man who has come to see him, while his horse is standing saddled in the stable."

"This looks serious," said Montagu, rising. "Have you remarked any thing further?"

"Yes," answered Edward: "I have remarked that, though they pretend never to have been in this part of the country before, they know every inch of the road and have some acquaintance in every town."

"Let us go to the stable," said Lord Montagu: "I will know more of this before I sleep."

[281] Quietly opening the door, he passed through a sort of dining-room and the kitchen into the court-yard; but at the moment he opened the outer door the sound of horses' feet was heard, and one of the stalls in the stable was found vacant. "Too late!" said Lord Montagu, calmly: "let us go back, Ned, and consult what is to be done."

Perhaps, where one person alone has power to decide, all consultation is useless,—more than useless,—only a waste of time. Who ever takes another man's advice unless he wishes to shuffle off a responsibility to which he feels himself unequal? Give me an obstinate general, if he have but a brain as big as a walnut. As far as success goes, it is better to be bravely wrong than timidly right.

Now, though Lord Montagu had a very great opinion of Edward Langdale's good sense, he had a much better opinion of his own; but councils of war had not then fallen into the state of disrepute to which they have sunk in our days; and therefore he returned to his room, and, having seen the door closely shut, asked, in a grave tone, "Now, Ned, what is to be done?"

"Why, my lord, you are the best judge; but if I were you I would go back to the road we left ten miles behind and go straight to Nancy. You are here on the very frontier of France, surrounded by French towns and castles: there are disputes about the exact bounds, and the cardinal, I should suppose, would not be very particular if he thought he could get possession of your lordship and your papers by a *coup-de-main*."

"You are a geographer, Ned," said Montagu. "Have you calculated how much time that detour would cost?"

"A day and a half," answered Edward, "if we ride hard."

"The roads are bad,—very hilly," said Montagu: "the beasts are tired now. It would cost two days and a half, at a moderate calculation; and I have not two days and a half to spare. I have promised to meet the Duke of Lorraine on Wednesday at Metz. We have ample time to do it if I ride straight on, but not more; and, if I do not come, he will not and cannot wait."

[282] "Send him a messenger, my lord," said Edward: "I will undertake to carry him any message from your lordship before Tuesday night, to appoint a meeting at Pont à Mousson, or anywhere you like. Better kill a horse by hard riding than have you taken prisoner."

Montagu thought in silence for a few moments, and then said, in a meditative tone, "Do you know, Ned, I do not think there is so much danger as you imagine? The man's conduct is suspicious, I admit; but it is no more than suspicious. How do we know he has any thing to do with Richelieu? But even suppose he has: he can have no means of communicating with his sweet Eminence between this night and to-morrow morning. No governor of a castle or commander of troops would venture to violate a neutral territory without an express order; and it was impossible for the cardinal to know that I should pass by this road, so as to give his orders beforehand. I think we are quite safe, my good youth."

Montagu spoke in that cool sort of indifferent tone which almost implied—at least, so Edward construed it—that his page had been magnifying dangers. The young man bit his lip and for a moment remained silent; but then a sense of duty made him answer, "I cannot but think that by following the direct road your lordship will place yourself in extreme peril."

"Why, you are not afraid, Edward?" said Lord Montagu, laughing. "You little fire-devouring Turk, I never saw you afraid of any thing before."

The young man's cheek reddened. "I am not afraid of any thing, my lord," he answered, "but of seeing your lordship a prisoner in the hands of your enemies. If they once get you into the Bastille, what becomes of all the results of your lordship's negotiations?"

"True," answered Montagu, "the stakes we play for are great ones; but in playing for great stakes one must risk boldly wherever there is a chance of success. I think we can pass, Edward; and I will try it. But I will take precaution to make our passage sure. An hour and a half will carry us over all immediate danger; for the road, I find, bends back deeper into Bar, and it is only on the very frontier that there is any risk. No French force will venture more than a mile at the most into the Duke of Lorraine's territory."

[283] "But what precaution can you take, my lord?" asked Edward, in some surprise. "Doubtless his Highness would grant you an escort; but he has no troops near. We are amidst peasants."

"No, no! I seek no escort," said Montagu: "we will pass alone if we pass at all. But you heard me on our arrival give the order to set out at seven. We will change the hour, Ned, and begin our march at five. Say not a word to any one to-night. I will trust only to you. At four let us all be called. Call Oakingham a quarter of an hour earlier, and Abbot too, for they are slow. Let the groom and the laquais get the horses ready by five; but, above all, say not a word to the Savoyard who is left, or his companion, if he returns, and keep a watch upon them."

"A sure watch," said Edward, with a grim smile. "All shall be ready, my lord; but yet——"

"Nay, nay," said Montagu, waving his hand; "no more objections, Ned. Now send the lackey to me: I will go to bed as if I had no alteration of last night's arrangements in my mind. You had better go to your room, too, and obtain a little sleep. I know you can wake when you like."

"I will go to my room," said Edward; "but I do not close my eyes to-night, my lord. I am not fond of leaving any thing to chance."

"You must have another word," said Montagu, laughing. "Pooh! pooh! We shall pass, my boy. Now, good-night."

Edward left him, sent the lackey to his room, went to the kitchen, where two of the stablemen were sleeping by the fire, roused one of them to give him a lamp, and retired to the chamber where young Abbot was snoring powerfully. But Edward was ill at ease. He thought that the precautions Lord Montagu had spoken of and ordered were not sufficient: he thought—as all men think, and young men especially—that his own plan was the best. However, he drew the charges of his pistols, loaded and primed them afresh; and then, sitting down at the window, where he had a view of the court-yard on one side and on the other a glance into the passage through the door which he left ajar, he waited, without moving a limb, for the coming of morning.

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

At a quarter to four o'clock, Edward Langdale shook young Abbot by the shoulder and with some difficulty succeeded in waking him. "Quick, Abbot! get up!" he said. "Go down and saddle your horse: but make no noise. Do you understand me? No more than an owl. Go down and saddle your horse: do you hear? but be quiet about it."

"What is in the wind?" said the other.

"Nothing to you: but do as you are bidden," answered Edward, and took his way to Mr. Oakingham's room. Here he had more difficulty, for the door was locked or bolted, and he had to make some noise before the good gentleman would open it.

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Oakingham. "Is the house on fire? It is quite dark."

"Here, sir, light your lamp," said Edward. "My lord has changed his mind, and is going to set out directly. You will be left behind if you do not make haste."

Oakingham swore a little; but Edward did not stay to listen, gave him his lamp, and turned toward the rooms of the servants, which lay at the end of the passage over the kitchen. The last chamber but one had been assigned to the two blacksmiths, and, as Edward was approaching quietly that where the lackey and the groom were housed, the shorter of the Savoyards, roused by the noise at Mr. Oakingham's door, put his head out.

Edward walked on quietly, and, when he was abreast of the man, said, with an easy air, "You had better get your clothes on. You will be wanted presently."

"Which horse?" asked the man, at once.

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"All but one," said Edward; and, knocking hard at the door of the servants' room, he ordered them in a loud tone to rise and come to the stable. The blacksmith was still at the door; but Edward caught him by the neck and pushed him back into the room, saying, "Pardie! did I not tell you to get dressed?"

The man staggered back, and before he recovered himself the young gentleman had caught the key from the inside and locked the door. He did not, however, call Lord Montagu till he had gone out into the yard and ascertained that the windows of the rooms above were too high to admit of any one dropping to the ground.

A good deal of bustle succeeded: the servants of the house were roused, valises and bags were packed in haste, and horses were saddled; but before five o'clock all was ready for departure, and Edward approached Lord Montagu as he stood before the inn, saying, "Shall I let out that blacksmith? He is safely locked in his room, and hammering at the door as if he would knock it down. Well he left his tools in the stable, or he would have been out by this time."

"Let him out, to-be-sure," said Montagu: "he may follow now if he will. He will keep us too late."

"His horse is saddled for him, my lord," replied Edward: "by your leave he shall come with us, or I will come with him." And, running up-stairs, he opened the door of the man's room.

The worthy was at first inclined to make some noisy remonstrance, but Edward stopped him in an instant. "No noise!" he said, seeing that he was dressed. "Go down-stairs. Get on your horse and put him between me and the groom. If you take a step too quick or a step too slow, you will have a ball through your head in one minute. We know where your comrade is gone, and all about you: so pray Heaven we meet with no misadventure on the road, for, if we do, this is the last morning you will ever see."

The man looked scared out of his senses, and descended the stairs with a face as pale as ashes.

The thundering command of Lord Montagu, "Mount, quick! Stand by him, Ned!" did not serve to allay his apprehensions; and perhaps no man of the whole party more sincerely prayed that they might pass uninterrupted than he did.

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The score was paid, and the party rode off, with Montagu and Mr. Oakingham at the head, and Edward Langdale, the groom, and the blacksmith between them, in the rear. It was still quite dark; but the eye of the pretended Savoyard roamed round and round from the very commencement of the journey. At the end of a few minutes he began to talk, and apparently desired to exculpate himself from any complicity in his fellow-countryman's proceedings; but Edward stopped him sternly, saying, "Silence! Your tongue makes as much noise as the crack of a pistol, and I will silence it if you say one word more." He put his hand to his holster as he spoke, and the man ceased instantly.

"I have pistols too, sir," said the sturdy groom.

"He will need no more than I give him," said Edward. "I do not miss, Hobbs."

"No, I know you don't, sir," said the groom: "at least I never saw you."

"Let us keep quiet," said Edward; "but be prepared. If we should be stopped, and this fellow's comrade is there, you take care of him. I will settle with this one."

The first part of the way led up hill, through a pretty close wood skirting the road on either hand; but at the top of the ascent the little party issued forth upon some open, undulating ground, which the insecurity of border-life had kept a good deal out of cultivation. The darkness was now growing pale at the approach of day, and the gray outline of a chateau or two, with a village church some two miles off, and what seemed a considerable town a good deal farther, might be seen to the right and left. All was still and silent till the light clouds overhead began to turn rosy, and then a lark started up close beside the road and went quivering and trilling into the sky.

"My heaven! they are going very slow," murmured the blacksmith, in a low voice and with a groan. "Why does not the English lord go faster, young gentleman? Does he not know this part of the country is full of brigands?"

"He knows there are brigands about," answered Edward; "but we know how to deal with them."

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Edward, however, did think that his lord might have ridden faster; and, as they began to descend into another hollow with a thick wood at the bottom, he scanned every thing around and below with a keen, quick eye, but could discover no moving thing.

When they issued out of the wood at the other side of the dell, the sun was apparently just rising above the horizon, and the whole sky was full of purple and gold; and, when they topped the hill above, a wide but not very interesting landscape was before them. Some high blue hills were seen at a distance on the right; but nearer, on both sides, were several chateaux and villages, with scattered woods and ponds and rivers, all glowing like rubies in the red light. The human race, too, began to bestir itself to daily toil, and several men,

evidently peasants, were seen leading horses or driving oxen to the field. But the view was soon cut off from their sight by broken banks tumbled about in strange confusion, interspersed with patches of scrubby firs, and here and there a low hovel looking picturesque in its very wretchedness.

The agitation of the blacksmith seemed every moment increasing, and once he even attempted to drop behind; but the stern words from Edward, "Keep up!" accompanied by a motion of the hand toward his pistols, soon brought the man to a line with his companions. At length, after they had ridden on for about half a mile or more, he burst forth, saying, "I want to speak to the lord: he is going too slow. Let me speak to him."

"Well," said Edward, "ride on by my side." And, drawing a pistol as a precaution, he spurred forward. The country indeed just there would have greatly favored the fellow's escape, for it was rough, uneven, and covered with stunted trees and bushes, while a small pine wood flanked the road on the left or French side, and a *borne*, or landmark, with a low wall, lay on the other. The highway was wide, however; and Edward felt certain that if the smith endeavored to gallop off he could bring him from his horse before he got out of sight. In a moment they were by the side of Lord Montagu, who checked his horse to hear what they wanted.

[288] "My lord, my lord," said the man, in very good French, but with great agitation, "ride fast. Take good advice, and ride fast, or they will catch you."

"Who will catch me?" asked Montagu, eyeing him.

"I do not know who, exactly," said the man, "Brin, my comrade, has the names of so many on his list. The cardinal gave it to him before we set out. But ride fast, for God's sake! There may be time yet."

"Good advice, truly," said Montagu. "Use your spurs, gentlemen. We will inquire further hereafter, if we can,—if we can: ay, if we can, indeed! Draw up your horses. Let the rest come forward. Stir not from that spot, man, or I blow your brains out. Now, who are these before us?"

From a little bridle-path which issued from the wood and crossed the highroad some twelve or fourteen men, well armed and mounted, had just ridden out and barred the way.

"Let us charge them at once, my lord," said Edward. "Some of us may cut through. You shall, if I live."

"Look behind, Ned," said Lord Montagu.

Edward turned his head in the direction to which Montagu had glanced a moment before, and saw a party not much less numerous than that in front, with the blacksmith who had disappeared the night before amongst the foremost. His pistol was in his hand, and the temptation was irresistible. He threw his arm across his chest without wheeling his horse, pulled the trigger, and the traitor fell from his saddle with a bullet in his shoulder.

At the same moment the English groom, who had ridden up at Lord Montagu's first order, caught the other unhappy man by the arm, and had the muzzle of his weapon at his ear; but Montagu put it aside before he could fire, saying, "Vain! vain! Edward, you are always too ready with those pistols."

"I have given him but his due, my lord, if I die for it the next minute," said Edward. "But see: that tall man with the white scarf is waving it to your lordship."

"Stay here, and I will go forward a little," said Lord Montagu. "There is nothing for it but to surrender quietly. They are five to one."

"Let me go with you, my lord," said Edward.

[289] "Well, then, put up your pistol," answered Montagu. "The rest stay here."

Montagu took off his hat in answer to the signal made by the other party, and rode forward with Edward, while a gentleman of some five or six and thirty, who seemed the leader of the larger body gathered across the road, advanced alone to meet the English nobleman. As they neared each other, the two saluted courteously; and throughout their interview the utmost politeness manifested itself, instead of the ferocious roughness which in a French picture of this very incident is represented as characterizing the demeanor of M. de Bourbonne.

The French gentleman spoke first. "I have the honor of wishing you good-day, my Lord Montagu," he said. "Your lordship is here somewhat earlier than we expected you."

"I am sorry I did not know, sir, that you are so matutinal in your habits," replied Montagu, somewhat superciliously; "otherwise I should have been here earlier still."

"Doubtless," answered the other. "But I need not now tell your lordship that, being later than you intended, it is useless to attempt to pursue your journey to-day."

"Why, the roads seem very bad, it is true," said Montagu. "I had hoped that my good friend the Duke of Lorraine kept his highways in better order."

"I am afraid, my lord," said the stranger, "that the French Government must bear the blame in this instance; for you are now upon French soil. That landmark points out the boundary."

"I did not mark the landmark," answered the Englishman; "but, if I be upon French territory, may I know to whom I am indebted for this hospitable reception?"

"My name, my lord, is Bourbonne,—the Count de Bourbonne," said the other. "I only last night heard of your lordship's arrival in these parts; and I at once made preparation to receive you in my chateau."

[290] "We expected something of the kind," rejoined Montagu; "for a personage who had attached himself to my service on the road thought fit to absent himself last night, and we judged he would most likely spread the rumor of my coming. In truth, I wished to spare all noble gentlemen the hospitable trouble you seem inclined to take, and, indeed, would a great deal rather not inflict it upon you now."

"No trouble in the world, my lord," replied the count. "And, indeed, I must insist upon the honor of entertaining you till you can be better lodged. As to the poor man who favored me with notice of your approach, I am afraid he has met with a little accident. I heard the report of a pistol, and saw one of the people there fall off his horse."

"A pure accident," said Montagu, in an indifferent tone. "One of my attendants had a pistol in his hand and his finger upon the trigger. He was seized at that moment with a convulsive affection to which he is sometimes subject: the hammer fell, and the bullet flew out of the muzzle. In those cases, monsieur le comte, the ball, as you must have often remarked, flies right at the greatest villain it can find. It is invariable, I believe."

"Very probably," answered De Bourbonne: "I will ask a philosopher his opinion. But, in the mean time, may I ask your lordship if there are more accidents of the same kind likely to happen? Are there any other gentlemen of yours with their fingers on their triggers?"

"Oh, no!" replied Montagu. "I made them put all their pistols up as soon as I comprehended the pressing nature of the invitation I was about to receive, and the forcible arguments ready to back it. Am I to understand that it is extended to my attendants also?"

"To every one," replied the count, with a low bow. "I could never think of asking your lordship to my house without including your friends and followers."

[291] "You do me too much honor," said Montagu. "But amongst my followers you will find a comrade of the worthy gentleman who did me the favor of being my harbinger. Now, if I have any influence with you, my lord count, I would bespeak for him a high place, not in your esteem, but on your castle. Doubtless you have battlements, or iron stanchions, or things of that kind, about, to which you could raise him *sus per col*. He has all the same qualities as his friend, whom you already know, and is a Savoyard, he says,^[5]—though we have some doubts upon the subject."

"I should be most happy to oblige your lordship in any thing," answered the Count de Bourbonne; "but you know the king is the bestower of all dignities and the fountain of all honors; and therefore I cannot take upon me to raise the gentleman to the elevated position you desire for him."

"Well, well," replied Montagu, "time works wonders; and doubtless he will meet his deserts sooner or later. May I ask if you have lately heard from our mutual friend the Cardinal de Richelieu?"

"Last night, my lord," answered Bourbonne. "He was quite well, and desired me to inquire particularly after your health."

"I expected no less of his courtesy," said the English nobleman. "But I see your people are closing up pretty near, and, if I mistake not, have got possession of my valet's horse, with a desire of lightening the poor beast's load. We had probably better join them, as the man does not comprehend much French; and Englishmen are sometimes so surly and stupid that it is impossible to get them to comprehend the force of numbers."

"At your pleasure," replied the count; and, making a sign to his followers on the road to the north to join him, he went quietly to the spot where Mr. Oakingham and Lord Montagu's servants had remained.

[292] He now somewhat changed his tone, and, abandoning the bantering mood in which he and Lord Montagu had indulged, but still with undiminished courtesy of manner, required all present but his own followers to give up their arms. Edward for one did so with regret; but still it was some satisfaction to him to see the treacherous blacksmith lying on the bank with his comrade busily engaged in bandaging his wounded shoulder.

"I will now have the honor of conducting you to my poor house," said the count, bowing to Lord Montagu; and, with five or six armed men before and a larger number following, with three on each side to guard against any evasion, he commenced his march. Before departing, however, he spoke a word or two to one of his attendants; and Edward remarked that, as they went, a diligent examination was made of all the pistols which his party had given up, as if to ascertain which had been discharged; and he doubted not that

some consequences not very agreeable to himself would follow the inevitable discovery that he had fired the shot which had wounded the traitor.

The road wound through one of the wildest parts of France, just upon the frontier of Champagne and Bar; two or three small rivers had to be crossed; the country was but little cultivated, bearing more the aspect of a sandy moor than of the entrance to one of the richest wine-districts in the world; and more than once Edward cast his eyes around, thinking that it might be no difficult matter to escape and find a refuge in Lorraine if he could but avoid the pistol-shots which were sure to follow him. Had he been intrusted with the care of Lord Montagu's papers he would certainly have made the attempt, but he knew not even who carried them, and he resolved not to abandon his lord except for his service.

Whether Montagu divined what was passing in his mind or not, I cannot tell; but, after they had gone about half a mile, he called Edward to his side and said to him, in English, "Keep still, Ned. Activity will do no good here. The best thing for all of us is to be perfectly passive. If I had trusted to your young, sharp eyes sooner, it might have been better; but it is too late now either to regret or amend what is done."

[293] "May I request your lordship to speak to your attendants in French?" said Monsieur de Bourbonne. "You speak our tongue in such perfection, my lord, that it must be as familiar to you as your own."

"I shall probably have time to study it more profoundly," answered Montagu, with a smile. "But you can inform me yourself, count, if that fine old chateau upon the height is Bourbonne, where we shall rest, I presume."

"That is Bourbonne," replied the count; "and the little town you may catch sight of down there in the hollow, a little to the left. But, though we will stop there to take some refreshment, I think that the Castle of Coiffy will afford your lordship a more convenient resting-place."

"Oh, yes! I remember Coiffy," answered Montagu, laughing. "I passed close to it some three months ago. It is a strong place, and so well built, I am told, count, that the garrison cannot hear the drums of Lorraine beat at Bar."

"That is only because they do not pay attention to them, my lord," replied Bourbonne.

As they rode on, the old chateau grew more and more clearly defined; and the state of decay into which the ancient defences had fallen showed plainly why it had not been chosen for the place of Montagu's detention.

In the village the party stopped to breakfast, and the English nobleman was treated with every sort of respectful attention; but a strict guard was kept at the door of the chamber where he was served. The attendants had some food placed before them in another room; but they were as carefully watched. In about an hour the march recommenced, and shortly after, while gazing forward, Edward perceived rising over the trees at the distance of several miles the towers of Coiffy, a much stronger place than Bourbonne, which he never lost sight of till they reached the drawbridge.

It was apparent that their coming had been made known beforehand, for all was evidently prepared to receive Lord Montagu with ceremonious politeness. An old gentleman whom they called Monsieur de Boulogne stood in the gateway, hat in hand, and immediately proceeded to conduct the noble prisoner to his apartments.

[294] Mr. Oakingham followed, and Edward Langdale was about to do the same, when the Count de Bourbonne took him by the arm, saying, "Stop, young man! I destine another chamber for you."

His tone was somewhat menacing, and Edward turned round and gazed full in his face.

"Tell me," said the count, "and mind you tell me true——"

"If I tell you any thing at all, I shall tell you the truth," answered Edward, interrupting him: "so spare such exhortations, sir count. But it is probable that I shall not answer a small gentleman of Champagne at all, especially if he interrogates me in a manner which much greater personages than himself have never displayed toward me."

It is probable that this rude answer was intended to stop all inquiries into Lord Montagu's affairs,—for Edward did not doubt that they were about to be the subject of De Bourbonne's questions; but the count gazed on him with extreme surprise, exclaiming, "Ha! Whom have we here? A small gentleman of Champagne! Will your magnificence have the condescension, then, to inform the small gentleman of Champagne if it was your hand that sent a pistol-ball into the shoulder of a poor personage who came up with my train when I first had the honor of seeing you?"

"It was by accident I shot him in the shoulder," replied Edward: "I intended the ball for his head."

"If he dies we may find a rope that will fit you, young man," said the count; and, beckoning up the man who had examined the pistols on the road, he said, "Take him away and put him in the dungeon where I told you."

"If you hang me, sir count," said Edward, without the slightest alarm, "you will do so with the passport in my breast which was given me by his Eminence of Richelieu with his own hand. You had better ask the two spies a few questions before you treat me with any thing like indignity."

So saying, he followed the man to whom Bourbonne had spoken. Another soldier took a lantern from a hook and came after; and in a minute or two Edward found himself pushed into a room where the faint light of the lantern only served to show the shining damp which clung to the stone walls.

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CHAPTER XXXIV.

A dungeon is by no means an agreeable place; and the dungeon of poor Edward Langdale was not an agreeable dungeon. As was common at that time, before Vauban and others had introduced a better system of fortification, the principal defence of the Castle of Coiffy was a wet ditch or fosse, which differed little from those we see surrounding old castles of the feudal period. This wet ditch was supplied with abundance of water from a spring a little higher up the hill, which, indeed, was the source of one of the principal confluent of the Aube; but the soil, as I have said elsewhere, being somewhat sandy, the banks suffered the water to percolate, somewhat to the detriment of the foundations of the castle; and, had not the masonry been very heavy and the mortar somewhat better than we use in building cockney villas, the square flanking-tower to the right of the gateway as you look east would have been down fifty years before and crushed to death the denizens of poor Edward's dungeon,—if it had been furnished with tenants at that time.

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Now, doubtless the reader learned in romance-composition may imagine that I am merely preparing the way for a fine scene of escape from prison, with melodramatic incidents, new songs, scenery, and decorations. But, as I am sorry to say no such heroic result was at this time achieved by Lord Montagu's page, I cannot use it as an incident in this part of my true history. I only mention the percolation of the water of the fosse, and its effect upon the foundations amongst which that and other dungeons were placed, to show that the place of the poor youth's confinement was as damp and disagreeable as it could be. Some stones had fallen from the vault above, some large detached pieces of mortar, green and shiny, covered the mud or stone floor, and the walls were all glistening with dampness; but those walls were too thick and the blocks of stone of which they were composed too heavy for any unaided prisoner to have worked his way out, with the utmost diligence. In one corner of the miserable hole was a sort of camp-bedstead, with a straw bed covered with yellow and green stains from long exposure to the foul, moist air,—disgust and sickness and death to lie upon; and in another corner, high up on the wall, was a little grated window, not so high as the opposite parapet of the glacis, but sufficiently so to admit the air and the sounds from without. The wall was too thick to allow of a prisoner catching even a glimpse of the blue sky or to permit one ray of the sun to enter, even at his rising or his setting. It was indeed a desolate chamber. What an expressive word that *desolate* is! Although sometimes in the heats of an almost tropical climate—heats often more intense than I ever heard of in the tropics themselves—I sometimes grumble a little at the power and ardor of the sun, yet what would the earth be without him? what is any place on the earth's surface which he does not visit? Desolate, desolate indeed!

The first sound which Edward heard after the bolts had ceased to grate in their sockets was that of a cannon, apparently from the walls of the castle. Some few minutes after the same sound seemed to be repeated from a distance. It might be an echo. He could not tell. But a moment or two after another report was heard, certainly nearer; and then two more confirmed his fancy that they were signal-guns announcing that the well-watched English envoy had been captured and was a prisoner at Coiffy. Some three hours then passed, if not in perfect silence, at least only enlivened by the voices of some soldiers on the ramparts; and then came the squeaking of the wry-necked fife and the beating of drums, intimating to Edward that troops of some kind were drawing round Coiffy. Then were heard voices on the drawbridge, and gay laughter, as if officers were being received into the castle with signs of honor.

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All that passed away, and silence resumed her reign till night fell. The light in the lantern burned down almost to the socket. No meat, no drink, had been brought to the prisoner; and he began to ask himself if it could be their intention to starve him there in darkness. His feelings were not pleasant.

Just about that time there was some noise and bustle heard from without,—probably on the drawbridge or at the gate,—the tramp of horses, and voices speaking. Then for a few minutes all was silent again. Then there were sounds just above, more distinct and clear than any he had hitherto heard,—people speaking, and others moving slowly about,—evidently penetrating to the cell which Edward tenanted by the broken parts of the vault on which the flooring of the upper chamber rested.

"Oh!" cried a voice, with a groan, "you have got me by the shoulder just on the wound! Do

not do that! Put your hand lower down: not there, not there!—lower still. That young devil! he does not miss his mark, indeed!"

"Lay him on the bed,—flat on his back," said another voice. "Now, Brin, is not that easier for you?" And then followed several sentences in a language Edward did not understand at all.

"The two blacksmiths," said Edward to himself. "They have just brought in the wounded man."

For some half-hour various sounds succeeded, some distinct, others confused, to which the young prisoner did not pay much attention; and then there was a sort of lull,—not quite silence, but still much less bustle. Even slight sounds were easily distinguishable in the dungeon; for the roof was so far dilapidated that here and there the rays of light from above found their way through a chink in the flooring and traced a yellow line upon the pavement. He could hear the wounded man groan and ask in a faint tone for drink.

"He is badly hurt, it seems," said Edward Langdale to himself: "if the horse had not shied away, it would have gone through his head and served the traitor right."

[298] Edward wanted a little more softening to make him a real sentimental hero; but I can only paint him as I find him. He did not feel the slightest remorse for what he had done. He thought it but right,—but just; and he would have done it over again the next minute. It is true, the groans of the wounded man did somewhat annoy him. He felt no pleasure in his pain; but, as to the mere fact of having shot him because he had betrayed his lord, Edward was as hard as a stone.

It seemed, indeed, as if Monsieur de Bourbonne was inclined to try upon the young Englishman the treatment sometimes employed to tame wild beasts,—fasting and darkness. He had kept him without food all day; and now the light in the lantern went out, and all was obscure in the dungeon, except where those yellow streaks from above checkered the floor; and the youth's only entertainment was to listen while a good deal of walking to and fro and speaking took place overhead. He divined from all he heard that a surgeon had been sent for and was performing some operation upon the wounded man. At length the latter exclaimed, "Oh, you have got it now. There, there! that is comfortable. It feels as if you had pulled out a hot coal!"

Just at that time a soldier opened the dungeon-door and brought in a pitcher of cool water and some bread.

"Am I to be kept in darkness?" asked Edward.

"I don't know," answered the man, holding up his own lantern to look at him: "you have offended Monsieur le Comte mightily, it seems; but I do not suppose that he intends you should have no light."

"Well, tell him something for me," replied Edward. "Say that I am greatly obliged to him for all his kindness, but that I have friends in France who will repay him sevenfold, or I am much mistaken in them."

The man went away without reply, but returned in a minute or two with a fresh candle.

"Did you tell him?" asked Edward.

"Yes," answered the soldier, who seemed a good-natured sort of person; "I told him. But you had better not enrage him. It will do no good, young gentleman."

Edward ate heartily of his poor fare, and drank the cool water as if it had been nectar. He had hardly finished the temperate meal, when he heard a voice above which he recognised by a slight hesitation of speech as that of Monsieur de Bourbonne; and he certainly might be excused in his circumstances for listening with all his ears.

[299] First the count made several inquiries as to the state of the wounded man; and then he added, "Well, my good friend, I have got the young tiger who scratched you safely caged in the worst dungeon of the castle. I hope you will get well; but if you should die I will hang him from the *herse*."

"For God's sake, do not do that, monseigneur," cried the companion of the patient.

"If I die, hang him as high as you please," growled the voice of Maître Brin: "the cardinal cannot do any thing to me after I am dead, and the young devil had better go with me."

"Ha!" said Monsieur de Bourbonne, apparently in a tone of some surprise: "he boasts of having some good friends in France, and speaks as if he personally knew his Eminence."

"And so he does," said Brin's more timid companion: "he is a great favorite of the cardinal; and Monsieur de Tronson warned us not to touch a hair of his head under any circumstances. He said that we should be held to answer for any evil that happened to him. We were only to follow him wherever he went from Nantes, and not lose sight of him till he joined the English lord."

"Then did you first see him at Nantes?" asked the count.

"Surely," replied the other: "we waited in the court-yard while he was in with the cardinal, that we might take good note of him as he came out."

There was a silence of some minutes, and then the voice of the sick man was heard saying, "After all, you had better not treat him badly, monseigneur. I do not think I am very much hurt; and if he is hardly used some of us will suffer, you may be sure."

"You should have told me this before," said Monsieur de Bourbonne, in a very sharp tone.

"Why, what time had we to tell you any thing, monseigneur?" asked the wounded man's brother.

[300] "At all events, we tell you now," growled Brin; "and this talking is not likely to do me good. The lad is as fierce as a young wolf. He threatened to shoot me once before; but he is a pet of the cardinal,—one of his own people, for aught we know,—and, now that you are told he is so, you may use him as you think fit. It is no fault of ours: we have not hurt him."

It is probable that the interview was less satisfactory to the Count de Bourbonne than he had expected; for he brought it speedily to a conclusion, and Edward for full half an hour after heard the two men above talking together in the language he did not understand. At the end of that time the bolt of the door was undrawn, and the soldier who had previously brought him bread and water appeared again, with somewhat of a grin upon his face.

"Well, young gentleman," he said, "Monsieur le Comte begs you will send him up the safe-conduct you mentioned to him. After seeing that, perhaps they may treat you better."

"Tell him I will not!" said Edward, in a resolute tone: "he may come and take it from me by force,—or he may see it here in my presence; but I give it out of my own hands to no one,—especially not to one who has treated me unlike a soldier and a gentleman. Tell him what I say."

The soldier laughed. "'Pon my word, you are a bold one!" he said. "Do you not know you are quite in his power?"

"Not so much as you think," replied Edward: "I am not the least afraid of him. Tell him exactly what I say."

[301] A full hour passed; and probably it was spent in some degree of anxious and hesitating deliberation between Monsieur de Bourbonne and the Count de Boulogne, his father-in-law, for they remained the whole of that time shut up together in a small room on the second floor. One can easily conceive that it was a hard thing for a proud and irritable man to make any concession to a mere lad who set him at defiance in language somewhat tinged with contempt. But a bold face stoutly kept up has a great effect upon most men; and if Edward had known the count intimately he could not (though it was entirely accidental) have chosen his course better. De Bourbonne was brave, and even rash; but he had a terrible reverence for power, and, when he found the youth's account of himself confirmed even by the very man whose life he had nearly taken, fancy conjured up all sorts of ministerial indignation, and showed him the service he had rendered in the capture of Lord Montagu—on which he had based many gorgeous dreams—more than counterbalanced in the eyes of Richelieu by his treatment of one of the cardinal's favorites. Monsieur de Boulogne, too, an older and milder man, strongly counselled moderation and gentleness, somewhat censured what had been already done, and advised recourse to measures perhaps too directly and suddenly opposed.

Still, pride struggled hard with De Bourbonne. He vowed he did not and would not believe the tale which he had heard. What hold, he asked, could a mere fierce English lad have upon the cardinal? and for some time his father-in-law reminded him in vain that Richelieu, though a wonderfully great man, was somewhat capricious in his affections, suggested that, as he was not a little superstitious, too, in regard to astrology and the occult sciences, he might find some imaginary connection between the youth's fate and his own, and pointed out that it was utterly improbable Edward should treat him with such daring disrespect if he was not certain of some very strong support.

In the mean time the poor prisoner remained in some doubt and anxiety. Imprisonment, solitude, and low diet had gone some way to tame the wild bird, and the uncertainty of the last hour had been very heavy. He had fancied that the words he had heard spoken by the wounded man and his companion would produce an immediate change; but, as minute after minute passed by and nothing indicated any better treatment, he began to despond. At length, however, he heard the tramp of feet and the jingle of spurs, and a man with a torch opened the door, admitting Monsieur de Boulogne and one or two attendants.

"Young gentleman," said the old nobleman, with a reproving but fatherly air, "you have been acting very rashly and impetuously toward the count my son-in-law."

"And how has he been acting toward me, sir?" asked Edward, in a more respectful tone than he had used in speaking to the younger man.

[302] "Somewhat harshly, I am afraid," said the other, looking round him: "he could not have known the state of this place, or he would not have put you here."

"What right had he to put me in a dungeon at all?" asked Edward.

"Why, you shot and nearly killed one of his attendants," was the reply.

"Not at all," answered Edward. "You are deceived, sir. I shot an attendant of Lord Montagu whom I caught in the act of betraying his master. Ask his lordship—ask the man himself or his brother—if they had not both taken service with my lord and received his money."

The old gentleman smiled. "That puts a new face upon the matter," he said. "But let us leave recriminations. I wish to smooth matters down between you and my fiery relative. You say you have a safe-conduct from his Eminence of Richelieu. Let me see it."

"On the sole condition, sir, that you restore it to me at once," said Edward, putting his hand into a pocket in the breast of his coat and taking out the passport in its velvet case.

"Let me examine it," said Monsieur de Boulogne. "Do not fear. You shall have it again in a moment."

"I do not fear," replied the youth, giving him the case. "I am sure you are a man of honor, by your face."

"Here, man, hold the torch nearer," said the count; and, putting a pair of spectacles—or banicles, as they were then commonly called—upon his nose, he proceeded to examine the safe-conduct minutely. But all was in proper form and order, calling upon all royal officers, governors of cities, castles, or provinces, to let the Seigneur Edward Langdale and suite pass and repass, without limitation of time or place, throughout the land of France; and there was the seal of the council, and the undoubted signature of the prime minister.

The face of the count turned very grave as he read. "This is odd!" he said. "My son should have seen this. Here is your suite mentioned, young gentleman. Of whom consists your suite?"

[303] "I might reply," said Edward, "that any one I choose to name is of my suite, for his Eminence put no restriction. But I wish not to quibble. The suite of which he speaks is now at Nancy,—with the exception of one page," he added, half smiling, "who is in Venice."

"Well, this is all very strange," said the old man. "I cannot understand the cardinal's giving you such a wide safe-conduct at all,—an Englishman,—and a youth like you."

"I am neither bound nor inclined to explain the motives of his Eminence," replied Edward. "If you think fit to interrogate any one upon that subject, it must be himself."

"God forbid!" cried Monsieur de Boulogne, eagerly. "There! take the paper and come with me. I will take this business on myself. Two such young, rash spirits may make mischief."

Edward followed, willingly enough; and the old count led him up the stairs from the dungeon to a tolerably comfortable room in one of the towers above, where he left him on his promise to remain till Monsieur de Bourbonne could be conferred with. In a few minutes the two noblemen entered together, De Bourbonne evidently struggling—not very successfully—to keep up his dignity while forced to make disagreeable concessions.

"The Count de Boulogne informs me, sir," he said, "that you have really got a safe-conduct from his Eminence of Richelieu."

"Which you have known ever since mid-day," said Edward.

"Hush! hush!" said the elder gentleman. "No more of that. Tell my son-in-law, young gentleman, what it is you demand of him in the circumstances."

"I demand that he shall respect the cardinal's safe-conduct," answered the youth.

But De Bourbonne waved his hand, saying, "I will respect it by sending you to his Eminence under guard on the very first opportunity. What more?"

"That I be no more put in a wet dungeon; that I be not fed on bread and water; that I have my baggage restored to me; and that I be treated in every respect as that safe-conduct gives me a right to expect."

[304] "Granted," said the count, "but upon the clear understanding that you are a prisoner and remain such till I can send you to the cardinal."

"With the clear understanding added," replied Edward, "that you shall be called to a strict account for every hour you keep me prisoner without lawful cause, and for your manifest disobedience of the cardinal's written orders under his own hand and seal."

The count's face flushed, and he exclaimed, in evident embarrassment, "What the fiend are you to the cardinal, or the cardinal to you?"

But Edward saw that, one way or another, he had got the advantage. "That, sir," he said, in a cool tone, "you may have to learn hereafter, from other lips than mine. In the mean time you can do exactly as you think fit. Obey the commands you have received in the king's name, or disobey them, as seems expedient to you; but only do not put me in a damp dungeon or feed me on bread and water any more, for it is as unpleasant to me as it may be

dangerous to yourself."

"But suppose the safe-conduct is a forgery," said De Bourbonne.

"It would be a curious one," replied the youth, with perfect composure,—"somewhat bold to devise and difficult to practise. Of that you can judge yourself; but take care you judge right. I have but one other demand to make; namely, to be permitted to visit my Lord Montagu."

"He has gone to bed," said De Bourbonne, sharply, "and I shall consider of the matter further till to-morrow. I have now one more question. How much liberty in this castle do you want? It will depend entirely upon whether you do or do not give me your parole of honor that you will not attempt to escape."

[305] "Now, this is strange!" said Edward, with an irrepressible laugh. "One moment I am suspected of forgery, and the next my word of honor is to be relied upon implicitly. However, Monsieur le Comte, as I have no intention of leaving you quite so soon, and as, if I did escape, I should run straight to his Eminence, to whom you say you intend to send me, I will give you my parole. But would you allow me to insinuate that I am exceedingly hungry, and that I have always considered a little good wine of Beaugency better than a draught of cold water out of a pitcher not over-clean?"

Both the counts laughed; and old Monsieur de Boulogne, taking his son-in-law by the arm, led him away, saying, in a low voice, "Come, come! I shall make you two better friends before I have done."

"You will need to do so, father," said M. de Bourbonne; "for, on my life, it shall be long enough before that keen boy sees the cardinal. If what he says is true,—as I suppose it is,—the tales he has to tell might ruin us; and, if it is false, he well deserves a good long spell of imprisonment."

CHAPTER XXXV.

The writers of biography and auto-or pseudo-autobiography who flourished and were so abundant in France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries made a great mistake by adding to the simple narrative a great number of romantic incidents which there is much reason to believe had no foundation in fact. Putting aside the morality or immorality of lying, they committed an artistic blunder. History is the best romance. Just in as much as a painter or sculptor can approach to the realities of the human form, so is the grace and interest of his design. Just in as much as a writer can approach to the truth of history, telling all the truth minutely, so is the romantic interest of his book,—only history is so very romantic that no one who writes it completely can obtain credence. Let us see whether the reader will believe a morsel of true history when it appears under the character of romance.

The fact of the capture of Lord Montagu spread rapidly through all France. Couriers carried it to Villeroy and Rochelle; rumor brought it rapidly to Paris; and thence, with concentric ripples, the knowledge was carried far and wide to all who were unwise enough to meddle with politics in those days.

[306] The effect was very different upon different people. The great cardinal rejoiced at the success of his well-laid schemes; for he had long known, and watched with a keen eye, the negotiations which had been intrusted to the English nobleman. Perhaps, however, he rejoiced more at the hold which he doubted not the seized papers of the diplomatist would give him upon his own enemies in France itself than upon the means afforded of frustrating all the combinations which had been effected abroad against his country. His mighty mind feared foreign enemies much less than secret cabal at home. In fact, he knew that the fortress of his power was strong enough to resist a cannonade but might not be proof against a mine.

Nor was the spirit of the king dissatisfied to learn that Buckingham's agent had fallen into his power, with all his correspondence, compromising probably one-third of the nobility of France. We have not had time, we shall not have space, to dwell upon the character of Louis, though it well merits a treatise entirely to itself. His sports in youth had been cruel, his amusements low. His father had called him "that wicked boy;" and, though he possessed all that father's courage and much of his military skill, he had none of his kindness of heart, his clemency, or his gentleness. It may be that he did not feel pleasure in the shedding of blood, but it is certain that he never objected to shed it; and when his best friends and greatest favorites were condemned, often by unlawful tribunals, he consented to their death with coolness or a jest.

But there was one in France who heard of Lord Montagu's capture with very different feelings. Anne of Austria, the unhappy queen, the childless wife of the coldest-hearted monarch that ever lived, received the tidings with terror and confusion. It might be that the

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tales they tell of certain secret communications between her and the brilliant Duke of Buckingham were founded in truth. It might be that she had connived at schemes for the overthrow of a minister who persecuted her. But it is beyond doubt that she held dangerous correspondence with her own family in Spain, that Buckingham had been negotiating with that court, and that Montagu was his most confidential emissary. What letters might not be upon his person at the moment of his arrest?—what papers which might give a complete triumph to her enemies? and she had many. Happily, however, she had many friends, sincere, devoted, fearless. At the very moment when she was in the most profound agony of terror, one of these was near at hand.

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It is well known that gentlemen of good family but small means were in those days proud to accept even what we consider menial offices in the household of princes or great men. A youth of the name of Laporte had been attached to the service of Anne of Austria, in the humble capacity of valet-de-chambre, almost ever since her entrance into France. In one of the many intrigues of the court he had incurred the anger of the king, but had been permitted to enter a corps of cavalry, known as the Gens d'armes de la Reine, as ensign. This corps, at the time of the capture of Lord Montagu, was serving on the frontiers of Lorraine, and was one of the first to be called toward the Chateau of Coiffy to form part of the escort of the noble prisoner on his way to Paris. But Laporte was not with his regiment. He was, when the news arrived, on leave of absence in the capital, and his presence had been known to the young queen. At midnight, and in disguise, he was brought to the Louvre; and Anne of Austria at once laid open to her attached servant the terrible apprehensions under which she suffered. To ascertain if her name was at all compromised in the correspondence of Lord Montagu was of immediate importance. It was, in fact, an affair of life and death. But to do so seemed utterly hopeless. All the papers of the prisoner were in the hands of his captors, and the utmost secrecy was maintained as to their contents. Laporte, however, undertook the difficult task, and on the following day set out to rejoin his regiment at Coiffy. The way was long, and he did not reach the castle till the prisoner and his escort were already on the march to Paris; but he was near enough to witness the absurd gasconade of M. de Bourbonne, who, having gathered together a very considerable force, notified the Duke of Lorraine of the day and hour when he would commence his journey. A cannon was fired from the battlements to give notice that the French troops were in motion; and the whole body remained in battle-array for about half an hour, to give the duke, Monsieur de Bourbonne said, an opportunity of rescuing the prisoner if he could. When this comedy had been enacted, the worthy Laporte joined his regiment and fell into the ranks, resolved, as he states, to watch for some happy accident which might enable him to communicate with the captive. Fortune favored him sooner than he expected, and, indeed, beyond all expectation. In the midst of the troops, consisting of some nine hundred horse, rode the Counts of Bourbonne and Boulogne, with Lord Montagu between them, treated with every mark of profound respect, but disarmed, without spurs, and mounted on a small horse not very capable of competing in speed with those which surrounded him. Laporte marked all this well; but a much more easy and secure mode of communicating with the English nobleman than any effort in the open field soon presented itself. The Baron de Ponthieu, a gentleman of considerable distinction, was one of the officers of Laporte's company of Gens d'armes de la Reine; and, as soon as he saw a man whose leave of absence did not expire for some weeks suddenly rejoin his regiment, an instant suspicion crossed his mind that his inferior officer had some important object in view. The baron was one of the most devoted partisans of the queen. He knew that Laporte was a bird of the same color, and also that he came straight from Paris. Quick and clear-sighted, Ponthieu, it appears, in his conjectures came near the real object of his companion-in-arms. But he had the rare gift of discretion; and, after having sounded Laporte and found that he was unwilling to trust his dangerous secret even to him, he contented himself with losing no occasion to give facilities for communication between the queen's attendant and the English prisoner.

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What marks the age as especially an age of faction is the fact that men usually sensitive on the point of honor had not the slightest scruple in violating their most sacred obligations and most solemn oaths in favor of the party to which they belonged. No shame, no remorse, attached to such acts; but, on the contrary, they were looked upon, both by actors and observers, as proofs of chivalrous daring and skilful diplomacy. Ponthieu and Laporte, though serving in what was called the "Queen's Gens d'armes," were the soldiers of the king, bound by solemn oaths to obey and serve him against all and every one; but they had not the least hesitation in betraying their trust and violating their promise when it was to assist the queen or thwart the minister. It was not dishonest or disloyal in their eyes: it was honorable and chivalrous. There is too much of this in the world even now; but there was much more then, and the wars of the Fronde both brought the abuse to its height and in some degree wrought its cure.

Monsieur de Bourbonne had received secret instructions to treat Lord Montagu with every sort of consideration, while taking all measures to prevent his escape; and at each halt upon the long march the officers of the various corps which escorted him were invited to bear him company during the evening, and various devices were formed for amusing the prisoner. Ponthieu, divining, as I have said, Laporte's object, invited his young comrade to partake his quarters, which were always near those of De Bourbonne, and took care that he should be at all the parties given in the evening for Montagu's entertainment. At the very first interview, Montagu, who never forgot a face, remembered having seen the young

officer when he had visited Paris some years before; and mutual looks of intelligence conveyed the information that Laporte was not there without a purpose. Cards were introduced, and the ensign of the Queen's Gens d'armes contrived to slip a pencil across to the captive. On the succeeding night, Laporte sat at the same card-table with Montagu, Monsieur de Bourbonne, and Ponthieu. But in shuffling the pack the young officer let it fall, scattering the cards upon the floor. He stooped instantly to remedy the effects of his awkwardness. Montagu stooped also with an easy grace to assist him; and, before he rose, a note was in his pocket, beseeching him to inform the writer if amongst his papers there had been any matter which could compromise the queen, and desiring him to be very careful of even mentioning her name.

[310] On the following evening, Lord Montagu, with a free and unembarrassed air, held out his hand to the young officer when they met, and, with better skill than the Signor Morini, contrived to slip into the hand of Laporte an answer to the note of the preceding night, without being seen by any one.

It conveyed the joyful news that the queen's name had never been mentioned in the papers which had fallen into the hands of the captors, and that Montagu himself would rather die than compromise her in any way.

Nevertheless, although he knew the anxiety and suspense of his royal lady, Laporte did not venture to trust the billet out of his own hands, nor again to quit his regiment to carry the intelligence himself. He was forced, therefore, to accompany the prisoner's escort by slow marches to Paris, and to see Montagu lodged in the Bastille. As soon as that was done, however, he found his way secretly to the Louvre, and easily explained to Anne of Austria the causes of his delay and the complete success of his mission. He tells the story himself; but, with the usual fate of zeal, intelligence, and devotion, his services were but poorly rewarded, though they were highly praised.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

[311] And where was Edward Langdale all this time? On the day which saw Lord Montagu a prisoner in the Bastille, the poor lad had been just a month in the Chateau de Coiffy; and his captivity was not yet at an end. Care had been taken that he should have no opportunity of seeing Lord Montagu; and, though he was well treated, and his personal liberty seemed but little abridged within the walls, there was a cold, silent guard kept over him which tended a good deal to subdue his impatient spirit. If he spoke to any one, he received a civil answer; but it was confined to two or three words, and never afforded any information. If he asked for writing-materials, they were promised, but never came. If he walked on one of the ramparts, there was a soldier at each end, who never lost sight of him; and his own chamber, with one or two of the passages near, was the only place where he found himself free from supervision. His principal resort was the walls, where on fine days he would sit and think, and gaze over the undulating country round, for hours,—pondering his own fate, dreaming of Lucette, or asking himself what the conduct of Monsieur de Bourbonne could mean.

It certainly had its meaning; and the secret was a very simple one. The reader has already the key in the few words spoken by the count on the first night of Edward's captivity. He had determined that the youth should have no communication with Richelieu till he himself had reaped the reward he expected for the valuable services he believed he had rendered.

For many reasons, however, the cardinal was slower in bestowing that reward than the count anticipated. In the first place, his mind was profoundly occupied with matters which we shall have to touch upon hereafter. In the next place, the service of the count was not so great as he imagined. Lord Montagu was a prisoner, it is true; the treaty with Spain, Lorraine, and Savoy was in the minister's hands; and the schemes of the external enemies of France were dissipated or deranged; but there were few names in France itself implicated by the papers which had been seized, and fewer letters found which could bring home to Richelieu's foes the treason which many of them had certainly meditated. Thus, day after day passed without bringing to Monsieur de Bourbonne the expected recompense; and it suited well with the cardinal's policy to keep the nobility of the kingdom expectants upon the bounty of the minister, as they were now daily becoming, rather than dictators to the Government, as they had too long been. Poor Edward suffered without the minister knowing it, and, at the end of three long months, the youth determined to endure but a few days longer. He contrived, with some oil and the soot of his lamp, to fabricate a sort of ink. A leaf torn out of one of the books which were amongst the baggage returned to him served him for paper sufficient to write on; and with such rude materials he contrived to indite a letter to Monsieur de Bourbonne, which will explain itself.

[312] "Sir," he said, "you informed me that you would send me to the cardinal prime minister by the very first opportunity; and on that understanding I gave my parole not to escape. You have broken your word; and I might be held justifiable in breaking mine: but the word of an English gentleman is too sacred to be trifled with. I therefore give you notice of my

intention to leave the Castle of Coiffy as soon as I find an opportunity of doing so after this letter has had full time to reach you and you have had full time to take your measures accordingly. Your men have debarred me the use of pen and ink and cut me off from all communication with others. They may neglect or refuse to carry this letter; but I shall give it to one of them for that purpose, and if it do not reach you the fault is not that of

EDWARD LANGDALE.

"*Postscriptum*.—I shall not set out for fourteen days."

This epistle was given to the servant who brought his food, with an injunction to have it given to the post-courier. At first the man hesitated to take it; but, on seeing that it was directed to his master, he ultimately consented; and Edward applied all his thoughts to devise the means of carrying the resolution he had expressed into execution, let Monsieur de Bourbonne take what precautions he would. The fourteen days passed without any answer, and all seemed dull and tranquil as before; but some messengers had been coming and going, and Edward little doubted that one of them bore directions in regard to himself. To test the fact, on the fifteenth morning he walked out upon the walls and approached quietly one of the little flights of steps that led down from the ramparts toward some of the outworks. Instantly the sentinel presented his musketoon, saying, "You cannot pass here."

"Why not?" asked the youth. "I have passed before."

"The orders are changed," answered the man, gruffly. "Keep off, I say."

[313] Edward was satisfied. Monsieur de Bourbonne had received his letter: his parole was at an end; and he felt almost as if he were already free. Two days passed without his making any attempt to escape; but he carefully selected every thing from amongst his baggage which was most valuable, including money, and packed it in the smallest compass. Sometimes, indeed, he was tempted to leave all behind him, for he foresaw that he should have to swim the canal; but the absolute necessity of money in almost every transaction of life he had learned early, and he remembered that he had a large piece of France to traverse. His attention was next directed to ascertain if, by passing boldly through the interior of the chateau, he could not turn the position of the sentinels upon the walls just in face of his windows, and emerge upon the opposite ramparts, which, from all he recollected of the approach to the castle, and from various other circumstances which had come to his knowledge during his long stay, he imagined were neither very high nor very well guarded. Away he went, then, along the passage through which he had always been allowed to pass, to a door at the end on the left-hand side, where there had usually sat a servant, and which he had understood,—believed would be the better word, for he knew not what had led him to the conclusion,—which he believed led to the apartments of the Countess of Bourbonne. But now no servant sat there, either to question or let him pass. The door, however, was shut; and when he tried it he found it locked.

[314] It was a great disappointment; for the servant who usually sat there was sometimes male, sometimes female, and he had calculated that he could devise some means of getting either out of the way. The ramparts before his windows were too steep for him to attempt the leap. Had the fosse been immediately below, he might have risked it, trusting that the water would soften his fall; but a ridge of dry ground ran along under the wall, and the breaking or dislocation of a limb, with his consequent recapture, was inevitable. He returned to his room, then, disappointed but not disheartened, and instantly applied himself to form some new scheme. The first thought that struck him was that a rope ladder might be constructed from the ropes which in those days garnished every bedstead in France. It would be short, indeed, but at all events it might diminish the distance between the parapet and the ground, and by dropping from the last round he would not, he thought, have more than eight or ten feet to fall. He instantly set to work to detach the ropes from the sacking; but he had not unlaced a yard before he asked himself how, when it was constructed, he was to fasten the upper end of his ladder to the parapet. With all his ingenuity, he was puzzled. There was nothing in the room of which he could make a hook,—nothing in the world, except an ancient pair of tongs for putting wood upon the fire; and he might as well have tried to make a hook out of the Colossus of Rhodes. He looked round and round in vain, when suddenly, as his eyes rested upon the heavy key in the lock of the door, he thought that keys would sometimes fit more locks than one. He took it out at once, greased it well with oil from the lamp, and walked quietly along to the door at the end of the passage. It was still locked, and by applying his eye to the key-hole he saw that there was no obstruction. The key had been taken away,—probably to prevent any tampering with the servants on the part of the young prisoner. But he saw also three persons sitting by a large fireplace in the long gallery before him. They were a lady of two or three and twenty,—probably Madame de Bourbonne,—a very beautiful child, three years old perhaps, and another woman, whose dress betrayed the soubrette.

Edward had to return to his room again and wait with impatience for the trial of the key. As he meditated by the remains of his fire, he remembered having heard that, but a year or two before, the famous Duke of Buckingham himself, while ambassador in Paris, in a wild frolic had passed through the whole of the royal palace disguised as the White Lady.

"Some sort of disguise might not be amiss," thought Edward. "Each of these old chateaux has some superstitious tale attached to it. A sheet and a little lampblack will make a very good ghost. But it is not yet time."

His impatience had wellnigh ruined all, however; for, just as he was about to take one of the sheets from the bed to tear a hole for his head to pass through, the servant entered his room with a fresh supply of wood.

"When does Monsieur de Bourbonne return?" asked Edward "I hope when he does he will give me a warmer room."

[315] "I do not know," answered the man, piling some more wood on the fire. "Some say he comes Saturday. That is the day after to-morrow."

Edward let him depart, and then sat and listened. For at least two hours sounds were still to be heard in the chateau; but they gradually died away. At midnight the password was heard upon the walls; then there was some tramping up and down; and then all was silent. Edward knew that there was a snug, warm pavilion, or look-out, thrown forth from the walls, whence the whole line of the curtain on that side could be seen, but which was sheltered from all rude winds; and he doubted not the two guards had retreated to its friendly covering,—for it was a cold spring night, and the keen blast was sweeping over the open country round. He waited some five minutes longer, and then wrapped the sheet round him, smeared his face with the soot of the lamp, and sallied out with the key in his hand. All was darkness in the passage, and he had to feel with his fingers along the wall, not without some anxiety as to how he should find his way through the part of the house with which he was not acquainted. Liberty was at stake, however, and on he went. Fortune favored him: at the end of the passage a faint light came through the key-hole of the door he was in search of. It was red, though dim; and he at once comprehended that it did not proceed from any lamp left burning, but from the embers of a half-exhausted fire. Then came the all-important moment. Quietly and slowly he applied the key to the lock. It entered readily; but when he came to turn it there was some resistance. He was almost in despair; but, thinking he might not have pressed the key home, he pushed hard, and it started forward with some noise. He paused to listen, but there was no sound, and, twisting it slowly round, the lock gave way, the door opened, and the gallery he had seen through the key-hole was before him, with the wood fire burnt low in a large fireplace on the left-hand side. There were a number of doors on the right, tight shut, to keep out the wintry air; but the gallery was vacant, and the fire gave light enough. On then he strode toward the opposite end, calculating that he was now in the great tower or lodging-part of the castle, and soon reached the farther extremity of the gallery, where another door presented itself, with the key in the lock. The moment he opened it, the cold air rushed in, and he found himself in a little garden upon the inner ramparts. All was still; and there seemed nothing there but one or two bare apple-trees and some withered shrubs and flowers.

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The rampart, however, was very high, and all the young man's trouble would have been in vain had he not divined that there must be some lower outwork to defend the foot of the wall. The moon was not yet up: there was no light but that of the stars; and he walked cautiously along under the parapet till he came to some descending steps. He could see no one on the walls; but the dry leaves crackled under his footsteps and more than once made him stop, thinking a sentinel was near. At the bottom of the steps was another wall, with embrasures and a solitary cannon, evidently commanding the approach from some work below; and, making his way along for about forty steps, Edward reached some more stairs, which led him down to what seemed a small bastion.

At the foot he paused, for upon the wall of the outwork he perceived some dark object, which he could not clearly make out. It was too large for a man, he thought, and it remained motionless; and after gazing for several minutes he quietly mounted the five steps which led up to the platform. He then perceived that the object which had alarmed him was a rude sentry-box, with a cannon hard by; and, having ascertained that it was empty, he looked over and beheld the river flowing quietly through the fosse at the foot.

The wall was about eleven feet in height, and he certainly would not have feared to leap. But noise was to be avoided; and, tying the end of the sheet to one of the trunnions of the cannon, the young adventurer let himself down by his hands as far as he could, and then dropped into the water. A slight splash was all the sound; but he sunk deep, and his feet touched the bottom. He rose again, however, and, thanking in heart the harsh angler who had first counselled him to learn to swim, he struck out for the other side of the fosse, and reached it in a moment. It was a sharp night, it is true, for cold bathing; but his heart felt warm with the consciousness of freedom, and, getting amongst the low bushes which covered a good part of the ground on the Lorraine side of the castle, he walked rapidly round to the other side, and then struck across the country directly toward the heart of Burgundy.

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Edward had many motives for so shaping his course. He had heard a vague rumor that the Duke of Lorraine had made his peace with France, and therefore he was as likely to be interrupted in the duke's territories as anywhere. In the next place, he knew that his evasion must be discovered early on the following morning, and the pursuit was of course likely to be directed on the side where the open doors and the sheet tied to the cannon gave evidence of the course he had first taken. But, after all, there was a certain degree of whim, or character, or call it what you like, in it. He had told Monsieur de Bourbonne that if at liberty he would go straight to the Cardinal de Richelieu. Some people might have

thought that it was going straight into a lion's den. But Edward did not fear; and he determined to go frankly and at once throw himself upon the cardinal's generosity, tell him all he had done and all he had suffered, and show him that he had kept his word in coming back to him, though only seven months, instead of two years, had passed since they had parted. He anticipated no obstruction in that direction if he could once get at a distance from Coiffy; for he still had the cardinal's safe-conduct about him.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

[318] Twenty miles in a day is no great walking. I myself have walked forty in ten hours. But the great point is what we walk over. It is the great point in life, too; for the worthy patriarchs, I have no doubt, journeyed through life for two or three hundred years without getting weary, simply because they had such an easy road to travel. Abraham had to fight now and then, it is true, and from time to time there was a quarrel amongst the herdsmen; but these were little incidents that only served to enliven the way; and the rest of the travel was without excitement of mind or great exertion of body. If Abraham or Isaac or Jacob had passed through nothing but low entangling bushes,—bilberries and cranberries, and sometimes blackberries, with their long prickly arms,—they would have laid themselves down to rest much sooner, and felt themselves as tired as Edward Langdale when, just about daybreak, he reached the end of the twentieth mile from the Chateau of Coiffy.

Edward had then arrived at a country somewhat more open; and he sat himself down to rest not far from a little country-road, which he could trace by the eye, running on, almost in a straight line, toward the tall square tower of a village-church. But that village-church was at least six miles distant; and Edward had not tasted food during fourteen or fifteen hours. His wet clothes had dried upon him, too, under the cold night-wind, stiffening every limb; and he had no comfortable little brandy-bottle, such as so often cheers the way for the modern romantic traveller.

The spot where he stopped, however, was a dry grassy mound, with some yellow broken ground before it; and out of the bank welled a little clear rivulet, where he quenched his thirst after the olden fashion before ladles or goblets were invented.

While he was still stooping down he heard the beat of horses' feet upon the road; and, with that strong consciousness of running away which makes every man who possesses it more or less timid, he hid himself under the bank as well as he could.

Presently, as well as the footfalls, he heard the sound of voices; and for a moment his apprehension was increased by one of the voices sounding familiar to his ear.

He was relieved in a moment, however,—and very much relieved.

[319] "Why, you are drunk already, you beast!" said one voice; and then came the thick and juicy tones of good Pierrot la Grange, with the music of brandy very strong in them. "To-be-sure I am," answered Pierrot. "Have I not had sorrow and trouble enough to make me drunk every day of the week for the last three months? My noble lord in prison; Master Ned no one knows where,—the only lad in all this world that could keep me straight."

"Pierrot! Pierrot!" shouted Edward; "Jacques Beaupré! halt there! I am nearer than you think."

The two horsemen stopped, the one with a dumb and stupefied gaze around, a little conscience-stricken, perhaps, at the state in which he had to present himself to his young master, the other with an observation in a low tone as to the consequences of talking of the devil. But Edward was soon by their side, and they were not long upon their horses' backs. Each was sincerely glad to see the young Englishman; for force of character as often wins affection as respect. Edward's adventures were soon told; and luckily the two men had some solid provisions with them, as well as Pierrot's brandy-bottle,—which was now nearly vacant of its contents. While the young gentleman ate and drank, the history of the two servants was related, at somewhat greater length than his own, though it was a very monotonous one. They had remained at Nancy with the rest of Lord Montagu's servants for some time, they said, before they heard of that nobleman's capture. After the news reached them, a week was spent, according to Jacques Beaupré, in active deliberations, at the end of which, as they had a sufficiency of money, their wages having been paid for some time in advance, it was determined to stay quietly where they were till they received some orders. One or two of their comrades, however, dropped off from time to time, till the two Frenchmen and young Freeland only remained of the whole party. For week after week no news came; but at length, some four days previous to that on which they spoke, a messenger had arrived from Lord Montagu, announcing his liberation and bearing funds to pay all expenses. At the same time, they said, Master Freeland was ordered to give them their discharge, and they were actually on their way back to their own part of France.

[320] "And so his lordship is liberated?" said Edward, with a slight touch of bitterness in his tone; for he could not imagine such an event to have happened so suddenly that Montagu, who

had found time to take care of common servants, had none to bestow a thought on him. "You are going back to Aunis, you say. Well, my good fellows, if you have a mind for such a companion, I will go with you. I will be no charge to you, for I have money enough with me. All I want is a horse and some arms."

"Charge, Master Ned!" exclaimed Pierrot, in a burst of semi-drunken enthusiasm. "What care we about charges? If it were the last crown I had in the world, I would share it with you. And as to a horse, here, get upon mine. I can walk well enough to that big village there, which they say is called Vitell. But here; let me take the pistols out of the holsters. I won't trust you with them, by the Lord!"

"Nonsense!" answered Edward. "I will not use them, man, upon my honor."

"No, no," said Pierrot, deliberately taking the pistols from his saddle-bow. "If once you get your hand upon the stock, there is no knowing where the bullets may go flying; and my legs have got lead enough in them already this morning."

"Your head has got brandy enough in it," said Jacques Beaupré: "that's what puts the lead in your heels. Here; let me hold the horse while our young master mounts, or you'll be down with your nose in the water and set the fountain boiling."

"If all the water in the world could wash it white," answered Pierrot, "I would tumble into a pond every day. It is that nose of mine gets me a bad reputation and makes men say I drink. Why, every man drinks. It entirely depends upon what men drink. But, after all, I think I had better try the cold water; for somehow I have a notion if I try to walk to Vitell with nothing but brandy in my stomach I shall make the distance three times as long with zigzags and vagaries."

[321] Thus saying, while Edward mounted, very well pleased with some relief to his tired legs, Pierrot knelt down by the side of a tolerably deep little pool formed by the rivulet at the side of the road, and, putting his lips to the clear water, took a deep draught. Jacques Beaupré, however, seemed to think that the water had better be applied externally also, and, giving him a push with his foot, sent him headlong into the pool.

The good man started up with a furious look; but we have already seen the singular effect which liquor had upon poor Pierrot la Grange,—an effect quite contrary to that which it produces on most men. The reader will not be surprised, then, that, though really angry, Pierrot sought no vengeance upon his assailant.

Had we time, and were it worth while, I might be inclined to examine psychologically into this peculiarity of Pierrot's idiosyncrasy; but suffice it to say that the result probably proceeded from one of two causes. Nothing crows like shame carried to a certain degree; and Pierrot at heart was always ashamed of being drunk. On the other hand, as when he did drink he never stopped at that point where liquor merely exhilarates, but generally went far enough to deprive both brain and limbs of vigor, he might feel very doubtful of his capability to combat an enemy even much weaker than himself.

However that might be, his immersion in cold water produced its usual effect. I do not say that it sobered him entirely: that would be too much; but it certainly greatly relieved his head, and gave his limbs a capability of direct progression which they had not previously possessed.

"Come, come, Pierrot," said Edward, interrupting him in the midst of terrible threats against Jacques, "we have no time to lose, my good friend. Did I not tell you that it is likely that I shall be pursued at once? We must get to the village as fast as possible, and then ride hard for the rest of the day, in order to put as great a distance between us and Coiffy as we can."

"Go on, then; go on," cried Pierrot: "I will come after as fast as I can. You can be buying a horse and arms in the mean time, if you can find them. If not, I suppose you must take to *franc étrier*."

[322] Edward took him at his word, and, accompanied by Jacques Beaupré, rode on, running over in his mind, with his usual quickness, his chances of escape and the best means of securing it. He did not know, indeed, how far the local jurisdiction, either as seigneur or Government officer, of the Count de Bourbonne extended; but he felt certain that, if he could once get beyond its limits, no other governor or Government officer would recognise it in opposition to the safe-conduct under the cardinal's own hand. Speed, therefore, was every thing; and, though he had neither whip nor spur with him, his light hand and thorough horsemanship easily kept Pierrot's horse at a swift trot till they reached the village of Vitell.

France has always been a comfortable country to travel in. Most villages have always possessed a tolerable inn, though the external man was sometimes not so well provided for as the internal. But what Edward principally wanted at that moment was generally in those days to be found in almost any part of France. People then almost universally travelled on horse-back, and very rarely went without arms. Pistols and a good sword, therefore, were soon found in Vitell. But a horse took longer to obtain, not from any want of the commodity,—for there were plenty of very excellent nags in the town,—but from the invariable and

unextinguishable propensity inherent in horse-dealers to cheat the chapman, and never to sell a good horse under any circumstances if they can sell a bad one. Six were brought in succession to the door of the inn for Edward's inspection, without remaining for more than a minute before he ordered them away. At length, however, one of the dealers, perceiving that he had not to do with a novice, as Edward's youth had at first led him to imagine, thought fit to bring forth from the stable a beast which, though not very handsome and somewhat vicious,—if not so great a devil as that which Edward rode from Angers,—was a good serviceable beast enough. All these things cost but a small sum compared with the price which we should pay for them in the present day; and bridle, saddle, and a pair of spurs were quite within the young gentleman's means.

[323] Pierrot had arrived in time to give his opinion in regard to the purchase of the horse, and, as he was now sober, that opinion was worth having. But the first moment he found himself alone with his former master he was eloquent in his excuses for his relapse; and Edward could not but admit to himself that, left alone in a great city where he knew no one, uncertain of his fate from day to day, and with sufficient money, no poor sinner had ever better cause to plead temptation.

The young Englishman contented himself, however, with telling him that as he was no longer his master he could pretend to no control over his conduct.

"Ah, Master Ned," cried the honest fellow, "do not say I am no longer your servant! Pray, do control me. I am sure I cannot control myself. You are the only one who ever could; and I do believe if I could but stay with you for a couple of years I should get over my bad habits. See what an effect good training had. All the time I was at Nancy, I declare, I did not drink two quarts till this very morning. Ask Jacques Beaupré: he will tell you the same; and if you will but let me serve you for two years you may read my name backward if I ever drink again."

"I am afraid, my good friend," answered Edward, "you would always be what the Catholics call a relapsed convert. As to serving me two years, Pierrot, God knows what will become of me before two years are over, and in the mean time I have little enough money for myself,—and none to keep a man upon."

"Well, well," cried Pierrot, joyfully, "I will run fortune with you! Only don't send me away, and don't fire at me any more, unless you see me drunk,—when it will be natural. But now tell me, Master Ned, where are you going now?"

"Into the lion's den, Pierrot," replied Edward, with a somewhat rueful smile: "I am going straight to the Cardinal de Richelieu."

[324] "In the name of Heaven!" exclaimed Pierrot, with a look of astonishment, "do you know he is now besieging Rochelle with a powerful army? The king has fallen sick and gone back to Paris. The cardinal has tucked up his gown and turned soldier; and our poor friends in the city are already, they say, so badly off for food that they will soon have to eat each other. The cardinal will not let a mouse stir out, and if any one ventures beyond the walls they send a shot at him and drive him in again."

Edward mused without reply for some moments; and, while he was still silent, Jacques Beaupré came back to the little *salle-à-manger* and stood by the young gentleman's side.

"Poor Clement Tournon!" cried Edward, still musing.

"Ay, poor Clement Tournon!" said Jacques Beaupré, in a sad tone: "he is a good man, sir, and took care of me from my boyhood."

"I would give the world to save him," answered Edward. "Come, let us ride."

They were soon upon their horses. Edward mounted first and Pierrot last, having stopped to answer some questions of the host.

"What did he ask you?" said Edward, as they rode on.

"He asked where your lordship was going," answered Pierrot, "and I told him straight to the cardinal."

"Right," said Edward. "And did he call me lordship, Pierrot? My lordship is a very small one."

"Ay, sir, but you have got quite a grand air now, though your doublet is somewhat soiled by dust and wet. You cannot think how you are changed since we left Nantes. What between riding, and getting stuck, and being in prison, you have grown broad and brown, and your mustache is an inch long. Those who saw you before would never know you."

"I hope they will," answered Edward, with a smile followed by a sigh; "and, as for my doublet, I must get a new one, whenever I can afford to stop without danger. All my baggage I left with the discreet Monsieur de Bourbonne. But, if I am not mistaken, Pierrot, I will make him pay all he owes me before I have done."

"At the pistol's point?" asked Pierrot, with a grim smile.

"No, no," replied Edward,— "in another way, and by other hands. But let us ride on fast; for

I have a great notion the news you left with the aubergist will sharpen the spurs of any who may be pursuing us."

[325] The whole party accordingly rode forward more quickly, but not at so headlong a pace as to risk any damage to their horses; and before night all fear of pursuit was ended by their entrance into another province, where, at a small walled town, which they reached just after sunset, Edward was obliged to produce his safe-conduct before the soldiers at the gates would give them admission.

The officer to whom it was shown, at the first sight of the broad seal of France and the name of Richelieu, respectfully came out of the guard-house to bid the bearer welcome, and asked, with great politeness, where he was going to lodge in the town, and whither his journey was directed.

"I am going straight to Rochelle, or wherever his Eminence of Richelieu may be," replied the young Englishman. "As to the place where I shall lodge, I shall be glad of advice; for I am a stranger here, and must depart early to-morrow."

"Your horses look tired, sir," said the officer, "and you had better give them some rest."

"No wonder they are tired," replied the young man; "for we have ridden from the frontiers of Lorraine, where I was somewhat badly treated, lost all my baggage, but luckily saved my purse."

"By brigands?" asked the officer.

"No better," answered Edward, somewhat bitterly. "But may I ask you the way to the best inn?"

The officer, all politeness, sent one of the soldiers to show him the way; and in a large, comfortable, though somewhat gloomy, old auberge the young Englishman passed the first night for several months with a feeling of freedom and security.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

[326] We left Edward Langdale at nightfall, and, by the reader's good leave, may as well take him up again about the same hour, but with an interval of some ten days. The interval measured upon the earth's surface must be equally great. When we last saw him he was entering a little town on the frontiers of Burgundy, just after the cool sunset of a chilly spring day. He was now riding out of the fine old town of Niort after a warm day's journey; for even under the genial sky of France ten days will make a great difference, and bring the warm breath of the South to expand the flowers, though winter even there will sometimes linger in the lap of spring.

"Well, sir," said Jacques Beaupré, who was a good deal tired with a longer day's ride than usual, "everybody says you will find the town full of soldiers; and we all know where fighting men are there is no room for civil men."

"We will find room, Jacques," replied Edward, in a light, confident tone; "and, as to civility, if we don't show ourselves too militant, the fighting-men will be civil enough, depend on it. But, my good friend, I must, if possible, see the cardinal to-morrow. They tell me that an assault upon Rochelle will be made shortly; and, if I could but get into the town for a few hours——"

Jacques Beaupré shook his head, saying, "Ah, sir, it is all in vain. I will go as far to help poor old Clement Tournon as any man; but the good syndic is most likely dead of starvation by this time; and, if he is not, you might as well try to persuade a cat to let a mouse get out of her jaws as attempt to persuade his Eminence to let one single soul, old or young, get out of Rochelle."

"I will try, at all events," answered Edward. "He who makes no effort never succeeds. He who makes an effort may fail, but he may succeed. The man who helped me at my utmost need shall never say that I did not try to help him when he was in a harder scrape. Ride on, ride on: we have still three leagues to go."

[327] The twilight grew fainter as they went, and it was quite dark when they emerged from the little wood which lies about a quarter of a league from the small old town of Fontenay, then universally called Rohan Rohan. It is now a mere insignificant burgh; but in those times and in the time before it was a small city of some importance,—if not for its commerce, at least for its capabilities for defence. It had even ventured a short time before to set at defiance the arms of France, and had made an obstinate resistance, but, having fallen at length, had suffered severely from the captors.

It was night, as I have said, when Edward and his two companions first came within sight; and very little of the place would have been visible had not a large body of men, which formed the rear-guard of the royal army, been marched out some days before and

encamped a mile beyond the town. Every one who has seen a camp must have remarked how much more light finds its way to the sky from amongst the tents in the early part of the night than arises from amongst the houses of a city, though, perhaps, much more populous; and now the blaze from watchfires and lamps and torches threw out the dark masses of the town of Rohan Rohan, with its fine old castle, in strong relief.

It is rarely that the rear of an army is guarded with as much care as its van. Few captains are as careful as Earl Percy. But in this case negligence was more excusable; for no one in all the camp ever dreamed of such a thing as an attack in the rear. Moreover, to say the truth, that rear-guard in advance of Rohan Rohan was composed of a somewhat disorderly set, gentlemen and soldiers alike, not one of whom wished particularly to see the fall of Rochelle.

To explain the cause of this indifference would take up too much time; but the words of Bassompierre revealed the fact when he said, "You will see we shall be fools enough to take Rochelle."

However that might be, Edward and his companions had passed the centre of the town before they saw a single soldier. It was badly lighted, it is true; but the cause of their not seeing any was that there were none to be seen. The young gentleman looked for guard, or picquet, or patrol, in vain, till he arrived within a hundred yards of the end of the street which leads up from Pont de Cossé to the castle. There, however, he was challenged for the first time,—one of a group of musketeers who were drinking at the door of a house starting up and demanding the password.

[328] Edward, unable to give it, requested to see the man's officer, and was led unceremoniously into the house, where he found an old gray-headed gentleman seated reading, with his steel cap upon the table. To him the young gentleman's errand was soon explained, and his safe-conduct exhibited.

"I cannot let you pass, young gentleman, without further orders," said the old man; "but if you will wait here for an hour I will send on your name and the description of your pass to our commander. He will soon let us hear from him. I am rather curiously situated myself, and therefore must be careful."

"I must wait the leisure of the king's officers," answered Edward, in a civil tone. "But, in the mean while, perhaps my two men, who are without, can get some forage for the horses and some food for themselves. I have not seen an inn open in the whole place."

"I suppose not," said the old officer, dryly. "But some of my people will easily find for yours what they want. Pray, be seated and wait till my return."

He was not gone more than five minutes; and then about an hour passed in broken and desultory conversation between him and his visitor, whom he treated with every sort of distinction,—for by this time Edward was once more equipped in the garments of a gentleman of the court, which were none the less gentlemanly for being plain and sober. Some of the old man's questions and observations seemed to his young companion somewhat strange: he asked if Edward had met any parties of armed men on the road, how long he had travelled, which way he had come, and remarked that this siege was a weary business, but that the cardinal was determined to carry Rochelle whatever it might cost.

Edward replied as shortly as politeness permitted, and only put a few questions in return. Amongst them, however, he inquired who was the officer commanding the troops in front, and heard, with sensations not altogether pleasant, that his name was Monsieur de Lude, into whose hands he had fallen once before.

[329] At the end of an hour he was relieved, however; for a soldier, entering the room with every appearance of haste, gave a letter into the hands of the old officer, who opened and read it with a good deal of merriment.

"Monsieur de Lude writes thus," he said: "'Present my compliments to Monsieur de Langdale and inform him that I cannot let him pass the posts till I have the cardinal's permission, which I have no doubt will be given as soon as he hears his name.' Shall I read the rest?" asked the old officer.

Edward nodded, and he went on thus:—"I got into a devil of a scrape last summer about him and a girl he had with him. Who the mischief he is I don't know; but, by what the cardinal said when I saw him, I think he must be his Eminence's pet cat turned into a cavalier. On your life, be as civil to him as possible; give him the best rooms in the castle, and feed and drink him well, till I can come over myself,—which will be as soon as I hear from the cardinal to-morrow. I am half afraid to stop him. But what can I do? The orders are strict not to let any one pass the posts, because'—The rest," continued the old man, abruptly, "refers to matters of no consequence. You will find the rooms of the castle very comfortable, for they were inhabited by the Duc de Rohan but a few weeks before we sat down before the place, and some of the old servants have been suffered to remain till the king's pleasure is known. Heaven grant there be no ghosts there to disturb you!—though there are some strange tales, as in regard to every old country-house."

"I am not afraid of any thing unsubstantial," answered Edward. "Do you know what has

become of the Duc de Rohan?"

"No,—not rightly," replied the old officer, with some slight hesitation. "They did say he was threatening the right flank of the army with a body of horse; but he must have found out by this time it was of no use. Men must submit to circumstances, sir. But let us go. I will have the honor of escorting you. We shall find your servants somewhere about." And, calling aloud for torches, he led the way out of the low house where he had taken up his quarters, and gave some orders to the men about the door.

[330] Before the torches were lighted and Edward Langdale and his companion, with two men before them, had proceeded a hundred yards up the hill, Jacques Beaupré and Pierrot had joined them, leading the horses. In sooth, the party proceeded exceedingly slowly; and it took a full quarter of an hour to reach the gates of the chateau. All watch and ward was gone; and at the inner door of the lodging-part of the building appeared a tremulous old man with a candle in his hand. The old officer called him "Matthew," as if they had been long acquainted, and ordered him briefly to pay every attention to the guest and give him the best chambers in the house.

"Those are the duchess's apartments," said the old major-domo. "We will have a fire lighted in a moment, gentlemen; but I fear me there is not much in the house to eat. However, I will tell old Henri Borgne, who was cook here before Maître Grondin's father came, to get something ready with all speed."

"No, no," said the old officer: "this gentleman is not fond of antediluvian sauces. I will make shift to send him up a roast chicken and a pottage. We are not particularly well off for provisions down below; but I can find something, and I think, Matthew, you can find the wine."

"Hush, hush, sir," said the old man, in a low voice: "if your soldiers did but hear."

"I will break the first man's neck that climbs the hill," replied the officer.

"I want nothing," said Edward. "We supped at Cossé, and my men have taken care of themselves below, depend upon it. Where is the duchess now, Monsieur Matthew? and who has she got with her?"

"Oh, she is in Venice still," replied the old man; "and there are Madame St. Aignan, and Mademoiselle de Mirepoix, and three or four maids, and the serving-men. Do you know her, sir? She's a fine lady, and mighty gay."

"I have not the honor," said Edward. "But now, my good man, let the fire be lighted: I shall go to bed soon, for I have ridden long and hard. I trust," he continued, addressing the old officer, "that Monsieur de Lude will communicate my coming to his Eminence as soon as possible; for it is very necessary that I should see him without delay."

[331] "Be you sure he will do that," replied the other. "De Lude is not a man to burn his fingers twice with the same chestnut."

He then took his leave. The old servant with the candle marshalled the way ceremoniously to a very splendid suite of apartments which had escaped, I know not how, from the rude hands of the soldiers when the town was taken. Pierrot and Jacques Beaupré disposed of themselves, doubtless very comfortably; and Edward sat down to meditate. The reader need not ask what was the subject of his thoughts, if he remembers that those were the halls and dwelling-place of the ancestors of Lucette.

"Was it a dream?" he asked himself. Hardly nine months before, had he passed with her not many miles from that very spot? had they wandered alone together for weeks without restraint? had they borne suffering, anxiety, danger in dear companionship which made even danger sweet? had they been married, parted, met again, and again parted?

There are times when a sensation of the unreality of all things upon this earth comes over us,—when memory seems but a dream, our past acts a vision, our hopes, our fears, our enjoyments, but the fancies of the fleeting hour.

For an instant it was so with Edward Langdale as he sat and gazed into the flickering and phantasm-begetting fire. But when he turned his eyes around upon those old walls, whose scrolls and sconces and fantastic ornaments all spoke of the past,—all told that he was in the dwelling of the Rohan Rohans,—the strange, shadowy doubts vanished: he felt that there was something real in the world,—something more real than mere tangible objects; that, if all else died or passed away like a show, the realities of heart and mind must remain forever,—that esteem, affection, love, truth, honesty and honor, genius and wisdom, can never perish.

How long he sat he knew not; but his meditations were interrupted by the old servant bringing in fresh wood, with a man from the town below, bearing a tray of provisions.

[332] The former he was glad to have, for the night had grown chilly; but the latter he sent away to Pierrot and Beaupré, bidding them eat and then go to rest, as he wanted nothing more. The old man, after reverent offers of service, put some fresh candles in the sconces and left him, assuring him that he should have had candlesticks,—fine silver flambeaux,—but that

they had been taken away.

Edward, left alone, began to pace up and down the room. He looked at the bed, which seemed comfortable enough, and thought of lying down; but he had no inclination to sleep. The chamber was a square room in an angle of the tower, one side looking to the south and the other to the east. The windows were without blinds or shutters. Edward advanced to one on the southern side, from which there was a view over a considerable part of the camp. The glow which had risen in that direction some hours before had considerably diminished: the watchfires were dying out; the torches no longer moved about from place to place. He lifted his eyes to the sky, studded with stars, and saw a planet with a pure mild light moving upward untwinkling amongst the more steadfast watchers of the night.

"Can there be any truth," he thought, "in those tales of the astrologers? Can the fate of many men, of many nations, depend upon the course of such a pale, silent orb as that?" And, turning to the table again, he sat down and let his thoughts run on in the new course they had assumed. Every thing grew more and more silent around. The village clock struck. He did not count its sounds, but he felt it must be near midnight.

Who can tell what it is which, when alone and in silence, at that still spectral hour, seems to chill the warm blood of the heart, and fills the brain with ideas vague, and awful, and sublime,—with fancies gloomy, if not fearful?

[333] Edward sat thoughtfully for nearly half an hour longer. The fire had fallen low, and he rose and threw some more wood upon it; but it would not burn. He then rose and went to the other window, which looked eastward. The moon was just rising, and he could see over a wide extent of country, with the wood which he had passed on his way to Fontenay on the left of the picture, then half a mile or so of open sandy ground, then another wood to the right, and farther still, on the same side, but more distant, the spires and towers of some other little town. There was the haziness of moonlight over the whole scene; but the moon, though she was strong enough to cast long shadows from every elevated object, so flooded the whole scene with light that the more distant features were not distinct.

Suddenly Edward raised his hand half open to his brow, and gazed from underneath. He saw something that surprised him. A dark figure issued from the wood; more followed; line after line of black, soldier-like phantoms swept over the sandy ground from the one wood toward the other, disappearing as they entered. But still more followed, horse and foot. They seemed to be a moving host; but there was something so quiet and gliding in their motions that Edward could hardly believe they were substantial. He opened the window quietly and listened. There was no noise; there was no beat of drum, or sound of fife, or clang of arms, or tramp of marching men. Yet still the line went on, troop after troop and squadron after squadron, in the same silent, stealthy way; and where he stood he could discern no shadows cast by the moon from the passing multitude.

At length he thought that fatigue must have affected his mind or body strangely; and, retiring from the window, he closed it, and lay down to sleep without undressing.

His eyes closed heavily in a few minutes; but, ere an hour was over, he started up and gazed around him, wondering where he was. Then, as remembrance came back, he approached the window again and gazed out. The moon was higher in the heaven, and shining with great splendor; but the phantom host had disappeared, and nothing was to be seen but the misty landscape and the shadows of the trees.

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CHAPTER XXXIX.

There was a loud knocking in the old castle of Rohan Rohan about half-past four o'clock in the morning, and then various other sounds, which seemed to indicate that people had been roused from their beds by some unusual summons. Horses' feet were heard stamping in the court-yard, too, and two or three persons talking below the windows; and Edward rose up, pulled on his boots, and lighted another candle in one of the sconces which was nearly extinguished. In those days people were more matutinal in their habits than in our times; but still half-past four was a somewhat early hour, and Edward had not slept well or long. He was bathing his face and head, however, in cold water, to waken up his sleepy faculties, when some person knocked at the door of his room. He bade them come in; and old Matthew, with the inevitable candle in his hand, entered, introducing a young man in military attire, who, having satisfied himself of Edward's name, presented a letter bearing his address.

Edward opened it, and, approaching the light, read the contents:—

"M. de Lude begs to inform Monsieur de Langdale that the cardinal will receive him this morning half an hour before daybreak. The bearer will be his guide to the quarters of his Eminence."

"We have hardly time," said Edward.

"Oh, yes," answered the other, with a smile. "The cardinal sometimes keeps people waiting; and I took the liberty of ordering your people and your horses to be brought forth, wherever they might be."

[335] "Thanks for the precaution," said Edward, looking at his watch, and shrewdly suspecting that the messenger had somewhere dallied on the way. "It wants now a quarter to five o'clock. I will not detain you a moment, sir." And, catching up his beaver and his cloak, and a few other articles that lay about the room, he descended to the court-yard, taking an opportunity of slipping some money into the hand of the old servant.

Pierrot was already there with two horses, and Jacques Beaupré appeared the instant after, leading the other. No time was lost, and Edward was immediately in the saddle. Three or four troopers followed; and the whole party set out down the steep streets from the castle toward the Pont de Cossé.

Edward asked no questions as to the course in which their ride was directed; and hardly a word passed between him and his companion as they trotted rapidly on. The fact was, the young man's mind was full of the coming interview. On some points his determination was formed; but upon others he was doubtful. To tell all that happened at Coiffy he was resolved, and to demand redress; but, turn it in his thoughts as he would, he could fix upon no way beforehand of introducing his proposed visit to Rochelle, and in the end he was obliged to leave it to chance and circumstance.

Very little of the country did he see as they rode on, for the moonlight was checkered with cloudy shadows; and faint gleams, and deep shades, and hazy hollows, and brown knolls, were all that caught the eye as the travellers passed along.

At length, after several miles' ride, a gleam of light rested for a minute or two upon a little elevation, and on the walls of an old castle, not unlike that of Rohan Rohan; and the young officer by Edward's side pointed forward, saying, "There is Mauzé, where his Eminence has passed the last four days."

"How far is it?" said Edward.

"About two miles," replied the young man; "but we shall soon be there. The road is good and even."

[336] The light passed away, and Edward caught no other distinct view of the chateau till, about twenty minutes after, they began to ascend the little slope. He then perceived a red and garish glow ascending from amidst some old walls, and in a minute more was in the court-yard, where a number of torches were burning and several men and horses were collected.

"Stay here," said the young officer. "I will go and announce you." And, leaving him there, he entered the chateau.

He had not been gone two minutes, however, when there was a bustle on the steps of the great hall, and some six or seven persons came forth, with a tall, fine-looking man at their head, habited certainly more in military than ecclesiastical costume; for, though he had a loose scarlet robe thrown over his shoulders, there was the gleam of a cuirass underneath, and he bore a heavy sword by his side. Edward pushed his horse forward, seeing at once it was the cardinal; but the great minister was evidently fully occupied. He spoke a few words to one of the little crowd which surrounded him, gave some papers to another, listened for a moment to a third, and then mounted a powerful charger which was held for him at the foot of the steps. His fine but somewhat stern face was full of thought, and the glare of the torches gave it even a look of harshness, which Edward had never remarked there before. His eye turned upon everybody around, and rested longer perhaps on the face of Edward Langdale than upon that of any other. But he did not seem to recognise him, and probably only remarked him because he remained on horseback while all the rest were on foot.

"Follow!" said Richelieu, and rode away; while a faint tinge of gray began to spread itself through the dark sky, announcing the coming sunrise.

[337] As the party rode on, Edward remarked that Richelieu spoke a few words to those immediately about him; and presently after one of them fell back to his side and asked if his name were Langdale. He answered in the affirmative; and the gentleman then told him to ride up near his Eminence. Edward did so; but the cardinal took no notice, and continued to push on at a quick pace till they reached the top of one of those abrupt little eminences which are scattered over the flatter ground upon the western coast of France. Upon the very summit Richelieu pulled in his horse; and by this time the pale bluish twilight had gained sufficient strength to show the brown moors and yellow sands, and the towers and pinnacles of Rochelle, with a gleam of the sea beyond. An odor of sea-weed also came sweeping up from the northwest, and a saltish taste was felt upon the lips of those who sat there and gazed.

"Edward Langdale!" said Richelieu, after a moment or two; and Edward spurred his horse up to his side.

"You have kept your word in coming back," said the cardinal; "but I did not expect you so soon."

"That was because your Eminence did not know all the circumstances," answered the young man, with that mixture of frankness and respect which is always well pleasing to the great.

Richelieu raised what was then called a perspective glass—a very feeble sort of telescope—to his eye, and gazed toward Rochelle, the long lines of which were becoming more distinct every moment. Edward was silent, seeing that the mind of the great minister was fully occupied; and no one spoke a word for nearly ten minutes. Then occurred one of those phenomena by no means uncommon, and easily accounted for in these days, but to which the superstition of old times lent a significance they do not now possess. Away out to the east the sun began to rise, somewhat pale and sickly in look, and with a whitish glare around him; while in the west, rising over the sea, appeared another sun, exactly of the same aspect and keeping as it ascended the same height in the sky.

"Two suns in the same heaven!" exclaimed Richelieu, with an accent of surprise.

"Yes, your Eminence," replied Edward. "But one is much brighter than the other, and its light will last after the other has gone out."

Richelieu turned suddenly round and gazed in his face with an inquiring look, as if he thought there might be something beneath his words more significant than the words themselves; then, bowing his head with a well-pleased smile, he said, "True, true! one is fading already."

[338] Whether Edward had spoken to his thoughts or not must be always a mystery; but it is certain that minds of great fire and eagerness, even without much fancy, will snatch at images supplied by external nature to figure forth without danger thoughts, dreams, purposes in their own hearts which they dare not utter. The parable is always a resource of ambition, and often a resource of love. Certain it is, too, that there were at that time two suns in the sky of France, and that one was already fading into an obscurity becoming darker and more dark till the faint figure of the dying monarch was hardly seen or felt, while the other was destined to go on increasing in splendor and power till it set forever. Here the comparison may be supposed to halt; for some may say that the real sun was fading while the false one was increasing in splendor. But that depends, after all, upon how men appreciate greatness,—whether genius or birth be the real sun.

[339] However that may be, it is certain that Louis XIII. was at all events endowed with military genius; but even in the splendor of that most dazzling—to the eyes of men—of human gifts, his rays were paling before the superior endowments of his minister. Sickness, weariness, disgust, despondency—we know not well what—had already induced him to withdraw from the siege of Rochelle, and to leave Richelieu to carry on the operations with a force, an energy, a talent, which would have won fame for the most distinguished general or engineer. The cardinal might well, therefore, apply the words of Edward Langdale to himself, feeling them a compliment which, like the misty light of a summer's day, was the more warm because it was in some degree indefinite. Richelieu did not wish to have it otherwise, and, without further words, turned his eyes once more upon the scene before them. A small battery opened its fire upon the walls of the devoted town as they sat there and gazed; but nobody could see whether it produced any effect or not. Richelieu, at all events, paid little attention to it, and only murmured to himself, "Waste of saltpetre!" Shortly after, he sent off two gentlemen on horseback with messages written in pencil on small scraps of paper, and then turned to gaze again. Some five minutes after, a man on horseback came back, galloping up from the rear, and gave him some information in a low voice. For a short space his brow contracted as if with anger; but the emotion lasted evidently only a moment, and the next instant he smiled almost gayly, and he said, aloud, "Well, one may have too many rats in a rat-trap. Monsieur Langdale, come hither."

Edward rode close up, and the cardinal asked, "Do you know any thing of the Duc de Rohan?"

"No, your Eminence," replied Edward; "I have not seen or heard of him for nearly nine months."

"You did not see him last night?" said Richelieu.

"The Duc de Rohan!" exclaimed Edward, in a tone of surprise. "I passed all last night, sir, in the Chateau de Fontenay; but the duke certainly was not there, to my knowledge."

"Nevertheless," said Richelieu, in a quiet tone, "he passed from right to left of our army in the rear with his whole force: so I understand."

"Now I comprehend what I saw last night," said Edward; and he detailed all he had observed from the window of the chateau.

"It was no phantom," said Richelieu, gravely; "but it is as well. I wonder if there were other people in the town or castle who took men for shadows as well as you. How long are you from Savoy, where I last heard of you?"

"A long time, may it please your Eminence," replied the young Englishman; "but only eleven days from the Chateau of Coiffy,—whence you certainly should have heard of me if they had not debarred me the use of pen and ink and kept me a close prisoner for months."

"Ha!" said the minister, with a grave, stern face, "Monsieur de Bourbonne thinks he can play with me, does he? and now he fancies he has got his reward. But we must talk more of this when I have some leisure. At present, that little black line there," he continued, pointing toward Rochelle, "occupies much of my thoughts. The battery has not yet ceased firing. These men of trumpet and broad-sword, Monsieur Langdale, attribute more virtue to gunpowder and cannon-balls than I do. There are much more efficient elements in war."

"Indeed, your Eminence!" exclaimed Edward: "may I ask what?"

[340] "The impudent young cur," said one of the old officers near, to another, in a low voice, "talks to the cardinal as if he were his bottle-companion."

Richelieu answered calmly, but with emphasis, "A pickaxe and a shovel, followed up by the movements of those two great officers, Pestilence and Famine. When you announced in Rochelle, Master Langdale, the coming of Lord Denbigh's fleet, and those wise men of the East refused to receive it in their port, they little thought, I ween, that those two mighty commanders would be so soon amongst them. But how was it," he continued, changing his tone and speaking rapidly, "that they dared, in such perilous circumstances, to send away King Charles's ships upon the pretext that they had not been warned, when you yourself had warned them?"

"Your Eminence's pardon," answered Edward; "but Master Jargeau, who of course told you all this, should also have said that I had not been an hour in Rochelle before I had my head broken, and lay for nearly a week incapable of delivering any of my letters. It was a pretext, as your Eminence calls it; but the Rochellois had really not been warned when Lord Denbigh's fleet arrived."

"You are mistaken, young man," said Richelieu, with a slight curl of the lip: "you jump at your conclusions too rapidly. There have been more Jargeaus than one in Rochelle; and this one, though a very serviceable fellow, I am told, never saw me in his life. Ay, it is a pity that he would not keep his neck out of the noose; but he forced us to hang him,—which was a severe loss to the king's service. He was in the case of those men who, as the Scriptures say, are exceedingly fond of serving both God and mammon. God abandoned him, and mammon could not save him; for though he offered Bassompierre the whole value of a cargo of fish he had contrived to get into Rochelle,—and every fish was worth an ounce of gold, be it remarked,—Bassompierre, whose intelligence is very good, seized the gold where he had hidden it, and hanged him according to proclamation."

[341] All this was said with much coolness and deliberation; and from time to time the great minister raised his glass to his eye and gazed at the battery, which had not yet ceased firing. He waited about ten minutes more, and then beckoned up some of the superior officers round him, asking if they thought his messenger had not had time to reach the lines. They all agreed that there had been plenty of time; but one of them added, in a careless tone, "It is possible, your Eminence, that he may not have carried either his head or his message with him. There has been a puff or two of smoke from the walls, and nobody can tell where the shot may have gone. A man may have a tierce major in his favor and yet lose the game after all."

"Possibly," replied Richelieu, and then resumed his watch. During some five minutes after, the line of the battery showed no more smoke or fire; the wreaths of sulphurous vapor curled away; the town also ceased firing, the whole scene lay quiet and peaceful beneath their eyes, and nothing was seen but a few horsemen riding about, with one apart from the rest, galloping quickly up toward the hill on which they were.

The cardinal waited his arrival and put some questions, which Edward Langdale, who had fallen a little back, did not hear.

"In five days, your Eminence," replied the officer, aloud. "He says that at present no boat bigger than a cockle-shell can get in or out, and, unless there be a very high tide or a gale of wind, the place will be sealed up as tight as a bottle of old Burgundy."

"Well," said Richelieu; "it is well. Have they made no attempt to interrupt the works?"

"None whatever, your Eminence," replied the other: "they are trusting to God's good providence and a high tide,—doubtless praying in all their temples for storm and tempest with profound devotion; but the devil and the wind do not seem inclined to help them, and the poor creatures whom they drove out have been received into the town again to eat them up, so that they cannot hold out many weeks longer."

The cardinal smiled, and, turning his horse, rode slowly back toward the Chateau of Mauzé, without saying a word to any one, and seemingly buried in profound thought.

[342] Edward Langdale followed, not knowing well what to do; and not one word did Richelieu speak to him or any one till they reached the gates leading into the court-yard. The cardinal dismounted and entered the building, followed by some of his immediate attendants. The military men scattered in different directions, each to his own quarters, without taking any notice whatever of the young stranger; and Edward remained upon his horse in the court-yard, while a curious smile upon the lip and a raising of the eyebrow of Jacques Beaupré read an unpleasant commentary upon his disappointed expectations.

"You must seek lodgings in the little town, Pierrot," said Lord Montagu's page. "Get the best you can,—though bad, I fancy, will be the best,—and make some arrangement for obtaining food. We must have something to eat,—though the poor folks in Rochelle are worse off than we, it would seem."

"It is a small place, Mauzé, sir, and quite full of soldiery," said Pierrot. "But I will do my best, and get something at all events; for I know some of the people here, who, I think, would kill a hog for me, if we can do no better. But I am afraid quarters will be worse to find than rations."

"We must seek for both," answered Edward, "and something for the horses too."

He was turning toward the gates again, to ride down the slope into the little town, or rather village,—for it was no better then,—when a man dressed in a dark suit and bearing somewhat the appearance of a servant came down the steps and approached the young gentleman's horse. "His Eminence the Cardinal de Richelieu," he said, in a low, sweet voice, "has commanded me to tell Monsieur de Langdale that he will see him as soon as the business of the day is over,—about nine o'clock to-night. In the mean time, I will show Monsieur de Langdale a chamber,—somewhat high up, it is true; but the castle is very full. Monsieur de Langdale will take his meals with the officers of the cardinal's guard. His servants must provide for themselves in the village, as we have no room. The cardinal allows them a crown a day as livery."

[343] Edward dismounted and followed him to a chamber convenient enough, though very near the top of the main tower; and, knowing the policy of saying as little as possible in such places, he only asked if at nine o'clock he should present himself before the cardinal, or if his Eminence would summon him.

"He did not say," replied the man. "But monsieur had better go to the ante-chamber at that hour and speak with the almoner, whom he will find there." Thus saying, he left him, seemingly as much indisposed to say a word more than was necessary as Edward could be himself.

The reader may probably have no great opinion, from the facts already related in this true history, of Edward Langdale's prudence; but, as I have shown, he had been undergoing for the last nine months a course of discipline under which he had greatly improved. Much was at stake at that moment, and he resolved to act as cautiously as possible; and during the whole morning he never quitted the chamber which had been assigned to him,—passing the time partly in sleep, partly in deep meditation over the character of the great minister, which had now appeared to him in a new point of view. The coldness, the somewhat sarcastic indifference with which Richelieu had spoken of the hanging of the unfortunate Jargeau and of the miseries of the people of Rochelle, would have given the impression that he was merely a hard, selfish politician, had it not been for the deep emotions which had stirred him in the case of Chalais and the lighter and more graceful feelings which Edward had seen him display in their first interview.

It was matter of study for the young man; but, as he thought over his own conduct, he determined to make no change. He had hitherto followed the promptings of the moment; and he had acquired a conviction that with the cardinal unpremeditated frankness was the best policy.

He was still indulging in this strain of thought, when a servant came to inform him that the officers of the cardinal's guard were at dinner, and led him to the great hall, where he found a seat reserved for him at the table. There was no sympathy, however, between him and those with whom he had to associate for a few minutes: they were civil,—which was all he could expect; and hardly ten words passed his lips before he retired once more to his chamber.

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CHAPTER XL.

It was night, and the scene was a somewhat curious one. A large chamber, with a vaulted roof, long square windows, and decorations neither new nor in a modern taste, a tall four-post bedstead with green velvet hangings a good deal tarnished, a brick floor well waxed and polished, an immense armory or wardrobe quaintly carved, three or four tall straight-backed chairs, and one large arm-chair well stuffed, together with a table of black oak, the legs of which were cut into the forms of some nondescript species of devil,—not the conventional gentleman with hoofs and tail and pitchfork, but somebody not a whit less hideous,—presented the aspect of a chamber quite of the olden time, it might be of the reign of Francis I. or Louis XII.

All days have their olden times; and I believe the olden times have always been praised,—such is the tendency of the human mind to regret.

When we are school-boys we wish we were children again, and think of the caresses

without the pangs and inconveniences of infancy; when we are men we wish we were school-boys again, and forget the heavy task, the ferule, and the rod; old age looks back to youth and sorrows over its lost powers; and only one man I know of has written in praise of life's declining stage. But even Cicero upon such a theme could only indite an eloquent lie.

Possession is always paid for by regret; and we take out the small change in hope.

[345] Nevertheless, it would appear, notwithstanding the excellencies of those old times, that some improvements have been made in the march of society,—at least, in the manufacture of chairs. Although they were not famous for that fabric in Louis the Thirteenth's time, Edward Langdale felt that seats were certainly much more inconvenient at a former period. "Men must once have had back-bones of quite a different construction," he thought. "They must have either been so supple as to bend into all kinds of corners, or so hard as not to care for any corners at all."

Such thoughts passed through his mind as he sat in a straight-backed sort of rack in the Castle of Mauzé, just opposite to the Cardinal de Richelieu, who, having cast off cuirass and scarlet robe, was seated, in an easy gown of deep purple, in that comfortable arm-chair. The light fell upon his magnificent head and easy graceful figure from a sconce upon the wall; and the fine flowing lines of the drapery and half-concealed limbs, with the broad high forehead and slightly gray hair, gave him the look of some antique picture, and made the whole person harmonize well with the room in which he sat.

The figure of Edward Langdale would have spoiled all, for it was full of youth,—I might almost call it youngness; but, as I have said before, his garments, though cut in what was then the modern fashion, were all of a sober color; and about the square brow, the delicately-chiselled nose, and the firm, determined mouth, there was an antique, if not a classical, character.

With the cuirass and the scarlet robe Richelieu seemed to have cast off the heavy cares and hard sternness of the day, and with the satin pantoufles to have put on the ease and relaxation of spirit which no man enjoyed more intensely than himself, if we may believe the stray admissions even of his enemies and calumniators. It is greatly to be regretted that Bois Robert did not write his history; for, although we might not have had a true picture of his many-sided character, we should have had another,—a more amiable and perhaps even a grander view of the man than any historian has given us, except by accident.

[346] He had sent for Edward Langdale about half an hour before the time he had appointed. His orders for the night and the following morning had been given; his letters and despatches had been written or dictated; audiences had been afforded to several gentlemen on business; even the minute details of his household had been attended to; and he had sat down for that repose of the mind which can only be obtained by complete change of subject. The young Englishman had pleased him from the first, and, without knowing it, had flattered his vanity on its most sensitive point,—for Richelieu had his weaknesses as well as other men. Where, indeed, is there any one who can boast that he is without either the hair of the Hebrew giant or the heel of the Greek demigod? The cardinal knew, too,—had, indeed, very soon perceived,—that Edward's mind had been early imbued, in an irregular manner, perhaps, but to a deep degree, with that sort of graceful literature of which he was himself most fond, and that he was full of that refined and delicate taste on which he prided himself. He was the very person Richelieu sought for the social converse of hours which were unfilled by any weighty employment,—hours which he would not give to his military officers, because his plans were all formed, his resolutions were all taken, and he neither sought advice nor remonstrance; hours which he would not bestow upon his almoner nor upon his chaplain, for he did not wish to sleep just then; hours that he wished to pass very lightly indeed, as a wise man takes nothing very heavy for his supper before he goes to bed.

"Welcome, Monsieur Langdale," said the great minister, as Edward followed a servant into the room. "I have not had time to welcome you yet; for, in the first place, I did not recognise you, your beard having grown into somewhat leonine proportions. Since then I have not had time; for I have been engaged with what the people of this world call weighty business,—weighty enough, God wot, for those who have to handle it, and which somewhat tries the arm that has to wield it. But let us leave that and talk of other things. How have you fared? Poor Lord Montagu, your friend, could not keep his nose out of a rat-trap; and yet it was badly baited."

"He would not have gone near the wires if he had taken my advice," said Edward. "I ventured to guess, not at the designs of your Eminence, but at your probable conduct; and I warned Lord Montagu not to come too close to you."

[347] "Perhaps I have let you see me too close, young gentleman," said Richelieu, with a good-humored smile. "And yet it is probable bable you served me when you did not intend it. There be some men, my young friend, and they very sensible men too, who will take no advice which comes from younger and less experienced persons; but yet things, as the Scripture says,—I speak with all reverence,—are often revealed to the poor and simple and are hidden from the wise and great. Now, I have a strong idea that you know more of Cardinal Richelieu, poor Bishop of Luçon, than that great diplomatist, Lord Montagu."

Edward shook his head. "I cannot pretend to do that," he said; "but my lord thought he might venture to pass over a quarter of a league of French territory, when some time before you had suffered him to roam for weeks over the whole of France."

"He had not got the papers then," said Richelieu, with a short laugh. "I did not want Montagu's skin: it was his letters and his papers that I arrested; and for that matter one quarter of a league is as good as a thousand miles. As for yourself, you have told me something new to-day. I heard of you at Aix, where your hot spirit had brought some damage on your skin. You had been wounded, I mean to say,—by your own brother I believe they told me. Very foolish, Master Edward Langdale, to fight with one's own brother!"

"I did not fight with him, may it please your Eminence. My sword was never drawn."

"Ha!" said the cardinal. "That is well. But then I heard of your making a hole in another man's skin. How was that?"

"Why, I told the two men you sent after me, sir," replied Edward, frankly, "that I would shoot them if they kept dogging me; and I always hold to my word. They not only kept dogging me, but betrayed my lord into the hands of Monsieur de Bourbonne; and so I shot one of them. I am sorry to say I had not time to shoot the other, or probably your Eminence would not have heard so much of me as you have done."

[348] "Oh, yes," replied Richelieu, calmly: "the man got well, and was here some two months ago. Besides, I never depend upon one informant. But every one may be deceived; and no one told me that the good count had got you in limbo all this time. You say he denied you the means of communicating with me. Did you show him your safe-conduct?"

"I did, sir," answered Edward; "and it had a very good effect, for it made him give me beef and wine instead of bread and water, with which he began my diet. I demanded also to be sent to your Eminence; but Monsieur de Bourbonne did not see fit to do so."

"Enough," said Richelieu; "enough." And, taking a scrap of paper from the table, he wrote a few words thereon and laid it down again. "And now tell me all about your escape," he continued. "How did you get away from this giant of the castle?"

Edward narrated, with perfect gravity of manner, but with some quiet pleasantry of language, every particular of his escape from Coiffy; and Richelieu listened, evidently amused, but without any comment.

"Then you did not pass through Paris?" said the cardinal. "That is a pity: you would have seen some interesting things there. We are improving the drama greatly; and the Marais has a good troupe, they tell me. I am building a house, too, there, and I should like to have your opinion of it."

Edward smiled. "My opinion would be little worth," he answered. "I have but little experience in those things of which your Eminence has a thorough knowledge."

"And yet," said Richelieu, "I am told that you have great taste and skill in arts which reached their height not long ago, but which we have nearly lost in these days: I mean the designing in precious metals. A very extraordinary man told me you were a thorough connoisseur."

"The little knowledge I possess," answered Edward, "is derived from seeing every day in my early youth some very precious specimens which my father brought over from Italy. They are all gone, alas! but one; and that, I am afraid, will soon be lost also."

"Nay," said Richelieu, rather eagerly; "if you want to part with it I will buy it. I am making a collection of the works of Cellini and the men of his time."

[349] "Could I obtain it," answered Edward, "I would humbly offer it to your Eminence without price, as a token of my gratitude. And, indeed, it is beyond price. But some day soon I fear it will be in less worthy hands, or melted down into gold crowns and the jewels picked out to adorn the brown neck of some Parisian seamstress. It is within the walls of yon devoted town, my lord. I was foolish not to bring it away with me."

Richelieu paused, and did not speak for a moment or two; but then he asked, "What sort of object is it?"

"It is a golden cup, or what we in England call a hanap," answered Edward, "with figures exquisitely sculptured, and the rim surrounded by a garland of jewels in the form of flowers. The figures are in high relief, and with their hands seem to support the garland."

"It must be beautiful indeed!" said Richelieu.

"The only defect," continued Edward, "is that my name is engraved upon the stem."

"What may be its value?" asked the cardinal: "it is a pity indeed so rare an object should be lost."

"I never heard it valued," replied the young man; "and I will sell it to no one on this earth,—though I should have pride to see it in the hands of a benefactor."

"Well, it is a pity," said the cardinal. "But, as there is no help, let us change the theme. Have you seen or heard from Mademoiselle de Mirepoix—I should say Madame de Langdale—lately?" He spoke with a smile. But Edward had learned that Richelieu's questions, even in his lightest moments, always meant something, and he replied, at once, "Not very lately, my lord. I have seen her once since we parted in Aunis, as she was passing through Aix on her way to Venice; and she has written to me once since her arrival, by the hands of a gentleman whom you know,—Signor Morini."

"He is a very singular man," said Richelieu, in a meditative tone. "Do you know, young gentleman, he says that your fate and mine are connected by an inseparable link?—that we were born under the same aspect?"

[350] "Your star must have been in the ascendant, sir," said Edward, with a smile. "Yet there must be some truth in it; for who could have thought a year ago that I should be sitting here, conversing with your Eminence as calmly as if you were some ordinary literary man? who could have thought that I should be indebted to you for more than life?"

"Act honestly and truly by me, young gentleman, and my friendship shall go further still," replied Richelieu. "As to these visions of astrologers," he continued, "they are only to be regarded as curious speculations. The star of a man's destiny is in his heart or in his brain. It is that star raises to power, shields against danger, guides amidst intrigue. God's will is above all; but he it is who gives the clear mind and the strong will, the wisdom and the courage; he renders them successful as far as their success is necessary to his own wise purposes, and then throws a bean-stalk in their way, and they stumble and fall. We have naught to do but to bow the head and say, Thy will be done!"

He ceased, and fell into a fit of thought, and Edward rose and took up his hat as if about to retire; but Richelieu motioned him to his chair again, saying, "Sit, sit! I have yet an hour. Have you read any of this man Corneille's verses?"

Edward, luckily, could say he had not, for Richelieu's dislike for Corneille was already strong, and, taking up a book from the table, he read some lines, commenting severely upon what he called their rudeness. He went on with his criticisms for some ten minutes, to an attentive ear; but Edward fancied he perceived an under-current of thought running through his literary disquisition.

"Perhaps I may be wrong," said Richelieu; "but in all matters of taste I like the graceful and the polished better than the strong and rude. This cup which you were speaking of must be a beautiful specimen of art. The design as you have described it shows the conception of a great genius. Is it known who was the artist?"

"I cannot assure your Eminence with certainty," replied Edward; "but he was always said to be a countryman and rival of Benvenuto Cellini. I forget the name; but it is engraved on the inside of the foot."

"John of Bologna," said the cardinal,— "probably John of Bologna."

[351] "The same, the same," said the young Englishman. "I now remember that is the name."

"It is invaluable!" exclaimed Richelieu, warmly. "His works are much more rare than those of Cellini, and some are amongst the most triumphant efforts of genius. There is a Mercury, for instance: the heavy bronze seems instinct with godlike life,—actually springing from the ground. What a pity that a work of his should be lost! Is there no way of getting it out of Rochelle, think you?"

"But one," answered Edward, gravely; "and that I do not suppose either your Eminence or the people of Rochelle would permit."

"What is it?" demanded Richelieu, abruptly.

Edward's heart beat high, for he had brought him to the very point he desired; but yet a single misplaced word might spoil all, and he struggled against his eagerness with sufficient success to answer with seeming indifference. "I left the cup," he said, "in the hands of the syndic of the goldsmiths, one Clement Tournon, who had taken me to his house and nursed me most kindly—"

"He is a pestilent heretic," said the cardinal, sharply.

"And so am I, my lord," answered Edward; "but he is an honest and a good man. I am willing, if your Eminence desires it, to try and get back into La Rochelle and bring you the cup; but I could only do so on being permitted to offer poor old Monsieur Tournon a pass to quit the city and escape the famine which they say is raging there."

Richelieu sat silent for a minute or two, and Edward then added, "I am not sure I shall be able to accomplish what I desire; but I will do my best, and shall be well pleased to see such a treasure of art in the hands of one who can appreciate it as your Eminence can."

"I could not accept it," said Richelieu, "except on making compensation."

"Nothing like sale, my lord," replied Edward: "the price has been paid beforehand, and it must be an offering of gratitude, or not at all. But I much fear that the Rochellois will not

[352] admit me within their walls. I can but make the attempt, however."

"But this Clement Tournon," said Richelieu, thoughtfully. "You know not what you ask, young man. Every mouth within that city hastens its fall; and I have been obliged already to show myself obdurate to all entreaties,—to see women and children and old men driven back into their rebellious nest. They say, too, your great Duke of Buckingham is preparing another fleet for their relief. He will find himself mistaken; but still we must waste no time."

"Old Clement Tournon is no great eater," said Edward, bluntly. "His feeble jaws will not hasten the fall of the city five minutes; and it is possible that, if admitted to your Eminence's presence, he might be the means of persuading his fellow-citizens to submission, if he sees that defence is hopeless and that favorable terms may be obtained."

"Ha! say you so?" exclaimed Richelieu; and, leaning his head upon his hand, he fell into profound thought. Edward would not say a word more, and after some five or ten minutes the cardinal looked up and shook his head. "They will receive no messengers, reject all offers: even the king's proclamation sent by a herald they would not admit within the walls, and Montjoie had to leave it before the gates."

"Perhaps they have learned better by this time," said Edward; "and, if not, they can but drive me back with bullets and cannon-balls."

"Well," said Richelieu, with a clearer brow, "you give me a better reason now for suffering you to go. So help me Heaven as I would spare this poor infatuated people the horrors they now suffer, if they would let me! But rebellion must not exist in this land, and shall not while I live. They must submit; but they shall have terms that even you will call fair. So you may tell them if you can but find your way in."

[353] Edward saw that the message was vague and not at all likely to have any effect upon the people of Rochelle; but he did not try to bring the cardinal to any thing more definite, for he had no inclination to take part in a negotiation for the surrender of Rochelle, remembering that all the plans of his own Government might be frustrated by such a result.

He and the cardinal both kept silent for several minutes, Richelieu's eyes remaining fixed upon the table, and his face continuing perfectly motionless, though he was evidently deep in thought. At length he said, abruptly, "You will come back yourself?"

"Upon my honor, sir," replied Edward, "if I live and they will let me. They shall either keep me as a prisoner, or I will be here in four-and-twenty hours."

"So be it, then," said the cardinal. "You shall not only have a pass, but some one shall be sent with you to the very outmost post; for there is something uncommonly suspicious in your appearance. Twice in your case already men have set at naught my hand and seal. The second case shall be punished: the third, for your sake and my own, must be guarded against. As to your entrance into Rochelle, there may be—probably will be—some difficulty; but if you are skilful—and I think you are—you may succeed. I need not recommend to you caution in what you say and do. We have some disease in the camp, it is true; but they have pestilence in the city. Our supplies are not over-abundant; but they are suffering from the direst famine. Every day increases our supplies and diminishes theirs."

"I shall say as little as possible, your Eminence," answered Edward. "First, because I cannot, knowing what I know, advise them to hold out; secondly, because if I advise them to surrender I might be wrong. Clement Tournon, when he has seen your Eminence, after having witnessed what is passing in the city, can advise better, and will be more readily believed. It is well you should have some means of communication with the Rochellois. I know none of their chief men, even by name; and they would put no faith in me."

[354] "In a week from this time," said Richelieu, "they must surrender. The dyke will be finished which shuts them out from all the world. Vain will be English fleets, vain all their imaginary armies. The gaunt spectre which already strides through their streets will have knocked at every door. Where will be the hand to fire the cannon? where the arm to defend the gate? The dead and the dying will be the garrison; and the soldiers of the king will rush in to wrest the undefended plunder from a host of skeletons. I would fain avoid such a result, young man," he added, with a shudder. "I delight not in misery and suffering; I have no pleasure in tears and woe. But France must have peace, the king must have loyal subjects; and, were my brother amongst those rebels, they should be forced to obey. You are frank, and I believe you honest. I therefore expect that you bear them no message from the enemies of France, that you delude them with no vain hopes, that you return yourself as speedily as possible, and that you bring this old man with you if he will come. Remember that I am not to be trifled with, and that I bear open enmity more patiently than deceit."

"I have no fear, sir," answered Edward. "I have come back and placed myself in your power without the least hesitation, and I will do so again; but then I will beseech your Eminence to let me pass over into England. I am nearly without money; and, although I have sufficient on the other side of the Channel, I cannot get it without going for it."

"We will talk of that hereafter," answered Richelieu. "I think I will let you go; but, at all

events, you shall not want for money. What is money, Monsieur Langdale? It is but dross,—at least, so the poets tell us; and yet I have found few men who like it better than the poets."

"Without it men cannot travel," replied Edward,— "cannot eat or drink or even sleep; and it would be hard for want of money to want meat and drink and sleep when I have plenty for all my wants on the other side of that arm of the sea; but harder still, my lord cardinal, to take from any man money that does not belong to me."

"How proud these islanders are!" said Richelieu, with a smile. "Why, there is hardly a Frenchman in the land who would not thank me for a crown."

"If I had worked for it," answered Edward, "I might thank you too; but till there be peace between France and England I can do your Eminence no service."

[355] "Now, let any one say," exclaimed the cardinal, with a laugh, "that I am not the sweetest-tempered man in all this realm of France,—ay, as sweet and gentle as Signor Mazarin himself. Why, no man will believe that you say to me such things and I do not send you to the Bastille at once. Oh, tell it not in the camp, or you will lose credit forever."

"I do not intend to tell it anywhere, my lord," replied Edward. "I know it would be foolish, and perhaps it might be dangerous. I am not ungrateful for your condescension to me; but it is a sort of thing I should not like to sport with."

"Right," said Richelieu: "you are right. You know the fact in natural history that tigers may be tamed; but if any one suffers them, in playing with them, to draw blood, he seldom goes away as full of life as he came. I see you understand me. Now go away and sleep. Be here by daybreak to-morrow, and you shall find the passes ready and somebody prepared to ride with you to the outposts. He will wait there four-and-twenty hours for your return. But if I should find you in Rochelle when it is taken, except in a dungeon, beware of the tiger."

Edward bowed and withdrew; but he retired not to rest. His first object was to inquire for Beaupré and Pierrot. They were not in the castle, and he had to seek them in the village below, where, after passing through many of the wild scenes of camp-life, he found them at length in a small wooden shed, where some sort of food, such as it was, could be procured by those who had money to pay for it. Much to the surprise of good Pierrot la Grange, the young gentleman's first order, after directing his horse to be prepared half an hour before daylight, was to have his flask filled with the best brandy he could procure and brought up to his room that night.

"Has the cardinal given you leave to go into the city?" asked Jacques Beaupré, in astonishment.

"He has given me leave to try," replied Edward.

"Pray, then, let me go with you," said the good man.

[356] "Impossible!" was the answer. "I must go alone, and take my fate alone, whatever it may be. See that the brandy be good, Pierrot, if you can find it. But be quick, for I would fain sleep before I go." And, retiring to his room in the castle, he waited till the man brought a small flat bottle well filled, and then, casting himself down upon the bed, fell sound asleep, exhausted less by fatigue than by emotions which he had felt deeply, though he had concealed them well.

CHAPTER XLI.

Two hours had not passed after the sun's rising above the horizon when Edward Langdale stood with a small group of officers at the extreme outpost of the royal army, before what was called the Niort gate of the city of Rochelle. There was still a space of about five hundred yards between him and the walls; and before him rose all those towers and pinnacles, many of which have since been destroyed, but which rendered then and still render Rochelle one of the most picturesque cities of France when seen from a distance. During the whole siege the operations, though sure and terrible, had been slow and apparently tardy. The Rochellois had been glad to husband their powder; and it was no part of Richelieu's plan to breach the walls or to do more than harass the citizens by an occasional attack. On this morning there had been no firing on either side, and the town looked as quiet and peaceable as if there were no hostile force before it. But, as Edward Langdale and his companion, a young officer of the cardinal's guard, had ridden down from Mauzé, the latter had pointed out to the young Englishman that famous dyke which, stretching across the mouth of the port, had gradually cut off the city from all communication with friends at home or allies abroad. He had, in a jesting way, too, put some questions to Edward in regard to the objects of his journey; but he obtained no information, and did not dare to press them closely.

"You had better take some more breakfast, sir," said an old officer commanding at the

[357] advance-posts. "You will get none in there; and, though we are forbidden to suffer the slightest morsel to go in, I presume that does not apply to what a man can carry in his stomach."

"I shall soon be back again if they let me in at all," answered Edward. "Can any one give me a white flag? for I may as well not draw the fire. That is a sort of breakfast I have no inclination for."

A small white flag was soon procured, and, leaving his horse with Pierrot and Beaupré, who had followed him down the hill, Edward set out on foot. He carried the white flag in his hand and approached the gate with a calm, steady pace. He saw some men walk quickly along the wall toward the same point to which his own course was directed; but the flag of truce was respected, and he was permitted to come within five or six yards of the heavy gate. Then, however, a voice shouted from behind a small grated wicket, "Stand back! What seek you here?"

"I seek to speak with the syndic Clement Tournon," said Edward; "and, if not with him, with Monsieur Guiton, mayor of the city."

"Stand back! You cannot enter here," said the man on the other side.

"Will you cause the mayor to be informed," said Edward, "that Master Edward Langdale, an English gentleman well known in Rochelle, stands without and desires admittance, if it be but for an hour?"

[358] The man grumbled something which Edward did not hear, and there seemed to be a consultation held within, at the end of which the same voice told him to keep on the other side of the drawbridge while they informed the mayor. The young gentleman accordingly retired, and seated himself on a large stone at the end of the bridge, where for nearly an hour he had nothing to occupy him but his own thoughts, with every now and then a puff of smoke from one of the royalist batteries, which had lately begun firing, and one gun replying from the walls. It seemed all child's play, however; and he soon ceased to think of the matter at all. His mind then turned to his own position and the curious fact of Richelieu having suffered him to visit Rochelle with so very little opposition. He could not but ask himself how much the gold cup had to do with the minister's acquiescence; but, as he reflected more deeply upon the cardinal's character and upon various incidents which had come to his knowledge, he concluded in his own mind that Richelieu might be well pleased to make another effort to open a communication with the citizens without compromising his own dignity. The position of the besieging force, he thought, might not be so good as it appeared. The dyke, on which so much depended, and which he had had no means of examining closely, might not be sufficiently solid to resist the action of the sea and winds. The English armament might be, to Richelieu's knowledge, of a more formidable character and more advanced state of preparation than was admitted; and all these circumstances might render the speedy capture of Rochelle upon any terms absolutely necessary.

In little more than an hour, the same voice he had heard before called him up to the gate, and the wicket was partly opened to give him admittance under the archway, where he found five or six men with halberds on their shoulders and otherwise well armed, while a young man bearing the appearance of an officer advanced to meet him. The steel caps of the soldiers in some degree concealed their faces; but the broad-brimmed, plumed hat of the young officer served in no degree to hide the gaunt, pallid features, the high cheek-bones, the fallen-in cheeks, the hollow eyes, and the strong marking of the temples, which told a sad tale of the ravages of famine, even amongst the higher and more wealthy classes of the town. A feeling of delicacy made Edward withdraw his eyes after one hasty glance at the young gentleman's countenance; and, as the other paused without speaking for a moment, he said, "May I ask, sir, if any one has conveyed my message to the syndic Clement Tournon or to the mayor?"

[359] "Monsieur Tournon is ill in his own house," replied the young officer: "but Monsieur Guiton, the mayor, has come down to a house near this gate, and will receive you there, as it might be inconvenient to invite you to the town-house, for fear of any disturbance."

"I am ready to wait upon him," replied Edward, "wherever he pleases."

"I am sorry to say," replied the young officer, "that even for so short a distance you must give up your arms and suffer your eyes to be bandaged."

"I have no arms," replied Edward, "as you may see. I purposely came without. As to bandaging my eyes, do as you please. I am no spy nor agent of the French Government." He pulled off his hat as he spoke, bending down his head for the handkerchief to be tied over his eyes; and, as soon as that somewhat disagreeable operation was performed, the young officer took him by the hand, and, with one of the soldiers following, led him into Rochelle. When they had passed on perhaps a hundred yards, Edward received a painful intimation of the state of the city. As they seemed to turn into another street, the young officer caught him by the arm and pulled him sharply aside, saying to the soldier, "Have that body removed. These sights serve to scare the people and make them clamorous."

"I don't think she is dead yet," said the soldier.

"Then have her carried to the hospital as quickly as possible. Don't let her lie there and die."

He then led Edward on, and in two or three minutes more stopped at the door of a house and entered what seemed a small passage, where he removed the handkerchief from Edward's eyes. "Monsieur Guiton is here," he said, opening a door where, in a little room and at a small table, was seated a man of middle age with a dagger by his side and a sword lying on the table. His form seemed once to have been exceedingly powerful and his face firm and resolute; but there was that gaunt and worn expression in every line which Edward had seen in the countenance of his guide.

"Who are you, sir?" said the mayor; "and what is the motive of so rare a thing as the visit of a stranger to the town of Rochelle?"

[360] "My name is Edward Langdale," replied the young Englishman,— "a poor follower of my Lord Montagu, who once bore letters from his Grace of Buckingham to the city of Rochelle."

"Ay, I remember," said the mayor, thoughtfully: "you were roughly used, if I remember right. But now, sir, to your business."

"It is in a great degree personal," replied Edward; "but, as it is private, I would rather speak to you alone."

"Leave us," said the mayor, addressing the young officer, who at once quitted the room and closed the door. "Now, sir," continued Guiton, "I am ready to hear. But be brief, I pray you. Occupation here is more plenty than time, and time more plenty than provisions. Therefore I cannot offer you refreshment nor show you much courtesy."

"I require neither, sir," answered Edward. "My business refers to Monsieur Clement Tournon. He is aged,—infirm; and I have with some difficulty obtained from the Cardinal de Richelieu permission and a pass for him to quit Rochelle."

"Ha!" said the mayor. "Ha! This is strange, young gentleman! You must be in mighty favor! Why, sir, he has driven back women and children and old men—all starving—from the French lines into this city of famine! You, an Englishman, an enemy,—he show such favor to you! Pah! There must be something under this. Have you no message for me?"

"No distinct message, sir," replied Edward: "the cardinal indeed said, in terms so vague that I cannot and will not counsel any reliance upon them, that if Rochelle would submit she should have favorable terms,—as favorable as even I could expect. But I am not his messenger, sir. Neither is there any thing that I know under the plain fact which I have stated."

"Let me see your pass," said Guiton, abruptly. Edward handed it to him, and he examined it minutely. "'Edward Langdale and one companion,—to wit, the syndic Clement Tournon!'" he said. "Well, this is marvellous strange! I cannot let this pass without some further knowledge of so unaccountable a matter."

[361] "Well, Monsieur Guiton," answered Edward, firmly, "pray remember that I, comparatively, a stranger to him, have perilled much to aid and rescue a man who once showed me kindness, nursed me like a father when I was sick, and trusted me as he would his son when I had recovered; and that it is you—his ancient friend, as I am told—who keep him here to die of famine or of sickness when he can be of no further service either with hand or head. I have done my duty. Probably you think you are doing yours."

The mayor waved his hand. "Not so many words," he said. "Can you give me any explanation of this strange matter?"

"None," replied Edward, boldly.

"Does Clement Tournon wish to leave the city?" demanded the mayor again.

"I do not know," replied the young Englishman. "He is old, infirm, and, I am told, sick. I have had no communication with him. But he knows that he can be of no further service in Rochelle, or I believe he would remain in it till the last man died and the last tower fell."

"He is sick," said the mayor, "of a very common disease here. But yet we are not so badly off that we cannot maintain the city till the English fleet arrives."

"The dyke!" said Edward, emphatically.

"Oh," replied Guiton, with a scoffing and unnatural-sounding laugh, "the first storm, such as I have seen many, will sweep that dyke away."

"But, if it stands fourteen days," said Edward, "will you not have a storm within these walls which will sweep away the people of Rochelle?"

Guiton covered his eyes with his hands and remained silent.

"But I have nothing to do with these things, sir," said Edward. "It was only to give aid, to give safety, to a friend, an old noble-minded man who befriended me when I had need of

friendship, that I came into Rochelle at all. May I ask what is this sickness that you speak of so lightly?"

[362] "Famine, sir! famine!" said Guiton, sharply. "An ounce of meat,—God knows of what kind,—two ounces of dried peas, and a draught of cold water, is but a meagre diet for old men and babes. We strong men can bear it; but there be some who are foolish enough to die rather than endure it a little longer."

"And have you the heart, sir," asked Edward, with some indignation in his tone, "to refuse the means of escape offered to an old man, and that man Clement Tournon, and to speak lightly of his sufferings,—his martyrdom, I might say?"

"No! no! no!" cried the mayor, vehemently, stretching forth his hands. "Young man, you mistake me! Could my blood nourish him, he should have the last drop. What! old Clement Tournon, my dear, dear friend,—would I deprive him of one hour's life? But it is that I cannot comprehend how you are here,—why you are here. This story that you tell is mere nonsense."

"It is true, nevertheless," said Edward. "But if my word will not satisfy you,—as, indeed, I see no reason why it should,—come with me to Clement Tournon, and he perhaps can tell you how much I can dare to serve a friend."

"I will!" cried Guiton, starting up; but then he sat down again immediately, saying, "No, no! I cannot bear those faces in the streets. Can you find your way yourself?—for I can spare no men."

"Not if I am to be blindfolded," said Edward: "otherwise I could find it, I am sure."

"Pshaw!" said the mayor, "what use of blindfolding you? You will see dying and dead, plague-eaten, famine-stricken. But you can go and tell the Cardinal de Richelieu how the citizens of Rochelle can die rather than see their privileges torn from them, their religion trodden under foot. You can tell him, too, that I will defend those walls as long as there is one soldier left to man them and one hand capable of firing a gun, unless we have security for our faith. You are sure he said nothing more?"

"No, nothing more," answered Edward: "merely that he would give you the most favorable terms, but that he would not have rebellion in the land."

[363] "Rebellion!" muttered Guiton, scornfully. "Who first drew the sword? But let us think of Clement Tournon. I am willing to believe you, young gentleman. If I remember rightly, I have heard the old man speak well of you. And, after all, what harm can you do? You can but repeat a story of our sufferings which I am aware they already know too well in yonder camp. What they do not know is the courage with which we can bear them. Go to the syndic. He has not come forth for several days. Go to him, and see if the prospect of relief can give fresh strength to those enfeebled limbs, fresh energy to that crushed and scarcely-beating heart. Tell him that I not only permit but beseech him to go with you,—that even one mouth less in Rochelle is a relief. He has done his duty manfully to the last. He can do it no longer. Beseech him to go. And yet," he continued, in a sad tone, "I much doubt his strength. Could he have crawled even to the council-chamber, we should have seen his face. Could he have lifted his voice, we should have heard his inspiring words. He was alive last night, I know. But to-day—Alas, alas, my poor friend!" And some tears ran down the worn cheek of the gallant defender of Rochelle.

"I have some brandy under my coat," whispered Edward. "I brought it on purpose for him. It may give him strength at least to reach the outposts."

Guiton seized his hand and wrung it hard. "Noble young man! well bethought!" he said. "But he must have a little food. Stay; he shall have my dinner. I do not want it. By Heaven! the thought that we have saved old Clement Tournon will be better than the best of meals to me!"

He rose from the table, and, approaching the door, gave some orders to those without, and then returned, saying, "There is still much to be thought of, young gentleman, and we have little time to think. I fear if you go out in the daytime the people will pour forth after you, and all will be driven back by cannon-shots."

"It must now be near one o'clock," said Edward, "and it will probably take some time to restore his strength a little. If you, sir, nobly give him up your own food, it must be administered to him by slow degrees, and—"

[364] "What! an ounce of meat?" said Guiton, with a miserable smile: "my fare is the same as the rest, sir. But I must leave all that to you. His own ration will be served to him in an hour. Mine you shall take and give him as it seems best to you. I will write a pass for you and him, that you may not be stopped at any hour of the night or day; and then I must go back to the town-hall, lest men should wonder at my long absence. My only fear is that the good old man will not take my ration if he knows it comes from me."

"Take a little of these strong waters, sir," said Edward, drawing the flask from beneath his coat. Guiton hesitated, and Edward added, "There is much more than he can or ought to use; and, if I tell him that I brought you some supply, he will take the food you send more

readily."

The mayor took the flask and drank a very little, giving it back again and saying, "Mix it with water ere you give him any. By Heaven, it is like fire! Yet it will keep me up, I do believe. Hark! there are steps. Put it up, quick. They might murder you for it, if any of the common people were to see it."

The steps were those of a soldier bringing the scanty meal, which was all the mayor allowed himself. A pen and ink and a scrap of paper were then procured, and the pass for Edward and Clement Tournon was soon written. To make all sure, Guiton called the young officer, in whom he seemed to have much confidence, and asked if he would be on guard at the gates that night. The young man answered in the affirmative; and the mayor gave strict directions that Monsieur Edward Langdale and the syndic Tournon should be passed safely and unmolested on their way toward the royal camp. A smile of hope and pleasure came upon the officer's face, and Guiton added, "Do not deceive yourself, Bernard. This is no treaty for surrender. We must suffer a little longer; and then we shall have relief. Here, go with Monsieur Langdale, first to the gate by which he entered, then to the end of the Rue de l'Horloge. There leave him. Farewell, sir," he continued, turning to Edward, and then adding, in a lower tone, "Mark well the turnings from the gate, and walk somewhat slow and feebly, so as not to draw attention. The people are in an irritable state."

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CHAPTER XLII.

I will not dwell upon the horrors of the streets of Rochelle. They have been described by an able pen: at least, I believe so; for I have not seen the work of Madame de Genlis since my boyhood, and that, dear reader, is a long time ago,—quite long enough to forget more than that.

The part of the town in which stood the house of Clement Tournon seemed quite deserted, and the house itself showed no signs of being inhabited. The windows were all closed; and the little court before the building, which separated it from the general line of the street, and which was once so trimly kept, was now all overgrown with grass. It was knee-high; and even the path of smooth white stones which led to the principal door hardly showed a trace of the unfrequent footfall. With a sinking heart, Edward looked up; but all was still and silent. The door stood open, and he approached and knocked with his knuckles. There was no reply, however: no voices were heard from the once merry kitchen, no sound of hammer or file from the workshop.

Edward Langdale had learned to know the house well, and, entering, he mounted the stairs and entered the room on the right. It was vacant and dark also, for the windows were all closed. He then turned to another; but it was empty likewise. He saw some light, however, stream from the room at the back,—the little room where he had lain in sickness for so many days,—Lucette's room, where he had first seen that dear face. It was a place full of memories for him; and, even if he had not seen that ray of sunshine crossing the top of the stairs, he would have entered. Pushing open the door, which stood a little ajar, he went in; and there was the object of his search straight before him.

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Seated in the great arm-chair in which he himself had sat when first recovering was good old Clement Tournon, the shadow of his former self. The palms of his hands rested on his knees; his head was bent forward on his chest; his eyes were shut, and his lips and cheeks were of a bluish white. Had it not been for a slight rocking motion of his body as he sat, Edward would have thought him dead. Behind his chair, silent and still as a statue, stood the good woman Marton. She, too, was as pale as her helmet-shaped white cap, and the frank, good-humored expression of her countenance was supplanted by a cold, hard, stony look which seemed to say that every energy was dead. That such was not really the case, however, Edward soon saw; for, the moment her eyes lighted on him as he passed the door, the old bright light came into them again, and she walked quietly but hastily across the floor in her little blue socks, holding up her finger as a sign to keep silence.

"He sleeps," she said; "he sleeps. It is wellnigh as good as food for him. But how came you here, Master Ned? What has brought you? Has the English fleet arrived?"

"Alas, no," replied Edward, in the same low tone which she herself had used; "and it could not enter the port if it had. But I come, if possible, to save that good old man. I have a little food here with me. Go get me a cup and some water; for I have a little of that which will be better to him at first even than food."

"God bless you, sir!" said the good woman: "there is not a drop of wine in all the city, and with him the tide of life is nearly gone out. I thought he would have died this morning; but he would rise. You stay with him, and I will be back in a minute. But keep silent and still, for sleep always does him good." So saying, she hurried away and brought a silver cup and some fresh water.

All was silent during her absence: the old man slept on, and Edward Langdale seated

himself near, as quietly as possible. Marton took her place again without a word; and for about three-quarters of an hour the slumber of old Clement Tournon continued unbroken. Then a voice was heard at the foot of the stairs, crying, "Rations!" and Marton hurried down.

[367] Either the voice or the movement in the room disturbed the old man. He moved in his chair, raised his head a little, and Edward, with some of the strong waters well diluted in the cup, approached and put it to his lips.

"What is it?" said Clement Tournon, putting the cup feebly aside with his hand. "I thought it might have pleased God I should die in that sleep."

"Take a little," said Edward, in a low tone: "it will refresh you." And Clement Tournon suffered him to raise the cup again to his lips, aiding with his own feeble hands, and drank a deep draught, as if he were very thirsty. Then, suddenly raising his eyes to Edward's face, he exclaimed, "Good Heavens! who are you? Edward Langdale! Is it all a dream?—a horrible dream?"

"I have come to see you and take you away, Monsieur Tournon," said Edward, as calmly as he could. "Keep yourself quite tranquil, and I will tell you more presently. At present be as silent as I used to be when I was sick and you were well."

The old syndic sat without speaking for a moment or two, and then said, "I know not what you have given me; but it seems to have strengthened and revived me. But pray, tell me more: I cannot make this out at all."

"I will tell you after you have eaten something," said Edward. "I have brought something with me for you. But first sip a little more of this draught."

The old man drank again, and then ate a little of the food which had been brought him; but the forces of life had so much diminished that it was long before the weight of the body seemed to give the mind liberty to act. At first he would wander a little, less with what seemed delirium than with forgetfulness. The brain appeared to sleep or faint; but with judicious care—an instinctive knowledge, as it were, of what was best for him—Edward administered support and stimulus by slow degrees till the mind fully awakened up. Quietly and cautiously the young man told him what he had done, why he came, and the certain prospect there was of his escape from that city of horror and famine if he could but summon strength to pass the gates.

[368] "But Guiton,—but my friend Guiton," said Clement Tournon. "What will he think of me?"

"He begs you, he beseeches you, to go," said Edward. "He says you have done all you can for Rochelle, that you can do no more, that every mouth out of the city is a relief, and that, now you can go in safety, you ought to go."

"Oh, my son," said Clement Tournon, "you know not what it is to ask me to quit the home of many years. I have travelled, it is true; I have left my domestic hearth; I have left the earth that holds my wife and children; but it was always with a thought of coming back and dying here. Now, if I go, I go forever,—never to see Rochelle more."

"Nay, I hope that is not so," answered Edward. "The cardinal assured me that he would give the most favorable terms to the city; and I cannot but think that your presence may be the means of rendering those terms really and not nominally favorable. You can tell him of the determination of the people, of your certain expectation of succor——"

The old man shook his head. "No succor," he said; "no succor."

"But at all events it is probable," replied Edward, "that you may be able to obtain terms for Rochelle which she can accept honorably. You can aid no one here; you may do good service there. In this instance the paths of duty and of safety are one."

"Oh, I will go," said Clement Tournon, languidly. "I need no persuading. But what am I to do with this poor creature?" he continued, looking at Marton, who continued still in the room. "How can I leave her behind me?"

A sort of spasm passed her countenance; but she answered, with the real devotion of woman, "Go, old master; go. Never mind me. I can do well enough. My light heart keeps me up; and old women live upon little. When the young gentleman has risked every thing to save you, you cannot disappoint him."

"No indeed, Marton," said the syndic; "but yet——"

[369] "Never talk about yet," said Marton. "You have got to go, that is clear; and perhaps you may be able to make a treaty by which we shall be all fed and comforted. Maître Guiton should have done it long ago; but he is a hard man, and would see us all die of famine, and himself too, before he would bate an inch of his pride."

"Hush, hush!" said Edward: "he is a good and noble man, Marton; and times far distant shall talk of the famous defence of Rochelle by the Mayor Guiton. Bring your master a little more food, Marton. The sun is beginning to go down, and we shall soon be able to set out."

The poor old syndic bent his eyes down upon his hands and wept tears of age, of weakness,

and of manifold emotions; and Edward, thinking it better to distract his thoughts, spoke of the gold cup which he had promised to bring to Richelieu, and asked where he could find it.

"What! a bribe?" exclaimed Clement Tournon, with more energy than the young man thought he had possessed. "The great Cardinal de Richelieu take a bribe?"

"No, no!" replied Edward: "do not misunderstand me. This cup was mentioned but incidentally as a curious and beautiful object of art, and I promised to bring it to him: therefore I must keep my word. But, if I must tell the truth, I believe the cardinal's inducement to give me a pass for you was that through you he might open some communication with the citizens, who have refused all overtures."

"Ay, there is that Mayor Guiton again," said Marton.

"The cardinal assured me," continued Edward, "that he had no wish to crush Rochelle, and would grant such favorable terms as could not honestly be rejected."

"God grant it!" said Clement Tournon; "but he has us at his mercy, and he knows it. As to the cup, my son, you will find it in the armory, where it stood when you were here before. Where are the keys, Marton? You will find it all safe, and the papers with it,—a letter for you amongst the rest; but I knew not where you were. All the gold and silver is safe; for when the people broke into the house it was food they sought, poor fools! They cared not for gold and silver: they could not eat them."

[370] Marton found the keys and handed them to Edward, by Clement Tournon's orders; and the cup, wrapped in manifold papers and enveloped in an old parchment bag, was soon found. The whole packet was inscribed, in the old goldsmith's own handwriting, with the words, "The cup within belongs to Master Edward Langdale, of Buckley, in the county of Huntingdon, England, left with me for safe-keeping." By the side of the cup lay a letter, surrounded, as was common in those days, with a silken string, tied and sealed; and, on taking it up, Edward instantly recognised the handwriting of good Dr. Winthorne. That was no time for reading, however, and he put the letter in his breast; but his eye could not help glancing over the vast quantity of plate, both gold and silver, which even that one cupboard contained. Taking the cup in his hands, he locked the door, and, returning to the room of the syndic, inquired, with some anxiety, what was to be done for the protection of his property while he was gone.

"Dross, dross, my son," said Clement Tournon. "Yet the door of the room may be as well locked and bolted. Give Marton the key."

"We will take care of it, Master Ned," said Marton. "The boys come back every night,—all who are left of them, poor fellows! but stout John died of the fever, and William the filigree-man soon gave way when we came to want food. Old men and old women have borne it best. But nobody will think of touching the gold and silver. What could they do with it if they had it? All the gold in that room would not buy a pound of beef in Rochelle."

"It were as well to make all safe, however," answered Edward. "I will go and lock all the doors."

"I will come with you," said Clement Tournon, "and see whether I can walk. What you have given me seems to have revived me much, very much. What is it?"

[371] "What you probably never tasted in your life before," said Edward,— "strong waters; and it shows the benefit of reserving the use of them for cases of need. That which kills many a man who uses it freely is now giving you back life, because you have never used it at all. All I have in that flask would not have the slightest effect upon Pierrot la Grange. I trust there is enough there to afford you strength to reach the camp."

"Oh, more than enough,—more than enough," said the good old syndic, whose holy horror of drunkenness made him almost shudder at the idea of what he had been imbibing, although he could not but feel that it had wrought a great and beneficial change upon him. "Now let me see how I can walk."

Edward gave him his arm; but the old man showed much more strength than he expected, —tottered a little in his gait, it is true, and lost his breath before he reached his arm-chair again. But Edward and Marton applied themselves diligently during the next two hours to confirm the progress he had already made, and were not unsuccessful.

I cannot say whether the good woman, whose love and devotion toward her master were extreme, did or did not secretly bestow upon him her own scanty portion of the common food which was doled out to all those who had given up their own stores to be disposed of by the city; but certain it is that, till the sun had nearly set, she and Edward contrived every quarter of an hour to furnish the old man a small piece of meat and a mouthful of pea-bread, with a few spoonfuls of the brandy-and-water.

At length the hour for departure came; and the parting between the old syndic and the faithful Marton was a very painful one. They said nothing, it is true; but she kissed his hand, and her tears, whether she would or not, fell upon it. Clement Tournon wept too; but Edward drew him slowly away, and once more he went out into the streets of Rochelle.

Those streets were nearly vacant, for almost everybody not wanted on the walls had retired to their miserable dwellings, there in solitude and famine to wait the return of the daylight which brought no comfort and very little hope.

Two men indeed passed by at a slow pace, and turned to look. "There goes old Clement Tournon," said one,— "up to the town-house, I suppose, as usual."

"I thought he was dead," said the other. "Old Dr. Cavillac died last night."

[372] They spoke aloud, for those were no times of delicacy; and Edward, fearful that the old syndic had heard such depressing words, whispered, "I trust, Monsieur Tournon, you will be able to obtain such terms as the city can accept."

"Pray God I may!" said the old man, not perceiving Edward's little stroke of art in playing off hope against despair. "Oh, it would be the brightest day of my life!"

They walked slowly, very slowly; but at length they reached the gate, over which a very feeble oil-lamp was burning under the heavy stone arch; for by this time even an article of such common necessity as oil was terribly scarce in Rochelle. The common soldiers on guard were evidently indisposed to let Edward and his companion pass; but the young officer whom the mayor had called Bernard was soon summoned forth from the guard-house, and with a reverent pressure of the hand he welcomed the old syndic. "God bless you, sir!" he said. "I was right glad to hear what Monsieur Guiton told me. Would to Heaven I had a horse or mule to give you to help you across! but it is not half a mile, and I trust you have strength for that."

"God knows, Bernard," said the old man, who was leaning very heavily upon Edward's arm. "I trust my going may be good for the city. Were it not for that hope, I should be well contented to stay and die here. God knows how often during the last week I have wished that it were all over and these eyes closed."

"Nay, nay, sir," said the other, in a kindly tone: "you are reserved for better things, I trust. But the wicket is open. You had better pass through, lest any people should come."

The syndic and his young companion passed out into the darkness; but Clement Tournon's steps became so feeble as they crossed the drawbridge that Edward proposed to sit down and rest a while upon the same stone where he had sat in the morning; and there, to amuse his mind for the time, he spoke of his last visit to the city, and even, under shadow of the night, alluded to Lucette.

[373] "Ah, dear child!" said the old man. "I heard that she had reached safely the care of the Duc de Rohan, for he wrote to me. But such a letter! I could not comprehend it at all. It was full of heat and anger about something,—I know not what; for there has been no means of inquiring since. He surely would not have had me keep her in Rochelle to suffer as we have suffered; but yet he seemed displeased that I had sent her away."

"He knew not all the circumstances," answered Edward; "and these great men are impetuous. Have you heard from her?"

"Not a word," said the syndic, with a sigh. "And yet God knows I loved her as a father."

"And she loved you," said Edward; "but it was some months ere she could possibly write, and since then Rochelle has been strictly blockaded."

"Ah, Edward Langdale," said the old man, in a sad tone, "the young soon forget. Joys and pleasures and the freshness of all things around them wipe away the memories of all early affections. And it is well it should be so. Old people forget too; but the sponge that blots out their remembrance is filled with bitterness and gall and decay."

Edward felt that Clement Tournon was doing injustice to Lucette; yet the words were painful to him to hear, and he changed the subject, trying to converse upon indifferent things, but with his mind still recurring to the question, "Can Lucette forget so easily?"

At the end of some half-hour he said, "Let us try now, sir, to reach the outposts. But first take some more of this cordial. Remember what we have at stake."

The old man rose; but he was still very feeble, and he stumbled amongst the low bushes at the end of the bridge. Immediately there was a call from the walls above of "Who goes there?" and the next instant a shot from a musket passed close by. Another succeeded, but went more wide; and, hurrying forward Clement Tournon, Edward put as much space between them and the walls as possible, saying, in a light tone, "Hard to be shot at by our friends. I trust that it is an omen we shall be well received by our enemies."

[374] "I cannot go so fast," said the old man. "Go you on, Master Ned: I will follow. If they shoot me I cannot hurry."

"No, no! we go together," replied Edward. "Here; keep along this path, straight for that watch-fire." And, placing the old syndic before him, he sheltered him completely from the walls with his own body. But there was no more firing; and the only result was to scare the unhappy Rochellois with a report that a party of the enemy had approached close to the gates to reconnoitre.

The distance was really very short, as we have seen, from the walls to the royal lines; but it was long to poor Clement Tournon, and it required all Edward's care and skill and attention to get the old man across. But at length the challenge of the sentinel came; and it was the most welcome sound that at that moment could meet Edward Langdale's ear. His flask was at the last drop, and the good syndic seemed to have no strength left. All difficulties, however, were now over. In five minutes the young officer who had accompanied Edward from Mauzé was by their side, with Jacques Beaupré and Pierrot; and, by the demonstrative joy of the two latter when they beheld Clement Tournon, one would have thought it was their father who had been rescued from death.

"Ah, sir," exclaimed Jacques, addressing Edward, "I will never doubt that you can do any thing again. Nobody but you in the whole world could have done it."

"I must beg of you, sir," said Edward to the young officer, "to obtain some place of repose for my poor old friend here. He is incapable of going any farther to-night; and I must away to the cardinal. These two men can, I presume, procure wine and meat for him; for food and rest are all that is needful."

"Be assured, sir, all shall be attended to properly," said the young officer, in the most courteous tone. "Monsieur de Bassompierre will be here himself in a moment, for he says he knows and esteems this gentleman, and we could not leave him in better hands, as I myself must accompany you back to his Eminence, who has moved down to what they call the Petit Chateau, some miles nearer the city."

[375] This brief conversation took place some fifty yards from where Clement Tournon was seated between Pierrot and Jacques Beaupré; and at the moment Edward uttered the last words he heard a bluff, good-humored voice saying, "Ah! Clement Tournon, my old friend, right glad am I to see you. So his Eminence has let you out of the cage. What, man! never droop! we will soon restore your strength. This cardinal of ours has heard how men tame wild beasts by keeping them on low diet, and he has determined to try the same plan with you people of Rochelle. But I have a nice cabin for you here in a corner of the trench, and a good soft bed, all ready, with a boiled pullet; and we will have a good stoup of wine together, as we had when you sold me that diamond signet."

"Ah, sir," said the feeble voice of Clement Tournon, "you drank seven-eighths of the stoup yourself, saying you were thirsty and needed it. I need it most now, I fear."

"And so you shall drink the seven-eighths now," said Bassompierre, gayly. "Here! some one bring us a litter. We will carry him home in triumph. The best of goldsmiths shall have the best of welcomes."

"Farewell for a few hours," said Edward, in a low voice, approaching the old man's side and pressing his hand. "I must away up to the cardinal, to show him that I keep faith. But I leave you in good hands, dear friend, and will be with you again early to-morrow."

Thus saying, he turned away, rejoined the young officer, and rode off with him as fast as he could go, in order to present himself before Richelieu had retired to rest. Though probably burning with curiosity, Edward's companion did not venture to ask any questions in regard to La Rochelle, but merely pointed to the large packet containing the cup which Edward carried slung to his cross-belt, saying, in a jocular tone, "I suppose, Monsieur Langdale, that is not a *havresac* of provision; for they do say that article is somewhat scanty in the city."

"Oh, no," said Edward: "this is something too hard to eat: it belongs not to me, but to his Eminence. I wish it contained something I could eat; for I have tasted nothing since I left you this morning."

[376] "They fast long in Rochelle," said the young man, dryly; "but you will be able to get something up at the chateau."

"I must report myself first," answered Edward; and on they rode without further conversation.

Edward was destined to wait longer for his supper than he expected, for he was detained in the cardinal's ante-chamber nearly an hour. At the end of that time, some five or six gentlemen came forth from Richelieu's room, and Edward's name was called by the usher. The minister was standing when the young gentleman entered, and was evidently in no humor for prolonged conversation.

"Have you brought the old man?" he said.

"Yes, my lord cardinal," replied Edward. "I left him at the outposts: he was too weak to come on."

"Then the famine in the city is severe, I suppose," observed the cardinal.

"It is, your Eminence," answered Edward; "but I was permitted to see very little."

"Blindfolded?" asked Richelieu.

"Yes," answered Edward. "But they may hold out some time, I think."

"How long?" demanded the minister.

"With their spirit, perhaps a month," replied Edward.

"A month!" repeated Richelieu. "Impossible! Did you hear of no tumults?"

"None whatever," replied Edward.

"What have you there?" next demanded the cardinal, pointing to the cup and its covers, which Edward had now detached from his belt.

"It is that work of art I mentioned, sire," replied the young man, taking it from the parchment bag and unwrapping the many papers which enfolded it.

Richelieu took it from his hands, gazed at it for a moment or two with evident admiration, and then set it down on the table, saying, "Beautiful! beautiful indeed! Have you heard any thing from England?" he continued, abruptly.

[377] "No," answered Edward; but, instantly correcting himself, he added, "Yes: I forgot. I found a letter waiting me; but I have not opened it. It is merely from my old tutor."

"Let me see it," said Richelieu, in a tone that admitted of no refusal.

Edward took it from the pocket of his coat and gave it to him in silence.

Without the least ceremony, Richelieu opened it, and, after looking at the date, gave it back again, saying, "Why, it is six months old; and I have news not much more than seven days. The English fleet is just ready to sail, it seems, and only waits for your mighty duke to lead them. He will find some stones in his way before he harbors in Rochelle. But now good-night, Monsieur Edward Langdale. Be here to-morrow betimes, and we will talk more. Just now I am tired, and must to rest."

CHAPTER XLIII.

Space is growing short, and we have much to tell. It was several weeks after the period of which we have just been writing when Edward Langdale and old Clement Tournon, now restored to health and some degree of strength, were in the cabinet of the great minister of France. Manifold papers were before them, and Richelieu's brow was cloudy and stern; but the old syndic of the goldsmiths of Rochelle was as calm, and seemingly as much at ease, as when he first encountered Edward Langdale in the streets of his city.

[378] "Your Eminence, they will not accept it," he said. "There are things which you do not consider. True, they are, as you say, pressed by famine. They may, or they may not,—for I have no correct information,—be forced to surrender or die for want of food within four days; but, if I know the people of Rochelle, they will die rather than surrender, unless they have better terms than these. It is useless to propose them. I should be in some sort deceiving your Eminence were I to be the bearer of such offers. I know that, without the free exercise of their religion being assured to my fellow-citizens, die they will,—of famine or pestilence, or by cannon-balls. I cannot undertake to propose such terms."

"Are you aware," asked Richelieu, in slow but emphatic language, "that, seven days ago, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, was stabbed at Portsmouth, by an assassin named Felton, and died upon the spot?"

Edward Langdale turned pale at the terrible news; but not the slightest mark of emotion was apparent upon the face of Clement Tournon. Old men are not easily moved; and he was thinking only of Rochelle.

"Possibly," he said, in a quiet tone: "I always thought he would die a violent death. But the hopes of the people of Rochelle never rested, my lord cardinal, upon the Duke of Buckingham."

"Upon what, then, did they rest?" asked Richelieu, in some surprise.

"Upon the hand of God," replied Clement Tournon; "upon the winds and waves, his ministers. The storms which annually visit this coast have been long delayed this year. But when they do come they will come more fiercely; and every man in Rochelle well knows that the marvellous dyke your Eminence has built will be but as a bed of reeds before them. Succor will pour in the moment the port is open, and the citizens, refreshed and comforted, will be ready to resist again all efforts to control their consciences."

"Pshaw!" said Richelieu: "this point of religion is but a name."

"Not for the people of Rochelle," said Clement Tournon. "We are loyal subjects of the King of France. We are willing to be obedient in all temporal things; but we will never profess one faith while we hold another: we will never resign our right to worship God according to our own belief."

"Well, well, that will be easily settled," said the cardinal, taking a pen and striking three or four lines from a writing on the table. "I am not fighting against any man's sincere faith. I am warring against rebellion. Read that, sir. Will that be received?"

"Not without a clause securing to the people of Rochelle the full and free exercise of their religion," said the old syndic, resolutely.

"That is what I mean to grant," said the cardinal,—though a slight cloud passed over his brow and seemed to indicate that the concession was made less willingly than he pretended. But, in truth, Richelieu had heard that very day that the English fleet had sailed, notwithstanding the death of the high-admiral. One severe storm, and all the labor of long months might be destroyed, and Rochelle be as safe as ever. There were indications in the sky, too, which threatened such an event. "That is what I mean to grant," he repeated. "Have it put in what words you will, so that nothing be inserted which shall give a turbulent people pretence for levying war upon their king. Call me a secretary, Monsieur Langdale."

Edward obeyed; and the terms offered by the cardinal were written out fair, with a clause guaranteeing to the Rochellois the full and unmolested exercise of their religion. This paper formed the basis of that remarkable treaty, soon afterward signed, which for its moderation has been the wonder of all historians. It is true that the Cardinal de Richelieu had many reasons for desiring peace as speedily as possible. It is true that the Rochellois had good reason to hope that relief of some kind would be afforded them ere long. But it is no less true that thousands had perished of famine within those walls, and that in a few days more no soldiers would have been found to man the walls, and corpses only would have opposed the entrance of the royal troops. There can be no doubt that a wise and politic clemency characterized the proceedings of the minister, and that, had he waited till the sick king's return to the camp, harder conditions would have been imposed. He seems not to have heeded where the glory of success or the honor of clemency might fall, so that his great purposes were accomplished; and, applied to his conduct toward Rochelle, as applied to a later period of his life, the words of one of his historians are neither fulsome nor unjust when he said, "France triumphed within and without the realm. Foreign enemies themselves proclaimed the superior genius of the cardinal; and the Huguenots, even while sighing over the ruins of their fortresses dismantled by his orders and under his eyes, could not but acknowledge his affability, his readiness to adopt all gentle expedients, and the fidelity with which all his engagements were observed."

And what became of Edward Langdale all this time? He remained in the royal camp, not as a prisoner, not exactly free. It was impossible for him to travel through France and to pass into England without safe-conduct of some kind; and Edward soon divined that—whether from suspicion, or from some other motive, he knew not—Richelieu had determined not to let him depart till Rochelle had surrendered. The minister became more difficult of access, also, after the king had returned to the camp, and the long and more familiar conversations which Edward had enjoyed with him previously were altogether at an end. He was courteous and kind when the young man was admitted to his presence; but, when Edward pressed for permission to depart, the answer always was, "In a few days." On one occasion, indeed, the natural impatience of Edward Langdale's disposition caused him to burst forth with something beyond frankness, and he said, bluntly, "Your Eminence has promised to let me go for the last six weeks. Now, six weeks are nothing to you, but they are all-important to me; for I have only one crown and two livres in my pocket, with two servants and myself to furnish, to say nothing of the horses, who are as badly off as if they were citizens of Rochelle; and, besides——"

"That will be soon amended," said Richelieu, with a slight smile. "Give me some more paper off that table." And he wrote an order upon the treasurer of his household for the payment to Monsieur Edward Langdale of the usual salary of a gentleman-in-ordinary to the king.

"My lord cardinal, how am I to take this money?" asked Edward. "England and France are still at war."

"Then take it as a prisoner," said Richelieu, somewhat sternly. "Do not talk nonsense, lad. But you said 'besides.' What is there besides?"

"If you had read the letter I showed your Eminence," replied Edward, "you would have seen that my presence is absolutely required in England upon business of much importance to myself."

"What letter? When? Oh, I remember,—when you brought me the cup. I cannot help thinking, notwithstanding, you are as well here for the time. But, speaking of the cup, I pray you put a price upon it."

"I cannot sell a gift that was given me by my father on my birthday. The very act of giving places an obligation on the receiver not to sell, but none not to give; and I trust your Eminence will condescend to receive it on the only terms on which I can part with it."

"Well," said Richelieu, "I will take it on those terms, and will direct my good friend Monsieur Mulot to give you back the papers that enveloped it. They seem to belong to you; for I see the name of Langdale frequently mentioned. Guard them safely till some more learned head than your own has examined them, for few men know the value of scraps of

old paper. Sometimes they will raise a man to wealth and power, sometimes throw him headlong down. God knows whether that same art of writing has done more good or harm in the world. Cadmus, who invented letters, they say, was the same man who sowed the serpents' teeth and reaped an iron harvest. Is not this an allegory, Master Langdale? Go and consider of it; for I am busy just now."

[382] Not long after this conversation, the good but stupid Father Mulot brought to the young gentleman the bundle of papers in which the cup had been enveloped, and entered into a long disquisition upon the various differences between the Catholic and Protestant faiths. He was evidently bent upon converting his hearer from his religious errors; but Edward was obdurate to the kind of eloquence which he displayed, and the good man left him rather in pity than in anger. To examine the papers was Edward's next task; but he could make nothing of them. Some pages were wanting; others were mutilated; and, though he saw his father's and his mother's name in many places, yet but little light could be obtained as to the import of the documents in which they were mentioned. Only one gleam of significance appeared throughout the whole. There was one passage which stated that "Richard Langdale, baronet, with the full and free consent of his wife, Dame Heleonora Langdale, in virtue of the last will and testament of Henry Barmont, her uncle, lord of the manor of Buckley as aforesaid, which consent was testified by her hand and seal unto the within-written lease and demise, did lease, give, and grant unto William Watson, his heirs and assigns, for the term of twenty-one years from the fifth day of—"

[383] There the manuscript stopped, the page which followed being torn off; but at the same time, though he had no knowledge of law, Edward could perceive that an admission of the absolute rights of his mother over the manor of Buckley, under the will of her uncle, was implied. He resolved, then, to follow the advice of the cardinal and preserve the papers with care. But still his detention in France was exceedingly annoying. The letter of Dr. Winthorne had pressed him earnestly to return to England; and other thoughts and feelings were busy in his bosom urging him in the same direction. He felt himself something more than bound—shackled—by his engagement with Lord Montagu. Without any definite cause of complaint, the links which attached him to that nobleman had been broken. He felt that he had been doubted without cause, that he had been neglected and forgotten in a moment of difficulty and peril, and that the confidence which had at one time existed between his lord and himself could never be fully restored. Such were the reasons which he urged upon himself to explain the desire he felt for severing the connection. But perhaps there was another motive which he did not choose to scrutinize so accurately. Fifteen months had passed since he had promised the Cardinal de Richelieu not to seek his young bride for the space of two years, and Richelieu had promised him that at the end of those two years she should be his. He had no absolute certainty of where she was; he knew not what might have become of her; he could only frame vague, wild plans for finding and recovering her; and nine months, without a long journey to England, seemed to his impatient heart not more than time sufficient to vanquish all the obstacles which might lie between him and her.

In the idleness of the camp, without post, duty, or occupation, his mind naturally rested for hours each day upon youth's favorite theme. The imaginative—perhaps I may say the poetical—temperament which he had inherited from his mother, and which had hitherto in life found few opportunities of development and little or no encouragement amidst the hard realities with which he had had to deal, had now full sway, and sometimes soothed, sometimes tormented him with alternate hopes and fears.

Lucette was often the theme of his conversation with good Clement Tournon, who was daily regaining health and strength. The old syndic asked many questions as to Lucette's journey, and told Edward many of the rumors which had reached Rochelle; but it was evident that he knew nothing of that part of Lucette's history which was the most interesting to his young hearer. Feelings which it is needless to dwell upon prevented Edward from referring to it himself; and day after day he would ride forth into the country alone, or walk up and down in the neighborhood of the cardinal's residence, buried in solitary thought.

[384] To the country-house now inhabited by Richelieu was attached a garden in an antique taste, where roses had now ceased to bloom and the flowers of summer had all passed away. But it was a quiet and solitary place, for the taste of neither soldiers nor courtiers led them that way, and, though the gates were always open, it was rarely that any one trod the walks, except one of the cooks with white night-cap on head seeking pot-herbs in a bed which lay at the lower part of the ground. Edward Langdale was more frequently there than anywhere else; and one day, toward evening, as he was walking up and down in one of the cross-walks, he saw the cardinal come forth from the building alone and take his way straight down the centre alley, looking first down upon the ground and then up toward the sky, as a man wearied with the thoughts and cares and business of the day. It seemed no moment to approach him; and Edward somewhat hurried his pace toward a small gate at the end of the garden. He had nearly reached it when the cardinal's voice stopped him.

"Come hither," said Richelieu, "and, if you are inclined to talk of no business, walk here by me. It is strange that amongst all who are here there is hardly one man with whom one's mind can refresh itself. My friend Bois Robert is too full of jest. It becomes tiresome. Good Father Mulot (whom they should have called Mulet) is full of one idea,—the conversion of

heretics, by fire and sword, pestilence and famine, or what else you like,—though I cannot see why to prevent them from being damned in the other world I should be damned in this. I know the verses of Horace are against me, and that every man unreasonably complains of his fate; but I cannot help thinking that of all the conditions in the world the fate of a prime minister is the most anxious, laborious, and tiresome."

"I should think so indeed, your Eminence," said Edward, with a sigh.

"Ha!" said Richelieu: "then you are so little ambitious as to deem it has no advantages?"

"Not so, my lord," replied Edward. "It has vast and magnificent advantages,—the power to do good, to stop evil, to reward the worthy, ay, and even to punish the bad,—to save and elevate one's country. But great and valuable things must always be purchased at a high price; and I can easily conceive that the sense of responsibility, the opposition of petty factions and base intrigues, the stupidity of some men, the cunning devices of others, the importunity and the ingratitude of all, the want of domestic peace, the continual sacrifice of personal comfort, must make the high position your Eminence speaks of any thing but a bed of roses."

[385] "You shall have your safe-conduct to-morrow morning," said Richelieu. "Such sentiments are sufficient to corrupt the whole court of France. Sir, if they were to become general, and men would but act upon them, I should have nothing to do. There would be nobody to envy me. Nobody would try to overthrow me. They would only look upon me as the wheel-horse of the car of state, and wonder that I could pull along so patiently. The ingratitude of all!" he repeated, in a meditative tone. "Ay, it is but too true! Those are the petrifying waters which harden the heart and seem to turn the very spirit into stone. Do you know what has been done within this hour, Monsieur Langdale?"

"No," replied the young Englishman: "I have heard of nothing important, sir."

"Why, I thought it must be at the gates of Paris by this time," said Richelieu. "A treaty has been signed with Rochelle; and a good man—a marvellous good man in his way—says I am no true Catholic, because I will not starve some thousands of men to death or make them take the mass with a lie upon their mouths. I do not understand his reasoning, but that is my fault, of course; but through this very treaty of Rochelle I think I shall make more real Catholics than he would make false ones. But now, Monsieur Langdale, you think I have kept you here unreasonably; but you are mistaken. I wished to have news from various quarters ere I suffered you to go back to England. I need not tell you to return by the month of July next; but, for many reasons, I desire you should return before. I leave it to yourself to do so or not; but you will find it for your benefit. To-morrow you shall have all necessary passes,—though it is probable that the fall of this very city of Rochelle will lead to peace between France and England. If it do so, remember a conversation which took place between us a good many months ago."

"I will not forget it, my lord," replied Edward. "I believe I have always kept my word to your Eminence."

"You have," said Richelieu. "You have. Would to God I could say the same of all men! And, now, what money will you want for your passage?"

"None, your Eminence," replied Edward. "I have a little property in England, the rents of which accumulated while I was lodged and fed by good Monsieur de Bourbonne; and I can get what I want at Rochelle."

[386] "Oh, go not into that miserable place!" said Richelieu,— "at least not till all the bodies are interred and it is free from pestilence. This siege will ever be memorable in the annals of the world for the sufferings of the people, and for the resolution of their leaders also. I can admire great qualities even in my enemies. But here comes Tronson to call me to the king. Come to me to-morrow."

CHAPTER XLIV.

Four days more passed before Edward actually got his proper passes and safe-conduct; but then they came in the most precise style and ample form. His whole person was described with accuracy. He was mentioned as a young English gentleman attached to Lord Montagu, travelling under the particular protection of his Majesty the King of France, with two *palfreniers* and other servants and attendants; and all governors of towns and provinces, and officers civil and military, as well throughout the realm of France as in neighboring countries in amity with that power, were directed not only to let him freely pass and give him aid and assistance, but to show him every hospitable attention and courtesy on his journey or journeys in any direction whatsoever during the next two years ensuing. The whole was signed by the king's own hand and countersigned by the cardinal. Though I possess one of these passports myself on parchment, signed with an immense "*Louis*," I regret to say it does not have the countersignature of Richelieu; but it is certain that they

were occasionally given under his administration also. At all events, Edward comprehended that, wherever he bent his steps, no more interruptions of his journey would occur on the part of any of the officers of the crown.

[387] The cardinal himself he could not see before his departure, for those were very busy times; but on the sixth day the young gentleman re-entered the city of Rochelle with his good friend Clement Tournon, and went direct to the syndic's house. The royal soldiers were in possession of the place; the walls were in progress of demolition; and there was an aspect of disappointment and sadness upon the faces of the people generally, though some were rejoicing openly in the return of peace and plenty, little heeding the loss of a certain degree of that liberty which they had at one time cherished as the best of human possessions.

The royal forces, however, had not confined themselves to razing the fortifications, but, with that good-humor which is one of the chief and most amiable characteristics of the French people, had aided the citizens in burying the dead, in cleansing the streets, and in purifying the town generally, so that, on the whole, the city bore a much more cheerful and happy appearance than it had done when Edward had last visited it. In the court before the house of the old syndic, two of the apprentices were busy rooting out the grass from between the stones; and Marton herself, with a gay face, though it was still somewhat pale and thin, came running down to greet her old master. These were all that remained of the once numerous household; and the joy of his return to his ancient dwelling was mingled with sufficient bitterness to draw some natural tears from Clement Tournon's eyes.

Many little incidents occurred to Edward Langdale during his short stay in Rochelle which we need not dwell upon here. Amongst the servants of his host he was in some sort a hero for the part he had taken in saving their beloved master. Several of the citizens, too, came to visit him; and, in the stormy night of the 2d of November, Guiton himself, wrapped in his large mantle, presented himself to pass an hour or two with his old friend and the syndic's young guest.

[388] It was a night very memorable,—much like that on which Edward had crossed the seas some eighteen months before. The winds burst in sharp gusts over the town, still rising in force, and howling as they rose; the casement shook and rattled, the tiles were swept from the roofs and dashed to pieces in the streets, and rain mingled with sleet dashed in the faces of the passers-by. Many died that night of those who were still sick in the hospitals. The conversation of the mayor was by no means cheerful. He had been forced into his high position against his own desire; he had drawn the sword unwillingly, but, full of energy and hope, he had sheathed it with even less willingness, and saw in the surrender of Rochelle the ruin of the Protestant cause and the destruction of the religious liberties of France. His heart was depressed, and all his thoughts seemed gloomy. Once, when one of the fiercest gusts shook the house, he burst forth in an absent tone, exclaiming, "Ay, blow! blow! You may blow now without doing any damage to Fortune's favorite! By the Lord in Heaven, Mr. Langdale, it would seem that this man Richelieu's fortunes have even bent the clouds and storms to his subjection! Here that tempestuous sea which was never known for six weeks to an end to be without storm and ship-wreck has been as calm and tranquil as a fish-pond in a garden for months—ever since that accursed dyke was first commenced; and now no sooner is Rochelle lost than up rises the spirit of the tempest. Hark how it howls! At high tide half the dyke that has ruined us will be swept away! Mark my words, young gentleman: by this time to-morrow all the succors which we needed so many months will be able to enter our port in safety."

And it was so. On the following day, more than forty toises of the dyke were carried away, and a fleet of small wine-vessels from the neighboring country entered the harbor without difficulty.

The storm raged fiercely for the next two days; and the time was spent in friendly intercourse by Clement Tournon and Edward Langdale, who wished to embark from Rochelle but could find no vessel ready or willing to put to sea.

[389] Of all the remarkable changes which have taken place in the state of society during the last two hundred years—changes which produce and will daily produce other changes—none is so wonderful as in the facility of locomotion. The change from the caterpillar to the butterfly is not so great. Go back two hundred years, and you will find nothing but delay and uncertainty. Ay, within a shorter space than that, the back of your own horse, the inconvenient inside of a heavy coach going three miles in an hour, or the still slower wagon with its miscellaneous denizens, or the post-horse with its postilion riding beside it, were, in every part of Europe, the only means afforded to the traveller of journeying from place to place over the land; while over the water slow ships could only be found occasionally at certain ports, and their departure and arrival depended upon a thousand other chances and events than the pleasure of the winds and waves. It is only wonderful that a voyage did not occupy a lifetime. Now—But it is no use telling my reader what this now is. He knows it so well that he forgets even the inconveniences that he himself has suffered, perhaps a score or two of years ago, and can hardly conceive the possibility of the hardships, the troubles and disappointments, of a journey in the seventeenth century, till he takes up some of the memoirs or romances of that day, and finds a whole host of minor miseries recorded which render an expedition to Mount Sinai at present but a joke in comparison. It is true that our present system has its evils as well as its benefits, viewed by different

persons according to their different professional or habitual tastes. The picturesque traveller will tell you that you lose one-half of the scenery; the timid traveller, that you risk breaking your neck; the police-officer, that thieves and swindlers get off much more easily than they used to do; and members of Parliament, that their constituents are a great deal too near at hand. But there are compensations for all these little troubles and especially in the case of those of the police-officer; for, if the thief or swindler has easy means of getting away, there are—thanks to electric telegraphs—more easy means still of catching him.

[390] All Edward's preparations were made: the calculation of what rents had accumulated in the hands of good Dr. Winthorne was easy also, and to get the amount in gold and silver was easier still, with Clement Tournon at his right hand. But, as there seemed, upon inquiry, no probability whatever of a ship sailing from Rochelle within a reasonable time, Edward determined to run across the country to Calais, between which port and England there always has been a desultory trade carried on, even in time of war, down to the reign of the third George.

"I shall see you soon again, Edward," said old Clement Tournon, as the young gentleman descended the stairs to mount his horse.

"I trust so," said Edward. "But I really cannot tell how soon I shall return."

"Nor I how soon I shall go over," said the old man, with a smile. "I have business myself at Huntingdon; and if you are in that neighborhood a month hence we shall meet there. You have told me all the places where you intend to stop, and I have made a note of it,—so that I shall easily find you wherever you are."

Edward was surprised, but not so much, perhaps, as might be expected; for, from vague hints which his good old host had let drop, he had gathered that Clement Tournon, steadfast and perhaps a little bigoted in the Protestant faith, had a strong inclination to make England his future home. He had been there often; he loved the country and the people, and still more the religion; and most of the ties between him and Rochelle seemed to have been severed when the city lost its independence. Often in Edward's hearing he had called England the land of comfort and peace,—alas! it was not destined long to remain so,—and even that very day he had remarked that the state of France, with its constant broils, intrigues, and factions, might suit a young and aspiring spirit, but was not fitted for declining years.

He and his young friend parted with deep and mutual regret. It is seldom that so much friendship ever exists between the old and the young; but each might feel that he owed the other his life, not by any sudden act which might be the result of a momentary impulse, but by calm, determined, persevering kindness, which could not but have a deeper source.

This has been a very short chapter: but we may as well change the scene; for our space, according to the law of Goths and Vandals, which altereth not, is very short, alas!

[391]

CHAPTER XLV.

The days of *vis-à-vis* lined with sky-blue velvet had not come, though, as any one who is read in the pleasant Antoine Hamilton must know, one generation was sufficient to produce them. But, had they been in existence, there were no roads for them to travel upon; for we hear that just about this time one of the presidents of the Parliament of Paris lost his life by the great imprudence of travelling in a large heavy coach over a French country-road.

I was in great hope at this place to be enabled to introduce, for the gratification of my readers, a solitary horseman. But I am disappointed; for Edward Langdale, now that I have again to bring him on the scene, had good Pierrot la Grange with him. And it would never do to have a solitary horseman two.

[392] It was on a road, then, leading from London into the heart of the country, that Lord Montagu's page—Lord Montagu's page no longer, for he had formally resigned his attendance upon that nobleman—rode along, on a cold, bright, wintry evening, with the renowned Pierrot la Grange, whose face, by adherence to the total-abstinence system, though much less brilliant in hue, had become much smoother, plumper, and fairer. Both he and his master were well armed, as was the custom of the day, and each was a likely man enough to repel any thing like attack on the part of others; for be it remarked that Edward Langdale was very much changed by the passage of twenty months over his head since first we introduced him to the reader. He was broader, stronger, older, in appearance; and, though of course there was nothing of the mould of age about him, yet all the batterings and bruising he had gone through had certainly stamped manhood both on his face and form. He had a very tolerable beard also,—at least as far as mustache and royal were concerned,—trimmed in that shape which the pencil of Vandyke has transmitted to us in his portraits of some of the most memorable characters in modern history. It is probable that he had grown a little also; for at his age men will grow, notwithstanding all the world will do to keep them down. He was, in short, somewhat above the middle height,

though not a very tall man,—of that height which is more serviceable in the field than in the ring.

At the crossing of two roads, one of which ran into Cambridgeshire, while the other took toward Huntingdon, was a small, low inn: I mean low in structure, for it was by no means low in character. It was one of the neatest inns I ever set my eyes on,—for it was standing in my day and is probably standing still,—with its neat well-whitewashed front, its carved doorway, its various gables, and its mullioned windows and the lozenge-shaped panes set in primitive lead. To the right of the inn, as you looked from the door upon the road, was a very neat farm-yard, half full of golden straw, with a barn and innumerable chickens,—chanticleers of all hues and colors, and dame partlets of every breed. Beyond the barn, at the distance of fifty or sixty yards, ran a beautiful clear stream, which crossed both the roads very nearly at their bifurcation, and which, though so shallow as only to wash gently the fetlocks of the passengers' horses, was, and must be still, renowned for its beautiful trout, silvery, with gold and crimson spots and the flesh the color of a blush-rose. On the other side of the stream, about a quarter of a mile farther up, was a picturesque little mill, with a group of towering Huntingdon poplars shading it on the east.

Here Edward Langdale drew in his horse, although the sun was not fully down.

[393] God knows what made him do so, for he had proposed to ride farther: but there was an aspect of peace and rural beauty and contented happiness about the whole place which might touch that latent poetry in his disposition already alluded to. Or it might be that all the fierce scenes of strife and turmoil and care and danger he had passed through in the last twenty months had made his heart thirsty for a little calm repose; and where could he find it so well as there? Expectation, however, is always destined to be disappointed. This is the great moral of the fable of life. The people of the house, who had much respect for a man who came with an armed servant and whose saddle-bags were well stuffed, gave him a clean, comfortable room looking over the court-yard to the river, and served him his supper in the chamber underneath.

It was night before he sat down; but, before the fine broiled trout had disappeared, the sound of several horses' feet was heard from the road, and then that of voices calling for hostlers and stable-boys.

Edward had easily divined, from his first entrance into the house, that this which he now occupied was the only comfortable public room in the inn,—although there was another on the other side of the passage, where neighboring farmers held their meetings and smoked their pipes. He expected, therefore, that his calm little supper would be interrupted, and was not at all surprised to see a gentleman of good mien, a little below the middle age, followed by two or three attendants, enter the parlor and throw himself into a chair.

The stranger cast a hasty and careless glance around, and then gave some directions to one of his followers in the French language. It was not the sort of half French spoken a good deal in the court of England at that time, but whole, absolute, perfect French, with French idioms and a French tongue.

As long as the conversation referred to nothing more than boots and baggage and supper and good wine, Edward took no notice, but went on with his meal, anxious to finish it as soon as possible. But soon after, when the person the stranger had been speaking to had left the room, that gentleman began a different sort of discourse with another of his followers, and commented pretty freely, and with some wit, upon the state of parties at the court of England.

"Your pardon for interrupting you," said Edward at once. "My servant and myself both understand French; and it would be neither civil nor honest to overhear your conversation without giving you that warning."

The other thanked him for his courtesy, adding, "You are a Frenchman, of course?"

[394] "Not so," answered Edward. "I am an Englishman; but I have spent some time in France."

Next came a great number of those questions which nobody can put so directly without any lack of politeness as a Frenchman:—how long he had lived in France; whom he knew there; when he had left it.

Edward answered all very vaguely, for he never had any great relaxation of tongue; but the stranger caught at the admission that he had been only a fortnight in England, exclaiming, "Then you must have been in France when Rochelle surrendered."

"I was," answered the young gentleman: "it is not quite three weeks since I left that city."

"Ha!" said the stranger, eyeing him from head to foot. "Will you favor me, sir, by telling me the state of the place and the condition of its inhabitants? It is a subject in which I take a great interest. Methinks they surrendered somewhat promptly when succor was so near."

"Not so, sir," replied Edward. "When men have nothing to eat,—when they have seen their fathers, and their brothers, and their mothers, and their sisters, die of famine in their streets,—when the very rats and mice of a city are all consumed, and the wharves have been stripped of mussels and limpets,—they must either die or surrender. There is no use

of dying; for death is the worst sort of capitulation, and the city becomes the enemy's without even a parchment promise."

"Ay; and was it really so bad?" said the other.

"More than one-third of the inhabitants had died," said Edward; "another third were dying; and the rest were so feeble that the walls might be said to be manned by living corpses."

"You excite my curiosity and my compassion," said the other. "May I ask if you had any command in Rochelle?"

[395] "None," replied the young gentleman. "By accident I was in it for a day during the siege, and saw how much they could endure. I was in it also immediately after the siege, and saw how much they had endured. Though Rochelle fell at last, her defence is one of the most glorious facts in French history."

The stranger looked down upon the ground and replied nothing for several minutes; but his companion with whom he had been conversing familiarly took up the conversation, and asked after several of the citizens of Rochelle whom Edward was personally acquainted with or knew by name. The solemn words, "He is dead," "She is dead," "All the family died by famine," "He died of the pestilence," were of sad recurrence. "But then," the stranger remarked, "we know that Guiton is alive; for he signed the treaty."

"He tried hard to die first," said Edward. "But nothing seemed to break his iron frame, and the people became clamorous."

"And what became of the good old syndic Tournon?" asked the first stranger.

"He is alive and well," answered Edward.

"Ah! but he would have been dead and buried," exclaimed Pierrot, who could refrain no longer, "if it had not been for you, sir."

"Indeed?" said the stranger. "Let me inquire how that happened."

"It matters not, sir," replied Edward, making a sign to Pierrot to hold his tongue. "What the man says may be partly true, partly mistaken; but, although I am willing to give any one interested general news, I must decline referring to matters entirely personal when conversing with strangers."

"Well, then, let us talk of other subjects," said the first stranger. "I cannot consent to part with a gentleman lately from my own land, so soon as that movement of your plate seems to imply. Supper I shall take none; for the news that has flowed in upon me for the last fortnight, has not tended to strengthen my appetite. Wine, however,—the resource of the sad and the sorry,—I must have. They tell me it is good here. Will you allow me to try some of that which stands at your right hand?"

[396] Edward ordered Pierrot to bring some fresh glasses, and put the bottle over to his self-invited guest. The stranger drank some, and, saying, "It is very fair," immediately ordered more to be brought, while Pierrot, bending over Edward's chair as if to remove the dish before him, whispered in his ear, "It is the Prince de Soubise."

With all his habitual self-command, Edward could not refrain from a slight start. The color, too, mounted in his cheek with some feelings of anger; but he was glad of the warning, and did not suffer what was passing in his heart to appear. The conversation turned in a different course from that which it had before assumed, Soubise referring no more to the subject of Rochelle, though his companion, who seemed a friend of inferior rank, often turned toward that topic. Whenever he did so, the prince immediately asked some question as to Edward's knowledge of France and its inhabitants; and the young gentleman, to say the truth, took some pleasure, after the first effects of surprise were over, in puzzling him by his answers. He had passed over so much of France that his intimate acquaintance with the country excited Soubise's astonishment; and from localities his questions turned to persons. "As you have been in Lorraine," he said, "you have probably seen the beautiful and witty Duchesse de Chevreuse."

"I have the honor of knowing her well," replied Edward.

"Do you know the Duc de Montbazou?" asked the prince.

"Not in the least," replied Edward.

"The Cardinal de Richelieu?" continued Soubise.

"I have seen his Eminence frequently," said the young gentleman, "and have had audiences of him; but, as to knowing the cardinal, that can be said but by few, I imagine."

Soubise smiled. "The duchess is more easily known," he answered; "but the death of her lover Chalais must have affected her much,—poor thing! Did you ever meet with him?"

"Not exactly," replied Edward, with a slight shudder at the memory. "I saw his head cut off, but did not know him personally."

The reference caused a momentary pause in the conversation; and then Soubise said, in an

indifferent tone, "As you have been much in that part of the country, you must have probably seen a Duc de Rohan."

[397] "I had the honor of meeting him once," replied Edward, fully on his guard.

"He is a relation of mine," said Soubise.

Edward merely bowed his head, and the prince proceeded to ask if there had been any news of him current when the young gentleman was in France.

"The last I heard of him," said Edward, "was a rumor that, after menacing the right of the king's army till a party had been sent out to cut off his retreat, he had, by a skilful night-march through the woods in the rear, effected his escape and fallen back upon Saintonge."

Soubise seemed desirous of prolonging the conversation; but Edward soon after retired to his chamber, resolved to be up by sunrise and pursue his way. His determination was vain, however. Though he was on foot early, Soubise was up before him; and they met at the door of the inn, where their horses were already standing. A quiet bow on either part was their only salutation; and, as there were two roads, Edward would willingly have seen which the prince selected. As he did not mount, however, the young gentleman followed the path he had previously proposed to take,—namely, that toward Huntingdon,—and three or four minutes after heard the more numerous party of Soubise coming up at good speed.

"Ah, young gentleman," said the prince, riding up to his side, "so we are going the same way. Permit me to bear you company."

Edward bowed his head somewhat coldly, for he did not desire the companionship. He might have learned some policy in the varied life he had led, and it certainly would have been politic in him to court the good opinion of the man by his side; but, even had the nature of his character permitted it, he believed it would be of no use. Generous and frank, Soubise was known to be somewhat obstinate as well as hasty; and Edward thought, "I would rather win her in spite of him than by his aid."

[398] Their journey, therefore, did not promise to be very agreeable; and, when the prince demanded which way his course ultimately lay, the young gentleman replied, "I go toward Huntingdon, sir; but, if that is the direction of your journey, I shall have to leave you before we reach the town, for I have to turn off the highroad some miles on this side of Buckden."

"And so have I," said Soubise; "but we may as well make the way pleasant by each other's society as long as our roads lie together. Do you know this country as well as you know France?"

"This part of the country," replied Edward; "for I was born and brought up not many miles from where we are now riding."

"Indeed!" said the prince. "I should have thought by your speech you had passed the greater part of your life in my own land. Do you know what that little river is just before us?"

"It is the Ivil," answered Edward, "which runs into the Ouse lower down."

"The Ouse!" said Soubise. "I do not know much English, but that seems to me an ugly name. If I recollect, Ouse means mud,—slime."

"We are a plain-spoken people," answered the young man, "and usually give things the name we think they deserve. The Ouse in many places is a sluggish, muddy stream; and our good ancestors applied the name they judged most appropriate."

"'Tis as well they do," said Soubise, with a sigh. "We in France have a different habit. Our more excitable imaginations take fire at a name, and we are apt to decorate very plain things with fanciful appellations; but this leads to frequent disappointment. Which is the happiest people must depend upon whether it is best in a hard world to see things as they are, or to see them as we would have them."

"We are often forced to see them as they are," replied Edward; "and if we always did so there would be no disappointments."

"Nor much happiness," said Soubise.

[399] Thus conversing, they rode on. But we must pass lightly over the talk with which they enlivened the way, merely observing that Lucette's cousin rose not inconsiderably in Edward's opinion as they went. Nay, more: his manners were so graceful, his thoughts so just, his conversation so varied, that the young Englishman could not but feel pleased with his company and inclined to like himself. Still, in the true English spirit, he said, in his own heart, "Oh, yes, he is very charming now he is in a good humor. The devil is so when he is pleased; but methinks I could conjure forth the horns and hoofs if I were but to tell him who I am."

At length the scenes through which they passed became painfully familiar to Edward's eye, —spots he had known well, cottages he had visited, houses belonging to old friends of his family. The very trees and shrubs and little water-courses seemed like old acquaintances calling back times past and appealing to regret. He grew grave and cold. The chilly feeling

which had first fallen upon him not many years before, but which had somewhat passed away during the last few months, returned, and many memories, as ever, brought their long train of sorrows with them.

Not far from Little Barford, a fine sloping lawn came down to the road-side, separated from the highway merely by a thick, well-trimmed hedge broken by some fine groups of trees; and, looking up, a large square house with many windows, and a trim garden terraced and ornamented with urns and statues, could be seen at the distance of a quarter of a mile. There were several men in the grounds engaged in various country-employments, and Edward said, within himself, "He is taking care of the place, at all events."

At the same moment Soubise observed, "That is a fine chateau! Do you know to whom it belongs, and what it is called? It is so long since I was in this part of England that I forget the places."

"That is called Buckley Hall," replied Edward. "It belongs to Sir Richard Langdale."

"How is that?" said Soubise, suddenly, as if something surprised him. But Edward did not answer, and the prince merely said, "Let us pull up for an instant and look at it."

It was torture to Edward to stay; but he paused for a moment, and then said, "I fear I must go on, for I have still some distance to ride. My road, too, lies here to the left."

[400] "Ay?" said Soubise; "so does mine. Let us go on."

"Are you sure you are right?" asked Edward Langdale. "Huntingdon is straight before you."

"Oh, I am right," answered the prince: "I turn just beyond Buckley."

Edward had nothing more to say; but he could not help beginning to think that his adventure with the two blacksmiths seemed likely to come over again. Somewhat quickening their pace, they rode on, and Edward made an effort to cast off the melancholy mood which had fallen upon him, and even the impression which the unsought society of a man who had spoken of him in such insulting terms had produced at first, and the conversation between him and Soubise became lively and cheerful. Mile after mile passed; and at length, after proceeding for more than an hour and a half, on a little bank by the side of the river appeared an old church with its gray ivy-clad tower and groups of yews in the churchyard. Beyond, at the distance of some two or three hundred yards, was one of those fine antique houses, built of stone, which were erected in the end of Elizabeth's reign and in the earlier part of that of the most pompous and conceited of kings. Thick walls, small square windows, little useless towers, and somewhat peaked roofs, spoke a good deal of King James. But the lawn, as soft as velvet, the groups of shrubs, and the garden, well trimmed and swept even in the winter-time, told a tale of more modern taste.

"I fear I shall have to quit you here, sir," said Edward, as they approached the gate with its two massy stone pillars and large balls at the top. "This is the end of my journey."

"What is the name of this place?" asked Soubise.

"Applethorpe," answered Edward,— "the residence of Dr. Winthorne."

"Ha?" said Soubise; "then we shall not part so soon. This is the end of my journey also."

[401] Edward could not refrain from turning round and gazing in his face with a look of most profound surprise; but the prince made no further remark, and, after pulling in their horses while one of the servants dismounted and opened the gates they rode up to the large arched door of the house. A heavy bell hanging outside soon brought forth an old domestic, dressed in dark gray, who gazed earnestly first at Soubise and then at Edward, both of whom had sprung to the ground while he was opening the door. At first he evidently recognised neither; but a moment after the light of honest satisfaction brightened his countenance, and, holding forth his hand to Edward, he exclaimed, "Oh, Master Ned, how glad I am to see you, and how glad the doctor will be! He has been looking for you for months. But he is not at home now, and may not come back for an hour. But come in; come in. Every thing is ready for you. Your old room is just as you left it,—not a book moved, nor a gun, nor a fishing-rod: only when I went in to-day to dust the things, I saw the ink had dried up in the horn, and was going to put in fresh this very day."

Edward shook the old man warmly by the hand; and, turning to the Prince de Soubise, he said, "If I understood you right, sir, you came to visit Dr. Winthorne. He is out, the servant says; but I have interest enough in this house to invite you to enter till his return. He will be back in an hour, and happy, I am sure, to entertain you. But, knowing my old preceptor's habits well, allow me to hint that it will be necessary to send your attendants into the village, as I shall send my servant; for, being a clergyman, he objects to have in his house what he calls 'swash-buckler serving-men;' and his rule apply to all, however high the quality of his guests."

Soubise smiled; and, ushering him into the library, Edward proceeded, amidst the somewhat garrulous joy of the old footman, to direct Pierrot to take the other men down to the village inn, to tell the host there to attend on them well, "for Master Ned's sake," and then to return as soon as might be with his saddle-bags.

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The prince merely ordered his baggage to be brought up, directing his men to take care of themselves, and seeming fully satisfied that he would be a welcome guest. He took some books from the shelves of the library, examined them cursorily, and put them back, saying, "The good doctor seems to have improved much in worldly matters. He has attained, apparently, the state he always desired,—competency, and enough to have a good library. Can any one imagine a man more happy?"

"Perhaps not," said Edward, gravely. "I believe circumscribed desires and moderate fortunes attain the height of human felicity."

"Not so," said Soubise. "I believe every human life must be looked at as an aggregate; and skilful would be the calculator who could reduce to an exact sum how much joy and how much sorrow are required to equivaile a given portion of calm and unimpassioned existence. All these things are as the individual views them. We have nothing in this life by which to measure the real value of any object but our own tastes. You may like a pearl better than a diamond; I may esteem the flashing lustre of the one more than the calm serenity of the other. That man is only happy who obtains what he really desires. But here come our men, I see, with the baggage."

CHAPTER XLVI.

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The Prince de Soubise stood at the window of the library of Applethorpe alone; for Edward had made an excuse to leave him, not thinking himself bound to play the host in a house which was not his, nor to act as the entertainer of a man whom he had some good cause, as he thought, to dislike. Soubise was then past forty, however, and he did not—as indeed who does in middle life?—look upon trifles with the serious view which one takes of them in earlier years. "Hasty and quick in quarrel" applies to small as well as great things; and Heaven knows how much patience we acquire each day by the mere habit of endurance. He received the young man's apology in good part, then; and, while Edward Langdale went to speak to every old servant and then to change his travel-stained dress, he stood, as I have said, at the window and gazed forth upon a scene to be viewed in no other country under the sky,—a home scene of English life. It is probably of no age, of no time; for it is an impress of the mind and character of the people. But I must not dwell upon it. The chapter of descriptions has gone by. Soubise gazed out, compared that which was before his eyes with that on which they might have rested in his own country, admired what he saw, and perhaps, in the desponding mood which certainly then affected him, felt sorry that France had not so calm, so peaceful, and so happy a look as an English country-village.

After he had continued gazing for some ten minutes, upon the road before him appeared an elderly man upon a fine stout horse, with clerical hat and cassock turned up, and a servant following him on a still better beast. They both rode fast; and, though the first sat his steed somewhat after the fashion of a sack of wheat, it was clear that the saddle was quite familiar to him, and the slouching shoulders and negligent air were more the consequences of perfect ease and habit than of awkwardness. The servant pulled back the gate: his master dashed through, and in a moment after Dr. Winthorne was at the door.

The old footman ran forth to give him entrance, and a few words passed, of which Soubise only heard the words, "Ned come back? Tell the dear fellow to come down. A stranger? Well, we must see strangers." And the door of the library opened.

Dr. Winthorne gazed at Soubise, and the prince at him, without any sign of recognition as they approached each other. But suddenly the reverend gentleman stopped, exclaiming, "God bless me! Monsieur Soubise! On my life, sir, I am glad to see you. When did you come over? How fares it with you? You are older by a good deal, but you look well. I am right?—surely the Prince de Soubise?"

"The same, my good old friend," said the prince. "I am not surprised you doubt, for I feel I am much changed. It is ten long years since we met, and with me they have been stormy years."

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"So I have heard," said the good doctor, "though news travels but slowly in our poor country. But I have watched your noble struggles as closely as I could; and I have felt great interest in them all, though you—every one of you—made great mistakes. And now Rochelle is lost. God help us! It is a sad case; but she could hold out no longer; and that Mayor Guiton is a noble man."

"He is indeed," said Soubise; "and his character has risen in my opinion by what has been told me by a young gentleman who came hither with me——"

"Odds-my-life!" cried the old doctor, "my boy Ned!—Ned Langdale! I must go, prince,—I must go and hug him. Sir, he is as fine a youth as ever lived, and ought to be a great man. God send he may escape it! But I have not seen him yet. Excuse me: I will be back in a minute. Make yourself at home; make yourself at home. All shall be prepared for you before you can say Amen."

With this somewhat unconnected speech, Dr. Winthorne left the room, and in a few minutes returned with Edward Langdale, who allowed himself to be introduced to the prince with cold ceremony. "He says," observed Dr. Winthorne, "that somehow you have not treated him well. But we will talk of that after supper. Every thing should be explained between all people; but no explanation should take place fasting. The humors are then in a bad condition; and, as there is no chance in my house of people heating them by potations, we will just calmly regulate them by wholesome food and moderate drink, and then have a clear understanding."

"I am perfectly unconscious——" said the prince; but the doctor cut him short, exclaiming, "After supper, after supper, my lord! Your apartments are quite ready. Let me conduct you."

The old clergyman and the Protestant prince retired from the room, and Dr. Winthorne was nearly half an hour absent. When he returned, however, he shook Edward once more warmly by the hand, saying, "Why, Ned, my boy, you are grown quite a man. Heaven show us mercy! you have a beard an ell long. But now tell me all that has happened to you. As to this man up-stairs, he is a good man, a very good man,—hasty, but noble and generous, steady in his friend-ships, true to his cause. There is some mistake between you and him. He says your brother Richard wrote to him, or visited him, or something, and he might have treated him with some indignity; but he never saw or heard of you in his life till last night, when he met you at an inn."

Edward smiled, saying, "He must have a short memory."

"Well, well," said Dr. Winthorne, "we will have it all after supper. Now tell me every thing you have done and seen and suffered; for I doubt not you have suffered too, my poor boy. We shall have plenty of time if this prince takes as long to bedizen himself as he used to do. He was a mighty fop in other years; but he has a more soldier-like look now. Well, Ned, give me the whole story."

Edward Langdale willingly enough related succinctly what had befallen him since he parted from the good doctor nearly two years before. There was a good deal, indeed, he did not tell, for he knew that the explanations required would be too long for the limited space before him. Indeed, before even the abbreviated narrative was brought to a close, the Prince de Soubise joined them, and they retired into another chamber to supper.

The meal passed over in great cheerfulness; the wine was good, and of that quality which parsons loved in those days, but all partook moderately; and as soon as the servants had withdrawn—for supper at that period of the world's history was served with very nearly the same forms as dinner in the present times—Soubise bowed his head to Edward Langdale, saying, in not very good English, "There must be some mistake between us, sir. I should like to have it set right, for your father was one of my dearest friends. We travelled long together with this worthy minister; and I wish much to remove any thing like coldness between myself and his son."

"I really do not know, Monsieur de Soubise," replied Edward, in French, "what mistake there can be. But may I ask if in June of last year you did not write a letter to your brother the Duc de Rohan, in which you styled me an insolent varlet? The duke sent me the letter, and my eyes, I think, cannot have deceived me."

"No, no!" cried Soubise. "Stay; let me remember. I applied that term," he continued, more slowly, "to Sir Richard Langdale, your father's eldest son, who, as I have been told and as I have still reason to believe, had robbed you of your property,—of your mother's as well as your father's inheritance. To the latter he might have some claim: even that is doubtful. To the former he had none."

"Unfortunately, by the laws of this country he had," said Edward. "But all this is past and over, and——"

"Stay, stay," said Soubise, interrupting him. "It is not all over yet: it is the very cause of my coming here. I was a witness, sir, to the marriage-contract—or settlement, as you call it here, I believe—between your father and your mother, by which it was agreed that all the property she possessed, not only at the time, but which might descend to her from her uncle, should belong to her and descend to her children. In his last letter, when he thought himself dying, good old Clement Tournon informed me that this very property had been taken from you by him whom I may well call your base-born brother. Having done all that I had to do, and been disappointed in all,—having seen the noble Buckingham die at my feet, and borne the loss of Rochelle,—my first business was to come on here to see right done if it could be done."

"There, Edward! there!" said Dr. Winthorne. "I told you he was noble and true."

"I doubted it not, my dear friend," replied Edward. "But still the words his Highness used were somewhat galling."

"They never were applied to you, upon my honor," said the prince. "As far as I recollect now,—for it was a time of great hurry and confusion,—I had heard that Richard Langdale, whose whole history I knew as well as my daily service, was at the court of France

soliciting some place from his Majesty. My brother wrote to me, mentioning only Monsieur de Langdale. Probably it was to you he referred. Probably he was deceived as well as myself, although he did not know so much of the circumstances as I did. My cousin left his child with his dying breath to my charge, enjoining me strictly to have her educated in the Protestant faith, and never to suffer her to fall into the hands——"

[407] "What!" exclaimed Dr. Winthorne, interrupting him,—"dear child? little Lucette? How is the sweet where is she? Oh that I could see her again for an hour! for she was an angel. Do you remember, Edward, that you once had a little sister, and that when you were ill of fever she disappeared?"

"Was that Lucette?" exclaimed Edward. "Remember her, my dear sir? Oh, yes! But how can that be? her death killed my mother, I think. Lucette my sister!" And he gazed down upon the table with a bewildered mind and a chilly, painful feeling at the heart, such as he never had experienced in life before. "I cannot comprehend," he added. "Lucette my sister! My sister not dead!"

"No, no," said Dr. Winthorne. "Tell him all, my lord the prince. Lucette is not your sister: she merely passed as such. Your father and your mother took her in very early years to hide her from her Roman Catholic relations in France, out of love and friendship for this noble gentleman. Those relations were powerful here as well as in the neighboring country; and at length they discovered where she was, but Monsieur de Soubise came over and removed her, first to the town of Brixham, where she remained some years, and thence to France. I had some share in all this, too. But you are mistaken, my son, about your mother's death. She grieved to lose her little pet, and wept often and bitterly at her loss; but the origin of her illness was a terrible fire which consumed your father's house when you were very young. Then, exposure and injuries received before she could escape sowed the seeds of that sad malady which, in this land of ours, like Death's gardener, culls the sweetest and most beautiful flowers to decorate the grave."

"Then she is not my sister?" exclaimed Edward. "She is not dead! Thank God for that!"

It might be difficult for those who heard it to know which he thanked God for most; and the exclamation produced a slight smile upon the countenance of Dr. Winthorne.

"Methinks, prince," he said, "this young man must have met Lucette since. You dog, you told me nothing of that."

[408] But the Prince de Soubise was very grave. "Let us not talk of that part of the subject to-night," he said. "I fear there are painful conclusions before us. But, Mr. Langdale, my friendship for your father and my deep gratitude to your saintly mother make me most anxious to see you reinstated in her fine property. Let us consult what can be done. I am here ready to swear I signed the deed as witness with my own hand."

"That will not be sufficient," said Dr. Winthorne, with somewhat of a smile on his countenance. "In this land we shall require the deed itself. But let us ride over to-morrow to Buckley and see our old friend Sykes, the hunch-backed attorney; for I cannot help thinking that he knows something more than he will tell me. For the last six months he has been keeping up the place at his own expense; for I dare say you have heard, Edward, that no one has known any thing of Sir Richard for more than twelve months. He draws no rents, sends over no orders. His lawyer here has written and sent to Turin, but no intelligence whatever can be procured; and many people think that he is dead."

"It is very strange," said the Prince de Soubise. "But I have no belief in the report of his death. Most likely he is wandering somewhere, and does not wish the place of his abode to be known. He was always very eccentric."

"Then you know him, my lord?" said Edward, who had not lately mingled in the conversation; for some words which had fallen from Soubise had saddened him.

"I have not seen him for many years," replied the prince; "but even then he was as strange a boy as I ever saw. There was insanity in the family of his mother, and some people thought that the child would grow up an idiot. It was not so, however. Though he was very strange, this strangeness never reached to madness. Fits of moody gloom would come upon him, and he often would not speak a word for hours. If he did, it would be with a bitter and supercilious tone, very extraordinary in a mere child. Then, again, at times he would fly into the most violent fits of passion, and then sink into melancholy. The way I learned all this is easily explained. At your father's request I took some charge of him after his mother's death in the convent; but his behavior became so bad that I had to relinquish the trust."

[409] "You applied to him, a short time since," said Edward, "a somewhat hard and unpleasant expression. You said that you might almost call him base-born. Is it too much to ask that you would give me some information on that point?"

"I know not well how to explain," replied Soubise, looking down thoughtfully.

"His mother was a very light Italian woman, of a low, bad race. Your father married her, beyond doubt, before this child was born; but it was only just before, and that with half a dozen stilettos at his throat; for they caught him alone with her and forced the marriage.

Almost as soon as it was over, he separated from her and she went into a convent,—her relations spreading absurd stories that they had caused the separation because your father was a Protestant. This gained them some favor at the court of Rome, and one of them obtained advancement in the Church, where, after leading a very dissolute life, he was struck with remorse and retired into the most austere seclusion. This is nearly all I know of the matter; but it was this knowledge of the young man's birth, character, and connections which made me use the term 'insolent varlet' which gave you so much offence. I pledge you my honor, however, it was not intended for you; and I should not have applied it, probably, to him, had I not been in haste and irritated at the moment."

"Then I hope, my good lord," replied Edward, "that, as the expression was not applied to me, I may look upon all the sentiments and resolutions contained in that letter as unsaid also?"

"Do not press me to-night," said Soubise, very gravely. "I am afraid if I speak now my reply will pain you. The house of Rohan is a proud house, and I have much to think of. Give me a few days for reflection, and I will meet you fairly. But in the mean time let us be friends. Your father was the companion of my youth and my most intimate associate; your mother, now a saint in heaven, was an angel upon earth; and I would fain have their son's regard."

As he spoke, he held out his hand to the young man, who took it respectfully; and shortly after the prince retired to rest.

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CHAPTER XLVII.

Though those were days of splendid cavalcades, and the neighborhood of the royal place of Royston had rendered them not infrequent some years before in that part of Huntingdonshire, it was not often that such a party presented itself in the small village of Buckley as that which was seen on the day after Edward's arrival. First, there was Dr. Winthorne, on his tall, stout, Roman-nosed horse, forming the centre of the group; then, on his left, Edward Langdale, riding a wicked, fiery devil, which screamed and bit at the approach of any other animal, but which he managed with grace and ease. Then there was the Prince de Soubise on the doctor's right, mounted on a powerful Norman charger and looking very much the soldier and the prince. Behind them were three servants, all well mounted and armed; and the whole formed a group which attracted the attention of the villagers and made even the blacksmith suspend the blows of his sledge-hammer to look at the fine horses he longed to shoe.

There was a little, old, dusty house on the right-hand side of the road as you came from Applethorpe toward the king's highway to Huntingdon, with the gables turned toward the street, a wooden porch carved in curious shapes, and some five or six descending steps. On one of the pillars of the porch was hung a curious sort of shield painted with various colors,—a quaint emblem of the holy Roman empire; and underneath was written, with no great regard to symmetry either in the size or shape of the letters, the words "Martin Sykes, Notary Public, Attorney-at-Law, Solicitor in his most gracious Majesty's Court of Chancery, &c. &c. &c.,"—which etceteras were explained and commented upon by a long inscription on the other pillar.

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Before that little porch Dr. Winthorne pulled in his rein and floundered off his horse, and Soubise and Edward Langdale followed. In the first room on the left hand they found three or four clerks; and at a separate desk, which he could not have overtopped without assistance, was seated a little old man with very keen features and a back and chest which assumed a menacing posture in regard to the head.

"Ah, doctor," he said, slipping off the high stool which raised him up to the desk, "what brings you so early to Buckley? Odds-my-life! Why, I can hardly believe my eyes! Master Ned grown into a bearded man of war! My dear boy, how are you? Oh, how I have missed you!—missed the trout in the month of May,—missed the partridges in September,—missed the snipes and the woodcocks in the cold weather, when I have my annual abscess in the lungs,—missed thy handsome face at all those times when a kind word in a youthful voice cheers an old man like me!"

Edward shook him warmly by the hand, and asked after all his ailments kindly, but speedily turned to their companion, saying, "Mr. Sykes, this is the Prince de Soubise, an old friend of both my parents."

"I remember him well," said Mr. Sykes. "That is to say, I do not remember him at all. I mean, in person I do not remember him, for he might as well be Goliath of Gath as Prince de Soubise, so far as any identification on my part could go; but I remember quite well a young gentleman of that name, in purpled silk philimot velvet laced with gold, slashed velvet breeches, and a sword as long as a barbecuing-spit by his side, being present at your father's wedding and witnessing the marriage-contract."

"He has got me exactly," said Monsieur de Soubise. "I have had, Mr. Notary, to take to

lighter but more serviceable weapons since; but, if my person is so much changed that you cannot remember me, there are plenty of witnesses here to swear to whom I am; and I expect in a few days my good friend Monsieur Clement Tournon, syndic of the goldsmiths of Rochelle, who made and brought over a set of jewels for my friend's bride, and who saw me witness the contract with his own eyes. He remembers the whole deed, he says; for it was read over to us before the signature."

[412] "He will be an important witness, sir," said Martin Sykes; "and your Highness will be more so. It is all coming right, as I thought it would," he continued, turning to Dr. Winthorne and rubbing his thin, bony hands. "Somewhat long we have been about it; but step by step we are making way. Every thing takes time, doctor,—even a sermon, as the poor people here know well. The great difference between a lawsuit and a sermon is, that during the first the people sleep often and sleep badly, and during the second they sleep once and they sleep well. Now, Master Ned, I calculate that we shall get to the end of this suit and have a decree in our favor—let me see: you are about twenty, are not you?—in about forty-nine years and seven months." He paused a single instant, and rubbed his hands, and then added, with a smile slightly triumphant, "That is to say, if we cannot get the original settlement. But I think we shall get it, Ned, my boy. I think I can guess where it is. It is most likely badly damaged; but just give me sufficient of it left to show some of the signatures and the date, and then come in these gentlemen as witnesses to prove what it originally contained. Oh, we will make a fine little case of it! But parties: we want parties,—somebody to fight us,—Master Ned."

"But if the fight is to last so long as you have said, my dear friend," remarked Edward Langdale, "and I am only to succeed when I am sixty-nine years and seven months old, I think I had better not begin the battle."

[413] "Ay, but you forget the if," said Martin Sykes, with a laugh. "An *if* makes every thing in law. It is as potent as 'any thing hereinbefore contained to the contrary notwithstanding,' or 'always provided nevertheless,' or any other of those sweet phrases with which we double up the sense of our documents or give a sweet and polite contradiction to what we have just been saying the moment before. As to the battle, my dear young friend, it has begun already. Acting on your behalf, as your next friend, I have managed to get possession of Buckley, have served Sir Richard's lawyer and agent with all sorts of processes,—some sixteen or seventeen, I think,—ejectments, quo warrantos, rules nisi, and others; and the poor fool, who is nothing at all unless he has a Londoner at his back, has let me have very nearly my own way, having no orders, not knowing where to get any, and standing like a goose under the first drops of a thunder-shower, with his eyes staring and his mouth half open."

"But where is the contract?" asked Monsieur de Soubise, in French. "If I understood him aright, he said he knew where it was."

Edward interpreted, feeling very sure that good Mr. Sykes was not very abundantly provided with French; but the little lawyer shook his head, saying, "No, no; I did not profess to know absolutely where it is; but there is one not very far from here who I think does know. I think he does,—I am sure he does. He tells me a box of valuable papers were lost at the great fire; and he shakes his head, and looks wise, and talks of its being 'made worth his while.' He is the most avaricious old devil in the world. It is a curious thing, Ned, all sextons are avaricious. They deal so much with dust and ashes that they learn to like the only sort of dross which does not decay when you bury it. He is a very old man now, and could not enjoy for more than a few months any thing he had, were it millions."

"What! you are not speaking of the old sexton at Langley, are you?" asked Edward,—"the man with the lame hip? He used to say he got that injury at the fire; and my father gave him many a guinea for it. I used to give him shillings and sixpences, too, to make him tell me all about the fire, till one day I caught him taking away a groat I had given to a poor child, and then I knocked him over the shoulder with my fishing-rod. He has never liked me after, but hobbles away into his cottage whenever he sees me, and shuts the door tight."

[414] What there was in this little anecdote which peculiarly struck good Mr. Sykes I cannot tell, but he fell into a fit of thought, still standing,—for there were no chairs in the room, except one, which had lost a leg, (in what action I do not know,) and the high stools on which the clerks were sitting, if they could be called chairs. He kept a finger of his right hand resting on the side of his nose, however, for two or three minutes; and then, suddenly rousing himself, he said, "Let us go into the house. We can sit down there and talk. This is a poor place for such company. It does well enough for roystering farmers' sons who have been breaking each others' heads, or for a deputy tax-collector, or for gossiping women who have been slandering and being slandered. I don't want them to sit down at all; and that is the reason I have only one chair with a broken leg, to which I always hand old Mistress Skillet, the doctor's widow, who abuses every young girl in the place who has got a pretty face and wears a pink ribbon. Then down she comes, and declares she has broken her hip-bone, and walks away in great indignation, never coming back until she has another peck of lies upon her stomach. I must not do it any more, for she has grown as large as an elephant; and the last time she tumbled she had nearly shaken the office down. Besides, it cost me two ounces of peppermint to bring all those boys there out of their convulsions. But come, gentlemen, let us go."

Thus saying, he led the way through a little door at the back of the office, across a small passage, into an exceedingly neat old fashioned parlor, where, having seated his guests, he rushed at a corner cupboard and brought forth some tall-stalked cut and gilded wineglasses, and a square-sided bottle, likewise cut and gilded, from which he pressed his visitors to help themselves. Monsieur de Soubise remarked it was too early to drink wine; but the old man pressed them, saying, "It is not wine at all. It is fine old Dutch cinnamon." And, each having taken a little, good Mr. Sykes leaned his arms upon the table, remarking, "Now, this looks really like the commencement of a conspiracy; and a conspiracy we must have. I have settled it all. We must go over to the old place,—that is, old Langley Court, prince. I will enact my own character. The doctor here is too reverent to undergo transformation. You, my noble sir, must be a French nobleman about to buy Langley Court, and Buckley too,—in fact, half the estates in the neighborhood. Edward here must be your cornet of horse. There will be no need to mention his name; but the old wretch, who is as sharp as Satan, will most likely know him. He is aware, however, that Master Ned has been over in the wars in France: so the story will go down."

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"It seems to me, my good friend Sykes," said Dr. Winthorne, "that you are going to tell a vast quantity of lies. Mark you, now: I will have nothing to do with them. I don't even know that I ought to stand by and hear them."

"You shall not hear a lie come out of my mouth," said Sykes, laughing. "My lord the prince, I dare say you are willing enough to buy Langley Court and the estate, if I will sell it to you for a gold crown,—what you call in France an *écu d'or*?"

"Oh, very willingly," answered Soubise: "this cinnamon is worth an *écu d'or*." And he helped himself to some more.

"Well, then, I will sell you the whole estate for that sum,—if ever I can prove my title to it," said Sykes. "It is a bargain. Now, Dr. Winthorne, do not you by any scruples spoil your young friend's only chance, if you would not have us take you for a cropped-eared Puritan instead of a good old sound Church-of-England man."

"Well, then, don't you lie too much, Mr. Attorney. I will swallow as much as I can; but keep within bounds, or you may chance to find me break out."

"All you have to do is to hold your tongue. I will do all the speaking," replied Sykes. "The prince here may talk as much French as ever he likes, and Master Ned may answer him in the same tongue. I will answer for it that neither old Grimes the sexton nor Martin Sykes the lawyer will be a bit the wiser for it."

"But when is this to be done?" asked Dr. Winthorne. "We have ridden ten miles already to-day."

"Well," said Mr. Sykes, "if we go over by the Barford road, that is but ten miles; and then we can go to Applethorpe, where you intend to give me a bed: that is but nine miles more. You would not mind going thirty miles any day for a fox-hunt."

"I never go fox-hunting," grumbled Dr. Winthorne.

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"No, but you used once," said Mr. Sykes. And, bearing down all opposition, being strongly supported, it must be owned, by Edward and the Prince de Soubise, Mr. Sykes carried his point, ordered his own easy-going cob to be brought round, and had a bag fixed to the saddle with such little articles of dress as he wanted.

When the four gentlemen issued forth into the street to proceed upon their way, a certain rosyngness of Pierrot's nose, which, together with some dewy drops in his eye, gave his face somewhat the aspect of a morning landscape, induced Edward to believe that he had been engaged in the pious employment of breaking a good resolution. But Pierrot declared manfully that he had only been following his young master's orders with his French companion. "You told me to treat them hospitably, sir," he said; "and how can I treat them hospitably without drinking with them?" Edward gave him a caution to keep himself sober at all events, and on they went some nine miles upon their way at a brisk pace.

"Now," said Sykes, as they approached the old park-wall, which had fallen down in several places, "we won't go nearer the old rascal. We must be perfectly indifferent."

"I recollect this park well," said the Prince de Soubise. "What a splendid place it was before the fire!"

"Hush! hush!" cried Sykes. "That is English." And, riding on, he pulled up his horse at a spot where some cottages were built between the road and the river, just fronting the old iron gates of what was called the grass court, beyond which, some two hundred yards off, appeared the blackened ruins of Langley.

The walls were all down,—at least, those of the main building; for not only had the fire overthrown them, but the pick and shovel had been busy for several weeks after the catastrophe, turning over the principal ruins in search of plate and other articles of value which had not been carried out during the fire.

There the gentlemen dismounted. The servants tied the horses to the iron gates, and the

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whole party entered the grass court and looked around. At that moment an old wizened face appeared at one of the small lozenges of a cottage-window, and the next a chink of the door was opened the mean and the same face gazed out. In time Mr. Sykes, with his riding-whip in his hand, was pointing out to Soubise all the wonders of the place, telling him where the great hall used to stand, where the guest-chambers were, and where were the private apartments of the Lady of Langley. Never before in his life was he so eloquent. While he went on, an old man of perhaps eighty hobbled across the road and came close up to the side of Dr. Winthorne. Just at that moment Mr. Sykes pointed with his whip to a tower a little detached from the main building, and apparently of more ancient architecture, saying, "That was the wine and ale cellar; and I have heard people say that during the fire the casks burst with an explosion like so many cannon."

"That is not true," said the old man, who had just come up; "for there had not been a thing or a body in that tower for thirty years before. Why, the stairs were half worn away; and Sir Richard would have pulled it down if it had not been for my lady, who liked the look of it."

"Ah, is that you, old Grimes?" said Mr. Sykes. "Why, you look younger than ever."

"I shall live to bury you yet," said the old sexton. "Don't make me wait long, for I am tired enough of life, I am sure. Who is that you have got with you, Sykes?"

"This is a French nobleman, the Prince de Soubise," replied the attorney. "As he cannot live in his own country, on account of the troubles, he has come over to England. We have been talking about his buying this place. Indeed, it is almost a bargain. He will have all these ruins cleared away," he continued, in a confidential tone, and somewhat dropping his voice, to prevent Dr. Winthorne from hearing too much.

The old sexton's face had turned a little pale; but the next instant he said, a little gruffly, "You can't sell him the place, Sykes."

"No; but Sir Richard can," replied the lawyer.

The old man grunted forth something which nobody heard distinctly, but which had some reference to "Sir Richard," and to "not paying a pension," and "giving no orders."

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Sykes kept his eye fixed upon him steadily, and thought he saw an uneasy look come upon the old man's face, which was turned at that moment toward the ruined tower; and, looking round, the attorney saw that the servants, having left the horses at the gate, were sporting about the court-yard, and that Pierrot had mounted upon a pile of stones which had fallen from the tall wall above.

"What were you saying, Grimes?" asked Mr. Sykes. "That Sir Richard had not paid your pension? That is strange. The agent has plenty of money in his hands, for he has got all the rents of Langley, and Sir Richard has not drawn a farthing."

"Ay, but he says he has no orders," said Grimes, with a hasty and uneasy manner. "But what I am saying now is, that man will break his neck if he goes up there: I tell you he will. I put my hip out once doing just the same thing."

"Ha!" exclaimed Sykes: "I thought that was at the fire, Grimes. But what you say is very true. He will break his neck. Call him down, sir,—call him down: he is your servant."

The last words were addressed to Edward, who instantly called to Pierrot to come down,—which the good man unwillingly did; for he had imbibed just a sufficient quantity of liquor to make him full of sport without shaking his nerves.

Now, it is to be hoped that the reader read and pondered well the description given of that old tower in the seventh chapter of this eventful history; but, as there are some readers, and a great number of them, who will skip certain passages which they in their superciliousness think of little importance, I may as well recall the words of Edward Langdale while he was narrating the scenes of his early life to Clement Tournon and Lucette. "The whole of the house was burned," he said, on that occasion; "and the greater part of the walls fell in, with the exception of those of the ivy-tower, which were very ancient, and much thicker than the rest. Even there the woodwork was all consumed, and the staircase fell, except where a few of the stone steps, about half-way up, clung to the masonry."

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Since Edward had seen the place or marked it with any particular attention, some changes had come over that tower, though they were not very apparent. We shall be compelled to notice them more in a moment or two. Suffice it for the present to say that those stone steps which Edward had mentioned were still sticking out about half-way up the tower, and that, somehow or another, Pierrot had contrived nearly to reach them.

However, Mr. Sykes took no notice of the careful forethought of an old sexton for a foreign servant's life, though he thought his benevolence strange, but went on round the old building, the piles of rubbish, and the blackberry-bushes which encumbered them, speaking a word or two every now and then to Dr. Winthorne, and keeping Mr. Grimes in pretty constant conversation. There is a game which young people play at, called, I think, "Hide-and-Seek;" and Mr. Sykes was determined to have a game with the old sexton. The seeker, when he approaches the object of his search, is told that he is hot; when he goes

far from it, that he is cold. Now, in the neighborhood of most parts of the old building Grimes's face said, as plainly as possible, "Cold; cold as ice;" but when Mr. Sykes brought him near to the old ivy-tower again there was a tremulous motion of the hanging under lip, an anxious twinkle of the eye, and a fidgety motion of the hands, which said, as plainly as possible, "Warm; warm; very hot." This was the more apparent when the party came in face of that part of the tower where about a third of the wall, rent from top to bottom by the great heat, had fallen and strewn the ground with ruins. Mr. Sykes did not look up at the tower at all. His eyes were fixed upon the face of Mr. Grimes, and he was reading it as a book. Dr. Winthorne was reading it too. Edward Langdale and the Prince de Soubise were talking together in French; but their eyes were about them all the time.

Suddenly Edward exclaimed, in English, "Why, Pierrot could have gone up very easily. There is a stone taken out of the wall every two or three feet, and between them somebody has made steps by jamming in large blocks of wood with smaller stones. Besides, the tough old stems of ivy would take any one up who has hands to hold by. Pierrot! Pierrot!"

[420] "No, no!" cried Dr. Winthorne: "send for a ladder from the church. My man shall go."

"Doctor, doctor," said Mr. Grimes, with a face as pale as death, "I want to speak to your Reverence."

"Well, speak out!" cried the bluff parson; but the old man drew him a little aside, and said, "If they will give me a hundred pounds sterling I will tell them something."

"Not a penny, you old sinner," said Dr. Winthorne. "Go down for the ladder to the church, William: get some men and bring it up, and be quick."

"Oh, doctor, I am an old man, and have suffered very much for the last fifteen years——"

"What is that he is saying? what is that he is saying?" said Sykes. "I have a notion you are very like the boy who went up the apple-tree to steal his neighbor's fruit: the branch broke, and he cracked his leg, and ever after he used to say that it had pleased God to afflict him."

At that moment a loud shout was heard from the tower above; and Pierrot, who had run up like a squirrel, put out his head, shouting, "A pie's nest! a pie's nest! Here are all manner of things!"

"Well, stay there and guard them," cried Dr. Winthorne.

"They are all mine!" cried the old man Grimes, wringing his hands, and speaking with the air and tone of a disappointed demon. "Well, I will not speak a word. I have done nothing. What business have you to take my things? I shall go home. If there is law in England, I will have it." And he was turning away toward the gates, when Mr. Sykes took him by the arm, saying, "John Grimes, I apprehend you for robbery on the night of the fire at Langley. Master Ned, tell that servant not to let him depart. I will be responsible: I know my man, and have had my eye upon him for many years. The old fool could not keep his tongue from babbling, and boasted what he could do if he liked."

[421] A few minutes passed in almost perfect silence, till the church-ladder was brought and reared against the tower, and then all the younger men ran up. Dr. Winthorne and Mr. Sykes kept guard over the prisoner, having no great confidence in their own agility, not being much accustomed to mount ladders; and, for a moment or two, Mr. Grimes, now evidently panic-struck, continued to whisper eagerly to Dr. Winthorne, while Mr. Sykes's eyes were turned with impatience toward the tower.

"I can promise you nothing," answered the clergyman, bluffly. "It is no great matter to them what you confess or what you don't; but perhaps, if you do tell the whole truth, Ned Langdale, in consideration of your great age, may spare you. It is a horrible thing to see a man hanged at eighty."

At that moment the servants began to come down, bringing between them a chest of no very great size but bound with brass and somewhat ornamented, though its color and appearance showed it to have been a good deal scorched with fire. Though its weight did not seem great, the men carried it with much care, the occasion of which became evident when they reached the ground; for the top had been rudely forced open, and they were afraid of its falling back and the contents tumbling out.

A number of other objects were subsequently brought down,—a chalice, evidently the property of some church, a silver waiter, a clergyman's cassock, a number of silver spoons bearing the arms of the family of Langdale, and a whole mass of miscellaneous articles, some valuable, some perfectly worthless. But Mr. Sykes put his foot firmly upon the chest after it was laid upon the ground, saying, "Take notice, doctor, that I do not open this till there are plenty of witnesses." The moment, however, that the Prince de Soubise and Edward had descended, he called upon them to remark what the chest contained, and proceeded to the examination.

It is not my intention to give a descriptive catalogue of old papers; but, after turning over many documents of no great importance, a parchment was found and opened, and the Prince de Soubise instantly put his finger on the lowest part of the fifth sheet, saying, "There stands my name."

"Well," said Dr. Winthorne, "I can easily conceive this old man stealing the sacrament-cup and the silver spoons. I remember the robbery of the church quite well. Those he could melt down, and he was a great fool for not doing it. But why he should take Brother Wynstone's gown, which he could never dare to wear, and why he should steal this box of papers, which he could make no use of, I cannot imagine."

It is impossible for any writer of history to discover and describe the real motives of one-half the actions he relates; and what it was that moved old Grimes the sexton at that moment I cannot at all pretend to say, but he certainly mumbled, in low and tremulous accents, and with some tears, "I thought it was my lady's jewel-case."

The scene which then took place is not worthy of description. Let the reader imagine the congratulations that were poured upon Edward Langdale, how all his friends shook hands with him heartily, how Pierrot, who from his knowledge of English understood the whole, almost danced with joy, and how the servant of the Prince de Soubise, seeing all the rest do it, shook hands with him too, and wished monsieur a good morning, being the two principal words he possessed. A cart was procured, and also a constable; under whose charge, escorted by Dr. Winthorne's servant, Mr. Grimes and the contents of his magpie's nest—with the exception of the all-important settlement, which Mr. Sykes would not part with—were carried over to Applethorpe that night.

Dr. Winthorne and his party had preceded them by nearly an hour, and very important business occupied the remainder of the day till it was time to retire to rest. On that business we need not dwell at present; but in order not to be obliged to turn back to a character which, however important, has appeared but briefly, let me say that that very night Mr. Grimes, in the first terror of detection, made a full and frank confession of all he had done. He had been one of the first to enter the house on the night of the fire, and had met Lady Langdale carrying the case which contained her marriage-settlement. He had instantly asked her after her boy; and, dropping the case, she had flown to Edward's room to see if he had been rescued by his father. The sexton, concluding that the case contained her jewels, had seized upon it and carried it off. At first he had concealed it under some of the bushes, but had afterward carried it up into what was called the ivy-tower, which, having been vacant and in ruins for some years, he imagined would never be searched. When asked why he had not carried it to his own cottage, he replied, "Because that was certain to be examined as soon as they discovered that any thing was lost." He was never prosecuted for the thefts he had committed; but he died some seven weeks after,—perhaps as much from shame and disappointment as disease; and thus he never had the pleasure of burying Mr. Martin Sykes.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"I can promise you nothing, my young friend," said the Prince de Soubise, about a fortnight after the period at which I concluded the last chapter, "till I have consulted with my brother Rohan and some other members of my family. You English people view these matters differently from ourselves in France: a marriage is not only the uniting two persons who are attached to each other, but it is the linking of two families together. Of course, this nominal and merely formal marriage between you and my young cousin is altogether null and void,—of no effect or consequence."

"I do not know, my lord the prince," replied Edward, in a tone of a good deal of irritation. "I have been assured it is a perfectly valid marriage; and, I must respectfully add, I shall attempt to prove it so."

"Pshaw!" said Soubise, in a light tone: "we had better not take up hostile positions toward each other." And, turning on his heel, he left the room.

The scene of this conversation was the rector's library at Applethorpe, for Dr. Winthorne had a headache and had retired to rest; and, as soon as the prince was gone, Edward took forth some letters he had received that morning, and, approaching the table where the candles stood, he read them again with an eager look. No French post, to his knowledge, had come in; but the letters were evidently from France, and one, addressed to Clement Tournon, was sent open to him; whilst another,—very short, but in Lucette's own hand,—tied and sealed, came to him direct.

Both were of a date which surprised and alarmed the young Englishman,—that from Clement Tournon dated only two days after he had left Rochelle, that from Lucette fully seven weeks previous. The letter of the good goldsmith which enclosed the other was somewhat long. It told Edward a great deal about Rochelle, and contained much matter that need not be recapitulated; but the point of greatest interest was his mention of Lucette. "Probably," he said, "she has told you in the enclosed all she has told to me, and therefore I need not repeat it. She calls upon us both for aid, and, as far as a feeble old man can give it, she shall not want it. But alas, my dear Edward, it is very wrongly that men attribute power to wealth. I have proved it, and know that there are times when heaps

of gold will not buy a loaf of bread. However, if my last livre will help that dear girl, she shall have it. In the mean time, do you, young, active, enterprising as you are, follow her directions to the letter. You can do more than I can. I set out this night; but, considering that you may want money for so long and expensive a journey, I have left such directions that all your drafts upon me will be paid to any reasonable amount. In a month I will be in Huntingdon, where I am assured by one I can depend upon that my presence is required for your benefit."

Lucette's letter was but a note.

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"Fly to me, my beloved husband." So it said. "If you love your poor Lucette as she loves you, come to me without the delay of an hour. There are people here who want to take me away and carry me to France. They have no authority from Monsieur de Rohan,—otherwise, as hard as he is, I should feel myself secure,—but they have great power with the rulers of this republic, it seems. Madame de la Cour is an excellent woman, but weak and timid. She says that she dares not resist them, that she is but a poor exile herself, and that when they are ready to go she must yield me up to them. I would rather die were it not that, when I think of you, hope still comes in to give me a ray of light which all these sorrows and troubles cannot darken. Oh, come soon to your
LUCETTE."

Edward looked at the date again. There was no time to be lost, if he were not already too late; and at once he determined on his course. The two years during which he had promised not to seek Lucette were nearly at an end. The words of Monsieur de Soubise had given him no encouragement to wait for the consent of her family: the only course was to make her his own irrevocably, then let them scoff at the marriage between them if they would. He would go to Richelieu, he thought; he would lay before him the letters he had received; he would beseech the cardinal to free him for the few short weeks that remained from the promise he had made, and to speed him to Venice with the power which only he possessed. Once side by side with his dear little bride, he thought, it would not be in the power of worlds to tear them apart.

The determined and impetuous spirit roused itself; recent success had refreshed hope; he had found more money waiting for him than he expected, so that none of the small material obstacles which so frequently trip up eagerness were present; and he determined to set out that very night.

Not more than half an hour was occupied in his preparations, and then he went to Dr. Winthorne's room and knocked at the door. After the second knock a somewhat testy voice told him to come in, and there he remained for a full hour in earnest conversation. Whatever took place, nothing Dr. Winthorne said induced him to alter his resolution; but about midnight he and Pierrot mounted in the court-yard and set out for London.

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Let us pass over all the little impediments of the road,—the horse-shoes and the blacksmiths, and the trouble about a pass from Dover to Calais, which, as the relations between France and England had become much more amicable, presented no great difficulties after all,—and let us carry Edward at once to the gates of Paris, where the gay and glittering crowd was as dense and perhaps more brilliant in those days than it is in ours. The young man's brain felt almost confused at the numbers before his eyes and the whirling rapidity of every thing around him. As he knew nothing of the town, he had to ask his way to an inn which had been recommended to him, and met with all the urbanity and real good-humor which have always distinguished the Parisian population.

The master of the *auberge*—for there were no hotels in Paris till the nobility who had hotels, broken in fortune and deprived of power, were forced to sell their dwellings to the affable receivers of all men—welcomed him, as he himself would have called it, with all distinction; and his reverence was greatly increased when the young stranger called for pen and ink and paper and indited a note to the cardinal prime minister, telling him of his arrival in Paris, and craving an audience as soon as possible on business of the utmost importance. He had the good faith to tell him that the business was of importance to himself; but that frankness was not thrown away upon the cardinal.

He sealed the letter with the great seal of his arms, and begged the aubergist to send it immediately by a messenger who would if possible obtain an answer.

The good man remarked that it was the hour of the cardinal's dinner, and that men said that his Eminence was to set off on the following day upon a long journey.

"The more reason he should have that letter as soon as possible," said Edward. "Pray, let it go without delay; and if the man brings me back an answer I will give him a gold crown."

What took place at the cardinal's palace—a smaller building than the magnificent edifice he afterward erected, long known first as the Palais Cardinal and afterward as the Palais Royal—I do not know; but at the end of an hour and a half the man returned, and, with a happy grin, demanded his gold crown, handing Edward a sealed paper. The contents were as follows:—

"I am commanded by his Eminence to inform Monsieur de Langdale that, though

he cannot give him a formal audience, he will see him to-night at the theatre of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, when he will hear whatever he has to communicate. This letter presented at the door will be his introduction. "ROSSIGNOL."

Edward Langdale took care to obtain every information he could from the landlord in regard to the Parisian theatre, which was at that time just beginning to rise into some degree of importance. Some years before, the theatres of Paris were merely the resort of bad women and dissolute men and the scene of very bad actors; but Richelieu, with that fine taste which was one of his remarkable characteristics, had not only seen that the stage might easily be refined, but had absolutely refined it. Excellent actors were engaged at both the great theatres of Paris; authors, not alone of merit, but of real genius, pressed forward in a new career of literature; and the highest and purest ladies of the French court graced the theatre, perhaps as much to please and flatter the great minister as for any entertainment they received.

At the hour which had been indicated by the landlord Edward was at the door of the Hôtel de Bourgogne; and as he saw that everybody was paying for entrance he did the same, and then exhibited the letter of the secretary Rossignol. The moment it was seen by the people at the door the effect was magical. Two men started forward, bowing to the ground, reproached the young stranger in somewhat stilted terms for not showing the note before he had paid for admission, and begged to lead him to the cardinal, who they informed him had just entered. The arrangement of a theatre in those days was very different from that of modern times; but yet Richelieu had his little room, or box, as we should call it now, at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, close to the stage, but not upon it. Into this room no one was admitted but those specially invited, and at the door stood two of his guards, who, however, gave instant ingress to Edward as soon as they saw the letter he carried in his hand. In the box were some eight or nine people, with the cardinal himself on the left-hand side, where he had a full view of the stage but could hardly be seen from the body of the house. The play had not commenced, and he turned his head at the sound of the door as Edward entered. The moment he saw him he beckoned him up to his side, before Edward had seen the other persons in the box, who, be it remarked, were all standing. Richelieu's first question was what had brought his young friend—as he was pleased to call him—to Paris before the stipulated time. Edward, in his usual brief style, explained all the circumstances, and, without hesitation, placed the two letters he had received in the minister's hands. Richelieu read them and smiled, saying, "So you are both still very much in love with each other? Well, I have done one good work at least in life *pour l'amour de Dieu*. Now, what do you intend to do, Monsieur Langdale?"

"To go post-haste to Venice, may it please your Eminence," replied Edward; "and when I arrive there, as it will not want much more than six weeks of the time I promised you not to seek her as my wife, I intend to ask you to free me from that promise, let me claim her as my own, and trust to my good luck and your power to sustain me."

The cardinal seemed half inclined to laugh. "Take her when you can get her," he said, with something more than a smile. "But you cannot get to Venice, my good boy, till the king opens the pass of Suza. Don't you know that the very impracticable Duke of Savoy holds all the passes closed and thinks he can resist the power of France?"

"By the Lord! I wish I had the power of France," said Edward: "I would soon make him open them."

"Ha, ha!" said Richelieu, with a significant nod of the head. "Did I not tell you that one day you would become ambitious? But the power of France is just as well as it is; and I think the king can open the passes as well as you could. He has gone there now, and I am going after him to witness his victory. But hush! they are going to begin the play. Mark it well, and tell me what you think of it."

Almost as he spoke the comedy commenced, and Edward withdrew from Richelieu's side into the little crowd behind. It was a piece of no great merit,—one of the failures of the great Corneille; and, to say the truth, Edward's thoughts were deeply engaged with other things.

While he was trying to attend, however, his hand was gently pressed by some one near, and, turning round, he beheld the diminutive figure of Morini the Italian adventurer.

There was something in the man that Edward could not altogether dislike, especially after the kindness he had shown him on two or three occasions, and he shook hands with him warmly. The little man stood on tiptoes, and said, in a whisper, "Good fortune to you. You and the cardinal will always have good fortune unless you quarrel. Look just opposite. Did you ever see so beautiful a creature?"

Edward cast his eyes across the theatre, which was not very well lighted, and saw a group of ladies splendidly dressed and well deserving commendation; but there was only one who struck him particularly, seated somewhat behind, and with the profile alone displayed. There was something, however, so exquisitely beautiful in the line of the face and the whole turn of the head, that Edward moved a little on one side to see her more distinctly. There, however, the head-dress of another lady interposed, and he was disappointed.

At that moment the first act ended, and Richelieu beckoned him to his side again. "What are you staring at there, young man? What would your Lucette say? I am afraid you are faithless."

"Oh, no, my lord," replied Edward. "That lady is very beautiful, but Lucette is more so,—to my mind at least."

"Do you think so?" said Richelieu. "I do not know which you were looking at, but one of them is my niece, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon. What do you think of the comedy?"

"Not much," replied Edward. "But I really am no judge, my lord."

[430] "I think you are a good judge," said Richelieu, whose dislike to Corneille is well known. "Now I will tell you what you had better do. Go on with me to Suza. You can help to force the pass as a volunteer, if you like, and then proceed to Venice should you feel disposed. You shall have Morini for a companion, and I will give you one of the king's foragers to see that you are not starved on the road."

No proposal could be more agreeable to Edward Langdale; but there was one impediment, which he frankly told the cardinal. As always happens, he had miscalculated his expenses, and found that the money he had brought from England would hardly suffice till he arrived at Venice. "I can get more to-morrow, your Eminence, I believe," he said, "for I have full authority to draw on my good friend Clement Tournon, whose credit is good in Paris; but that will take time; and your Eminence, I presume, sets out early."

"Not very early," answered Richelieu; "but if you follow me the next day you will catch me on the road. You can ride fast, I know, for you nearly killed the poor Basques who were sent to ride after you when you left Nantes. Morini will help you to get the money. Don't you know he is an alchemist, and can change any thing into gold? But he will take you to my banker,—who is the best alchemist, after all. So Clement Tournon trusts you, does he? He is the first goldsmith of the kind, I fancy."

"I can well afford to pay him whatever he lends me now, my lord," replied Edward. "For on one lucky day, which the Romans would have marked with a white stone, I recovered the deeds which secured to me my mother's large property, which deeds had been lost for several years."

"What day was that?" asked Richelieu, in a somewhat eager tone.

Edward told him, for he remembered it well; and the cardinal immediately called Morini to his side, and spoke to him for a moment or two in a low tone.

"The very same day, your Eminence sees," replied Morini, with an air of triumph. "Such small coincidences may be necessary to confirm your belief: with me it is not so. The stars never lie, my lord cardinal."

"If they speak at all, I suppose they do not," said Richelieu.

"They have spoken very plainly in this case," replied the astrologer. "But the actors are going to begin again." And he was about to retire.

[431] "Never mind," said the cardinal; "stay here. I have orders to give you, and I want them obeyed to the letter."

Edward knew that it was sometimes dangerous to overhear too much of the minister's conversation. He had heard of a man's finding his way into the Bastille merely because he had been very near his Eminence while he was conversing with a friend; and he therefore prudently withdrew to the farther part of the box. While the second act went on, Richelieu continued to talk with Morini, in a low tone, it is true, but with an indifference not at all complimentary to the actors or the piece. To the last acts he was somewhat more attentive, but went away before the play was concluded, merely saying to Edward as he passed, "Go with this good signor, Monsieur Langdale, and follow his counsels. He has heard my opinion upon several matters; and, until we meet again, you had better be guided by him even in what may seem things of small consequence."

Edward Langdale bowed, and the minister passed out; but Morini approached Edward's side, saying, "Let us go also, my young friend. There is no use of staying to see this stupid play."

The young gentleman's eyes, however, were fixed upon the opposite side of the theatre, where the cardinal's niece and the ladies in her company were also preparing to take their departure. He had caught another glance of that beautiful face, though it was but for a moment; and now the figure as she was moving away showed lines as lovely as the profile. Taller than most of her companions, and yet not very tall, every movement seemed grace itself; and, just as she was passing the door, she turned round and gave a quick glance at the cardinal's box, which certainly did not diminish the admiration of the young Englishman.

"How very beautiful the Duchess of Aiguillon is!" said Edward, turning to Morini.

"Oh, yes," replied the other. "She is perhaps the most beautiful woman in France. But take

care of what you are about; for some people say the cardinal is in love with her himself, and he will bear no rival."

[432] "Oh, love," said Edward, "is out of the question. I look at her, Signor Morini, merely as I should look at a beautiful statue. I love one, as you know, fully as beautiful, and to me a thousand times more dear than she could ever become."

"Now you mention it," said Morini, "it strikes me there is some likeness between them."

"There is," said Edward; "but Lucette is much younger, and not so tall. Now I will follow you, my good sir." And they went out of the theatre together.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Youth and Fate are always at variance as to times and distances. Youth says, "one day;" Fate says, "two." Youth says, "fifty miles;" but Fate almost always makes it a hundred. Edward had more difficulty in getting a thousand crowns than he had expected; and he did not altogether think that Signor Morini aided him as much as he might have done. Richelieu, who had only made a very short stay in Paris, quitted the capital about mid-day, and Edward, as may be supposed, was all impatience to hurry after him; but Morini, on the contrary, was as cool and composed as if he was making an astrological calculation, always remarking that he would overtake the minister long before he got to Suza. "He never travels very fast, you know," said the little Italian; "and, besides, he has got a whole party of the ladies of the court with him, who always make a march tedious. They went off at daylight this morning; but you may count upon them to make the journey at least five days longer than it ought to be."

"Nevertheless," said Edward, "I wish to proceed as fast as possible; and the objections of these bankers seem to me to be ridiculous."

[433] "Oh, no; they make no objections," said Morini. "They only want a little time to consider. They are not all in love. They do not all want to get to Venice. They do business in a business-like way, and have no idea of firing off large sums like cannon-shot."

However, the whole of that day passed without the money being procured; and the second day had seen the sun rise several hours, when at length Signor Morini thought fit to whisper two words in the ear of Monsieur Philippon, the banker, which, as if by magic, brought forth the thousand crowns about which there had been so much difficulty.

Nevertheless, it was three o'clock in the evening before Edward Langdale could depart; and then, besides Signor Morini himself and the king's forager who had been promised, were half a dozen lackeys and pages, and a good deal of baggage,—which did not promise to accelerate the journey. Once started, however, and with sufficient money in his pocket, Edward resolved to delay for no man, and to be at Suza as soon as the cardinal. He was somewhat mistaken in his calculation, indeed; for Richelieu pursued his way, wherever he could, by water; and, though the prime minister could always command boats, the young English gentleman could not obtain the same accommodation in a country where the passage of troops and the court had rendered all means of progression scarce. In every other respect, the first part of Edward's journey was without accident,—I might almost have said without incident. But it so happened that at Montargis, where the young gentleman arrived in the afternoon, a large party of ladies were setting out on horseback just at the moment he entered the little town. The number of servants with them, and a small body of the cardinal's guard, showed that they belonged to the court, which could not otherwise have been discovered by their faces, as each, according to the general custom of that day, wore a little black velvet mask, called a *loup*, to guard her complexion when travelling. Signor Morini, however, either divined who each was by her figure, or else, with Italian carelessness, took his chance of mistakes; for he dashed at once amidst the party, talked first to one and then to another, and seemed very well received by all. Edward had ridden up by his side; but, as he knew nobody, he spoke to nobody till one of the ladies observed, in a very sweet voice, "You do not seem so sociable as your companion, sir."

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"I could not presume," said Edward, "to address ladies whom I have never seen before, unless they gave me some encouragement to do so."

"I do not know whether you have seen me," said the lady; "but I have seen you."

"Pray, where?" asked Edward,—"that I may give that wild bird, Fancy, some notion how to fly."

"I saw you last with the cardinal, at the Hôtel de Bourgogne," said the lady, with that sort of timid, trembling accents which are so attractive on young and beautiful lips,—small drops of honey to young ears and hearts.

"Last?" said Edward. "Had I ever the pleasure of seeing you before that night?"

"I did not mean to say that," answered the lady. "But you imply that you did see me then."

"I saw two or three very beautiful persons," said Edward, "but have no means of knowing which of those you are."

"No, nor shall you have any," she replied, bowing her head gracefully, "neither to-day, nor to-morrow, nor the next day; but if you are very good, and behave yourself very well, I may take off my *loup* some time between this and Michaelmas. But now tell me: where are you riding so fast?—to get yourself killed at Suza?"

"No," answered Edward: "such is certainly not my object; but I am going toward Venice, and wish to reach that city as soon as my horse can carry me."

"Oh, that is a long way off," said the lady. "I think I must keep you near me. You shall be my cavalier along the road. I will find out some crime you have committed, and put you to all sorts of penances."

"But what if I have committed no crime?" asked the young gentleman.

[435] "Oh, but you have," she said. "You should have known me the moment you saw me. No mask should be sufficient to hide a lady from a gallant and courteous cavalier. You ought to be able to see my face through my *loup*, as if it were made of glass."

Edward smiled, but made no reply; but he thought within himself, "Lucette would not have spoken so to a mere stranger. What a difference there is between her pure, sweet simplicity and the free manners of these courtly ladies!"

"You do not answer," continued the lady: "I am afraid we do not ride fast enough for you. Now, what is it makes you so anxious to run forward to Venice? Now, I warrant it is some of the beautiful black eyes of the City of the Sea."

"No, indeed, it is not," replied Edward. "I never was in Venice in my life."

"Well," she continued, "love of some kind, at all events. Nothing but love could make a man in such a hurry. Now, tell me what kind of love it is."

"Why, the most extraordinary love in the world," answered Edward. "The love of a man for his wife,—a love they recognise little in France, not at all in Italy, and so dilute in Turkey that it is not worth having."

"Very marvellous love indeed," replied the lady. "Yet I think if I were a man, and were married, I should love my wife better than you do."

"I defy you," said Edward, laughing.

"Now, I will catechize you," returned the lady. "Do you think of her every day?"

"Every hour, every moment," said Edward.

"Do you make her your chief object in life?—pray for her, work for her?"

"Every thing else in life," said Edward, "is but valuable to me as it has reference to her. Ambition becomes splendid when I think it may elevate her. Money, which is but dross, seems to gain real worth if she is to share it."

"And do you ever," continued the lady, laughing, "stare at pretty faces across a theatre and dream for a minute or two as to what might be your luck if you had not tied yourself to another?"

[436] "No!" replied Edward, boldly. "I sometimes may stare at pretty faces, and think them very beautiful, when I think there is a fanciful resemblance to that which I think most beautiful of all."

The lady was silent for a minute or two; but at length she answered, "Well, I think you are very rude. You must be an Englishman, you are so uncivil. You dare me so that I have a great mind to make you in love with me, just to punish you. Nay, do not shake your head: I could do it in five minutes. All men are as weak as water,—at least, so I have always been told; and I could soon bring you to my feet if I chose to employ a few little simple arts upon you."

"I doubt not your power, dear lady," replied Edward, "upon any heart not preoccupied like mine; but Helen of Troy, or her bright mistress, Venus herself, could have no effect upon one who loves as I do."

"Well, this is too bad," said the lady. "We shall see. We have a long journey to take together; and if before it is over I do not make you tell me you love me, my name is not—what it is."

Just at this moment one of the young cavaliers rode up, with the gay and dashing air of his country and his class, and addressed the lady in some commonplace terms of gallant attention. In an instant she seemed turned into ice,—answered a few words politely, but in so cold a tone that Edward could not but see at once the dangerous preference she seemed to show him. The young man appeared to feel it too; and, after staying by her side for about

five minutes, he directed his horse to another group, where his society seemed more welcome. The conversation was renewed between Edward and his fair companion as soon as the officer was gone, and did not much vary in character from the specimen already given. It was late, however, when the party arrived at Chatillon, and the ladies retired at once to the apartments which had been prepared for them; but at eight o'clock on the following morning none of them had quitted their chambers, nor did Edward see any preparation among guards or attendants for pursuing the journey before a late hour. Calling Pierrot without much deliberation, the young Englishman ordered his horses to be saddled, and was in the act of mounting, when Morini, whom he had not yet seen that day,

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appeared at the door, exclaiming, "Hi? Where are you going?"

"To Suza," replied Edward, springing on his horse's back; and, without waiting to hear any remonstrances from the little Italian, he rode off as fast as he could go.

We will not pursue him on his journey, nor even dwell upon the forcing of the pass at Suza. Suffice it to say that Edward arrived, just in time to volunteer, the night before the attack. Richelieu he did not see, although he heard he was in the camp. But one of the first persons he met with was the young officer who had gone down with him to the outposts before Rochelle, and who now gayly marched up with him against the entrenchments at Suza. It is well known how they were taken at the first rush, with no great resistance on the part of the troops of Savoy. But Edward and his companion both received slight pike-wounds,—one in the arm and the other in the shoulder,—sufficient to show they had been in the heat of the battle, but not severe enough to obtain much commiseration. The king, as was usual with him, retired to his quarters as soon as the pass was carried, without inquiring the amount of his loss or taking any notice of the wounded. Not so Richelieu; for as soon as the particulars could be ascertained he caused a list of all who had suffered much, or little, to be laid before him.

On the following morning, somewhat to his surprise, Edward received a summons to attend the cardinal, and, when he presented himself, met with a somewhat sharp rebuke for having left Morini and his party.

"They tell me you are wounded," said Richelieu. "It serves you very right, for having disobeyed my commands."

"It is but a scratch, sir," said Edward. "A rusty nail in an old door would inflict a worse; and I was anxious to show that in all cases, except against my own country, I am really desirous of serving your Eminence."

"That is all very well," replied the cardinal. "But I like to be obeyed. You could not tell my views or purposes in the directions which I gave. But, as it is done, it cannot be helped. And now, I suppose, you are longing to go on to Venice?"

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"Most anxiously," replied Edward, "if I understand your Eminence rightly, that you free me from the promise I made to you some two years ago, and authorize me to claim my bride wherever I may find her."

"That is soon settled," said Richelieu; and, taking up a pen, he wrote:—"Lucette Marie de Mirepoix du Valais is the wife of Edward Langdale, of Buckley; and these are to summon and require all persons who have or have had any control or custody of the said Lucette to give her up to the said Edward Langdale, her husband, and, in the king's name, to warn all persons to refrain from opposing the rights of the said Edward Langdale in regard to the said Lucette de Mirepoix, under pretence of relationship, guardianship, or any other cause whatever."

He signed it with his name, and gave it to Edward, saying, "Get it sealed, and then away to Venice as soon as you please. Peace will be signed in three days, if I am not mistaken; and not only peace with Savoy, young gentleman, but with England also,—hard-headed England! In the mean time, you can pass freely. My safe-conduct—which of course you have with you—is as good now, I imagine, in Italy as in France. Only one thing more. Let it be understood that you return and join me as soon as you have fulfilled your mission; and bring your bride with you, if you find her." He paused, with a smile of much good-humor, and then added, "When you come back I may have a little negotiation for you; for the first steps to the surrender of Rochelle I owe to you."

The political events which followed are well known. The peace of Suza with Savoy and England, the raising of the siege of Casal, and the relinquishment of Mantua to the house of Nevers, succeeded with the utmost rapidity; and the Cardinal de Richelieu saw every thing that his mind conceived or his hand touched perfectly successful.

In the mean time, Edward Langdale hastened over the Alps, crossed the whole breadth of Italy, and, taking boat at Mestré, landed in Venice. But he was not so successful as the great man he had just left. Richelieu's safe-conduct obtained for him instant access to all the authorities of the republic; and, with more frankness than they usually displayed, they informed him at once that the young lady he sought was no longer in the city. She had been claimed, they said, some months before, by authority which their laws prevented them from opposing, and had been carried, they believed, into Savoy. Edward then asked for Madame de la Cour; but he found that she also had left Venice, and had gone, they believed, to Paris. The only person, they said, who knew any thing of Mademoiselle de Mirepoix was an

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old merchant who had arrived some days before and was living at a goldsmith's on the Slavonian quay. Edward hurried there, and, as he expected, found old Clement Tournon. But the worthy syndic could give him no information, and was in almost as much distress about his Lucette as Edward himself.

"Depend upon it," he said, "that horrid Madame de Chevreuse has got possession of the dear girl at last; and our only resource will be an appeal to the cardinal. He has eyes everywhere, and will both know where to find her and how to recover her."

[440] No time was lost. The old man and Edward set off together, directing their course by Turin and Suza. But again they were disappointed. The king, who in time of war forgot all his slothful inactivity and showed the fire and eagerness of his father, had by this time turned upon the Cevennes,—the last refuge of the Protestants in France,—and Richelieu had followed—or, rather, accompanied—him. With the delay of one day at Chambéry, to rest the old man, Edward pushed on after the cardinal toward Nismes, hearing nothing as he went but tales of Louis's exploits. The army of the Duc de Rohan, which had opposed successfully several of the best generals of France, had seemed paralyzed by the fierce energy of the king. Town after town had fallen; and Montauban itself, the people said, could not hold out three days. Such was the last intelligence which Edward received just after his entrance into Ners; but at the same time came the news, far more satisfactory to him, that Richelieu himself was at Alais, but a few miles distant. No horses were to be procured: his own were tired nearly to foundering; and poor Clement Tournon, in his eagerness to keep up with his young companion, had greatly over-tasked his strength. Nothing remained but to pass the night at Ners, a mere village, where almost every house was occupied by some of the followers of the court. But though the accommodation was as poor as it could be, yet Edward saw the next morning that Clement Tournon must still remain at Ners. His bodily powers were not equal to carry him farther without long repose; and Edward set out for Alais alone, leaving Pierrot to attend upon the old man.

The little town, when the young gentleman entered it, was all alive. Courtiers and soldiers were fluttering about in every direction; and the gay dresses, unspotted and fresh, showing that the court had been some days there, contrasted sadly with Edward's dusty garments and travel-soiled apparel. Nevertheless, he rode straight forward, through what is now called the Place de la Maréchale, to a house where the numerous groups, both on foot and horseback, before the door, led him to believe the cardinal's quarters were established. There he sprang to the ground under the arcade, and, leaving his tired horse, with the perfect certainty that he would not run away, he was pushing his way through the little crowd around, noticed very little by anybody, when the voice of his young companion in the attack at Suza met his ear, exclaiming, "Ah, Monsieur de Langdale! Have you heard Montauban has been taken? But do not let me stop you; for his Eminence was asking for you yesterday."

"As you are of his household," said Edward, "will you have the kindness to tell his Eminence that I am here?—for I know none of these people. They do not know me; and I suspect I am not a very courtier-like figure to seek an audience of the prime minister."

"I will do it directly," said the young officer. "He is very busy, but I know he wishes to see you: so follow me up."

[441] Edward mounted the stairs close after his companion, and, entering a chamber to which there was no ante-room, as he had expected, found himself immediately in the presence of Richelieu, who was seated at a table near the window, while two secretaries were writing at his right hand. The room was half full of people, some of whom were waiting silently, as if for audience, while others were conversing in low voices; and one middle-aged man was speaking to the cardinal, with a paper in his hand, as if making a report. Richelieu raised his eyes as Edward entered, but took no notice, and continued to listen attentively to the gentleman who was speaking. As soon as he was done, the cardinal said, "Well, be it so. See that it is done;" and wrote a few words on a sheet of paper. Another and another succeeded, spoke a few words to the minister, and received their answer; and then Richelieu, rising, said, aloud, "No more audiences this morning." The young Englishman was about to retire with the rest, who were slowly going out; but the cardinal added the next moment, "Monsieur Langdale, I wish to speak to you."

Thus saying, he passed into a room beyond, and Edward followed, leaving none but the secretaries in that which they had just quitted. It was a bed-chamber they now entered, (for, when campaigning, prime ministers, as well as others, must put up with such accommodation as they can get,) and Richelieu neither seated himself nor asked his companion to be seated.

"You have come at an important moment," said the cardinal, abruptly, "and I almost feared you would not be here in time. Are you willing to undertake a mission for me to Monsieur le Duc de Rohan, some forty miles hence?"

"Certainly, your Eminence," replied Edward. "But I must make three conditions, though to you. They are very slight ones."

"Ha!" said Richelieu, his brow somewhat darkening. "I am not accustomed to conditions. But let me hear what they are. You are an original, like most of your countrymen. Perhaps I

shall be able to grant them."

"Simply these three, my lord cardinal:—That while I am gone you shall cause search to be made for my young wife, who is not in Venice, has been brought to France, and is beyond doubt, I think, in the hands of Madame de Chevreuse."

[442] "Granted," said Richelieu. "The next."

"That you shall send over a physician to good old Clement Tournon, whom I have left ill at Ners."

"Ah!" said Richelieu. "Is he at Ners? That is most lucky. That man Morini said truly. Fortune goes with you. He may help me to raise the money, so that there may be no delay; for you must know, Master Langdale, that even kings and prime ministers, when they carry on expensive wars, sometimes come to the end of their finances at the very moment when large sums are most necessary. Clement Tournon: he is connected with all the goldsmiths of Nismes, is he not?"

"I heard him say on the journey that he had a number of friends there, and also in Avignon," replied Edward.

"It will do," said Richelieu. "Your second condition is granted. What is the third?"

"That your Eminence lends me a fresh horse, for my own is knocked up. I could wish also that I had some servant with me,—some one who knows the way."

"The horse you shall have," said Richelieu; "but as for the servant," he continued, thoughtfully, "I think you must go alone. I do not wish to send any Frenchman to that camp. Nay, more: nobody must know where you are going. Look at this map. This is the road." And he pointed with his finger to a map of the Cevennes. "First you go there,—to St. Martin,—then on to Mas Dieu. There you must inquire where the duke is encamped. I think it is somewhere near St. Andeal; but you will soon learn."

He ceased, and fell into a fit of thought; and, after waiting two or three minutes, Edward inquired, "And what am I to say to him? or will your Eminence write?"

"No, I will negotiate no more," answered Richelieu. "Say to him I have received his message; and I answer, 'One hundred thousand crowns in money, in four days, on the conditions expressed before;' and I wish his answer, Yes or No, before mid-day to-morrow."

"One horse will not carry me there and back—if it be forty miles—in that time over those mountains," said Edward.

[443] "Pshaw! Kill the horse and buy another!" exclaimed Richelieu. "It is worth ten horses for me to have the news to-morrow. Stay; you must have some credence."

Thus saying, he went into the other room again, was absent a few minutes, and returned with a small packet and a sheet of paper. Both were addressed to the Duc de Rohan, and on the latter was written, "Hear and believe the bearer, Edward Langdale, to you already known;" and then followed the great scrawl of "Richelieu." The packet was sealed; but, as the cardinal gave it to his young friend, he said, "That contains the terms which he must sign and return by your hand. Go down and get yourself some breakfast in the eating-hall while the horse is getting ready. You will find good wine here. But remember: silence!"

Edward went down, and soon procured refreshment; but, ere he had eaten more than a few mouthfuls or drank more than one draught of wine, one of the secretaries whom he had seen above came in, with a very reverential bow, saying, "His Eminence desires me to ask if Monsieur de Langdale requires any money for his journey."

"No," replied Edward: "I have enough."

The horse was announced as ready the moment after, and Edward, springing on his back, set out before the secretary lost sight of him.

CHAPTER L.

The ride was long and hot, for it was just the middle of the month of June; and though the scenery is perhaps without its parallel in the whole world, combining more beauties and more varieties of beauty than ever I saw anywhere else, though every now and then the road was shaded with trees attaining a height and breadth which would shame the forest-giants, yet toward evening Edward was forced to acknowledge to himself that he was very much exhausted. The horse which bore him was excellent, strong, willing, but not easy in its gait; and it also, ere they reached St. Andeal, showed the effects of the heat, preceding though it had not had the journey from Ners to Alais. At St. Audral he had but little difficulty in extracting from the towns-people an account of the position of the Duc de Rohan's camp, and Edward rode on under the shade of the mountains somewhat more slowly, calculating that he would have time both to take some rest and return to Alais

[444]

before noon on the following day.

It was dark when he arrived; and all that he could discover of the position of the camp was that it was very strong, while a number of mountain-gorges radiating from a centre offered the means of retreat in almost any direction. After some difficulties and delays at the outposts, he gave up his horse to one of the soldiers, who regarded him with a somewhat gloomy look, and was led to a little, rudely-constructed hut, where a sentry kept guard before the door. He found the Duc de Rohan perfectly alone; and, advancing to meet him, he was received in a much more courteous and friendly manner than at their last interview.

"Monsieur Langdale," said the duke, holding out his hand, "I am glad to see you. Pray, be seated. I can only offer you a stool in this place, for we are obliged to fare hardly here. What brings you now I know not; but I am glad of an opportunity of apologizing for some rudeness and heat which I displayed at our last meeting. By your bearing the cardinal's safe-conduct, I presume you come from him. What have you to say?"

"First let me hand you this," said Edward, giving him the letter of credence, over which the duke ran his eye hastily. "And next," said Edward, "that, in answer to your message, his Eminence says, 'One hundred thousand crowns, to be paid in four days, in money.'"

"Is that all he said?" said De Rohan. "Are you to act as negotiator in this business, sir?"

"Not in the least," replied Edward. "I merely bear you a message, and am perfectly ignorant of the whole circumstances, even of the contents of this package,—though I have been told that it contains the conditions, which, if you assent to them, you will sign, and enable me to return them to the cardinal by noon to-morrow."

[445] The duke took the packet, broke open the seal, and looked at the writing, which was very brief, consisting only of three paragraphs. There was a second paper, however, apparently briefer still. As he read, de Rohan knit his brows and bit his lip.

"Am I to understand that you know nothing of these papers?" he asked.

"Nothing whatever," replied Edward; and the duke, rising from his stool, walked up and down the hut for some minutes in deep thought.

"It must be done," he said, at length. "There is no use taking counsel in the matter, for it is what they all wish. And thus ends the Protestant cause in France! Monsieur Langdale, the only part of these papers which is personal to myself is that." And he laid the second enclosure before the young Englishman. "Why the cardinal has made this a condition all along I cannot conceive, unless it be a point of pride with him."

Edward read the paper, and perceived these words:—"I do hereby solemnly consent to and affirm the marriage of my cousin Lucette Marie de Mirepoix du Valais with Edward Langdale, of Buckley, in the county of Huntingdon, England, as solemnized at Nantes, on the 3d of July, in the year of grace 1627."

"I do assure you, my lord," said Edward, "this is none of my doing; and, sooner than be any impediment to a peace so necessary to the poor Protestants of France, I say, tear it. I will win Lucette by other means."

"No," said the duke: "I will sign it; I will sign all. And when a Rohan pledges his word the cardinal may be assured that it will be kept."

He took a little ink-horn from a neighboring table and signed the two papers; then, shaking Edward by the hand again, he said, "Give you joy, cousin! But you look ill and tired."

"I have ridden some sixty miles," said Edward, "with hardly any food, and no rest."

[446] The duke heard his reply with a rueful smile, but called a man from without, telling him to bring the best he had for a young gentleman's supper. The best was merely a bone of ham and some brown bread; but there was added a flagon of very good wine.

"I require a little rest more than any thing," said Edward; "and I would fain, my lord, lie down to sleep for a few minutes, if your people will take care of my horse and wake me at four o'clock when they change the sentries."

"That shall be done," said Rohan. "No chance of sleep for me to-night after signing these papers. Here; you can sleep on my bed. It is as good as any in the camp, I suppose." And, opening a door in the boarded partition, he pointed to a great pile of rosemary and wild mountain-herbs, saying, "It is a little better than the ground; but fatigue gives balm to sleep."

Edward's eyes were closed in a moment, and he knew nothing more till the duke himself called him at four. "Your horse is at the door," he said. "There are the papers. I hope his Eminence will be punctual in the payment; for I cannot turn ten thousand men loose amongst the mountains with no money in their pockets. Let the man who has brought the horse walk by your side and give the passwords."

Edward rode away well pleased with his success, and about half-past eleven reached the small town of Alais. There he was informed that the cardinal had not returned from Ners, but that Monsieur Rossignol would see him; and, on being admitted to the well-known

secretary, an order to deliver the papers which he brought, signed by Richelieu, was given him. Edward obeyed; and good Monsieur Rossignol, a man of great talent, though originally a peasant, said, in a significant tone, "It will be better for monsieur to ride out to the castle at Bourillaut, near Ners, where he will find the cardinal."

"My good sir, I am tired to death, and my horse can hardly move a leg. You forget what these mountain-roads are like."

[447] "You can rest below for three or four hours," said the secretary. "Get some refreshment,—by which time your own horse will have had rest sufficient,—and then ride to Bourillaut in the cool of the evening. It will be better. His Eminence desired it."

The thought that perhaps Richelieu might have obtained, through his many-eyed communications, some news of Lucette gave Edward fresh spirit; but still he followed the secretary's advice, for, after having ridden so hard for many days, some more repose was absolutely needful. Toward four o'clock, however, he set out toward Ners, having ascertained that the chateau to which he was directed lay on the right of the road some two or three miles before he reached the village; and all that need be said of his journey is that the road, as every one knows, is beautiful, and that his thoughts were like all young men's thoughts,—a little wild and chaotic, perhaps, but with Lucette prominent above all. Some two miles before the castle appeared in sight, however, he was met by a large cavalcade of gentlemen, ladies, guards, and pack-mules, with Richelieu at its head, going back apparently to Alais. The cardinal drew up his horse, saying, "I have heard of you, my young friend. Rossignol has sent me a messenger. Our good friend the syndic is well and gone to Nismes, but will be back in two days. Go on to the chateau, where I have ordered every thing to be prepared for you. There rest in peace for the night. You will find nobody there to plague you, unless it be a few women, who, if they are wise, will let you alone."

The cardinal moved on as he spoke; and Edward was fain to pursue his way to Bourillaut. He found some servants on the drawbridge, loitering about in the fine summer sunset; but as soon as his name was given the omnipotent commands of the cardinal made them all activity and attention. His horse was taken to the stable by one man; another ushered him into a handsome room, communicating with a bedroom beyond; and a third ran to bring the supper which he said his Eminence had ordered for him. All around had a very comfortable aspect; and Edward thought, as he threw himself into a chair, "A man with a wife whom he loved, and some little ones to cheer him, might pass his life very happily even here."

[448] The supper was soon brought, and was evidently the handiwork of some courtly cook; the wine was delicate and good; and Edward, according to the English fashion of all times, chose to take the moderate portion he did take after his meal. Telling the man who waited on him to leave him, he was about to pass the evening quietly, when, soon after the servant had quitted the room, the door was opened and some one looked in. One glance at the figure showed Edward that it was the lady with whom he had ridden some way from Montargis; and, to say the truth, the young Englishman would willingly have been spared her company. She still wore the black velvet *loup* over her face, which Edward thought was somewhat too coquettish, considering that it was now dark and the candles lighted; but of course he found himself bound to be polite, though he was determined to be as cold as ice. Yet there was something timid and hesitating in her manner that surprised him. As she came forward he could see that she trembled, and, rising, he placed a chair for her, saying, "To what am I indebted for this honor?"

"I have come to pass the evening with you," she said, in a low voice: "I cannot let you be here all alone."

Edward did not well know what to reply, and he answered at random:—"Let me beseech you, at all events, madam, to lay aside your mask now. Your complexion runs no risk here."

"No," said the lady, shaking her head; "not till you tell me you love me and will marry me."

"Are you not married already?" exclaimed Edward.

"Yes," she answered, "I am; but that makes no difference. Do you love me?"

"I have told you, dear lady," said Edward, in as calm a tone as he could assume, "that it is impossible. If you are the lady whom I saw at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, doubtless I could have loved you if my whole heart and soul had not been given to another; for I have seldom seen anybody more lovely."

"But who is this you love so well?" said the lady. "Give me her name,—her full name."

"Lucette Marie de Mirepoix du Valais," said Edward, impatiently.

[449] The mask was off in a moment. "Am I so changed, Edward?" said Lucette, throwing her arm round his neck. "I know I am taller,—much taller; but I did not think you would ever forget me."

"Forget you! Oh, no, no, Lucette!" cried Edward, circling her in his arms and covering her with kisses. "Have I ever forgotten you? have I ever ceased to think of you? But I saw you but for a moment across the dull and misty air of a theatre; and you are changed,—more charming, more beautiful than ever. But even Lucette unknown could not rob Lucette long

known of the love that has been hers always. When for a moment I saw your face I did not hear your voice, and when I heard your voice I did not see your face. But now I see all these loved features distinctly, and wonder how I could be deceived."

"We shall both change still more, Edward," she said, almost sadly. "And will you love me still?"

"Better,—still better," said Edward, clasping her to his heart. "If, Lucette, I loved you still after long absence, when you yourself tried to make me love another, do you suppose that affection will wane when the change comes over us together and you yourself engage me to love you still? Oh, yes, Lucette; I will not deny it; you are more beautiful than you used to be; but it was my young Lucette I loved; and how could I love any other?"

[450] "Well, I own that it was wrong," said Lucette, "to play with you and tease you as I did; but it was not to try you, for I was sure I knew your heart right well. It was the cardinal's command, however, and I feared to disobey him. He brought us all from Paris,—some for one reason, some for another: one that she might not intrigue against him at the court of the queen-mother; another, to remove her from poor Anne of Austria; others, for the amusement of the king and court, and perhaps to assist him in his own views. Why he brought me I know not,—perhaps to tease you on the road. No, no: I do him injustice. I sincerely believe it was to unite us in the end. But do you forgive me, Edward? Do you forgive me for acting a part that is not in my nature? A hundred times the mask was nearly taken from my face. My joy to find that you loved me still, and that you were faithful to your poor Lucette, passed all bounds, and made me almost faint with happiness. It is nearly eighteen months since I saw you at Aix; and since then how much I have suffered! And I have heard that you have suffered too,—that you have been apprehended and kept in prison, wounded again——"

"Oh, that is nothing!" answered Edward. "All has been followed by joy and success. I never valued wealth, Lucette, till I met with you; but now I have beyond doubt recovered one-half of my patrimonial property,—all that belongs to me; but enough, and more than enough, to secure my Lucette against all those grinding cares and petty annoyances which, though less sharp than the fierce blows of misfortune, are more wearing to the spirit and the heart. But tell me, my Lucette: how came you here? I had feared, from what they said at Venice, that you had fallen into the hands of Madame de Chevreuse."

"Oh, no," she answered: "that was a mistake. The council notified Madame de la Cour that I was demanded by those who had a right to demand me in France; but, with their usual secrecy, gave no further information. At first I resolved to fly; but whither could I go? To Madame de Rohan I could not apply; for her life in Venice has been one of great scandal and disgrace. Madame de la Cour could not or would not help me. But in the end I found that it was the ambassador from France who claimed me; and, when assured that I was to be under the guardianship of the cardinal himself, I went joyfully. He forbade me to write to you, saying you promised soon to rejoin him; and on the night I saw you at the theatre he told me to look at his *loge*, but to take no notice whatever I might see. The only thing I now fear is the opposition of my high relations. The Duc de Rohan is the head of the house; and, though he was kind to me—very kind—while I was with him, I know him to be the proudest man on earth, and as obdurate in his determinations as a rock."

[451] "You are my wife," said Edward, pressing her to his heart,—"*my wife by every tie, human and divine. Soubise may oppose, Madame de Chevreuse may oppose; but their opposition is nothing. Look here what authority the cardinal gave me when I was setting out for Venice.*" Lucette looked at the paper which he gave her.

"It was unkind of him to let you go," she said, "when he knew that I was within two days' journey of Suza; but that was to punish you for leaving that little Morini on the road."

"Do you know why I left him?" said Edward, kissing her rosy lips. "It was because a very beautiful lady said she would make me love her before our journey was ended; and I was resolved to love nobody but Lucette. No, my Lucette: our journey together has never ended, and through life never must end. You are mine, as I have said, by every tie. The Duc de Rohan, the only one who had any real authority, I saw last night. His opposition was entirely withdrawn, and his formal approval of our marriage at Nantes was given in writing."

Lucette was silent for a moment or two, and turned a little pale; and Edward asked, in a low tone, "What ladies are there here in the castle?"

"None," said Lucette. "Except my maid, we are all alone. Now I understand: I think I see why the cardinal took every one else away and insisted on my staying."

"Assuredly," replied Edward, "because you are my wife, Lucette, and he did not wish that we should be separated any more."

Her face was now as rosy as the dawn, and her breath came thick with agitation.

"You are mine, Lucette! are you not mine?" said Edward,—"*my own, my wife, my beloved?*"

"Oh, yes, yes!" sobbed Lucette, casting herself upon his bosom,—"*my husband, my own dear husband!*" And they parted no more.

CHAPTER LI.

The famous peace of Alais, which terminated, during the reign of Louis XIII., the struggles of the Protestants of France for a distinct organization and left them nothing but an insecure toleration, was concluded on the 27th of June, 1629, a few days after the reunion of Edward and Lucette. None can doubt that Richelieu was politically right in asserting and enforcing the sovereign authority over a body of men who had made religious differences a pretext for rebellion and a continual source of exaction and menace. Nor can any one accuse him of having violated his word in any degree to the Huguenots. They were suffered to follow the forms of their religion in peace; their peculiar tenets formed no obstacle to their admission into the highest offices in France; and the Duc de Rohan himself was employed in high and delicate negotiations, and ultimately fell in the military service of the monarch against whom he had so often fought.

A few days after the period to which we have carried our story in the last chapter, the hundred thousand crowns in gold, which were necessary for him, as well to provide for his troops as to repair his own shattered fortunes, were paid to the duke, according to Richelieu's promise; and the Protestant army was immediately disbanded,—glad to escape from the inevitable ruin and disaster which hung over their heads.

[453] The peace concluded at Suza restored those friendly relations with England which had so long been broken off. Spain and Savoy were, at least for the time, cowed by the power of France; and all men, both friends and enemies, saw in the well-directed operations of the French armies and the success of French diplomacy the great military and political genius of Armand du Plessis.

In the mean time, the cardinal kindly left Edward and Lucette to the enjoyment of each other's society; and it was not till some six or seven days after the union which he himself had aided so much to bring about that he visited them at the castle of Bourillaut. Great success, if in the end it makes men haughty and overbearing, seems at first to soften and expand the heart; and Richelieu, at the culminating-point of his fortunes, sat down and conversed with the two young people as their friend. He amused himself somewhat with their love, and expressed, and probably felt, some gratification at their happiness.

"Monsieur Langdale," he said, "a foolish prediction has been made to me, that as you and I were born on the same hour of the same day of the same month, though a number of years apart,—how many I do not remember,—my fate and yours should run together; and, though of course I put no faith in it, that prophecy has as yet proved remarkably true. I am therefore very desirous to attach you to me, now that peace is signed between France and England; and you must tell me, according to a promise which you once made, what post I can give you at the court of France."

Edward and Lucette looked at each other; and then, with his usual frankness, Edward answered, "No post your Eminence can give me can attach me more strongly to you than that which you have already given me,—the husband of this dear lady. Two days ago we had a long consultation with our good friend Clement Tournon, and laid out our plans for life. He is resolved, with the sum he has amassed, to purchase a small and beautiful estate and chateau which he has seen not far from Paris; and Lucette and myself intend to live there a great part of each year as his son and daughter. We shall of course visit England from time to time; but our wish is to avoid courts and cities as much as may be."

"Young people's dreams," said Richelieu, gravely.

[454] "That may be," said Edward, "but I trust it will not prove so. However, if your Eminence were to give me some high post, you would make many of the French nobility dissatisfied, and you might find me ungrateful; but, as it is, I shall be near you the greater part of my days; and, whether I may be in England or in France, if at any time I can serve you with my hand, or my head, or my heart, believe me, I will not forget these happy days are all owing to your great goodness."

"I wish I could dream," said the cardinal, looking down thoughtfully. "It must be a very happy thing to be so confident of the world and of fate and of oneself. But be it so, Monsieur Langdale. Only remember!"

"My lord, have I ever forgotten?" asked Edward.

"No, no," said Richelieu; "and it is for that I have esteemed you. Come and see me when you are near Paris; for when I have a leisure hour I shall love your conversation. We will talk of art, and literature, and science; and I shall banish for that hour the thought of politics, and intrigue, and cabal: oh, how I hate them! And if you have a son," he continued, laying his hand kindly upon that of Lucette as he rose to depart, "you shall call his name Armand."

"And you shall bless him," cried Lucette, warmly, kissing his hand; "and I will tell him that you made his father and myself happy."

Perhaps, in all his career of splendid misery, that was one of the happiest hours that Richelieu had ever experienced.

[455] The Prince de Soubise, as is well known, did not return to France and make his full submission to his king till Edward and Lucette had been married some time. To Edward, whom he met at the court not long after the final fall of Marie de Medici, he was polite and even friendly; but, whether it was that he was naturally of a more haughty disposition than his brother the Duc de Rohan, or that he was never placed under the same pressure of circumstances, he refused to acknowledge, by any authentic act, the legality of the marriage between his young cousin and the son of one of his earliest friends. It made no difference to them, however, nor troubled their peace in the least; and in the end, after witnessing their mutual felicity for many years, both he and his brother the duke, by their own wretched experience, were forced to acknowledge that a marriage of affection has more chance for happiness than a marriage of convenience. Still, however, with the same peculiar obduracy which had characterized his resistance to the crown in the hopeless war of the Protestants against Louis XIII., he refused to sign, on several occasions, the papers which were necessary to enable Lucette to enter fully into possession of her father's estates, saying that he would not recognise her marriage with the second son of a simple English gentleman. But his consent was passed over by certain forms of the Parliament; and as for Madame de Chevreuse, with her usual gay lightness, she signed her approbation of the marriage without a word of opposition,—when she found that opposition would be vain. She was even inclined to be exceedingly kind and intimate with the young pair; but Edward gave no encouragement to her advances, and she satisfied herself by declaring that, like many of his countrymen, he was a handsome man, but somewhat brutal.

In regard to Edward's claim to the estate of Buckley, there was no opposition; and he kept quiet possession during the whole of his life of that fine part of his inheritance. The estates of Langley were suffered to go greatly to decay for several years, the rents accumulating in the hands of the agent without ever being called for or paid over to any one.

How this property reverted to Edward himself, and how the objections of the Prince de Soubise to the marriage of his young cousin with Edward Langdale were at last done away,—what was the ultimate fate of Sir Richard Langdale,—and how an old proverb was verified,—would be too long of telling in the pages which yet remain.

[456] Perhaps, if God spares the life, the health, and the senses of the author of this work, these particulars may all be related in another. At all events, the history of Lord Montagu's Page is completed; for it would be folly to pursue that history in the calm, continued, uninterrupted happiness of his married life. Every one has been unsuccessful in painting happiness with the pen. Dante failed in his *Paradiso*, Milton in his *Paradise Regained*; and the writer of these pages is not sufficiently presumptuous to suppose that he could succeed in representing a state as near as this world permits to that which they attempted to picture in vain.

THE END.

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FOOTNOTES:

- [1] Some historians have fancied that there were feelings of tenderness on the part of Richelieu toward the beautiful Marie de Rohan; but it is only necessary to look into any of the memoirs of those times, and to remember the character of the man, to see that Madame de Chevreuse was incessantly employed in thwarting his plans, undervaluing his genius, and even ridiculing his person; and that nothing but the most bitter enmity could be excited on his part by such conduct.
- [2] In the beautiful play of Richelieu, by Sir Edward Lytton, Richelieu is always dressed and represented, both on the English and American stage, as a very old and feeble man. The period of Richelieu's life is marked in the play by the introduction of Baradas. Now, Baradas succeeded Chalais in the favor of Louis XIII., and was exiled within the year. His fall from high favor and great wealth to his original obscurity and actual poverty was caused by no crime or conspiracy on his part, but merely by his rudeness and imprudence.
- [3] The second examination of the unhappy Chalais, perhaps,—perhaps the lamentable scene of Anne of Austria's appearance before the council. It does not seem that De Tronson was particularly intimate with the Count de Chalais during his prosperity; but he certainly spoke in his favor to the king after his arrest, and painted in strong colors the danger of marrying Gaston to the rich heiress of Montpensier, whose revenues would in time make the heir-presumptive more wealthy than the monarch. Indeed, to many it has seemed that in this marriage Richelieu made the most dangerous error of his life. De Tronson seems to have been an amiable man and a man of talent, who somewhat feared Richelieu and courted him as much as honor and honesty would permit. But he soon disappears from the political stage;

and his ultimate fate I do not know.

[4] Some say seven-and-twenty.

[5] These two men, who adhered to Lord Montagu through his whole journey, first tracking him from place to place with the sagacity and pertinacity of well-trained hounds, and then contriving to get admitted to his service, were in reality Basques. Some have supposed that they were creatures of Monsieur de Bourbonne; but there seems no doubt they were two of the many skilful agents whom Richelieu took care to provide himself with in every rank of life.

Transcriber's notes:

P.18. 'It it' is changed to 'It is'
P.76. 'stoop' changed to 'swoop'.
P. 106, 'dulness' changed to 'dullness'.
P.108. 'Rochelois' changed to 'Rochellois'.
P.126. 'Loge' changed to 'Logé'.
P. 211. 'Loir' changed to 'Loire'.
P. 219. 'th' changed to 'there'.

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