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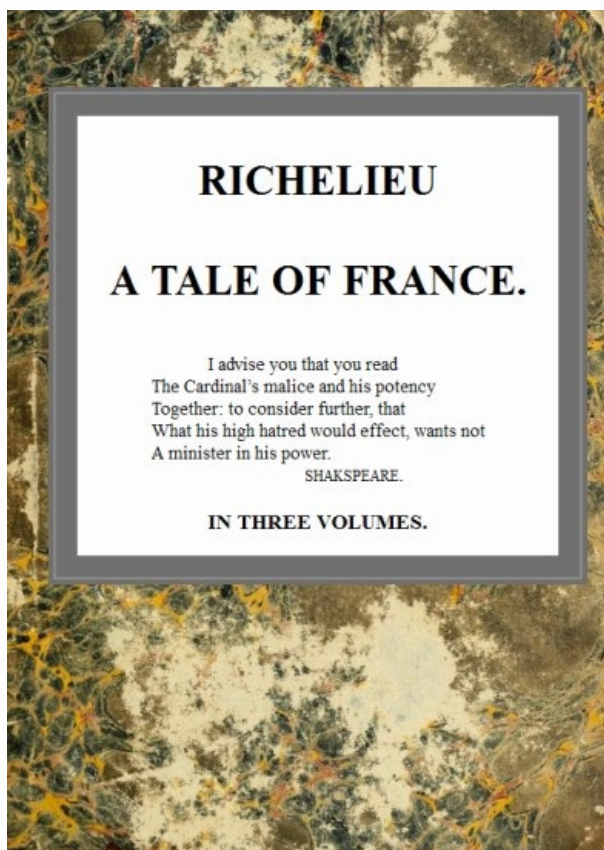
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## **RICHELIEU, A TALE OF FRANCE.**

I advise you that you read  
The Cardinal's malice and his potency  
Together: to consider further, that  
What his high hatred would effect, wants not  
A minister in his power.  
SHAKSPEARE.

**IN THREE VOLUMES.**

**VOL. III.**

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**CONTENTS**

**CHAPTER I., II., III., IV., V., VI., VII., VIII., IX., X., XI., XII., XIII., XIV., XV. NOTES.**

**RICHELIEU.**

## CHAPTER I.

Showing how a Great Minister made a great mistake.

STRANGE to say, in the manuscript notes from which this true history is derived, there occurs the most extraordinary omission that perhaps ever appeared in the writings of any one pretending to accuracy; and most provoking of all, I have searched memoirs and annals, histories and letters, state papers and private memoranda, and have consulted all sorts of tradition, oral and written, without being enabled to supply from any other source the neglect of the original historian. Who would believe, that, after having interested the reader so deeply in the character of Jacques Chatpilleur, *Cuisinier Aubergiste*, the writer of the above-mentioned notes would be so inconsiderate, so stupid, so disappointing, as not to say one word concerning the farther progress of the redoubtable *vivandier* on that night, wherein he achieved the two famous victories recorded in the last volume. But so it is: instead of giving us a pathetic account of the scanty supper he at length contrived to furnish forth for the noble prisoner, or of satisfying our curiosity in regard to the means he employed to appease the wrath of the Governor, the notes skip over the farther proceedings of that entire night, and bring us at once upon the Count de Blenau's levee the next morning; entering into very minute details concerning the difficulties he encountered in arranging his mustaches, buttoning his pourpoint, &c. without assistance; all of which I shall pass over as contemptible and irrelevant, and below the dignity of authentic history.

With the embarrassment of the Count de Blenau's mind we have something more to do; and, to tell the truth, the more he reflected upon his situation, the more he was puzzled in regard to his future conduct. A fresh examination, either by Lafemas or some member of the Council, was to be expected speedily, under which he must either still refuse to answer, which would infallibly be followed by the *peine forte et dure*; or he must acknowledge that the Queen had privily conveyed him an order to confess all, which would involve his royal mistress and himself and Pauline in dangers, the extent of which he hardly knew; or he must reply to the questions he had before refused to answer, and disclose what had been intrusted to his honour, without showing that he was authorized to do so; in which case, the reproach of treachery and cowardice must inevitably fall upon his name. This was a dilemma with three horns, and each very sharp; so that it was difficult to determine which to jump upon, and seemingly impossible to avoid them all. De Blenau was sadly chewing the cud of these bitter doubts, when he heard some one enter the outer chamber; and the moment after, the very privacy of his bedroom was invaded by the Governor, who entered with a countenance pale and agitated; and who, like all people who have something horrible to communicate, begged him not to be alarmed, in a tone that was enough to frighten him out of his wits.

"Alarmed at what?" demanded the Count, summoning courage to encounter the danger, whatever it might be.

"Why, Monsieur de Blenau," answered the Governor, "you must prepare yourself to meet the Cardinal himself; a messenger has just come to say that he will be here in person without loss of time. He arrived last night at the Palais Cardinal, and brought the King to Paris with him."

"You seem to hold this Cardinal in some fear," said De Blenau, almost smiling, amidst his own embarrassment, at the evident terror of the Governor. "I could have wished that he had given me a little more time for consideration; but I am not so frightened at him as you seem to be, who have nothing to do with it."

"But pray remember, *mon cher Comte*," cried the Governor, "that you promised not to betray me to the Cardinal in any case."

De Blenau's lip curled with contempt. "I think, you ought to know before this time," answered he, "that I am not likely to betray any one.—But there seems a noise and bustle in the court, in all probability caused by the arrival of the Cardinal. Go and receive him, and depend upon me."—Of all misfortunes on the earth, thought De Blenau, the curse of cowardice is the most dreadful.

In a few minutes his supposition respecting the arrival of the Cardinal was confirmed by a summons to appear before the Council in the hall of audience; and with his mind still undecided, he followed the officer across the court to the scene of his former examination. A difference, however, struck him in the present arrangements of the prison, from those which he had before remarked.

The court, instead of being crowded by those prisoners who had the liberty of walking in it, was now entirely void; and, fixed like marble on each side of the door opening into the audience-hall, was a soldier of the Cardinal's guard, between whom stood a clerk, or greffier, of the council-chamber, seemingly waiting for the approach of the prisoner. As soon as De Blenau was within hearing, the doors were thrown open, and the Clerk pronounced, "Claude Count de Blenau, appear before the King in council."

"The King!" thought De Blenau; "this Cardinal, not content with taking the King's guards, must take his title also:"—but passing on through the open doors he entered the hall, where a very different scene presented itself from that which had before met his eyes in the same place.

The whole farther part of the chamber was filled with the officers and attendants of Richelieu: each side, as well as the interstices between the massy pillars that supported the roof, was occupied by a body of the Cardinal's guard: in the chair at the head of the table sat the King himself with the Prime Minister on his right hand: Chavigni, Bouthilliers, Mazarin and others, occupied seats on either side; and to complete the array appeared several clerks, together with the officers of the prison, leaving only the space of about three feet at the bottom of the table, which remained clear for the prisoner to present himself opposite the throne.

Extraordinary as it was for the King himself to sit upon the examination of a State prisoner, the whole demeanour and conduct of the monarch had undergone a change since the return of Cinq Mars, which astonished those about him more than even his resolution to be present at the council held that morning in the Bastille. Even those who were most accustomed to watch the changes of the King's variable disposition, would hardly have recollected in the Sovereign, who, with the easy dignity and self-possession of a clear and intelligent mind, presided at the head of the council-table, the same man who in general yielded his very thoughts to the governance of Richelieu, and abandoned all his kingly duties to one whom he appeared both to dislike and dread. But so it was, that, stimulated by some unseen means, Louis seemed at once to have resumed the King; and as soon as De Blenau entered the audience-hall, he at once opened the business of the day himself with all those powers which his mind really possessed when called into activity.

"Monsieur de Blenau," said the King, "we are glad to see you. We have heard much of you, and that always a good report, from those that we love, and therefore our confidence in your honour and integrity is great. There will be various questions asked of you to-day by the members of the council present, which much affect the welfare of the kingdom, and our own personal happiness; and to these questions we command you, as a good subject and an honest man, to answer truly, and according to your conscience, without any reservation whatsoever."

Before entering the audience-hall, De Blenau, well knowing that every careless word might be subject to misconstruction, had determined to speak as little as possible; and therefore, merely answering the King's speech by a profound inclination of the head, he waited in silence for the questions to which he had alluded.

Richelieu, the keen searching glance of whose eyes had been fixed upon him during the whole time, paused for a moment in expectation of a reply; but seeing that he said nothing, the Minister proceeded himself. "I have heard with astonishment, Monsieur de Blenau," said he, "that you have lately refused to answer questions, to which you had before replied in conversation with me; and I can conceive no reason, Sir, why you should object to give satisfaction on these points one day as much as another."

"Nor can I conceive," replied De Blenau, "any reason why your Eminence should cause questions to be put to me again which I had before answered; and that reiteration even while the replies were yet new in your mind."

"My memory might want refreshing," answered the Cardinal; "and you must also remember, that the circumstances were very different at the two periods in which those questions were addressed to you. In the first place, you spoke merely in conversation; in the second case, you were a prisoner, and it was therefore necessary that your deposition should be taken from your own mouth.—But all this is irrelevant. The Council is not inclined to take notice of your former contumacy, provided you now reply to what shall be asked you."

De Blenau was again silent, merely bowing to signify that he comprehended, without pledging himself either to answer or not; and Richelieu proceeded with his questions, placing his hand, as he did so, upon a large packet of open letters which lay on the table before him.

"You have already informed me, Monsieur de Blenau, if I remember rightly," said the Minister, "that you have, at various times, forwarded letters for the Queen, both by the usual public conveyances and otherwise."

The King fixed his eyes intently upon the Count, while he replied at once, "I have done so!"

"Can you remember," continued the Cardinal, "during what period you have been accustomed to send these letters for the Queen? I mean, of what date was the first?"

"I cannot precisely at this moment call to mind," answered De Blenau, "but it was shortly after your Eminence appointed me, or rather recommended me, to the office of Chamberlain to her Majesty."

"You see, Sire," said Richelieu, turning to the King with a meaning glance, "just before the taking of Arras by the Imperialists——"

"Exactly so, your Eminence; I remember it by a circumstance that occurred at the time," interposed De Blenau, misdoubting the effect of the Cardinal's comments.

Richelieu gave him a gracious smile for this confirmation of his remark. "Pray, what circumstance was that, Monsieur de Blenau?" demanded he; but his smile was soon clouded by the Count's reply.

"It was, that the lace lappets, in order to procure which her Majesty wrote that letter to Brussels, were seized at Arras, that city having fallen into the enemy's hands. The Queen was much grieved thereat. You know, Monseigneur, ladies set great store by their apparel."

Chavigni smiled, but Richelieu's brow gathered into a heavy frown, and his reply was in that deep hollow tone of voice, by which alone one could distinguish when he was affected by any powerful feeling. His brow at all times remained calm, except when he sought to awe or intimidate; his eye, too, was under command, scanning the passions of others, and expressing none of his own, but those which he himself wished to appear; but his voice betrayed him, and when internally agitated, it would sink to so low and cavernous a sound, that it seemed as if the dead were speaking. It was in this tone that he answered De Blenau.

"The contents of that letter, Sir, are but too well known by their effects. But I am to conclude, from your observation, that you are as well aware of what the Queen's letters have contained, as the persons to whom they were addressed."

"Not so, your Eminence," replied De Blenau. "The import of that letter I happened to be acquainted with by accident, but I pretend to no farther knowledge."

"Yes, yes, Sir," said Richelieu, "it is very evident that you know well to be informed or not on any subject, as it suits your purpose."

"Nay, Monsieur le Cardinal," interposed the King, "I think the young gentleman answers with all candour and discretion. We do not seek to perplex him, but to hear the truth; and sure I am that he will not discredit his birth or honour by prevarication."

"Your Majesty's own honourable mind does justice to mine," replied the Count: "I will own that I am guarded in my speech; for surrounded by those who seek to draw matter from my mouth, on which to found some accusation against me, I were a fool to speak freely. Nevertheless, I will answer truly to whatsoever I do answer; and if there should come a question to which I cannot reply without betraying my duty, I will tell no falsehood, but, as I have done before, refuse to answer, and the consequences of my honesty be upon my own head."

"Well, Sir," said the Cardinal, "if you have done the harangue with which you are edifying the council, I will proceed with my questions; but first let me tell you, that I am not disposed to be dared with impunity. I think you denied to me that you had ever forwarded any letters to Don Francisco de Mello, Leopold Archduke of Austria, or Philip King of Spain.—Beware what you say, Claude Count de Blenau!"

"If I understand your Eminence rightly," said the prisoner, "you do not ask me whether I ever did forward such letters, but whether I ever denied to you that I did forward them: in which case, I must reply, that I did deny having expedited any letter to Don Francisco de Mello, but the two other names I never touched upon."

"Then you acknowledge that you have conveyed letters from the Queen to the Archduke and the King of Spain?" demanded Richelieu.

"I have made no such acknowledgment," answered De Blenau; "your Eminence puts a forced construction on my words."

"In vain you turn, Sir, like a rebellious serpent that strives in its windings to escape the hand that grasps it. At once I ask you, have you or have you not, ever, by any means, expedited any letter from the Queen, or other person, to either the Archduke of Austria, or the King of Spain? This, Sir, is a question that you cannot get over!"

The eyes of the whole Council fixed upon the Count as the Cardinal spoke. De Blenau paused for a moment to recollect himself, and then addressed himself directly to the King. "As a good and faithful subject," he said, "there is a great duty which I owe your Majesty, and I believe I have always performed it as I ought; but as a servant of your royal consort the Queen, I have other duties, distinct, though I hope in no degree opposed to those which bind me to my King. As a man of honour also and a gentleman, I am bound to betray no trust reposed in me, whether that trust seem to me material or not; and though I feel sure that I might at once answer the questions proposed to me by his Eminence of Richelieu without any detriment or discredit to her Majesty, yet so sacred do I hold the confidence of another, that I must decline to reply, whatever be the consequence. However, let me assure you, Sire, that no word or deed of her Majesty the Queen, which has ever come to my ears, has been derogatory to your Majesty's dignity, or contrary to your interest."

"Then I am to conclude that you refuse to answer?" said Richelieu sternly: "think, Monsieur de Blenau, before you carry your obstinacy too far."

"My conduct does not arise in obstinacy," replied De Blenau, "but from a sense of what is due to my own honour; and unless it can be shown me that it is her Majesty's desire I should inform your Eminence of all I know respecting her affairs, from henceforth I hold my tongue, and answer no farther questions whatever."

"Be the consequence on your own head then, young man," exclaimed the Cardinal. "We will now break up the council.—Monsieur de Blenau, take leave of the sun, for you never see another morrow!"

De Blenau's courage was unshaken, but yet a cold chilly feeling gathered round his heart as Richelieu bade him take leave of the sun, and rose to break up the council. But still the King kept his seat, and Chavigni, hastily writing a few words on a scrap of paper, handed it to the Cardinal, who, after reading it, appeared to think for a moment, and then again addressed De Blenau. "There is one hope still left for you, Sir: did Monsieur de Chavigni understand you rightly, that if you had the Queen's command to confess what you know of her affairs, you would answer the questions we put to you?"

De Blenau breathed freely. "Undoubtedly!" replied he; "my honour will then be satisfied, and there will be no subject on which I shall have a reserve."

"What will you consider a sufficient expression of her Majesty's commands to that effect?" asked Chavigni: "I know that his Eminence wishes to treat you with all possible lenity, although the mere command of the King in council ought to be sufficient warrant for you to yield any information that may be required."

"We think differently on many points, Monsieur de Chavigni," answered De Blenau; "but if you can show me her hand-writing to any order, or if one of the officers of her household will bear me a message from her Majesty to deliver what little I know of her affairs, I will do so without farther hesitation."

There was now a momentary consultation carried on in a low voice amongst the various members of the council, apparently concerning which of the Queen's attendants should be sent for; but at length Chavigni whispered to the Cardinal, "Send for La Rivière; he is a friend of Lafemas, and will do any thing he is bid."

"If Monsieur de La Rivière bear you the Queen's commands, will you be satisfied, Sir Count?" demanded Richelieu.

"The Queen's Gentleman-usher," said De Blenau; "most assuredly; that will be sufficient."

"Go yourself, Chavigni," whispered Richelieu, "and as you come, tell him what to say.—We will wait his arrival," he proceeded aloud;—"but see, Monsieur de Chavigni, that he communicates with the Queen, and be fully informed of her wishes."

De Blenau smiled, convinced from his late information through Pauline that the Queen was still at Chantilly, and therefore that though La Rivière might be himself in Paris, and ready to swear any thing that the Cardinal dictated, he could have no communication with Anne of Austria, unless, what seemed improbable, she had returned to the capital with the King.

As soon as De Chavigni had retired for the purpose of seeking La Rivière, Richelieu ran his eye over some memoranda, as if about to put farther questions to De Blenau; but the King, not noticing these indications of his purpose, addressed the prisoner himself. "Well, Monsieur le Comte," said he, "while Chavigni is gone, there are two or three points on which I shall be glad to speak with you."

Richelieu was surprised, and not particularly delighted, thinking that the King was about to continue the examination himself, which might not be conducted precisely in such a manner as to produce the effect he wished; but, in the independent mood with which Louis was affected, he dared not, with all his daring, attempt to interrupt the course of his Sovereign's proceedings, and therefore remained silent, watching the opportunity of interposing, to give what turn he best could to the interrogatory that appeared about to commence. In the mean while De Blenau bowed his head, calmly prepared to bear the mental torture of a long cross-examination, where every word might be subject to dangerous misconstruction.

"I understand, Monsieur de Blenau," continued the King, while the whole Council listened with attentive expectation—"I understand that you have the best breed of boar-dogs in France. Pray are they of the Pomeranian or the Exul race?—and how can they be procured?"

Richelieu bit his lip; but to De Blenau the King's question was like the clearing away of a threatened storm; and habitually attached to the chase, as well as deeply learned in all its mysteries, he was delighted to find that Louis turned the conversation to a subject equally familiar to both.

"Mine are the true Pomeranian breed, Sire," he replied; "flewed an inch deep, with eyes like Sandarak—would light your Majesty home at night, if by chance you lost your way. In truth, they are only fit for a monarch; and Cinq Mars has now four couple of the best in education for your Majesty, which, when well trained, and recovered from their wildness, he will present to your Majesty in my name; and I humbly hope that you will accept them in aid of your Royal sport."

"We shall, we shall; and thank you well, Sir Count," replied the King, smiling most graciously at the prospect of possessing a breed which he had been long seeking for in vain. "Monsieur le Cardinal, do you hear that? We will

hunt with them some day. You used to hunt in your day too; have you quite given it over?"

"I have been too much busied, Sire," answered Richelieu gravely, "in hunting from your Majesty's dominions Huguenot wolves and Spanish foxes, to pursue other game."

Louis turned from him with an uneasy shrug, expressive of fully as much distaste for Richelieu's employments as the statesman experienced for his; and once more addressing De Blenau, he plunged deep into the science of hunting, hawking, and fowling; giving the young Count a thousand receipts, instructions, and anecdotes, which he listened to with the most reverential deference, not only in as much as they proceeded from his Sovereign, but also as coming from the most experienced sportsman of the age.

In the mean while, Richelieu was fain to employ himself in writing notes and memoranda, to allay the spleen and irritation that he felt at what he internally termed the King's weak trifling; till at length he was relieved by the return of Chavigni, bringing with him the Queen's Usher, La Rivière.

De Blenau well knew that this person, who was by birth just within the rank of a *gentleman* (which word was then in France one of great significance), had been placed in the service of Anne of Austria for the purpose of acting as a spy upon her, from Richelieu's fear of her correspondence with Spain; but informed, as the Count now was, of the Queen's wishes, it was perfectly indifferent to him who appeared on her behalf; his only object being, that his mistress's commands, publicly expressed, should, in the minds of all, free him from the imputation of having betrayed her.

La Rivière looked round him, as he entered, with a glance not altogether free from apprehension; for though Chavigni had given him full instructions and information concerning the services he was sent for to perform, yet there was something so terrible in the idea of the Bastille, that he could hardly keep his limbs from trembling as he passed the gates of the prison.

"Come hither, Monsieur de La Rivière," exclaimed the Cardinal, as soon as he appeared: "We are wasting too much time here." La Rivière approached, and placed himself in the spot to which Richelieu pointed, almost exactly opposite to De Blenau.

The Cardinal then proceeded. "Have you seen her Majesty the Queen since Monsieur de Chavigni informed you of the wishes of the Council?"

"I have, may it please your Eminence," replied La Rivière, in a tremulous voice.

"And what was her Majesty's reply to our request?" asked Richelieu. "Speak boldly!" he added, in a tone only calculated to reach the ear of the Usher, who stood close beside him, and showed plainly, by his hesitating manner, that he was under the influence of alarm. The Cardinal, however, attributed this to a wrong cause, thinking that La Rivière had not really seen the Queen, and was about to play his part, as prompted by Chavigni, but that in all probability he would spoil it by his hesitation.

Just as La Rivière was proceeding to answer, however, Chavigni, who had taken his place at the council-table the moment he entered, and had been writing rapidly since, conveyed a slip of paper across to the Cardinal, who raised his hand for the Usher to be silent while he read. The words which his friend had written greatly discomposed the Minister's plans. They were, "I am afraid it will not succeed: I have seen the Queen, when she not only told La Rivière, at once, to command the Count, in her name, to answer every question that related to her, but has given him a letter under her own hand to that effect. She is either innocent, or relies devotedly on De Blenau: whichever is the case, her open conduct will clear her in the mind of the King. Act as you like."

"What is the matter, Monsieur le Cardinal?" demanded Louis, somewhat impatiently. "Why do we not proceed?"

"Because," answered Richelieu, "what Monsieur de Chavigni says is right, Sire, though, I confess, it did not strike me before. Shall we not become contemptible in the eyes of the world, by submitting to be dictated to by Monsieur de Blenau? And is it not a gross insult to your Majesty's power, to obey the commands of the Queen, when he has refused to obey your own? I am sorry that this did not appear to me earlier; but the objection now seems to me so forcible, that I can proceed no farther in this course."

Louis paused. He was as jealous of the Queen possessing any authority as Richelieu could wish; but in the present instance he was urged, by different motives, in an opposite direction. Some sparks of affection had revived in his bosom towards Anne of Austria, and he wished much to satisfy himself regarding the suspicions which had been urged against her. De Blenau was the dear friend of his favourite Cinq Mars; and his mind also had begun to yield to the arguments of those who sought the destruction of the Minister. But, on the other hand, the habit of being ruled by Richelieu, and the specious arguments he produced, made Louis hesitate:—"What, then, do you intend to do?" demanded he, addressing the Cardinal.

"In the first place, Sire," replied Richelieu sternly, "I propose to interrogate the prisoner once more, and if his contumacy still continues, let the *question* be his doom."

The King's naturally good feelings and love of justice here at once overcame all doubt. "No, God forbid!" cried he, rousing himself to energy. "What, are we Christians, Monsieur le Cardinal, and shall we put a fellow-creature to the torture, when there is a straight-forward way to gain the information that we want? Fie upon it! No!"

Richelieu's ashy cheek grew still a shade paler. It was the first time for many a year he had undergone rebuke. He felt that trammels with which he had so long held the King enthralled were but as green liches twined round the limbs of a giant. He saw that the vast fabric of his power was raised upon a foundation of unsteady sand, and that even then it trembled to its very base.

"Monsieur La Rivière, answer the King!" continued Louis, in a dignified tone. "What says the Queen to the request of our Council, that she would command her Chamberlain to answer those questions, in regard to which he has a scruple on her account?"

"Her Majesty says, Sire," answered La Rivière, "that she is most willing to do any thing that will please your Majesty; and she has not only ordered me to command, in her name, Monsieur de Blenau to inform the Council of every thing he knows concerning her conduct; but has also written this letter, with her own hand, to the same effect." And advancing to the table, he bent his knee before the King, and presented the document of which he was the bearer.

Louis took the letter, and read it through. "This looks not like a guilty conscience," said he, frowning upon Richelieu. "Give that to Monsieur de Blenau," he continued to one of the officers. "There, Sir Count, is your warrant

to speak freely; and though we think you carry your sense of honour too far, so as to make it dangerous to yourself, and almost rebellious towards us, we cannot help respecting the principle, even though it be in excess."

"May I always have such a judge as your Majesty!" replied De Blenau. "Most humbly do I crave your royal pardon, if I have been at all wanting in duty towards you. Believe me, Sire, it has proceeded not from any fault of inclination, but from an error in judgment. I have now no farther hesitation, all my duties being reconciled; and, I believe, the best way fully to reply to the questions which have been asked me, will be by telling your Majesty, that I have on several occasions forwarded letters from the Queen, by private couriers of my own, or by any other conveyance that offered. None of these letters have been either to the Archduke, to Don Francisco de Mello, or any other person whatever, connected with the Spanish Government, except her Majesty's brother, Philip, King of Spain, to whom I have assuredly sent several; but before I ever undertook to do so, her Majesty condescended to give me her most positive promise, and to pledge her Royal word, that the tidings she gave her brother should on all occasions be confined to her domestic affairs, nor ever touch upon the external or internal policy of the Government, so that my honour and allegiance should be equally unsullied. These letters have sometimes remained upon my person for weeks, waiting for the fit opportunity to send them; which circumstance having by some means been discovered, has caused me no small inconvenience at times. Farther, I have nothing to tell your Majesty, but that I have ever heard the Queen express the greatest affection for your Royal person, and the warmest wishes for your public and private welfare; and, on my honour, I have never observed her do, by word or action, any thing which could be construed into a breach of the duty she owes your Majesty, either as her sovereign or her husband.

"You see!" exclaimed the King, turning to Richelieu, as De Blenau concluded; "You see—exactly what she confessed herself—not one tittle of difference."

The anger of the Cardinal, at finding himself foiled, swept away his political prudence. Irritated and weakened by a wearing disease, he was in no frame of mind to see calmly a scheme he had formed with infinite care, so completely overthrown; and forgetting that the King's energies were now aroused to oppose him, he resolved to let his vengeance fall on the head of De Blenau as the means of his disappointment. His brow darkened, and his eye flashed, and he replied in that stern and haughty manner which had so often carried command along with it.

"If your Majesty be satisfied, of course so am I, whose sole wish was to purge the lily crown from the profaning touch of strangers. But as for Monsieur de Blenau, he has confessed himself guilty of a crime little short of high treason, in forwarding those letters to a foreign enemy. We have already condemned a woman to exile for a less offence; and therefore the mildest sentence that the Council *can* pronounce, and which by my voice it *does* pronounce, is, that Claude Count de Blenau be banished for ever from these realms; and that, if after the space of sixteen days he be found within their precincts, he shall be considered as without the pale of law, and his blood be required at the hand of no man that sheds it!"

There was an indignant spot glowing in the King's face while Richelieu spoke thus, that Chavigni marked with pain; for he saw that the precipitant haste of the Minister was hurrying his power to its fall.

"Too much of this!" cried Louis angrily. "Lord Cardinal, you forget the presence of the King. Monsieur de Blenau—We, by our royal prerogative, do annul and make void the sentence you have just heard, merely commanding you to retire from this chateau of the Bastille, without holding communication with any persons attached to the Court, and to render yourself within the limits of our province of Bourbon, and there to wait our farther pleasure. The Council is over," he continued, rising. "Monsieur le Cardinal de Richelieu, by sending the warrant for the Count's release some time in the day to our Governor of the Bastille, you will merit our thanks."

The officers cleared the way for the King—the *huissiers* of the chamber threw wide the doors—and Louis, with a firm and dignified step, proceeded slowly out of the hall, followed by Richelieu, who, thunderstruck and confounded, kept his eyes bent upon the ground, in the silence of deep astonishment. The rest of the Council, equally mute and surprised, accompanied the Cardinal with anxiety in every eye; while the officers of the Bastille and the Count de Blenau remained the sole occupants of the hall of audience.



## CHAPTER II.

In which De Blenau gets out of the scrape.

THE silence that reigned in the audience-hall of the Bastille after the scene we have described, endured several minutes, during which each person who remained within its walls, commented mutely on the extraordinary events he had just witnessed. De Blenau's feelings were of course mingled, of surprise at the King's unusual conduct, and gratification at his own deliverance. The Governor's thoughts were differently employed, looking forward to the fall of Richelieu, speculating in regard to his successor, and trying to determine who would be the best person to court in the changes that were likely to ensue. "Like master, like man," says the adage; and the inferior officers of the prison, in compliance therewith, calculated upon the removal of the Governor as a consequence of the ruin of the Minister who had placed him there, and laid their own minor plans for securing their places.

De Blenau was the first to break silence. "Well, my friend," said he, addressing the Governor, "I am to be your guest no longer, it seems; but be assured that I shall not forget my promises."

"You are infinitely good, Monseigneur," answered the other, bowing almost to the ground. "I hope you will believe that I have gone to the very extreme of what my duty permitted, to afford you all convenience."

"I have no doubt of it," replied the Count; "but let me ask what has become of my good friend, Philip, the woodman? He must not be forgotten."

The knowledge of the severity he had exercised towards poor Philip, in the first heat of his anger, now called up a quick flush in the pale cheek of the Governor; and he determined to shelter himself from the resentment of his late prisoner, by telling him that the Woodman had been liberated.

In those dangerous times, the acuteness of every one was sharpened by continual exercise; and De Blenau's eye, fixing on the varying countenance of his companion, soon detected that there was something amiss, by the alteration which his question produced. "Monsieur le Gouverneur," said he, "give me the truth. I promise you that every thing shall be forgotten, provided you have not seriously injured him; but I must know that the man is safe who has served me so faithfully."

"The fact then is this, Monseigneur," replied the Governor; "thinking it best for all parties, I ordered this Monsieur Philip Grissolles to be confined till after your examination to-day, lest any thing might transpire that could injure you or me."

"You thought of yourself alone, Sir," answered De Blenau somewhat bitterly; "but see that he be restored to that degree of liberty which you were ordered at first to permit, or you will hear more of me—"

As he spoke, the door of the audience-hall, communicating with the outer court, was thrown open so suddenly as to make the Governor start a pace back, and Chavigni entered the room with a countenance, from which all his efforts could not banish the anxiety of his mind. Naturally quick and impatient, it often happened that his long training in the school of political duplicity did not suffice to overcome the struggles of his original disposition; and even the violent effort to conquer the native earnestness and impatience of his character would sometimes produce more visible marks of its working than if he had suffered his passions to take their course. In the present instance, his fine features were drawn and sharpened by the attempt to drive from them any expression of his feelings, and his eye flashed with ill-subdued fire, as he irritated himself with a thousand conjectures concerning the latent movers of the recent occurrences. On entering, he pointed with his hand towards the door for the Governor to leave them; and seeing that he did not immediately obey, he exclaimed in no very placable voice, "Begone! I wish Monsieur de Blenau's company alone.—What do you wait for? Oh, there is the order for his liberation—There, take your pack with you." And he pointed to the lower officers of the prison, who thus dismissed, quickly followed the Governor as he shrunk away from the Statesman's hasty and irritable glance.

"Monsieur de Blenau," said Chavigni, as soon as the door was closed, "it was not worth while to detain you here for an hour or two, till such time as the order could be sent for your emancipation; I therefore drew it out in the lodge.—But you owe me nothing for that;" he continued, seeing that De Blenau was about to thank him for the supposed service. "I made it an excuse to stay behind, in order to seek an answer to a question or two. Now, I make no pretence of asking you these questions as a friend, for I know that you consider me not as such; but I do it merely on my own account, wishing for information on some points regarding which you alone can satisfy me. It is your business, therefore, to consider before you answer, whether so to do be for your interest or not. The only thing I will promise, which I do honestly, is, not to let your replies go beyond my own breast."

"The method of your address is certainly extraordinary, Monsieur de Chavigni," replied De Blenau: "but however we may differ on many points, I give you credit for so much frankness, that I believe you would not betray even your enemy if he relied on you: neither do I know, or rather recollect, at this moment, any question I should hesitate to answer. Therefore propose what you think fit, and I will satisfy you, or not, as suits my convenience."

"Between you and me, Monsieur de Blenau, there is no need of fine words. I have always found you strictly honourable, and therefore I rely on what you tell me, as if it were within the scope of my own knowledge. In the first place, then, you have been witness to an extraordinary scene to-day.—Are you at all aware from what cause the King has acted as he has done, so at variance with his conduct for fifteen years?"

"Particularly, I am aware of no cause, and can only conjecture that his Majesty is tired of being dictated to by his servant?"

"Umph!" said Chavigni, in a tone of dissatisfaction; "there is no need to triumph, Monsieur de Blenau. Am I to believe that you know of no one who has instigated the King to take such singular steps in your favour?"

"Of none whatever!" answered the Count; "unless it were her Majesty the Queen,—the effect of any application from whom, would be quite different, I should conceive."

"No, no, no!" said Chavigni. "It was not on her that my suspicions rested. I must have been mistaken. One word more.—Have you had any late communication with Monsieur de Cinq Mars?"

"About three weeks ago I wrote to him from St. Germain, sending some young hounds for the King's service; but that was long before I dreamed of finding my way hither."

"I must have been mistaken," repeated Chavigni. "I thank you, Monsieur de Blenau. This must be a whim of the

King's own—God grant it! for then the humour will soon pass.”

“And now, Sir,” said De Blenau, “that I have answered your questions, there are one or two subjects on which you might give me satisfaction. Are you inclined to do so?”

“If I can, without injuring myself or others, or disclosing any plan that I am desirous to conceal,” replied the Statesman.

“My questions shall regard the past, and not the future,” said De Blenau; “and are intended merely to gratify my own curiosity. In the first place then, I once saw you at St. Germain, in conversation with a demoiselle attached to Mademoiselle de Beaumont—to what did your business with her refer?”

“I did not think you had seen us,” replied Chavigni. “I might answer that I was making love, and probably you thought so as well as she did herself; but my conversation referred to you. I found that she had been present when Seguin, the surgeon, brought the news of your having been wounded to the Queen: and from her also I learned the words he made use of to let her know that you had not lost the packet which you had upon you in the wood of Mantes.”

“Monsieur de Chavigni,” said De Blenau, with more cordiality in his manner than he usually evinced towards the Statesman; “the world is too well aware of your domestic happiness for any one to suspect you of degrading yourself to a soubrette; I thank you for your candour. Now tell me, is a poor man, called Philip, the woodman, detained here on my account? and why is he so?”

“He is,” replied Chavigni, “and the reason is this:—he happened to recognize amongst those who attacked you a servant of mine, and was fool enough to tell it abroad, so that it reached the King's ears. Now, though every thing is justifiable in the service of the State, I did not particularly wish that business investigated, and I therefore put Monsieur Philip in here to keep him out of the way for a time. You are now of course aware why you were attacked. It was to secure the papers on your person, which papers we supposed were part of a treasonable correspondence between the Queen and the Spanish Government. All that is now over; and therefore, if you will promise me not to stir the business of that affray in any way—which indeed would do you no good—this meddling Woodman shall have his liberty.”

“I never had the slightest intention of stirring it,” replied De Blenau; “and therefore rest satisfied on that score. But at the same time I must tell you that the whole affair came to the King's ears through me, and not through the Woodman, I believe. I observed your servant, as well as he did, and did not fail to write of it to several of my friends, as well as speak of it openly on more than one occasion; and this, depend upon it, has been the means by which it reached the ears of the King, and not by poor Philip.”

“Then I have done him wrong,” said Chavigni, “and must make him some amends.—Let me see.—Oh, he shall be Sub-lieutenant of the forest; it will just suit him. And now, Monsieur de Blenau, as a friend, let me give you one piece of advice. This country is in a troubled and uncertain state, and there will be, doubtless, many plots and cabals going on. Retire, as you are commanded, into Bourbon; and if any one attempt to lead you into any conspiracy, so far from acceding, do not even listen to them; for the Cardinal owes you something for what has happened to-day, and he is not one to forget such debts. The eye of an angry man is upon you!—so be as guarded as if you trod amongst vipers. The time will come when you will say that Chavigni has advised you well.”

“And it is certainly advice which I shall follow, both from reason and inclination. But let me ask—am I to consider the King's prohibition strict in regard to communicating with any one at the Court?”

Chavigni thought for a moment, and De Blenau imagined that he was considering the circumstances under which Louis's command had been given; but it was not so. The mind of the Statesman rapidly reverted to Pauline de Beaumont, all his precautions with regard to whom turned out to be nugatory; and he now calculated the consequences which were likely to ensue under the present state of affairs. He had no fear, indeed, in regard to the responsibility he had taken upon himself; for it would be easy to prove, in case of investigation, that Pauline had attempted in disguise to communicate privately with a State prisoner in the Bastille, which would completely justify the measures he had pursued; but he wished on all accounts to let a matter drop and be forgotten which had already produced such disagreeable events, and he therefore determined boldly to inform Madame de Beaumont of what had been done, and the motives for doing it; and then—certain that for her own sake she would keep silence on the subject—to restore her daughter with all speed.

Though the thoughts of Chavigni were very rapid in combination, yet all these considerations occupied him so long, that De Blenau, perceiving his companion plunged into so profound a reverie, took the liberty of pulling him out by the ear, repeating his former question, whether he was to consider the King's prohibition in regard to communicating with the Court as strictly to be observed.

“Undoubtedly!” replied Chavigni: “beyond all question! You do not want to get into the Bastille again, do you? Oh! I perceive it is Mademoiselle de Beaumont you are thinking of. But you cannot see her. She is neither in Paris, nor at St. Germain; but I will take care that when she joins her mother in Paris, she shall be informed of your safety; and you can write yourself when you get into the Bourbonnois.”

The reader, who is behind the scenes, may probably take the trouble of pitying De Blenau for the anxiety he would suffer on hearing that Pauline was neither at St. Germain nor in Paris; but there is no occasion to distress himself. De Blenau knowing that Pauline had absented herself from the court for the purpose of conveying to him the epistle of the Queen, naturally concluded that Chavigni had been deceived in regard to her absence, and that she was at all events in safety wherever she was.

In the mean time Chavigni proceeded. “You must of course go to St. Germain, to prepare for your journey; but stay even there as few hours as you well may. Remember, I have told you, the eye of an angry man is upon you!—To-day is yours—to-morrow may be his—take care that by the least imprudence you do not turn your sunshine into storm. That you may make all speed, I will lend you a horse; for I own I take some interest in your fate—I know not why—It shall be at the gates in an hour, together with an order for the Woodman's liberation: so now, farewell. I have wasted too much time on you already.”

With this speech, half kind, half rude, Chavigni left De Blenau. Whether the Statesman's motives were wholly friendly, or whether they might not be partly interested, proceeding from a nice calculation of the precarious state both of the Cardinal's health and of his power, weighed with the authority the Queen might gain from the failure of either, the Count did not stay to investigate, although a suspicion of the latter kind flashed across his mind. In this,

however, he did Chavigni injustice. In natural character he was not unlike De Blenau himself, frank, honourable, and generous; but education is stronger than nature; and education had made them different beings.

On the departure of the Statesman, the Count returned once more to the apartment he had occupied while a prisoner, with no small self-gratulation on the change in his situation. Here he busied himself in preparations for his departure, and took pains to ascertain that the paper written by the unhappy Caply still remained in the book, as well as that the file was yet in the position which it described. Having finished this examination, which he looked upon as a duty to the next person destined to inhabit that abode, he waited impatiently till the hour should be passed which Chavigni had named as the time likely to elapse before the horse he promised would be prepared.

Ere it had flown much more than half, however, the Governor entered the chamber, and with many profound bows and civil speeches, informed him that Monsieur de Chavigni had sent a horse for his use, and an order for the immediate liberation of Philip, the woodman. De Blenau was gratified by Chavigni's prompt fulfilment of his word in this last respect; and remembering the thousand crowns which he had promised the Governor on his liberation, he placed them in his hands, which brought him very near to the end of the large sum of gold that his valise contained.

Now De Blenau was perfectly well convinced that the Governor was as great a rogue as need be; but there is something so expansive in the idea of being liberated from prison, that he could not bear the thought of keeping his louis shut up in a bag any longer, and he poured them forth into the Governor's palm with as much satisfaction as if he was emancipating so many prisoners himself.

An *ecu courant* was worth, in that day, about three francs, and a *louis d'or* somewhere about four-and-twenty (more or less, according to the depreciation), so that eight ecus, or crowns, went to the louis; and, consequently, the sum of one thousand crowns amounted very nearly to one hundred and twenty-five golden louis, which was a very pretty reward for a rogue to receive for being a rascal in a good cause: nevertheless, the Governor, even when he had safely clutched the promised fee, looked very wistfully at a little green silk bag, which De Blenau reserved in his left hand, and which he calculated must contain about the same sum, or more.

The Count, however, held it firm; and having given directions to whom, and when, his baggage was to be delivered, he descended into the inner court, and cast his eyes round in search of his faithful friend Philip. But the Woodman had received at once his emancipation from the dungeon where we last left him, and the news that De Blenau was free; and though he lingered in the court to see the young Count depart, with something both of joy and pride in his feelings, yet there was a sort of timid delicacy in the peasant's mind, which made him draw back from observation, amidst the crowd of prisoners that the court now contained, the moment that he perceived the Governor, with many a servile cringe, marshalling the late prisoner towards the gate of the Bastille; while those less fortunate persons, still destined to linger out their time within its walls, stood off with curious envying looks, to allow a passage for him now freed from their sad fellowship. De Blenau, however, was by no means forgetful of the Woodman, and not perceiving him amongst the rest, he inquired where he was, of the obsequious Governor, who instantly vociferated his name till the old arches echoed with the sound. "Philip! Philip the woodman! Philip Grissolles!" cried the Governor.

"Does he know that he is free altogether to return home?" demanded De Blenau, seeing him approach.

"No, I believe not," replied the Governor. "I had the honour of waiting first upon your Lordship."

Philip now came near, and De Blenau had the gratification of announcing to him, unforestalled, that the storm had blown over, and that he might now return to his cottage in peace. He also told him of the appointment with which Chavigni proposed to compensate his imprisonment—an office so elevated, that the gayest day-dreams of Philip's ambition had never soared to half its height. But the joy of returning to the bosom of his family, to the calm shelter of his native forest, and the even tenor of his daily toil, swallowed up all his feelings—A throne would not have made him happier; and the tears of delight streaming down his rough cheek, brought a glistening drop too into De Blenau's eye. Noble and aristocratic as he was, De Blenau felt that there was an aristocracy above all—the nobility of virtue; and he did not disdain to grasp the broad hand of the honest Woodman. "Fare you well, Philip," he said. "Fare you well, till we meet again. I shall not easily forget you."

The Woodman felt something more weighty in his palm than the hand of De Blenau, and looked at the heavy green purse which remained in it with a hesitating glance. But the Count raised his finger to his lip with a smile. "Not a word," said he, "not a word, as you value my friendship." And turning round, he followed the Governor through the various passages to the outer court, where stood Chavigni's horse caparisoned for his journey. De Blenau sprang into the saddle with the lightness of recovered freedom. The heavy gate was thrown open, the drawbridge fell, and, striking the sides of his horse with his armed heel, the newly emancipated prisoner bounded over the clattering boards of the *pontlevé*, and with a lightened heart took the road to St. Germain.

His journey was soon made, and, as he approached the place of his destination, all the well-known objects round about seemed as if there shone upon them now a brighter and more beautifying sun than when he last beheld them. At his hotel all was gladness and delight, and crowding round their loved Lord, with smiles of welcome, his attendants could scarcely be made to comprehend that he was again about to quit St. Germain. De Blenau's commands, however, immediately to prepare for a long journey, recalled them to their duty; and eager to accompany him wherever he went, their arrangements were soon completed, and the Majordomo announced that all were ready.

Not so the Count himself, who, notwithstanding the King's command, could not resolve to quit St. Germain's without visiting the Palace. Sending forward, therefore, his train to the entrance of the forest, he proceeded on foot to the gate of the Park, and crossing the terrace, entered the chateau by the small door in the western quadrangle.

Perhaps De Blenau was not without a hope that Pauline might have returned thither from Paris; and at first, meeting none of the royal servants, he walked from empty chamber to chamber, with a degree of undefined expectation that in each he should find the object of his wishes: but of course his search was in vain, and descending to the lower part of the building, he proceeded to the Porter's chamber, who, having received no news to the contrary, informed him that the whole Court were still at Chantilly.

I know not why it is, but somehow the heart, by long association with particular objects, forms as it were a friendship even with things inanimate, when they have been the silent witnesses of our hopes or our happiness; they form a link between us and past enjoyment, a sort of landmark for memory to guide us back to happy recollections; and to quit them, like every other sort of parting, has no small degree of pain. We are apt, too, to calculate all that may happen before we see them again, and the knowledge of the innumerable multitude of human miseries, from

amongst which Fortune may choose, gives generally to such anticipations a gloomy hue. Looking back upon the towers of St. Germain, De Blenau felt as if he were parting from Pauline, and parting from her for a long and indefinite time; and his heart sickened in spite of all the gay dreams to which his liberation had at first given birth.

Who is there that even when futurity is decked in the brightest colours which probability can lend to hope—when youth, and health, and ardent imagination combine to guarantee all the promises of life—who is there, that even then does not feel the painful influence of parting from any thing that is loved? Who is there in the world, the summer of whose bosom is so eternal, that at such moments, dark imaginings will not cloud the warmest sunshine of their heart, and cast a gloomy uncertain shadow on the most glowing scenes expectation can display? Just so De Blenau. Fancy presented to his mind a thousand forebodings of evil, as with many a lingering look he turned again and again towards the Palace; and even when at length he was joined by his train, who waited at the entrance of the forest, he was still absorbed in gloomy meditations. However, he felt it was in vain, and springing on his horse, he turned his face resolutely on his onward way.

Skirting along the wood, he soon reached Versailles, and thence proceeding with little intermission, he arrived in time to pass the night at Etampes, from which place he set out early the next morning for Orleans. Continuing to trace along the course of the Loire with quick stages, he soon arrived at Nevers, where he crossed the river, and shortly after entered the Bourbonnois.

### CHAPTER III.

Which shows the truth of the French adage, "L'habit ne fait pas le moine."

I KNOW I am very wrong, very partial, and very inconsiderate, to give two consecutive chapters to the Count de Blenau, when I have more people to despatch than had Captain Bobadil in the play, and less time to do it in. But I could not help it; those two last chapters would go together, and they were too long to be clapped up into one pat, as I have seen Sarah the dairy-maid do with the stray lumps of butter that float about in the butter-milk, after the rest of the churn's produce has been otherwise disposed of. So I am very sorry, and so forth.—And now, if you please, my dear reader, we will go on to some one else. What would you think of the Norman?—Very well!—For my part, I look upon him as the true hero of the story; for according to the best accounts, he eat more, drank more, lied more, and fought more than any one else, and was a great rogue into the bargain; all which, in the opinion of Homer, is requisite to the character of a hero. See the *Odyssey passim*.

At Troyes, the Norman's perquisitions were very successful. No Bow-street officer could have detected all the proceedings of Fontrailles with more acuteness. Step by step he traced him, from his first arrival at Troyes, till the day he set out for Mesnil St. Loup; and learning the road he had taken, he determined upon following the same track, for he shrewdly concluded, that whatever business of import the conspirator had been engaged in, had been transacted in the two days and one night, which, according to the story of the *garçon d'auberge* at the Hotel du Grand Soleil, he had been absent from the good city of Troyes.

Now, our friend Monsieur Marteville had learned another piece of news, which made him the more willing to bend his steps in the direction pointed out as that which Fontrailles had taken. This was no other than that a considerable band of robbers had lately come down into that part of the country to collect their rents; and that their principal haunt was supposed to be the thick woods which lay on the borders of the high road to Troyes, in the neighbourhood of Mesnil.

True it is, the Norman had abandoned his free companions of the forest, and received the wages of Monsieur de Chavigni; but still he kept up a kind of desultory correspondence with his former associates, and had not lost sight of them till certain reports got about, that the *Lieutenant Criminel* was going to visit the forest of Laye, which induced them to leave the vicinity of St. Germain, for fear that there should not be room enough in the forest for them and the Lieutenant too. It was natural enough that Marteville should wish to make a morning call upon his old friends: besides—I'll tell you a story. There was once upon a time a man who had a cat, of which he was so fond, that, understanding one Mr. Pigmalion had got an ivory statue changed into a wife by just asking it, he resolved to see what he could do for his cat in the same way. But I dare say you know the story just as well as I do—how the cat was changed into a woman, and how she jumped out of bed after a mouse, and so forth; showing plainly, that "what is bred in the bone will never go out of the flesh;" that "nature is better than a schoolmaster;" and that "you can never make a silk purse out of a sow's ear;" as Sancho would say. But, however, the Norman had a strange hankering after his good old trade, and was very well inclined to pass a day or two in the free forest, and do Chavigni's work into the bargain. There was a little *embarras* indeed in the case, respecting Louise, for whom, in these first days of possession, he did feel a certain degree of attachment; and did not choose to leave her behind, though he did not like to take her with him, considering the society he was going to meet. "Pshaw!" said he at length, speaking to himself, "I'll leave her at Mesnil."

This resolution he began to put in execution, by placing Louise upon one horse, and himself upon the other, together with their several valises; and thus, in the same state and order in which they had arrived at Troyes, so they quitted it for Mesnil St. Loup. All the information that Marteville possessed to guide him in his farther inquiries, amounted to no more than this, (which he learned from the aforesaid *garçon d'auberge*;) namely, that the little gentleman in grey had taken the road apparently to Mesnil; that he had been absent, as before said, two days and one night; and that his horse, when it came home, appeared to have been furnished with a new shoe *en route*. This, however, was quite sufficient as a clue, and the Norman did not fail to turn it to its full account.

Passing through the little villages of Mehun and Langly, the Norman eyed every blacksmith's forge as he went; but the one was next to the post-house, and the other was opposite the inn; and the Norman went on, saying within himself—"A man who was seeking concealment, would rather proceed with his beast unshod than stop there." So, resuming his conversation with Louise, they jogged on, babbling, not of green fields, but of love and war; both of which subjects were much within the knowledge of the Sieur Marteville, his battles being somewhat more numerous than his wives, and having had plenty of both in his day.

At all events, Louise was very well satisfied with the husband that Heaven had sent her, and looked upon him as a very fine gentleman, and a great warrior; and though, now and then, she would play the coquette a little, and put forth all the little *minauderie* which a Languedoc soubrette could assume, in order to prevent the Norman from having too great a superiority, yet Monsieur Marteville was better satisfied with her than any of his former wives; and as she rode beside him, he admired her horsemanship, and looked at her from top to toe in much the same manner that he would have examined the points of a fine Norman charger. No matter how Louise was mounted: suffice it to say, that it was not on a side-saddle, such things being but little known at the time I speak of.

While they were thus shortening the road with sweet discourse, at the door of a little hovel by the side of the highway, half hidden from sight by a clumsy mud wall against which he leaned, half exposed by the lolloping position he assumed, appeared the large, dirty, unmeaning face and begrimed person of a Champenois blacksmith, with one hand grubbing amongst the roots of his grizzled hair, and the other hanging listlessly by his side, loaded with the ponderous hammer appropriated to his trade. "*C'est ici*," thought the Norman; "*Quatre vingt dix neuf moutons et un Champenois font cent*—Ninety-nine sheep and a Champenois make a hundred; so we'll see what my fool will tell me.—*Holla! Monsieur!*"

"*Plait-il?*" cried the Champenois, advancing from his hut.

"Pray has Monsieur Pont Orson passed here to-day?" demanded the Norman.

"Monsieur Pont Orson! Monsieur Pont Orson!" cried the Champenois, trying to assume an air of thought, and rummaging in his empty head for a name that never was in it: "Pardie, I do not know."

"I mean," said the Norman, "the same little gentleman in grey, who stopped here ten days ago, to have a bay

horse shod, as he was coming back from—what's the name of the place?"

"No!" cried the Champenois; "he was going, he was not coming, when he had his horse shod."

"But I say he was coming," replied the Norman. "How the devil do you know he was going?"

"*Mais dame!*" exclaimed the other; "How do I know he was going? Why, did not he ask me how far it was to Mesnil? and if he had not been going, why should he wish to know?"

"It was not he, then," said the Norman.

"*Mais dame! ouai!*" cried the Champenois. "He was dressed all in grey, and had a bay horse, on whose hoof I put as nice a piece of iron as ever came off an anvil; and he asked me how far it was to Mesnil, and whereabouts was the old Castle of St. Loup. '*Monsieur Pont Orson! Monsieur Pont Orson? Dieu! qui aurait deviné que c'étoit Monsieur Pont Orson?*'"

"*Mais je vous dis que ce n'étoit pas lui,*" cried the Norman, putting spurs to his horse. "*Allons, chérie. Adieu, Monsieur Champenois, adieu!*—Ha! ha! ha!" cried he, when at a little distance. "*Ganache!* he has told me all that I wanted to know. Then he did go to Mesnil—the old Chateau of St. Loup! What could he want there? I've heard of this old chateau."

"But who is Monsieur Pont Orson?" demanded Louise, interrupting the broken cogitations of her husband.

"Nay, I know not, *ma chère,*" replied her husband. "The man in the moon, with a corkscrew to tap yon fool's brains, and draw out all I wanted to know about the person whom I told you I was seeking for Monsieur de Chavigni.—It was a mere name. But there, I see a steeple on yon hill in the wood. Courage! we shall soon reach it. It is not above a league.—That must be Mesnil."

The Norman's league, however, proved at least two, and Louise, though a good horsewoman, was complaining most bitterly of fatigue, when they arrived in the little street of Mesnil St. Loup, and, riding up to the dwelling of our old friend Gaultier the innkeeper, alighted under the withered garland that hung over the door.

"*Holla! Aubergiste! Garçon!*" cried the Norman, "*Holla!*"

But no one came; and on repeating the summons, the sweet voice of the dame of the house was all that could be heard, screaming forth a variety of tender epithets, applicable to the *garçon d'écurie*, and intended to stimulate him to come forth and take charge of the strangers' horses. "Don't you know, *Lambin,*" cried she, "that that hog your master is lying up-stairs dying for no one knows what? And am I to go out, *Maraud,* and take people's horses with my hands all over grease, while you stand l—s—ng yourself there? *Cochon!* if you do not go, I'll throw this pot-lid at you." And immediately a tremendous rattle on the boards at the farther side of the stable, announced that she had been as good as her word.

This seemed the only effectual method of arousing the occult sensibilities of the *garçon d'écurie*, who listened unconcerned to her gentler solicitations, but, yielding to the more potent application of the pot-lid, came forth and took the bridle of the horses, while our Norman lifted his lady to the ground.

The sight of such goodly limbs as those possessed by Monsieur Marteville, but more especially the blue velvet pourpoint to which we have formerly alluded, and which he wore on the present occasion, did not fail to produce the most favourable impression on the mind of the landlady; and, bustling about with the activity of a grasshopper, she prepared to serve the athletic cavalier and his pretty lady to the best cheer of the *auberge*.

"Would Madame choose some stewed escargots *pour se restaurer*? Would Monsieur take *un coup de vin* before dinner to wash the dust out of his mouth? Would Madame step up-stairs to repose herself? Would Monsieur take a *gouter*?" These and a thousand other civil proffers the hostess showered upon the Norman and Louise, some of which were accepted, some declined; but the principal thing on which the Norman seemed to set his heart was the speedy preparation of dinner, which he ordered with the true galloping profusion of a beggar on horseback, demanding *the best of every thing*. While this was in progress, he forgot not the principal object of his journey, but began with some circumlocution to draw the hostess towards the subject of Fontrailles' visit to Mesnil.

At the very mention, however, of a little man in grey, the good landlady burst forth in such a torrent of invective that she went well nigh to exhaust her copious vocabulary of epithets and expletives; while the Norman, taken by surprise, stood gazing and shrugging his shoulders, wondering at her facility of utterance, and the vast rapidity with which she concatenated her hard names. The little man in grey, who had been there precisely ten days before, was, according to her opinion, a liar, and a rogue, and a cheat; a conjuror, a Huguenot, and a vagabond; a man without honour, principle, or faith; a *maraud*, a *matin*, a *misérable*; together with a great many other titles the enumeration of which she summed up with "*et s'il n'est pas le Diable, le Diable l'emporte!*"

"*C'est vrai,*" cried the Norman every time she paused to take breath; "*C'est vrai.* But how came you to find out he was so wicked?"

The lady's reply was not of the most direct kind; but from it the Norman gathered, with his usual acuteness, that after our friend Gaultier had pointed out to Fontrailles the road to the old Castle of St. Loup, he returned home, his mind oppressed with the consciousness of being the confidant of a Sorcerer. He laboured under the load of this terrific secret for some days; and then, his constitution not being able to support his mental struggles, he sickened and took to his bed, where he still lay in a deplorable state, talking in his sleep of the conjuror in grey, and of Père Le Rouge, and the Devil himself, and sundry other respectable people of the same class. But when awake, it must be remarked, the *aubergiste* never opened his lips upon the subject, notwithstanding all the solicitations which his better half, being tempted by the curiosity of her sex, did not fail to make. From all this the good dame concluded that the little man in grey had bewitched her husband and driven him mad, causing him to lie up there upon his bed like a hog, neglecting his business and leaving her worse than a widow.

All this was corn, wine and oil to the mind of the Norman, who, wisely reserving his opinion on the subject, retired to consult with Louise, having a great esteem for woman's wit in such cases. After some discussion, a plan was manufactured between them, which, though somewhat bold in conception, was happily brought to issue in the following manner.

During the dinner, at which the *bourgeoise* waited herself, she was not a little surprised to hear Louise more than once call Marteville by the reverend appellation of *mon père*; and if this astonished, how much was her wonder increased when afterwards, during a concerted absence of the Norman, the fair lady informed her, under a promise of profound secrecy, that the goodly cavalier, whose blue velvet doublet she had so much admired, was neither more

nor less than the celebrated *Père Alexis, directeur* of the Jesuits of Alençon, who was travelling in disguise in order to place her (one of his penitents) in a monastery at Rome.

True, Louise either forgot or did not know that they were not precisely in the most direct road to Rome, but she was very safe in the person she spoke to, who had even less knowledge of where Rome stood than herself. Now the story of Louise was a very probable one in every other respect, considering the manners of the day; for *les bons pères Jesuites* very often travelled about in disguise for purposes best known to themselves, and very few of the *bons pères*, whether Jesuits or not, were averse to a fair penitent. Be that as it may, the simple *bourgeoise* never doubted it for a moment, and casting herself at the feet of Louise, she entreated her, with tears in her eyes, to intercede with the reverend *directeur* to confess and absolve her sinful husband, who lay up-stairs like a hog, doing nothing.

Just at this moment the Norman re-entered the room; and though his precise object, in the little drama they had got up, was neither more nor less than to confess the unhappy *aubergiste*, yet, as a matter of form, he made some difficulty to meddling with the penitent of another; but after faintly advising that the *Curé* of the village should be sent for, he agreed, as the case was urgent, to undertake the office of confessor himself, though he mildly reproached Louise, in presence of the hostess, for having betrayed his real character, and bade her be more careful in future.

As soon as he had signified his consent, the *bourgeoise* ran to tell her husband that the very reverend *Père Alexis, directeur* of the Jesuits of Alençon, had kindly consented to hear his confession and absolve him of his sins; and in the mean while the Norman gave directions to Louise, whose adroitness had often served him in discovering the secrets of the Palace, while she had remained with Madame de Beaumont, to gain, in the present instance, all the information she could from the wife, while he went to interrogate the husband.

This being settled, as a blue velvet pourpoint was not exactly the garb to play a confessor in, Louise ran in all haste to strip the Astrologer's robe we have already mentioned of all its profane symbols, and the Norman, casting its shadowy folds over his lusty limbs, and drawing the hood over his head, appeared to the eye as goodly a friar as ever cracked a bottle. No great regard to costume was necessary, for the landlady took it all for granted; and when she beheld the Norman issue forth from the room in which the valise had been placed, clothed in his long dark robes, she cast herself at his feet in a transport of reverence and piety.

Monsieur Marteville, otherwise the *Père Alexis*, did not fail to give her his blessing with great gravity, and with a solemn demeanour and slow step followed to the chamber of the sick man.

Poor Gaultier was no longer the gay rosy-cheeked innkeeper which he had appeared to Fontrailles, but, stretched upon his bed, he lay pale and wan, muttering over to himself shreds and tatters of prayers, and thinking of the little man in grey, *Père Le Rouge*, and the Devil. As soon as he beheld the pretended *Père Alexis* enter his chamber, he essayed to rise in his bed; but the Norman motioned him to be still, and sitting down by him, exhorted him to make a full confession of his sins, and then, to give greater authenticity to his character, he knelt down and composed an extempore prayer, in a language equally of his own manufacture, but which the poor *aubergiste* believed devoutly to be Latin, hearing every now and then the words *sanctissimus, in secula seculorum*, and *benedictus*, with which the Norman did not fail to season it richly, being the only stray Latin he was possessed of.

"Humgumnibus quintessentialiter expositu dum dum; benedictus sint foolatii et sanctissimus fourbi. Hi sty Aubergisti rorum coram nobis excipe capones poulardici generi, fur grataverunt pectus, legbonibus venzon in secula seculorum sanctissimus benedictus," said the Norman.

"Amen!" cried the innkeeper from the bottom of his heart, with such fervency that the *Père Alexis* could scarcely maintain his gravity.

The Norman now proceeded to business, and putting down his ear to a level with the lips of Gaultier, he once more desired him to make a clear breast.

"*Oh, mon Père,*" cried Gaultier, "*Je suis un pauvre pécheur, un misérable!*"

The good Father exhorted him to take courage, and to come to a detail of his crimes.

"*Oh, mon Père,*" cried he, "I have sold cats for rabbits, and more especially for hares. I have moistened an old hareskin with warm water and bloodied it with chicken's blood, to make my cats and my badgers and my weasels pass for what they really were not. I have cooked up snakes for eels, and dressed vipers *en matelot*. I have sold bad wine of Bois-marly for good wine of Epernay; and, *Oh, mon Père, je suis un pauvre pécheur.*"

"Well, well, get on," cried the Norman somewhat impatiently, "I'll give you absolution for all that. All innkeepers do the same. But what more have you done?"

"*Oh, mon Père, je suis un pauvre pécheur,*" proceeded Gaultier in a low voice; "I have charged my customers twice as much as I ought to charge. I have vowed that fish was dear when it was cheap; and I have—"

"*Nom de Dieu!*" cried the Norman, getting out of temper with the recapitulation of Gaultier's peccadilloes. "*Nom de Dieu!* that is to say, in the name of God, I absolve you from all such sins as are common to innkeepers, masters of taverns, cooks, *aubergistes* and the like—sins of profession as they may be called—only appointing you to kneel before the altar of your parish church for two complete hours, repeating the Pater and the Ave during the whole time, by way of penance;" thought he, for making me hear all this nonsense.—"But come," he continued, "bring up the heavy artillery—that is, let me hear your more uncommon sins. You have some worse things upon your conscience than any you have told, or I am mistaken."

"*Oh, mon Père! Oh, mon bon Père!*" groaned Gaultier, "*Je suis un pauvre pécheur, un misérable.*"

"Now it comes," thought the Norman; "*Allons, allons, mon fils, ayez courage! l'Eglise est pleine de miséricorde.*"

"There was an old owl in the barn," said Gaultier, "and woodcocks being scarce—"

"*Ventre Saint Gris!*" cried Marteville to himself, "this will never come to an end;" "*Mais, mon fils,*" he said aloud, "I have told you, all that is pardoned. Speak, can you charge yourself with murder, treason, conspiracy, sorcery,"—Gaultier groaned—"astrology,"—Gaultier groaned still more deeply—"or of having concealed any such crimes, when committed by others?" Gaultier groaned a third time. The Norman had now brought him to the point; and after much moaning, hesitation, and agony of mind, he acknowledged that he had been privy to a meeting of sorcerers.—Nay, that he had even conducted a notorious Astrologer, a little man in grey, on the road to meet the defunct *Père Le Rouge* and his companion the Devil, at the old Chateau of St. Loup; and that it was his remorse of conscience for this crime, together with his terror at revealing it, after the menaces of the Sorcerer, that had thrown

him into the lamentable state in which he then lay.

By degrees, the Norman drew from him every particular, and treasuring them up in his memory, he hastened to give the suffering innkeeper absolution; which, though not performed in the most orthodox manner, quite satisfied Gaultier; who concluded, that any little difference of form from that to which he had been used, proceeded from the Norman being a Jesuit and a *directeur*; and he afterwards was heard to declare, that the Père Alexis was the most pious and saintly of men, and that one absolution from him was worth a hundred from any one else; although the *Curé* of the village, when he heard the method in which it had been administered, pronounced it to be heterodox and heretical, and in short a damnable error.

And here be it remarked, that a neighbouring *Curé* having taken up the quarrel of Père Alexis, and pronounced his form to be the right one, a violent controversy ensued, which raged in Champagne for more than fifty years, producing nine hundred pamphlets, three thousand letters, twenty public discussions, and four Papal bulls, till at length it was agreed on all hands to write to the Jesuits of Alençon, and demand their authority for such a deviation from established rules: when it was discovered that they administered absolution like every one else; and that they never had such a person as Père Alexis belonging to their very respectable and learned body.

But to return to the Norman. As soon as he had concluded all the ceremonies he thought right to perform, for the farther consolation of Gaultier, he said to him—"Fear not, my son, the menaces of the Sorcerer; for I forbid all evil beings, even were it the Devil himself, to lay so much as the tip of a finger upon you; and moreover, I will go this very night to the old Chateau of St. Loup, and will exorcise Père Le Rouge and drive his spirit forth from the place, and, *morbleu!* if he dare appear to me I will take him by the beard, and lead him into the middle of the village, and all the little children shall drum him out of the regiment—I mean out of the town."

With this bold resolution, Monsieur Marteville descended to the ground floor, and communicated his design to Louise and the *bourgeoise*, who were sitting with their noses together over a flaggon of *vin chaud*. "*Donnez moi un coup de vin,*" said he, "*et j'irai.*"

But Louise, who did not choose to trust her new husband out of her sight, having discovered by a kind of instinct, that in his case "absence was worse than death," declared she would go with him, and see him take Père Le Rouge by the beard. The Norman remonstrated, but Louise persisted with a sort of sweet pertinacity which was quite irresistible, and, though somewhat out of humour with her obstinacy, he was obliged to consent.

However, he growled audibly while she assisted to disembarass him of his long black robe; and probably, had it not been for his assumed character, would have accompanied his opposition with more than one of those elegant expletives with which he was wont to season his discourse. Louise, notwithstanding all this, still maintained her point, and the horses being brought forth, the bags were placed on their backs, and the Norman and his spouse set forth for the old Chateau of St. Loup, taking care to repeat their injunction to the landlady not to discover their real characters to any one, as the business of the *Père directeur* required the utmost secrecy.

The landlady promised devoutly to comply, and having seen her guests depart, entered the public room, where several of the peasantry had by this time assembled, and told every one in a whisper that the tall gentleman they had seen get on horseback was the Père Alexis, *directeur* of the Jesuits of Alençon, and that the lady was Mademoiselle Louise de Crackmagnole, *sa pénitente*. Immediately, they all ran in different directions, some to the door, some to the window, to see so wonderful a pair as the Père Alexis and his *pénitente*. The bustle, rushing, and chattering which succeeded, and which the landlady could no way abate, called the attention of the Sieur Marteville, who, not particularly in a good humour at being contradicted by Louise, was so much excited into anger by the gaping of the multitude, that he had well nigh drawn the portentous Toledo which hung by his side, and returned to satisfy their curiosity by presenting his person rather nearer than they might have deemed agreeable. He bridled in his wrath, however, or rather, to change the figure, kept it in store for some future occasion; and consoling himself with a few internal curses, in which Louise had her share, he rode on, and soon arrived at that part of the wood which we have already said was named the Sorcerer's Grove.

Of the unheard of adventures which there befel, the giants that he slew, and the monsters that he overcame, we shall treat in a future chapter, turning our attention at present to other important subjects which call loudly for detail.



## CHAPTER IV.

Being a Chapter of Explanations, which the reader has no occasion to peruse if he understands the story without it.

"GREAT news! Cinq Mars!" exclaimed Fontrailles. "Great news! the Cardinal is sick to the death, and goes without loss of time to Tarascon: he trembles upon the brink of the grave."

Cinq Mars was stretched upon three chairs, the farthest of which he kept balanced on its edge by the weight of his feet, idly rocking it backwards and forwards, while his mind was deeply buried in one of the weak romances of the day, the reading which was a favourite amusement with the Master of the Horse, at those periods when the energies of his mind seemed to sleep. "Too good news to be true, Fontrailles," he replied, hardly looking up; "take my word for it, the Devil never dies."

"That may be," answered Fontrailles, "but nevertheless the Cardinal, as I said, is dying, and goes instantly to Tarascon to try another climate."

"Why, where hast thou heard all this? and when didst thou come from Spain?" demanded Cinq Mars, rousing himself. "Thou hast made good speed."

"Had I not good reason?" asked the other. "But they tell me that I must question you for news; for that it is something in regard to your friend, the young Count de Blenau, which has so deeply struck the Cardinal."

"Well then, I will give the story, in true heroic style," answered Cinq Mars, tossing the book from him. "Thou dost remember, O my friend!" he continued, imitating the language of the romance he had just been reading, "how stormy was the night, when last I parted from thee, at the old Chateau of Mesnil St. Loup; and if the thunder clouds passed away, and left the sky clear and moonlighted, it was but to be succeeded by a still more violent tempest. For, long after thou wert snugly housed at Troyes, De Thou and myself were galloping on through the storm of night. The rain fell, the lightning glanced, the thunder rolled over head, and the way seemed doubly long, and the forest doubly dreary, when by a sudden blaze of the red fire of heaven, I descried some one, mounted on a white horse, come rapidly towards us."

"Come, come, Cinq Mars!" exclaimed Fontrailles, "for grace, leave the land of romance—remember I have a long story to tell, and not much time to tell it in. Truce with imagination therefore, for we have more serious work before us."

"It's truth—it's truth, thou unbelieving Jew," cried Cinq Mars. "No romance, I can assure you. Well, soon as this white horseman saw two others wending their way towards him, he suddenly reined in his beast, and turning round, galloped off as hard as he could go. Now, if curiosity be a failing, it is one I possess in an eminent degree; so, clapping spurs to my horse, after him I went, full faster than he ran away. As for De Thou, he calls out after me, loud enough to drown the thunder, crying, 'Cinq Mars, where are you going? In God's name stop—We know the place is full of banditti—If these are robbers, they may murder you,'—and so on; but finding that I did not much heed, he also was smitten with a galloping fit, and so we followed each other, like a procession, though with no procession pace: the white horseman first—I next—and De Thou last—with about a hundred yards between each of us—going all at full speed, to the great peril of our necks, and no small danger of our heads from the boughs. I was best mounted however, on my stout black horse Sloeberry—you know Sloeberry;—and so distancing De Thou all to nothing, I began to come closer to my white horseman, who, finding that he could not get off, gradually pulled in, and let me come up with him. 'Well, Sir,' said he directly, with all possible coolness—'you have ridden hard to-night.'—'In truth, I have, my man,' answered I, 'and so have you, and I should much like to know why you did so.'—'For the same reason that you did, I suppose,' replied the boy, for such it was who spoke.—'And what reason is that?' I asked.—'Because we both liked it, I suppose,' replied he.—'That may be,' answered I; 'but we have all a reason for our likings.'—'True, Sir,' said the boy, 'and I dare say your's was a good one; pray, believe that mine was so also,'—All the time he spoke, he kept looking round at me, till at last he got a good sight of my face. 'Are not you Monsieur de Cinq Mars?' cried he at length.—'And if I am, what follows then?'—'Why it follows that you are the person I want,' said the boy.—'And what want you with me?'—'Who is that?' demanded he, pointing to De Thou, who now came up. I soon satisfied him on that score, and he went on. 'My name is Henry de La Mothe, and I am Page to your good friend, the Count de Blenau, whom I have seen arrested and carried to the Bastille.'

"Now, you know, Fontrailles, how dear I hold De Blenau; so you may guess how pleasantly this rang upon my ear. My first question to the Page was, whether my friend had sent him to me. 'No, no, Seigneur,' answered the boy; 'but as I knew you loved my master, and the King loved you, I thought it best to let you know, in case you might wish to serve him. He was taken as he was about to go with the Queen to Chantilly, and they would not let me or any other go with him, to serve him in prison. So I cast about in my mind, how I could serve him out of it, and consequently came off to seek you.'—'But how did you know where to find me?' demanded I, not a little fearing that our movements were watched; but the boy relieved me from that by answering, 'Why, Sir, there was a messenger came over from Chantilly to desire the Queen's presence; and amongst all the questions I asked him, there was one which made him tell me that you had gone to Troyes upon some business of inheritance, and as I heard that the path through this wood would save me a league, I took it, hoping to reach the town to-night.'

"Well, all the Page's news vexed me not a little, and I thought of a thousand things to relieve De Blenau ere I could fix on any. But it happened, as it often does in this world, that chance directed me when reasoning failed. Having made the best of my way, I arrived with De Thou and the boy at Chantilly, at the hour of nine the next night, and passing towards my own apartments in the Palace, I saw the King's cabinet open, and on inquiry, found that he had not yet retired to rest. My resolution was instantly taken; and without waiting even to dust my boots, I went just as I was, to pay my duty to his Majesty. My short absence had done me no harm with Louis, who received me with more grace than ever; so while the newness was on, I dashed at the subject next my heart at once. Like a well-bred falcon, I soared my full pitch, hovered an instant in my pride of place, and then stooped at once with irresistible force. In short, Fontrailles, for the first time I believe in my life, I boasted. I told Louis how I loved him; I counted over the services I had done him. His noble heart—you may smile, Sir, but he has a noble heart—was touched; I saw it, and gave him a moment to think over all old passages of affection between us, and to combine them with the feelings of the moment, and then I told him that my friend—my bosom friend—was suffering from the tyranny of the Cardinal, and demanded his favour for De Blenau. 'What can I do, Cinq Mars?' demanded he, 'you know I must follow the advice of my ministers and counsellors.'

"It was an opportunity not to be lost," exclaimed Fontrailles, eagerly; "I hope you seized it."—"I did," replied Cinq Mars. "I plied him hard on every point that could shake the influence of Richelieu. I showed him the shameful bondage he suffered. I told him, that if he allowed the sovereign power, placed by God in his hands, to be abused by another, he was as guilty as if he misused it himself; and then I said—'I plead alone for the innocent, Sire. Hear De Blenau yourself, and if you find him guilty, bring him to the block at once. But if he have done nothing worthy of death, I will trust that your Majesty's justice will instantly set him free.' Well, the King not only promised that he would go to Paris and examine De Blenau himself, but he added—'And I will be firm, Cinq Mars; I know the power is in my own hands, and I will exert it to save your friend, if he be not criminal.'"

"This was all fair, Fontrailles; I could desire no more; but Louis even out did my expectation. Something had already irritated him against the Cardinal—I think it was the banishment of Clara de Hauteford. However, he went to the Bastille with Richelieu, Chavigni, and others of the council. Of course I was not admitted; but I heard all that passed from one who was present. De Blenau bore him nobly and bravely, and downright refused to answer any questions about the Queen, without her Majesty's own commands. Well; Richelieu, according to custom, was for giving him the torture instantly. But the King had many good reasons for not suffering that to be done. Besides wishing to pleasure me, and being naturally averse to cruelty, he had a lingering inclination to cross Richelieu, and De Blenau's firmness set him a good example: so the Cardinal was overruled; and the Queen's commands to De Blenau to confess all being easily procured, he owned that he had forwarded letters from her Majesty to her brother the King of Spain. Now, you see, Richelieu was angry, and irritated at being thwarted; and he did the most foolish thing that man ever did; for though he saw that Louis was roused, and just in the humour to cross him, he got up, and not considering the King's presence, at once pronounced a sentence of exile against De Blenau, as if the sovereign power had been entirely his own, without consulting Louis, or asking his approbation at all. Though, God knows, the King cares little enough about using his power, of course he does not like to be treated as a mere cipher before his own Council; and accordingly he revoked the Cardinal's sentence without hesitation, sending De Blenau, merely for form's sake, into Bourbon, and then rising, he broke up the Council, treating Richelieu with as scanty consideration as he had shown himself. By Heaven! Fontrailles, when I heard it, I could have played the fool for joy. Richelieu was deeply touched, you may suppose; and what with his former ill health and this new blow, he has never been himself since; but I knew not that he was so far gone as you describe."

"It is so reported in Paris," replied Fontrailles, "and he has become so humble that no one would know him. But mark me, Cinq Mars. The Cardinal is now upon the brink of a precipice, and we must urge him quickly down; for if he once again gain the ascendancy, we are not only lost for ever, but his power will be far greater than it was before."

"He will never rise more in this world," answered Cinq Mars. "His day, I trust, is gone by: his health is broken; and the King, who always hated him, now begins to fear him no longer. I will do my best to strengthen Louis's resolution, and get him into a way of thinking for himself. And now, Fontrailles, for the news from Spain."

"Why, my story might be made longer than yours, if I were to go through all that happened to me on the road. It was a long and barren journey, and I believe I should have been almost starved before I reached Madrid, if I had not half filled my bags with biscuits. However, I arrived at length, and not without some difficulty found a place to lodge, for these cold Spaniards are as fearful of admitting a stranger to their house, as if he were a man-tiger. My next step was to send for a tailor, and to hire me a lacquais or two, one of whom I sent instantly to Madame de Chevreuse, praying an audience of her, which was granted immediately."

"Why thou wert not mad enough to make a *confidante* of Madame de Chevreuse?" exclaimed Cinq Mars; "why, it is carrying water in a sieve. A thousand to one, she makes her peace with Richelieu, by telling him the whole story."

"Fear not, Cinq Mars," answered Fontrailles. "Have you yet to learn that a woman's first passion is revenge? To such extent is the hatred of Madame de Chevreuse against the Cardinal, that I believe, were she asked to sacrifice one of her beautiful hands, she would do it, if it would but conduce to his ruin."

Cinq Mars shook his head, still doubting the propriety of what had been done; but Fontrailles proceeded.

"However, I told her nothing; she knew it all, before I set foot in Spain. You must know, King Philip is a monarch no way insensible to female charms, and the Duchess is too lovely to pass unnoticed any where. The consequences are natural—A lady of her rank having taken refuge in his dominions, of course the King must pay her every attention. He is always with her—has a friendship, a *penchant*, an affection for her—call it what you will, but it is that sort of feeling which makes a man tell a woman every thing; and thus very naturally our whole correspondence has gone direct to Madame de Chevreuse. My object in first asking to see her, was only to gain an immediate audience of the King, which she can always command; but when I found that she knew the whole business, of course, I made her believe that I came for the express purpose of consulting her upon it. Her vanity was flattered. She became more than ever convinced, that she was a person of infinite consequence, and acknowledged discernment; entered heart and hand into all our schemes; stuck out her pretty little foot, and made me buckle her shoe; brought me speedily to the King's presence, and made him consent to all I wished; got the treaty signed and sealed, and sent me back to France with my object accomplished, remaining herself fully convinced that she is at the head of the most formidable conspiracy that ever was formed, and that future ages will celebrate her talents for diplomacy and intrigue."

Cinq Mars, though not fully satisfied at the admission of so light a being as Madame de Chevreuse into secrets of such importance, could not help smiling at the account his companion gave; and as it was in vain to regret what was done, he turned to the present, asking what was to be done next. "No time is now to be lost," said he. "For the whole danger is now incurred, and we must not allow it to be fruitless."

"Certainly not," answered Fontrailles. "You must ply the King hard to procure his consent as far as possible. In the next place, a counterpart of the treaty must be signed by all the confederates, and sent into Spain, for which I have pledged my word; and another, similarly signed, must be sent to the Duke of Bouillon in Italy. But who will carry it to the Duke? that is the question. I cannot absent myself again."

"I will provide a messenger," said Cinq Mars. "There is an Italian attached to my service, named Villa Grande, a sort of half-bred gentleman, who, lacking gold himself, hangs upon any who will feed him. They laugh at him here for his long mustaches, and his longer rapier; but if he tell truth, his rapier has done good service; so, as this will be an undertaking of danger, he shall have it, as he says he seeks but to distinguish himself in my service, and being an Italian, he knows the country to which he is going."

"If you can trust him, be it so," replied Fontrailles. "At present let us look to other considerations. We must seek to strengthen our party by all means; for though circumstances seem to combine to favour us, yet it is necessary to guard against any change. Do you think that the Queen could be brought to join us?"

"Certainly not!" replied the Master of the Horse; "and if she would, to us it would be far more dangerous than advantageous. She has no power over the mind of the King—she has no separate authority; and besides, though Richelieu's avowed enemy, she is so cautious of giving offence to Louis, that she would consent to nothing that was not openly warranted by him."

"But suppose we are obliged to have recourse to arms," said Fontrailles, "would it not be every thing in our favour to have in our hands the Queen and the Heir apparent to the throne?"

"True," answered Cinq Mars; "but if we are driven to such extremity, she will be obliged to declare for some party, and that of necessity must be our's; for she will never side with Richelieu. We can also have her well surrounded by our friends, and seize upon the Dauphin should the case require it."

"What say you, then, to trying the Count de Blenau? He is your friend. He is brave, expert in war, and just such a man as leads the blind multitude. But more, he is wealthy and powerful, and has much credit in Languedoc."

"I do not know," said Cinq Mars thoughtfully, "I do not know.—De Blenau would never betray us, even if he refused to aid our scheme. But I much think his scruples would go farther than even De Thou's. I have often remarked, he has that sort of nicety in his ideas which will not suffer him to enter into any thing which may, by even a remote chance, cast a shade upon his name."

"Well, we can try him at all events," said Fontrailles. "You, Cinq Mars, can ask him whether he will join the liberators of his country."

"No, Fontrailles," answered the Master of the Horse in a decided tone; "no, I will not do it. Claude de Blenau is a man by whom I should not like to be refused. Besides, I should hesitate to involve him, young and noble-hearted as he is, in a scheme which might draw down ruin on his head."

"In the name of Heaven, Cinq Mars," cried Fontrailles, with real astonishment at a degree of generosity of which he could find no trace in his own bosom, "of what are you dreaming? Are you frenzied? Why, you have engaged life and fortune, hope and happiness, in this scheme yourself, and can you love another man better?"

"There is every difference, Fontrailles—every difference. If I cut my own throat, I am a fool and a madman, granted; but if I cut the throat of another man, I am a murderer, which is somewhat worse. But I will be plain with you. I have embarked in this with my eyes open, and it is my own fault. Therefore, whatever happens, I will go on and do my best for our success. But mark me, Fontrailles, if all were to come over again, I would rather lay down one of my hands and have it chopped off, than enter into any engagement of the kind."

A cloud came over the brow of Fontrailles for a moment, and a gleam of rage lighted up his dark grey eye, which soon, however, passed away from his features, though the rankling passion still lay at his heart, like a smouldering fire, which wants but a touch to blaze forth and destroy. But his look, as I have said, was soon cleared of all trace of anger; and he replied with that show of cheerfulness which he well knew how to assume, "Well, Cinq Mars, I do not look upon it in so gloomy a light as you do; though perhaps, were it now to begin, I might not be so ready in it either, for the chances we have run were great; but these, I trust, are over, and every thing certainly looks prosperous at present. However, there is no use in thinking what either of us might do had we now our choice. We are both too far engaged to go back at this time of day; so let us think alone of insuring success, and the glory of having attempted to free our country will at least be ours, let the worst befall us."

The word *glory* was never without its effect on Cinq Mars. It was his passion, and was but the more violent from the restraint to which his constant attendance on the King had subjected it, seldom having been enabled to display in their proper field those high qualities which he possessed as a soldier. "So far you are right, Fontrailles," replied he; "the glory even of the attempt is great, and we have but one course to pursue, which is straightforward to our object. You, do every thing to bind the fickle goddess to our cause, and so will I; but thinking as I do, I cannot find it in my heart to involve De Blenau. Manage that as you like; only do not ask me to do it."

"Oh that is easily done," answered Fontrailles, "without your bearing any part in it. Of course each of the confederates has a right to invite whomsoever he may think proper to join his party, and it would be highly dishonourable of any other to dissuade the person so invited from aiding the scheme on which all our lives depend. The Count de Blenau, I think you say, is now retired to Bourbon. There also is the Duke of Orleans, and I will take care that he shall broach the subject to the Count without implicating you."

Cinq Mars started from his seat, and began pacing the room with his eyes bent on the ground, feeling an undefined sensation of dissatisfaction at the plans of Fontrailles, yet hardly knowing how to oppose them. "Well, well," said he at length; "it is your business, not mine; and besides, I do not, in the least, think that De Blenau will listen to you for a moment. He has other things to think of. Mademoiselle de Beaumont is absent, no one knows where; and he must soon hear of it."

"Be that as it may," replied Fontrailles, "I will try. And now, Cinq Mars, let me touch upon another point;" and the wily conspirator prepared all his powers to work upon the mind of his less cautious companion, and to urge him on to an attempt which had already been the object of more than one conspiracy in that day, but which, by some unaccountable means, had always failed without any apparent difficulty or obstacle. This was no other than the assassination of the Cardinal de Richelieu: and those who read the memoirs of the faction-breathing Gondi, or any other of the historical records of the time, will wonder how, without any precaution for his personal safety, Richelieu escaped the many hands that were armed for his destruction.

Princes and nobles, warriors and politicians had thought it no crime to undertake the death of this tyrant Minister; but yet there was something in the mind of Cinq Mars so opposite to every thing base and treacherous, that Fontrailles feared to approach boldly the proposal he was about to make. "Let us suppose, my noble friend," said he, in that slow and energetic manner which often lends authority to bad argument, "that all our schemes succeed—that the tyrant is stripped of the power he has so abused—that the tiger is enveloped in our toils. What are we to do? Are we to content ourselves with having caught him? Are we only to hold him for a moment in our power, and then to set him loose again, once more to ravage France, and to destroy ourselves? And if we agree to hold him in captivity, where shall we find chains sufficient to bind him, or a cage in which we can confine him with security, when there are a thousand other tigers of his race ready to attack the hunters of their fellow?"

"I propose nothing of the kind," answered Cinq Mars; "once stripped of his authority, let him be arraigned for the crimes which he has committed, and suffer the death he has merited. The blood of thousands will cry out for justice, and his very creatures will spurn the monster that they served from fear."

"Then you think him worthy of death," said Fontrailles, in that kind of undecided manner which showed that he felt he was treading on dangerous ground.

"Worthy of death!" exclaimed Cinq Mars; "who can doubt it?—Fontrailles, what is it that you mean? You speak as if there was something in your mind that you know not how to discover. Speak, man. What is it you would say?"

"Who will deny that Brutus was a patriot?" said Fontrailles; "a brave, a noble, and a glorious man? And Brutus stabbed Cæsar in the Capitol!—Cinq Mars, when the freedom of our country is at stake, shall we wait tamely till we have preached a timid Monarch into compliance, or drawn a foreign power to our aid, when *one—single—hand* could do the work of justice, and rid the world of a tyrant who has lived so much too long?"

"Ha!" exclaimed Cinq Mars, starting back, and laying his hand upon his sword; "dost thou suppose me an assassin? Art thou one thyself, that thou canst so well gloze over murder with a stale tale of antiquity?—Monsieur de Fontrailles," he continued more calmly, but still with stern indignation, "you have mistaken the person to whom you addressed yourself. Pardon me. We will speak no more upon this subject, lest we end worse friends than we began."

Fontrailles was not a common hypocrite; he saw at once that on this point persuasion would be vain, and defence of his first proposal would but leave the worse impression on the mind of his companion; and therefore his determination was formed in a moment to take up the exact reverse position to that which he had just occupied, and if possible to force Cinq Mars into a belief that the proposal had only been made to try him. The first wild start of his companion had caused Fontrailles to draw back almost in fear; but instantly recovering himself, like a well-trained actor, every muscle of whose face is under command, he fixed his eyes on Cinq Mars, and instead of any sign of anger or disappointment, he threw into his countenance an expression of gratified admiration. "Cinq Mars, my noble friend!" he exclaimed, opening his arms to embrace him as the other concluded; "you are the man I thought you! Pardon me if I have sought to try you! but when I heard you propose to affect the Cardinal's life by our plans, I knew not how far that idea might lead you, and I wished to be sure of the man with whom I was so deeply engaged. I declare before Heaven, that had I found that you proposed to do Richelieu to death by aught but legal means, I should have been deeply grieved, and would have fled from France where-e'er my fortune might lead, leaving you to follow your plans as best you might. But I am now satisfied, and demand your pardon for having ever doubted you."

Cinq Mars suffered the embrace which Fontrailles proffered, but returned it coldly. Acting is ever acting, however near it may approach to nature; and notwithstanding all the hypocritical art of which Fontrailles was a master, and which he took care to exert on the present occasion, the mind of Cinq Mars still retained its doubts as to the character of the man with whom he had so closely linked his fate. "If he *is* a villain," thought the Master of the Horse, "he is a most black and consummate villain;" and though they parted apparently friends, the recollection of that morning's conversation still haunted the imagination of Cinq Mars like some ill vision; nor did the impression cease with his waking thoughts, but visited him even during the hours of repose, making him believe himself chained in a dungeon with Fontrailles standing over him turning a dagger round and round in his heart, while ever and anon he cried "Thou art a murderer!"

## CHAPTER V.

Which evinces the necessity of saying, no; and shows what it is to hunt upon a wrong scent.

IN journeying onward towards the Bourbonnois, the thoughts of De Blenau had full time to rest upon the late occurrences; and though these had been of such a fearful nature, yet so rapidly had they passed, that dangers and sorrows, prisons and trials, floated before his remembrance like a confused and uncertain dream; and it required an effort to fix all the particular circumstances in their correct position, for the purpose of investigating the motives of the principal actors in those events which had so deeply affected himself.

This, when he could turn his mind from happier contemplations, was the principal occupation of his thoughts; and more especially in reflecting upon the conduct of the King, De Blenau imagined that he could perceive a regular design in every part of the Monarch's behaviour, which in truth it did not possess. Under this view he was left to conclude, that he had been ordered to retire to Bourbon for the specific reason that he had there no acquaintance or influence which could be dangerous to the Government; but it is more probable that Louis, not wishing to reverse the Cardinal's sentence entirely, by freely pardoning De Blenau, had in the hurry of the moment mentioned any province that suggested itself. However that might be, it so happened that De Blenau was hardly known to any individual within the limits to which, by the King's command, he was bound to confine himself. Nor did he feel any additional uncomfot in the prospect of passing a short space of time in comparative solitude; for his mind was not likely to be well attuned to society, while constrained to absent himself from those he loved best; and he was rather pleased than otherwise, that the time of his separation from Pauline would be passed without the annoyance of associating with people to whom he was indifferent.

De Blenau's first care, on arriving at Moulins, was to write to Pauline de Beaumont.

Fancy might easily supply his letter, which is otherwise irrecoverably gone; but as each reader's imagination will do more justice to it, according to his own taste, than mine could do, I will leave it unwritten here, especially as I have undertaken to commemorate truth only; and I really know nothing of the matter. Suffice it that it was full of all that affection, and gratitude, and hope, and delight could suggest, and gave a bright picture of a bright and happy mind. As couriers and posts in those days were as different from such things at present, as the first wooden clock was from a modern chronometer, De Blenau did not choose to trust his letter to the uncertain conveyance of the Government carrier, or, as he was then called, the *Ordinaire*; but placing it in the hands of his trusty page, Henry de La Mothe, he sent him forth upon a journey to St. Germain, with orders to deliver many a kind greeting to Pauline in person, and to bring back an answer with all speed.

The boy set out, and De Blenau, flattering himself with the idea that his banishment from court would not be of any long continuance, took his residence for the time in the immediate neighbourhood of Moulins, contenting himself with an old chateau, the proprietor of which was very willing—his fortune and his castle both being somewhat decayed—to sacrifice his pride of birth, in consideration of a handsome remuneration from the young Count.

Here De Blenau had dwelt some time, waiting the return of his messenger, and in possession of that quiet solitude most consonant to his feelings, when he was disturbed by a billet left at his gate by a horseman, who waited not to be questioned, but rode away immediately after having delivered it. The note itself merely contained a request, that the Count de Blenau would ride in the direction of St. Amand on the following evening, at the hour of four, when he would meet with one who had business of importance to communicate. The hand-writing was unknown to him, and De Blenau at first hesitated whether to obey the summons or not; but curiosity has a thousand ways of strengthening itself, and at last he reasoned himself into a belief, that whatever it might be, no harm could accrue from his compliance.

Accordingly, on the following evening, as the hour drew near, he mounted his horse, and, accompanied by his usual attendants, proceeded towards St. Amand. Having ridden on for more than an hour without meeting any one above the rank of a peasant, he began to accuse himself for having been the dupe of what might prove some foolish joke. He had even reined in his horse with the purpose of returning, when he perceived a person approaching on horseback, who, notwithstanding a sort of carelessness,—even perhaps, slovenliness of manner and carriage—had about him that undefinable air, which in all ages, and in every guise, denotes a gentleman, and a distinguished one. It was not, however, till he came near, that De Blenau recognised Gaston Duke of Orleans, whom he had not seen for some time. The moment he did remember him, he gave him the centre of the road, and saluting him respectfully, was passing on, never dreaming that the summons he had received could have proceeded from him.

"Good day, Monsieur de Blenau. You are close upon the hour," said the Duke, drawing up his horse, and at once allowing the Count to understand that it was with him that the appointment had been made.

"I was not aware," replied De Blenau, "that the summons which I received last night was from so honourable a hand, or I should have had no hesitation in obeying."

"Why, that is right," said the Duke. "The truth is, I wished much to see you, Monsieur le Comte, upon a business wherein you may not only be of much service to yourself and me, but also to your country. We will ride on, if you please; and as we go, I will explain myself farther."

De Blenau turned his horse and rode on with the Duke; but the warning which Chavigni had given him, came strongly into his mind; and Gaston of Orleans was too famous for the unfortunate conspiracies in which he had been engaged, for De Blenau to think with aught but horror, of acting in any way with a man, the weak versatility of whose disposition had already brought more than one of his friends to the scaffold. He therefore waited for the Duke's communication, determined to cut it short as soon as propriety admitted; and even to deviate from the respect due to his rank, rather than become the confidant of a Prince, whose station was his sole title to reverence.

"You do not answer me, Monsieur de Blenau," said the Duke, after having waited a moment or two for some reply. "Are you, Sir, inclined to serve your country; or is the Cardinal de Richelieu your good friend?"

"That I am inclined to serve my country," replied De Blenau, "your Highness need not doubt; and when my sword can avail that country against a foreign adversary, it shall always be ready at her call. In regard to his Eminence of Richelieu, I hope that he is no more my enemy than I am his; and that he will no more attempt to injure me than I will to injure him."

"But has he not endeavoured to injure you already?" said the Duke. "Listen to me, Sir Count. Suppose that there

were many men at this moment well inclined to free France from the yoke under which she labours. Suppose I were to tell you that——”

“Let me beseech your Highness,” interposed De Blenau, “to tell me no more; for, if I understand you rightly, it must be a confidence dangerous either to you or me—dangerous to you, if I reveal it; and dangerous to me, if I do not. Pardon me, my Lord, for interrupting you; but let my ears remain in their present innocence of what you mean. What may be your wishes with me, I know not: but before you proceed farther, let me say that I will enter into no scheme whatever against a government to which his Majesty has given his sanction, and which it is always in his power to alter or remove at his pleasure, without any one being entitled to question his authority either in raising it or casting it down. And now, having ventured to premise thus much, if I can serve your Highness personally, in any way where my honour and my allegiance are not at all implicated, I shall be most happy in an opportunity of showing my attachment to your royal person and family.”

“Why then, Monsieur de Blenau,” replied the Duke, “I think the best thing we can do is, to turn our horses different ways, and forget that we have met to-day at all. Our conference has been short, but it has been to the purpose. But of course, before we part, I expect your promise, as a man of honour, that you will not betray me.”

“I have nothing to betray, my Lord,” replied De Blenau with a smile. “We have met on the road to St. Amand. We have not been five minutes in each other’s company. Your Highness has told me nothing, whatever I may have suspected; therefore you may rest perfectly secure that I have nothing to betray, even if they put me to the torture to-morrow. But as I think that for your Highness’s sake, we had better be as little together as possible, I will humbly take my leave.”

So saying, De Blenau bowed low, and turned his horse towards Moulins, the Duke of Orleans preparing to take the other road; but suddenly the latter stopped, and turning his head, asked if De Blenau had gained any news of Mademoiselle de Beaumont.

“I am not aware of what your Highness alludes to,” replied De Blenau, quickly reining in his horse, and returning to the side of the Duke.

“What, then you have not heard—When had you letters from St. Germain?”

“Heard what? In the name of God, speak, my Lord!” cried De Blenau: “Do not keep me in suspense.”

“Nay, Monsieur de Blenau, I know but little,” answered the Duke. “All my news came yesterday in a letter from St. Germain, whereby I find that Mademoiselle de Beaumont has disappeared; and as no one knows whither she is gone, and no cause is apparent for her voluntary absence, it is conjectured that Richelieu, finding, as it is whispered, that she endeavoured to convey intelligence to you in the Bastille, has caused her to be arrested and confined *au secret*.”

“But when did she disappear?—Who saw her last?—Have no traces been discovered?—Why do they not apply to the King?” exclaimed De Blenau, with a degree of agitation that afforded amusement, rather than excited sympathy in the frivolous mind of the Duke of Orleans.

“Really, Monsieur de Blenau, to none of all your questions can I at all reply,” answered Gaston. “Very possibly, the lady may have gone off with some fair lover, in which case she will have taken care to leave no traces of her flight.—What think you of the weather?—will it rain to-day?”

“Hell and fury!” cried De Blenau, incensed at the weak trifling of the Prince, at a moment when his feelings were so deeply interested; and turning his horse round without farther adieu, he struck his spurs into the animal’s sides, and, followed by his attendants, galloped off towards Moulins. Arrived at the chateau which he inhabited, his thoughts were still in such a troubled state, as to forbid all calm consideration. “Prepare every thing to set out. Saddle fresh horses. Send to Moulins for the *Propriétaire*,” were De Blenau’s first commands, determined at all risks to set out for St. Germain, and seek for Pauline himself. But while his orders were in train of execution, reflection came to his aid, and he began to think that the news which the Duke had given him might not be true—that Gaston might either be deceived himself, or that he might have invented the story for the purpose of forcing him into a conspiracy against Richelieu’s government. “At all events,” thought he, “Henry de La Mothe cannot be longer absent than to-morrow. I may miss him on the road, and thus be four days without information instead of one.” Accordingly, after some farther hesitation, he determined to delay his journey one day, and counterordered the preparations which he had before commanded. Nevertheless, his mind was too much agitated to permit of his resting inactive; and quitting the chateau, he walked quickly on the road towards Paris; but he had not proceeded more than a quarter of a league, when from the top of a hill he perceived a horseman coming at full speed towards him. At first, while the distance rendered his form altogether indistinct, De Blenau decided that it was Henry de La Mothe—it must be—it could be nobody else. Then again he began to doubt—the horse did not look like his; and De Blenau had almost determined that it was not his Page, when the fluttering scarf of blue and gold becoming apparent, decided the question, and he hurried forward, impatient even of the delay which must yet intervene.

The Page rode on at full speed; and even from that circumstance De Blenau drew an unfavourable augury: he had something evidently to communicate which required haste. His horse, too, was not the same which had carried him away, and he must have changed him on the road: this too was a sign of that urgent despatch which could alone proceed from some painful cause. However, the Page came rapidly forward, recognized his lord, and drawing in his horse, alighted to give relief to De Blenau’s doubts, only by confirming his fears.

His first tidings were perfectly similar to the information which had been given by the Duke of Orleans; but the more minute details which he had obtained, forming part of the history which he gave De Blenau of all that had occurred to him on his journey, I shall take the liberty of abridging myself, instead of leaving them in the desultory and long-winded condition in which they proceeded from the mouth of Monsieur de La Mothe.

Setting out from Moulins on one of the Count de Blenau’s strongest horses, and furnished with plenty of that patent anti-attribution composition, which has facilitated the progression of all sorts of people in all ages of the world, and in all states except in Lycurgus-governed Sparta—namely gold, Henry de La Mothe was not long in reaching St. Germain; and with all the promptitude of his age and nature, he hastened eagerly towards the Palace, promising himself infinite pleasure in delivering a genuine love-letter into the fair hands of Mademoiselle Pauline. No small air of consequence, therefore, did he assume in inquiring for Mademoiselle de Beaumont, and announcing that he must speak with her himself: but the boyish vivacity of the Page was soon changed into sorrowful anxiety, when the old servant of Anne of Austria, to whom his inquiries had been addressed, informed him that the young lady had

disappeared, and was no where to be heard of. Now Henry de La Mothe, the noble Count de Blenau's gay Page, was an universal favourite at St. Germain; so out of pure kindness, and without the least inclination in the world to gossip, the old servant took him into the Palace, and after treating him to a cup of old St. Vallier wine, told him all about the disappearance of Pauline, which formed a history occupying exactly one hour and ten minutes in delivering.

Amongst other interesting particulars, he described to the Page how he himself had accompanied Mademoiselle de Hauteford and Mademoiselle de Beaumont from Chantilly to Paris, for the purpose of conveying news to Monsieur de Blenau, in the Bastille;—and how that night he followed the two young ladies as far as the church of St. Gervais, where they separated, and he remained at the church door, while Mademoiselle de Hauteford went in and prayed for the good success of Pauline;—and farther, how Mademoiselle de Hauteford said all the prayers she knew, and composed a great many new ones to pass the time, and yet no Pauline returned;—and how at last she came out to know what the Devil had become of her;—and how he told her, that he could not tell.

He then went on to describe their search for Pauline, and their disappointment and distress at not finding her, and the insolence of a lying Innkeeper, who lived opposite the prison, and who assured him that the young lady was safe, for that he himself had delivered her from peril by the valour of his invincible arm. After this, he took up the pathetic, and showed forth in moving terms the agony and despair of Madame de Beaumont on first hearing of the non-appearance of her daughter; and then commented upon the extraordinary insensibility that she had since shown. "For after two days," said he, "she seemed to grow quite satisfied, and to forget it all, the cold hearted old—*cat.*"

"'Tis just like her," said Henry de La Mothe. "They say, when her husband was killed, she never shed a tear. But mark me, Monsieur Mathieu, she shall not have the Count's letter. As Mademoiselle is not here, I'll take it back to him unopened; so have a care not to tell the old Marquise that I have been here. Before I go back, however, I'll away to Paris, to gather what news I can. That *aubergiste* meant something—I know him well. 'Tis old Jacques Chatpilleur, the *vivandier*, who served with the army in Roussillon, when I was there with the Count."

"Well, well, my good youth, go to Paris if you please," replied the old servant. "You'll gain no tidings more than I have given you.—Did not I make all sorts of inquiries myself? and they are not likely to deceive me, I wot. Young birds think they can fly before they can peck; but go, go,—you'll gain no more than what I have told you."

Henry de La Mothe did not feel very well assured of the truth of this last position; and therefore, though his back ached with a four days' ride as fast as he could go, he set out again for Paris, where he arrived before night-fall; and entering the city by the Port St. Antoine, directed his course to the house of our doughty friend, Jacques Chatpilleur, where he was instantly acknowledged as an old acquaintance by the worthy *aubergiste*, and treated with suitable distinction. Although every moment was precious, the Page did not think fit to enter upon the business that brought him till the *auberge* was clear of intruders; and this being the hour at which many an honest burgess of the good city solaced his inward man with *boudin blanc* and Burgundy when the fatigues of the day began to cease, Henry de La Mothe thought he might as well follow the same agreeable calling, and while he was at Rome, do as Romans did.

More than an hour passed before the Page had an opportunity of communicating fully with the good *aubergiste*; but when Jacques Chatpilleur heard that the lady he had delivered from the clutches of Letrames, was no less a person than Pauline, only daughter and heiress of the late celebrated Marquis de Beaumont, and that, notwithstanding his assistance, she had somehow been carried off on that identical night, his strange woodcock-shaped person became agitated with various extraordinary contortions, proceeding from an odd mixture of pleasure and grief, which at once took possession of him, and contended for the mastery.

"*Mon Dieu!*" cried he, "to think that it was Mademoiselle de Beaumont, and that she should be lost after all!" And the *aubergiste* set himself to think of how it could all have happened. "I'll bet a million," cried he at length, starting from his reverie, and clapping his hands together with a concussion that echoed to the Bastille itself—"I'll bet a million that it was that great gluttonous Norman vagabond, who on that very night eat me up a *matelot d'anguille* and a *dinde piquée*. He is understrapping cut-throat to Master Chavigni, and he has never been here since. He has carried her off, for a million; and taken her away to some prison in the provinces, all for trying to give a little news to the good Count. But I'll ferret out his route for you. On with your beaver and come with me. Margueritte, look to the doors while I am absent. I know where the scoundrel lodged; so come along, and we'll soon hear more of him."

So saying, the landlord of the Sanglier Gourmand led Henry de La Mothe forth into the Rue St. Antoine, and thence through the several turnings and windings by which the Norman had carried Pauline to the late lodgings of Monsieur Marteville. Here Jacques Chatpilleur summoned all persons in the house, male and female, lodger and landlord, to give a full, true, and particular account of all they knew, believed, or suspected concerning the tall Norman who usually dwelt there. And such was the tone of authority which he used, and the frequency of his reference to Henry de La Mothe, whom he always specified as "this honourable youth," that the good folks instantly transformed, in their own imaginations, the Page of the Count de Blenau into little less than the valet de chambre of the prime Minister, and consequently answered all questions with becoming deference.

The sum of the information which was thus obtained amounted to this, that on the evening in question, Monsieur Marteville had brought thither a young lady—whether by force or not, no one could specify; that she was dressed as a Languedoc peasant, which Monsieur Chatpilleur acknowledged to be the disguise Pauline had assumed; and that the same evening he had carried her away again on horseback, leading her steed by the bridle rein. It farther appeared that the Norman, while preparing to set out, had asked a great many questions about Troyes in Champagne, and had inquired whether there was not a wood extending over some leagues near Mesnil St. Loup, which was reported to be infested by robbers. From all this the inhabitants of the house had concluded universally that his journey was destined to be towards Troyes, and that he would take care to avoid the wood of Mesnil St. Loup.

Henry de La Mothe now fancied that he had the clue completely in his hands, and returning with Jacques Chatpilleur to his *auberge*, he took one night's necessary rest, and having exchanged his horse, which was knocked up with its journey, he set out the next morning on his return to Moulins.

After this recital, all considerations of personal safety, the King's commands to remain in Bourbon, the enmity of the Cardinal, and the warnings of Chavigni, vanished from the mind of De Blenau like smoke; and returning to the Chateau, he ordered his horses to be instantly prepared, chose ten of his most resolute servants to accompany him,

ordered Henry de La Mothe to remain till he had recovered from his fatigues, and then to return to St. Germain, and tell Madame de Beaumont that he would send her news of her daughter, or lose his life in the search; and having made all other necessary arrangements, he took his departure for Troyes without a consideration of the consequences.



## CHAPTER VI.

The consequence of fishing in troubled water.

WE must now return to the two worthy personages whom we left jogging on towards the Chateau of St. Loup, taking them up at the precise place where we set them down.

"*Bon gré mal gré va le prêtre au séné,*" grumbled the Norman. "Remember, Madame Louise, I take you with no good-will: you insist upon going; so now if you meet with any thing disagreeable, it is your own fault,—mark that, *ma poule.*"

"I'm no more afraid of the Devil than yourself," answered Louise pertly; "and I suppose I shall meet with no one worse than he is."

"You may," replied the Norman; "but come on, it gets late, and we have no time to spare."

The tone of Marteville was not very encouraging; but Louise was resolved not to lose sight of her husband, and being by nature as bold as a lion, she followed on without fear. True it is, that she did not know the whole history of the Sorcerer's Grove, or perhaps she might have felt some of those imaginary terrors from which hardly a bosom in France was altogether free: although Louise, bred up by Madame de Beaumont, whose strong and masculine mind rejected most of the errors of that age, had perhaps less of the superstition of the day than any other person of her own class.

The first approach to the Sorcerer's Grove was any thing but terrifying. The road, winding gently down the slope of the hill, entered the forest between some fine tall trees, which rising out of a tract of scanty underwood and open ground, with considerable spaces between each of the boughs, afforded plenty of room for the rich sun to pour his rays between, and to chequer the green shadows of the wood with intervals of golden light. Every here and there, also, the declining sunbeams caught upon the old knotted trunks, and on the angles of the broken ground on either side, enlivening the scene without taking from its repose; and at the bottom of the hill, seen through the arch of boughs which canopied the way, appeared a bright mass of sunshine, with a glimpse of the sky beyond, where a larger open space than ordinary gave free access to the day. From this spot, however, the road, entering the deeper part of the wood, took a direction towards the old Château of St. Loup; and here the trees, growing closer together, began to shut out the rays; gloom and darkness spread over the path, and the rocks rising up into high broken banks on each side, cut off even the scanty light which glided between the thick branches above. At the same time, the whole scenery assumed a wilder and more desolate character, and the windings of the road round the base of the hill prevented the eye from catching even a glimpse of the prospect beyond.

Here, strewn upon the path, lay great masses of green mouldy rock, fallen from the banks on each side, evincing plainly how seldom the foot of man traversed its solitude; there again a mundic stream, blood-red, flowed across and tinged all the earth around with its own unseemly hue; while long brambles and creeping shrubs, dropping with chill dew, grew at the base of the rocks on either side, and shooting out their thorny arms, caught the feet of the horses as they passed. The deep solitude, the profound silence, the shadow of the overhanging woods, and the sombre gloom of every object around, began to have their effect on the mind of Louise, and notwithstanding her native boldness of heart, she set herself to conjure up more than one displeasing vision. Her fears, however, were more of the living than the dead; and having now, against her nature, kept silence a long while, out of respect to the angry humour of her dearly beloved husband, she ventured to assert that it looked quite a place for robbers, and added a hope that they should not meet any.

"Pardie! I hope we shall!" replied the Norman. "Those you call robbers are *fort honnêtes gens*: they are merely gentlemen from the wars, as I am myself: soldiers at free quarters, who have ever had a right prescriptive to levy their pay with their own hand. I beg that you will speak respectfully of them."

Louise looked at her husband with an inquiring glance, not very well knowing whether to take his speech seriously, or merely as a jest; but there was nothing mirthful in the countenance of Monsieur Marteville, who, out of humour with his fair lady for persisting to accompany him, was in no mood for jesting. At this moment a whistle was heard in the wood, so like the note of a bird, that Louise was deceived, and would have taken no farther notice of the sound, had not her companion applied his hand to his lips and imitated it exactly.

"What is that?" demanded Louise, upon whose mind a thousand undefined suspicions were crowding fast: "What noise is that in the wood?"

"It's only a *pivert*," replied the Norman with a grim smile, in the effort of which the scar upon his lip drew the corner of his mouth almost into his eye.

"A *pivert*!" replied Louise: "No, no, that is not the cry of a woodpecker—you are cheating me."

"Well, you will see," replied Marteville; "I'll make him come out." So saying, he repeated the same peculiar whistle, and then drawing in his rein, shook himself in the saddle, loosened his sword in the sheath, and laid his hand on one of his holsters, as a man who prepares for an encounter, of the event of which he is not quite certain whether it will be for peace or war.

His whistle was again returned, and a moment after the form of a man was seen protruding itself through the trees that crowned the high bank under which they stood. His rusty iron morion, his still rustier cuirass, his weather-beaten countenance and dingy apparel, formed altogether an appearance so similar to the trunks of the trees amongst which he stood, that he would have been scarcely distinguishable, had it not been for the effort to push his way through the lower branches, the rustling of which, and a few falling stones forced over the edge of the rock at his approach, drew the eye more particularly to the spot where he appeared. In his hand he carried a firelock, which, by a natural impulse, was pointed at the Norman the moment he perceived a doublet of blue velvet—as the fowling-piece of a sportsman is instinctively carried to his shoulder, on the rising of a partridge or a grouse. But Monsieur Marteville was prepared for all such circumstances; and drawing the pistol which hung at his saddle-bow, and which, if one might judge by length, would carry a mile at least, he pointed directly towards the rusty gentleman above described, crying out, "*Eh bien, l'ami! Eh bien!* Do you shoot your friends like woodcocks? or have you forgotten me?"

"*Nom de Dieu!*" cried the man above: "*Je vous en demande mille pardons, et mille, Monsieur le Capitaine.* I'll come down to you directly. Christi! I had nearly given you a ball! But I'll come down!"

While the robber was putting this promise in execution, Marteville whispered a few words of consolation to Louise, bidding her not be afraid, that they were *fort honnêtes gens, très aimables* to their friends, *et cetera*; but seeing that his words produced no effect, and that the unfortunate girl, beginning to comprehend the nature of his character, had burst into tears of bitter regret, he muttered a curse or two, not loud, but deep; and without any farther effort to allay her fears, sat whistling on his horse, till the robber, half sliding, half running, managed to descend from the eminence on which he had first appeared.

"*Eh bien, Callot,*" said Monsieur Marteville to his former companion, "how goes it with the troop?"

"But badly," replied Callot: "What with one devilry or another, we have but half a dozen left."

"And where is Pierrepont Le Blanc?" demanded the Norman: "Could not he keep you together?"

"Oh! we have sent him to the kingdom of moles," answered the robber, twisting his face into a most horrible grin. "First he quarrelled with one, and then he quarrelled with another; and then, as he was captain, and had the purse, he bethought him of taking himself off with all the treasure. But we caught him on the road; and so, as I have said, we sent the buccaneer on an embassy to the kingdom of moles. After that, there were two of us shot near Epernay, by a party of the Guard; and then six more went to see what could be gathered upon the road to Perpignan, and one was taken and hanged at Troyes; so that there are but myself and five others of the old band left."

"And quite enough too, if you had a bold leader," replied the Norman. "But where do you roost, *mes jolis oiseaux?*"

"No, no; we do not perch now," answered the robber; "we go to earth. Under the old castle here, are the most beautiful vaults in the world; and I defy Beelzebub himself to nose us, when we are hidden there."

"But why not take to the château itself? Is it so far decayed?"

"Nay," replied the other, "for that matter, it is as good a nest as any one would wish to house in: but it is not quite so forsaken as folks think. We did put up there at first; but one night, while all of our party were out but three—being myself and two others who stayed—we heard suddenly the sound of horses, and looking out, we saw by the twilight five stout cavaliers dismount in the court; and up they marched to the very room where we were sitting, so that we had scarce time to bundle up our things and to cover. And there they sat for four good hours; while we were shut up in the little watch-tower next to them, with no way to get out, and no powder but what was in our carbines, or mayhap we should have given them a dose or two of leaden pills, for at first we thought they were on the look-out for our band. But presently after, up came another, and then they all set to, to talk high treason. I could not well hear, for the door was so thick, and we dared not move; but I know they spoke of a treaty with Spain, and bringing in Spanish troops into France. Since then, we have kept to the vaults, for fear of being nosed."

"Well, Louise," whispered the Norman, turning to the *soubrette*, "you see I did not come here for no purpose. It is this treaty with Spain I want to find out; and if I do, our fortune is made for ever, and you will eat off gold, and drink out of gold, and be as happy as a princess!"

The prospects which her husband held out, and which might certainly be called golden, were not without their effect on Louise; but still his evident familiarity with the gentleman in the rusty steel coat did not at all suit her ideas of propriety, nor were the matters which they discussed in the least to her taste; but as remonstrance was in vain, and she began to perceive that the influence of her tears was not very great, she resigned herself to her fate in silence.

Several more questions and replies passed between the Norman and his ancient comrade, which, as they tend to throw no light upon this history, shall not find a place therein. At length Monsieur Callot, in as hospitable and courtly a strain as he could assume, requested the pleasure of Monsieur Marteville's company to spend the evening in the vaults of the old chateau, if he had not grown too fine, by living among the great, to associate with his old friends. In return for this, the worthy Norman assured him, that he never was so happy as when he was in their society, accepted the invitation with pleasure, and begged to introduce his wife. Callot would fain have offered his salute to the lips of the fair lady, and had mounted on a huge stone beside her horse for that purpose; but Louise repulsed him with the dignity of a duchess, and Callot did not press the matter farther, merely giving a shrewd wink of the eye and screw of the under-jaw, as much as to say, "she's nice, it seems," and then led the way towards the present abode of Marteville's old band.

The road which he took, wound through the very depth of the wood towards that side of the hill which, looking over the wide extent of forest-ground lying between the old castle and the high road to Troyes, seemed to offer nothing but dark inaccessible precipices, from the shallow stream that ran bubbling at its base to the walls of the ruin above. Crossing the rivulet, however, which did not rise higher than the horses' knees, the robber led the way round a projecting mass of rock, that seemed to have been forcibly riven from the rest, and which, though it left space enough for the horses to turn, would have effectually concealed them from the sight of any one who might be in the wood.

The two sides of the hill next to the village of Mesnil, and the ridge of rising ground on which it was situated, sloped easily into the valleys around, and were covered with a rich and glowing vegetation; but on the northern as well as the western side, which the Norman and his companions now approached, the rock offered a very different character, and one, indeed, extremely rare in that part of the country.

Wherever the eye turned, nothing presented itself but flat surfaces of cold grey stone, with the deep markings of the rifts and hollows which separated them from each other. Occasionally, indeed, a patch of thin vegetable earth, accumulating on any point that offered the means of support, yielded a slight gleam of verdure, so poor in hue, and so limited in extent, that it seemed alone to rival the lichens and stains of the rocks around, and to serve but as a mockery of the naked crag that bore it. Here and there too, a black antique pine, fixing its sturdy roots in the bleakest pinnacles, would be seen to start boldly out, as if to brave the tempests, that, sweeping over the oaks in the forest below, spent their full fury on its more ambitious head. The principal objects, however, that attracted attention, were the multitude of deep fissures and hollows which presented themselves at every point, and the immense blocks of stone which, scattered about round the base of the rock, offered plentiful means of concealment to any one who might there seek to baffle a pursuer.

Turning, as we have said, round the base of one of these large masses, the robber uttered three loud whistles, to give notice that it was a friend approached; and immediately after, from a cavern, the mouth of which was concealed in one of the fissures above-mentioned, came forth two figures, whose wild apparel corresponded very well with that

of their companion.

"*Morbleu! Monsieur Marteville!*" cried one of them, the moment he recognised the Norman, "*est-ce vous? Soyez le bien venu!* Come at a lucky moment for some of the best wine of Bonne! The *Gros St. Nicholas*—you remember our old companion—has just returned from the Chemin de Troyes, where he met two charitable monks, who, out of pure benevolence, bestowed upon him three paniers of good wine and twelve broad pieces; though they threatened to excommunicate him, and the two who were with him, for holding steel poniards to their throats while they did their alms. However, you are heartily welcome, and the more so if you are come to stay with us."

"We will talk of that presently," said the Norman. "But in the first place, good friends, tell me, can one get up to the castle above, which, Callot says, is habitable yet? for here is my wife, who is not much used to dwell in vaults, and may like a lodging above ground better."

"Oh, certainly! Madame shall be accommodated," said the last speaker, who seemed to be more civilized than good Monsieur Callot. "Our own dwelling is well enough; but if she so please, I will show you up the staircase which leads from the vaults to the court above. However, I hope she will stay to partake of our supper, which is now before the fire, as you shall see."

"She shall come down again," said the Norman, dismounting, and lifting Louise out of the saddle, "and will thank you for your good cheer, for we have ridden far." So saying, he followed into the cave, which at first presented nothing but the natural ruggedness of the rock; but at that spot where the daylight began to lose its effect in the increasing darkness of the cavern, one might perceive, though with difficulty, that it assumed the form of a regular arch cased with masonry; and in a moment or two, as they proceeded groping their way after the robber, they were warned that there were steps: mounting these, and turning to the left, they discerned, at a little distance in advance, a bright red light streaming from behind a projecting angle, which itself remained in utter obscurity. The robber here went on first, and they heard him announce in a loud and jocular tone, "*Le Sieur Marteville, et Madame sa femme!*" with as much ceremony as if he had been heralding them into the presence of royalty.

"*Bah! vous plaisantez!*" cried a thick merry voice, seeming as if it issued from the midst of stewed prunes. But the Norman advancing, bore evidence of the truth of the other's annunciation, and was instantly caught in the arms of the Gros St. Nicolas, as he was called; who merited, at least, the appellation of *gros*, though with the sanctity he appeared to have but little to do. He was fat, short, and protuberant, with a face as round as the full moon, and as rosy as a peony. In fact, he seemed much better fitted for a burgess or a priest, an innkeeper or an alderman, than for the thin and meagre trade of a cut-purse, which seldom leaves any thing but bones to be hanged at last. However, he bore him jollily; and, when the party entered, was, with morion and breast-plate thrown aside, engaged in basting a large quarter of venison, which smoked before a stupendous fire, whose blaze illuminated all the wide vault, which formed their *salle à manger* and kitchen both in one.

"*Est-il possible?*" cried the Gros St. Nicolas, embracing our Norman, whose companion he had been for many years both in honourable and dishonourable trades;—" *Mon ami! Mon Capitaine! Mon Brave! Mon Prince! Enfin, Mon Normand!*"

Quitting the ecstasies of the Gros St. Nicolas at meeting once more with his friend, and the formalities of his introduction to Louise, we shall only say that, according to the request of the Norman, one of the freebooters led the way up a circular staircase in the rock, which soon brought them into the open air, through a small arch entering upon the court of the old castle. Here Marteville, having marked all the peculiar turns which they had taken, with the accuracy which his former life had taught, bade good day to their guide, promising to rejoin the party below by the time the venison was roasted; and finding that more than an hour of daylight yet remained, he proceeded with Louise to explore the remains of the château.

The little attentions he had lately paid, had greatly conciliated his fair lady; and though still somewhat disposed to pout, she suffered him to explain his views with a tolerable degree of placability. "You must know, *ma charmante Louise*," said he, "that there is a tremendous plot going on against the Government; and that Monsieur de Chavigni has intrusted me to discover it. You heard what Callot said, concerning a treaty with Spain. Now I have always understood, that when these secret treaties are formed, a copy is deposited in some uninhabited place for greater security. You see, I have traced Fontrailles to this castle, and it is evident that here he met the other conspirators: now where, then, can they have secreted the treaty but somewhere about here? So now, Louise, help me to find this paper, if it is to be found; and then we will soon quit these men, of whom you seem so much afraid, and go and live like princes on the fortune that Chavigni has promised."

To this long speech of her husband, which he accompanied with sundry little caresses, Louise replied, in a tone still half sulky, that she was ready to seek the paper, but that she did not see how they could find it, with nothing to guide them in the search. But nevertheless, when they did seriously begin their perquisitions, she displayed all that sagacity in discovering a secret which women instinctively possess. Of course, the first place to which they particularly directed their inquiries was the chamber in which, according to the account of Callot, the meeting of the conspirators had been held.

Here they looked in every nook and corner, turned over every heap of rubbish, examined the chairs and the table of old *Père Le Rouge*, and having gone over every inch of the apartment, began anew and went over it all again. At length Louise, seemingly tired of her search in that chamber, left her husband to pursue it as he pleased, and sitting down in one of the settles, began to hum a Languedoc air, beating time with her fingers on the table.

"*Pardie!*" cried the Norman, after having hunted for some time in vain: "it is not here, that is certain!"

"Yes, it is!" said Louise, very quietly continuing to beat time on the table; "it is in this very room."

"*Nom de Dieu!* where is it then?" cried Monsieur Marteville.

"It is here, in the inside of this hollow piece of wood," answered Louise, tapping the table with her knuckles, which produced that sort of empty echoing sound that evinced it was not so solid as it appeared.

The Norman now approached, and soon convincing himself that Louise was right, he took her in his arms and gave her a kiss that made the ruin echo. The next thing was to get into the drawer, or whatsoever it was, that occupied the interior of the table; but this not proving very easy, the impatient Norman set it upright upon one end, and drawing his sword, soon contrived to cleave it through the middle; when, to the delight of the eyes that looked upon it, appeared a large cavity neatly wrought in the wood, containing a packet of vellum folded, and sealed at all corners in blue and yellow wax, with neat pieces of floss-silk to keep it all together. The Norman could have eaten it

up; and Louise, with a degree of impatient curiosity peculiarly her own, was already fingering one of the seals, about to break it open, when Marteville stopped her with a tremendous oath. "What are you going to do?" cried he: "you know little what it is to pry into State secrets. If you had opened that seal, instead of having perhaps a reward of twenty thousand crowns, we should both have been sent to the Bastille for the rest of our lives." Louise dropped the packet in dismay; and the Norman continued, "Did you never hear of the Abbé de Langy, who happening to be left by Monsieur de Richelieu in his private cabinet only for five minutes, with some State papers on the table, was sent to the Bastille for twelve years, merely for fear he had read them? No, no; this must go to Monsieur Chavigni without so much as cracking the wax."

"Could not we just look in at the end?" demanded Louise, looking wistfully at the packet, which her husband had now picked up. But upon this he put a decided negative; and having now succeeded to his heart's content, the burly Norman, in the exuberance of his joy, began singing and capering till the old pile both echoed and shook with his gigantic gambols. "*Ma Louise,*" cried he at length, "*vous êtes fatiguée. Je vais vous porter;*" and catching her up in his arms, notwithstanding all remonstrance, he carried her like a feather into the court-yard, through the narrow arch, and threading all the intricacies of the vaults with the same sagacious facility with which a ferret glides through the windings of a warren, he bore her safely and in triumph into the *salle à manger* of the honourable fraternity below. This was not the mode of progression which Louise most admired, nor was she very much gratified at being exhibited to her husband's old friends in so ungraceful an attitude; and the consequences, of course, were, that she would willingly have torn his eyes out had she dared.

However, Monsieur Callot, Le Gros St. Nicolas, and others, applied themselves successfully to soothe her ruffled spirits; and the venison being ready, and a long table laid, each person drew forth their knife, and soon committed infinite havoc on the plump haunch which was placed before them. The wine succeeded, and then that water of life which very often ends in death. All was hilarity and mirth, song, jest, and laughter. Gradually, one barrier after another fell, as cup succeeded cup. Each one told his own story, without regard to the rest; each one sang his own song; each one cracked his own joke. Louise had retired to a settle by the side of the fire, but still mingled in the conversation, when it could be called such; and Monsieur Callot, somewhat full of wine, and a good deal smitten with her charms, plied her with assiduities rather more perhaps than was necessary. In the mean time, the Gros St. Nicolas, running over with brandy and good spirits, kept jesting the Norman upon some passages of his former life, which might as well have been passed over and forgotten. "Madame!" cried he at length, turning round towards Louise, with an overflowing goblet in his hand, and his broad face full of glee, "I have the honour of drinking to your health, as the fifth spouse of our good friend Monsieur de Marteville; and let me assure you, that of the three that are living and the two that are dead, you are the most beautiful beyond compare!"

Up started Louise in an agony of indignation, and forth she poured upon the Gros St. Nicolas a torrent of vituperation for jesting upon such a subject. But on his part he only shrugged his shoulders, and declared that he did not jest at all. "*Mon Dieu!*" said he, "it is very unreasonable to suppose that Monsieur Marteville, who is as big as five men, should be contented with one wife. Besides, it is *très agréable* to have a wife in every province; I always do so myself."

The thunder of Louise's ire, now increased in a seven-fold degree, was turned instantly upon her dearly-beloved husband. Her eyes flashed, and her cheek flamed, and approaching him, where he sat laughing at the whole business, she demanded that he should exculpate himself from this charge of pentigamy, with a tone and manner that made the Norman, who had drunk quite enough, laugh still more. With an unheard-of exertion of self-command, Louise kept her fingers from his face; but she burst forth into reproaches so bitter and stinging, that Marteville's mirth was soon converted into rage, and he looked at her with a glance which would quickly have taught those who knew him well not to urge him farther. But Louise went on, and wound up by declaring, that she would live with him no longer—that she would quit him that very moment, and finding her way to Monsieur Chavigni, would tell him all—adding, that she would soon send the Guard to ferret out that nest of ruffians, and that she hoped to see him hanging at the head of them. With this expression of her intentions, Louise darted out of the vault; but the Norman, who, speechless with rage, had sat listening to her with his teeth clenched, and his nether lip quivering with suppressed passion, started suddenly up, cast the settle from him with such force that it was dashed to pieces against the wall, and strode after her with the awful cloud of determined wrath settled upon his brow.

The mirth of the robbers, who knew the ungovernable nature of their companion's passions, was now over, and each looked in the face of the other with silent expectation. After a space, there was the murmur of angry voices heard for a moment at the farther end of the passage; then a loud piercing shriek rang through the vault; and then all was silence. A momentary sensation of horror ran through the bosoms of even the ferocious men whose habits rendered them familiar with almost every species of bloodshed. But this was new and strange amongst them, and they waited the return of the Norman with feelings near akin to awe.

At length, after some time, he came, with a firm step and unblenching brow, but with a haggard wildness in his eye which seemed to tell that remorse was busy with his heart. However, he sat him down without any allusion to the past, and draining off a cup of wine, strove laboriously after merriment. But it was in vain; the mirth of the whole party was evidently forced; and Marteville soon took up another strain, which accorded better with the feelings of the moment. He spoke to them of the dispersion of the band, which had taken place since he left them; announced his intention of joining them again; and drawing forth a purse containing about a thousand livres, he poured them forth upon the table, declaring them to be his first offering to the treasury.

This magnificent donation, which came in aid of their finances at a moment when such a recruit was very necessary, called forth loud shouts of applause from the freemen of the forest; and the Gros St. Nicolas starting up, addressed the company much to the following effect: "Messieurs—every one knows that I am St. Nicolas, and no one will deny that I am surrounded by a number of goodly clerks. But although in my saintly character I will give up my clerical superiority to nobody; yet it appears to me, that our society requires some lay commander; therefore I, your bishop, do propose to you to elect and choose the Sieur Marteville, here present, to be our king, and captain in the wars, in room of the Sieur Pierrepont Le Blanc, who, having abdicated without cause, was committed to the custody of the great receiver-general—the earth, by warrant of cold iron and pistol-balls. What say ye, Messieurs, shall he be elected?"

A shout of approbation was the reply; and Marteville, having been duly elected, took the oaths, and received the homage of his new subjects. He then entered into a variety of plans for increasing the band, concentrating its

operations, and once more rendering it that formidable body, which it had been in former times. All this met with the highest approbation; but the Captain showing the most marked dislike to remaining in the forest which they at present tenanted, and producing a variety of reasons for moving their quarters to Languedoc, where the neighbourhood of the court and the army offered greater facilities both for recruiting their numbers and their purses, it was agreed that they should disperse the next morning, and re-assemble as soon as possible, at a certain spot well known to the whole party, about forty leagues distant from Lyons.

This was happily effected; and the Norman, on presenting himself at the rendezvous, had the pleasure of introducing to the band two new associates, whom he had found the means of converting on the road.

Although abandoning himself heart and soul to the pleasures of his resumed profession, our friend Marteville was not forgetful of the reward he expected from Chavigni; and as his official duties prevented his being himself the bearer of the paper he had obtained, he despatched it to Narbonne, where the Statesman now was, by his faithful subject Callot, with orders to demand ten thousand crowns of Monsieur de Chavigni, as a reward for having discovered it, adding also an elaborate epistle to the same effect.

The Norman never for a moment entertained a suspicion that the paper he sent was any thing but the identical treaty with Spain, which the conspirators had been heard to mention; and he doubted not that the Statesman would willingly pay such a sum for so precious a document. But the embassy of Monsieur Callot did not prove so fortunate as had been anticipated. Presenting himself to Chavigni, with as much importance of aspect as the ambassador from Siam, he tendered his credentials, and demanded the reward, at a moment when the Statesman was irritated by a thousand anxieties and dangers.

Making no ceremony with the fine blue and yellow wax, Chavigni, having read the Norman's epistle, soon found his way into the inside of the other packet, and beheld in the midst of a thousand signs and figures, unintelligible to any but a professed astrologer, a prophetic scroll containing some doggrel verses, which may be thus rendered into English:—

#### THE FATE OF RICHELIEU.

Born beneath two mighty stars,  
Mercury with Mars combined,  
He shall prompt a thousand wars,  
Nor live the balm of peace to find.

Less than a King, yet Kings shall fall  
And tremble at his fatal sway;  
Yet at life's end he shall recall  
The memory of no happy day.

And the last year that he shall know,  
Shall see him fall, and see him rise;  
Shall see him yield, yet slay his foe,  
And scarcely triumph ere he dies.

Begot in factions, nursed in strife,  
Till all his troubled years be past,  
Cunning and care eat up his life,—  
A slave and tyrant, first and last.

#### PERE LE ROUGE.

Chavigni gazed at the paper in amazement, and then at the face of Monsieur Callot, who, totally unconscious of the contents, remained very nonchalantly expecting the reward. "Ten thousand crowns!" cried the Statesman, giving way to his passion. "Ho! without there! take this fellow out and flog him with your hunting whips out of Narbonne. Away with him, and curry him well!"

The grooms instantly seized upon poor Callot, and executed Chavigni's commands with high glee. The robber, however, though somewhat surprised, bore his flagellation very patiently; for under the jerkin which he wore, still lay the rusty iron corslet we have before described, which saved him from appreciating the blows at their full value.

The matter, however, was yet to be remembered, as we shall see; for when Callot, on his return to the forest, informed his captain what sort of reward he had received for the packet, the Norman's gigantic limbs seemed to swell to a still greater size with passion, and drawing his sword he put the blade to his lips, swearing, that before twelve months were over, it should drink Chavigni's blood: and promises of such sort he usually kept most punctually.

## CHAPTER VII.

Wherein De Blenau finds out that he has made a mistake, and what follows.

HAVING now conducted our truly-begotten friend, the Sieur Marteville, considerably in advance of the rest of the characters in this true history, it becomes us to show our impartiality by detailing the principal actions of our other personages, and also to display the causes which brought the noble Count de Chavigni to such a distance as Narbonne, a little town in the southern nook of Languedoc, not above a few leagues from Perpignan. However, as all these circumstances are naturally explained in the history of the Count de Blenau, we may as well follow him on the useless pursuit into which he had been led by the precipitancy of Monsieur Henry de La Mothe, his page, who would have saved his master a great deal of trouble and distress, as we all know, if he had thought fit to see the Marquise de Beaumont; but young hounds will often cry upon a wrong scent, and mislead those who should know better.

Thus it happened in the present instance; and De Blenau, blinded by anxiety for Pauline, took the suspicions of his Page for granted, without examination. He knew that Chavigni scrupled not at any measures which might serve a political purpose; he knew that the Norman was in the immediate employment of the Statesman, and was still less delicate in his notions than his master; and he doubted not that Pauline, having been discovered issuing from the Bastille, had been carried off without ceremony, and sent from Paris under the custody of the *ci-devant* robber. At all events, De Blenau, as he rode along, composed a very plausible chain of reasoning upon the subject; and far from supposing that the Norman would avoid the wood in the neighbourhood of Mesnil, he concluded, from his knowledge of Marteville's former habits, that a forest filled with robbers would fulfil all his anticipations of Paradise, and be too strong an attraction to be resisted.

Thus cogitating, he rode on to Decize, and thence to Corbigny, where day once more broke upon his path; and having been obliged to allow the horses a few hours' rest, he tried in vain for some repose himself. Auxerre was his next halt, but here only granting his domestics one hour to refresh, he passed the Yonne, and soon after entered Champagne, which traversing without stopping, except for a few minutes at Bar sur Seine, he reached Troyes before midnight, with man and horse too wearied to begin their search before the following morning.

It unluckily so happened that De Blenau did not alight at the hotel of the Grand Soleil, where he might have gained such information as would in all probability have prevented his farther proceedings; and as the keeper of the auberge where he stopped, was at open war with the landlord of the Grand Soleil, to all the inquiries which were made the next morning, the only reply the *aubergiste* thought fit to give was, that "indeed he could not tell; he had never seen such a person as De Blenau described the Norman to be, or such a lady as Pauline;"—though, be it remarked, every body in the house, after having gazed at Marteville and Louise for a full hour on their arrival, had watched their motions every day, and had wondered themselves stiff at who they could be and what they could want. At length, however, De Blenau caught hold of an unsophisticated hostler, of whom he asked if within the last ten days he had seen a carriage stop or pass through the town containing two such persons as he described.

The hostler replied, "No; that they seldom saw carriages there; that a tall gentleman, like the one he mentioned, had ridden out of the town just two days before with a lady on horseback; but Devil a carriage had there been in Troyes for six years or more, except that of Monseigneur the Governor."

De Blenau, glad of the least intimation where news seemed so scanty, now described the Norman as particularly as he could from what he had seen of him while speaking to Chavigni in the Park of St. Germain's, dwelling upon his gigantic proportions, and the remarkable cut upon his cheek.

"Yes, yes!" replied the hostler, "that was the man; I saw him ride out with a *jolie demoiselle* on the road to Mesnil St. Loup; but Devil a carriage has there been in Troyes for six years or more, except that of Monseigneur the Governor."

"Well, well," replied De Blenau, wishing if possible to hear more, "perhaps they might not be in a carriage. But can you tell me where they lodged while in the city of Troyes?"

Even the obtuse faculties of the hostler had been drilled into knowing nothing of any other auberge in the town but his own. "Can't tell," replied he. "Saw him and the lady ride out on horseback; but Devil a carriage has there been in Troyes for six years or more, except that of Monseigneur the Governor."

It may have been remarked, that a certain degree of impatience and hastiness of determination was one of the prevailing faults of De Blenau's disposition; and in this case, without waiting for farther examination, he set out in pursuit of the Norman as soon as his horses were ready, merely inquiring if there was any castle in the neighbourhood of Mesnil which might serve for the confinement of State prisoners.

The landlord, to whom the question was addressed, immediately determined in his own mind, that De Blenau was an agent of the Government; and replied, "None, that he knew of, but the old Chateau of St. Loup; but that Monseigneur had better have it repaired before he confined any one there, for it was so ruinous they would get out, to a certainty, if they were placed there in its present state."

De Blenau smiled at the mistake, but prepossessed with the idea that the Norman was carrying Pauline to some place of secret imprisonment, he determined at once to proceed to the spot the *aubergiste* mentioned, and to traverse the wood from the high road to Troyes, as the most likely route on which to encounter the Norman, against whom he vowed the most summary vengeance, if fortune should afford him the opportunity.

As, from every report upon the subject, the forest had been for some time past the resort of banditti, De Blenau gave orders to his servants to hold themselves upon their guard, and took the precaution of throwing forward two of his shrewdest followers, as a sort of reconnoitring party, to give him intelligence of the least noise which could indicate the presence of any human being besides themselves. But all these measures seemed to be unnecessary; not a sound met the ear; and De Blenau's party soon began to catch glimpses of the old Chateau of St. Loup, through the breaks in the wood; and gradually winding round towards the east, gained the slope which gave them a clear view of the whole building.

The whole appearance of the place was so desolate and dilapidated, that the first glance convinced De Blenau that Chavigni would never dream of confining Pauline within such ruinous walls; as the mere consideration of her rank would prevent him from using any unnecessary severity, though her successful attempt to penetrate into the Bastille afforded a plausible excuse for removing her from Paris. However, in order not to leave the least doubt upon

the subject, he mounted to the court-yard, and having ascertained that every part of the building was equally unfit for the purposes of a prison, and that it was actually uninhabited except by owls and ravens, he determined to cross to a town, the spire of whose church he saw rising on the opposite hill, and to pursue his search in some other direction.

Descending, therefore, by the same slope which he had previously mounted, he wound round the base of the hill much in the same path by which Callot had conducted the Norman and Louise. The stream, however, formed the boundary of his approach to the castle on that side; and passing the rocks, which we have already mentioned as strewn about at the foot of the precipices, he followed the course of the river, till, winding into the wood, the castle, and the hill on which it stood, were lost to the sight. Here as he rode slowly on, revolving various plans for more successfully pursuing the Norman, and reproaching himself for not having made more accurate inquiries at Troyes, his eye was suddenly attracted by the appearance of something floating on the river like the long black hair of a young woman.

De Blenau's heart sank within him; his courage failed, his whole strength seemed to give way, and he sat upon his horse like a statue, pointing with his hand towards the object that had thus affected him, but without the power of uttering any order concerning it.

In the mean while the hair waved slowly backwards and forwards upon the stream, and one of the servants perceiving it, dismounted from his horse, waded into the water, and catching it in his grasp, began dragging the body to which it was attached towards the brink. As he did so, the part of a red serge dress, such as that in which Pauline had visited the Bastille, floated to the surface, and offered a horrible confirmation of De Blenau's fears. The first shock, however, was passed, and leaping from his horse with agony depicted in his straining eye, he sprang down the bank into the stream, and raising the face of the dead person above the water, beheld the countenance of Louise.

Perhaps the immoderate joy which De Blenau felt at this sight might be wrong, but it was natural; and sitting down on the bank, he covered his face with his hands, overcome by the violent revolution of feeling which so suddenly took place in his bosom.

In the mean while his servants drew the body of the unfortunate girl to the bank, and speedily discovered that the mode of her death had been of a more horrible description than even that which they had at first supposed; for in her bosom appeared a deep broad gash as if from the blow of a poniard, which had undoubtedly deprived her of life before her murderer committed the body to the stream.

According to the costume of her country, Louise had worn upon the day of her death two large white pockets above the jupe of red serge. These were still attached to the black velvet bodice which she displayed in honour of her marriage with the Norman, and contained a variety of miscellaneous articles, amongst which were several epistles from her husband to herself in the days of their courtship, which showed De Blenau that she had been employed as a spy upon Pauline and Madame de Beaumont ever since their arrival at St. Germain's: added to these was a certificate of marriage between Jean Baptiste Marteville and Louise Thibault, celebrated in the chapel of the Palais Cardinal, by François Giraud. All this led De Blenau to conclude, that he had been misled in regard to the cause of Pauline's absence from St. Germain's; and he accordingly proceeded to the little bourg of Senecy on his return towards Troyes, making his men bear thither the body of Louise with as much decent solemnity as the circumstances admitted. Having here intrusted to the good Curé of the place the charge of the funeral, and given two sums for the very different purposes of promoting the discovery of the murderer and buying a hundred masses for the soul of the deceased, De Blenau pursued his journey, and arrived at Troyes before night.

Putting up this time at the hotel of the Grand Soleil, De Blenau soon acquired sufficient information to confirm him in the opinion that the Norman had been accompanied by Louise alone; but at the same time, the accounts which the people of the house gave respecting the kindness and affection that Marteville had shown his bride, greatly shook the suspicions which had been entertained against him by De Blenau, who, unacquainted with any such character as that of the Norman, knew not that there are men who, like tigers when unurged by hunger, will play with their victims before they destroy them.

The next morning early, all was prepared for the departure of De Blenau, on his return to Moulins, when his farther progress in that direction was arrested by the arrival of Henry de La Mothe, his page, accompanied by one of the King's couriers, who immediately presented to the Count two packets, of which he had been the bearer from St. Germain's. The first of these seemed, from the superscription, to be a common official document; but the second attracted all his attention, and made his heart beat high by presenting to him the genuine hand-writing of Pauline de Beaumont. Without meaning any offence to Royalty, whose insignia were impressed upon the seal of the other packet, De Blenau eagerly cut the silk which fastened the billet from Pauline. It contained only a few lines, but these were quite sufficient to give renewed happiness to the heart of him who read it. She had just heard, she said, that the King's messenger was about to set out, and though they hardly gave her time to fold her paper, yet she would not let any one be before her in congratulating him on his freedom to direct his course wheresoever he pleased. She could not divine, she continued, whether his choice would lead him to St. Germain's, but if it did, perhaps he might be treated to the history of an errant Demoiselle, who had suffered various adventures in endeavouring to liberate her true Knight from prison.

De Blenau read it over again, and then turned to the other paper, which merely notified that the King, contented with his loyal and peaceable behaviour while *relegué* in Bourbon, had been graciously pleased to relieve him from the restrictions under which he had been placed for his own benefit and the State's security; and informed him, in short, that he had leave, liberty, and licence, to turn his steps whithersoever he listed.

"To St. Germain's!" cried De Blenau gaily. "To St. Germain's! You, Henry de La Mothe, stay here with François and Clement. Take good care of Monsieur l'Ordinaire, and see that he be rewarded."—The messenger made him a reverence.—"After you have reposed yourself here for a day," continued the Count, "return to Moulins; pay *notre Propriétaire*, and all that may be there due. There is the key of the *coffre fort*. Use all speed that you well may, and then join me at home. And now for St. Germain's."

So saying, he sprang on his horse as light as air, gave the well-known signal with his heel, and in a moment was once more on the road to Paris.

Although I find a minute account of De Blenau's whole journey to St. Germain's, with the towns and inns at which he stopped, marked with the precision of a road-book, I shall nevertheless take upon myself the responsibility

of abridging it as far as well can be, by saying that it began and ended happily.

The aspect of St. Germain's, however, had very much changed since De Blenau left it. Louis had now fixed his residence there; his confidence in the Queen seemed perfectly restored; every countenance glowed with that air of satisfaction, which such a renewal of good intelligence naturally produced; and the Royal residence had once more assumed the appearance of a Court.

The first welcome received by De Blenau was from his gallant friend Cinq Mars, at whose request his recall had been granted by the King, and who now, calculating the time of the exile's return, stood at the door of De Blenau's hotel, ready to meet him on his arrival.

"Welcome, welcome back! my long-lost friend, Claude de Blenau," exclaimed Cinq Mars, as the Count sprang from his horse; "welcome from the midst of prisons and trials, perils and dangers!"

"And well met, gallant Cinq Mars, the noble and the true," replied De Blenau. "But tell me, in heaven's name, Cinq Mars, what makes all this change at St. Germain's? Why, it looks as if the forest were a fair, and that the old town had put on its holiday suit to come and see it."

"Nay, nay! rather, like a true dame that dresses herself out for her lover's return, it has made itself fine to receive you back again," replied the Master of the Horse. "But if you would really know the secret of all the change that you see now, and will see still more wonderfully as you look farther, it is this. Richelieu is ill at Tarascon, and his name is scarcely remembered at the Court, though Chavigni, that bold rascal, and Mazarin, that subtle one, come prowling about to maintain, if possible, their master's sway. But the spell is broken, and Louis is beginning to be a King again: so we shall see bright days yet."

"I hope so; in truth I hope so, Cinq Mars," replied De Blenau. "But, at all events, we will enjoy the change so far as it has gone. And now, what news at the Palace? How fare all the lovely ladies of the Court?"

"Why well," answered Cinq Mars; "all well; though I know, De Blenau, that your question, in comprising a hundred, meant but one only. Well, what say you?—I have seen thy Pauline, and cannot but allow that thy taste is marvellous good. There is a wild grace about her, well worth all the formal dignity of a court. One gets tired of the stiff courtesy and the precise bow; the kissing of hands and the lispings of names; the *Monseigneurings* and the *Madamings*. Fie! one little touch of nature is worth it all."

"But answer me one question, Monsieur le Grand," said De Blenau. "How came there a report about, that Pauline had been carried off by some of the Cardinal's people, and that no one knew where she was? for such a tale reached me even in Bourbon."

"Is it possible that you are the last to hear that story?" exclaimed Cinq Mars. "Why, though the old Marquise, and the rest at the Palace, affect to keep it a secret, every one knows the adventures of your *demoiselle errante*."

De Blenau's cheek flushed to hear such a name applied to Pauline; but Cinq Mars continued, observing that his friend was hurt—"Nay, nay, every one admires her for the whole business, and no one more than I. But, as I was saying, all the world knows it. The Queen herself told it to Monsieur de Lomenie, and he to his cousin De Thou, and De Thou to me; and so it goes on. Well, but I must take up the gossip's tale at the beginning. The Queen, wishing to communicate with you in prison, could find no messenger, who, for either gold or fair words, would venture his head into the rat-trap, except your fair Pauline; and she, it seems, attempted twice to get into the Bastille, once by day and once at night, but both times fruitlessly. How it happened I hardly remember, but by some means Chavigni, through some of his creatures, winded the whole affair; and posting from Chantilly to Paris, catches my fair lady in the very effort, disguised as a *soubrette*; down he pounces, like a falcon on a partridge, and having secured the delinquent, places her in a carriage, which, with the speed of light, conveys her away to his castle in Maine, where Madame la Comtesse de Chavigni—who, by the way, is an angel according to all accounts—receives the young lady and entertains her with all kindness. In the mean while, Monsieur le Comte de Blenau is examined by the King in person, and instead of having his head cut off, is merely *relegué* in Bourbon; upon which Chavigni finds he has lost his labour, and is obliged to send for the pretty prisoner back again with all speed."

Although De Blenau was aware, from his own personal experience, that Cinq Mars had mistaken several parts of his history, he did not think fit to set him right; and the Master of the Horse proceeded: "However, let us into thy hotel. Get thy dinner, wash the dust from thy beard, array thyself in an unsullied doublet, and we will hie to the dwelling of thy lady fair, to glad her eyes with the sight of thy sweet person."

De Blenau smiled at his friend's raillery, and as the proposal very well accorded with his wishes, every moment seeming mis-spent that detained him from Pauline, he changed his dress as speedily as possible, and was soon ready to accompany Cinq Mars to the Palace.

As they proceeded on their way towards the gates of the Park, a figure presented itself, which, from its singularity, was worthy of notice. It was that of a tall, thin raw-boned man, who, naturally possessing a countenance of the ugliest cast of Italian ugliness, had rendered it still more disagreeable by the enormous length of his mustaches, which would have far overtopped his nose, had it been a nose of any ordinary proportion; but a more extensive pear-shaped, ill-adapted organ never projected from a human countenance; and this, together with a pair of small, flaming black eyes, which it seemed to bear forward with it above the rest of the face, protruding from a mass of beard and hair, instantly reminding the beholder of a badger looking out of a hole. The chin, however, bore no proportion to the nose, and seemed rather to slink away from it in an oblique direction, apparently overawed by its more ambitious neighbour.

The dress of this delectable personage was a medley of the French and Flemish costumes. He wore a grey vest of silk, with sleeves slashed at the elbow, and the shirt, which was not conspicuously clean, buttoned at the wrist with agate studs. His *haut de chausse*, which was of deep crimson, and bore loops and ribbons of yellow, was fringed round the leg, near the knees, with a series of brazen tags or points but indifferently silvered; and as he walked along with huge steps, these aforesaid tags clattered together with a sort of important sound, which, put in combination with the rest of his appearance, drew many a laugh from the boys of St. Germain's. Over his grey vest was drawn a straight-cut doublet of yellow silk, without sleeves; and a pair of long boots, of untanned leather, covered all defects which might otherwise have been apparent in his hose. His dress was completed by a tawdry bonnet with a high black plume: and a Toledo blade of immeasurable length, with a worked iron hilt and black scabbard, hung by his side, describing with its point various strange figures on the dust of the road.

"Here comes Villa Grande, the Italian lute-player," exclaimed Cinq Mars the moment he saw him. "Do you know



him, De Blenau?"

"I have heard him play on his instrument and sing at your house," replied De Blenau; "and from his language that night, may say I know him through and through, for a boasting coxcomb, with as much courage as the sheath of a rapier,—which looks as good as a rapier itself till it is touched, and then it proves all emptiness. Mind you how he boasted of having routed whole squadrons when he served in the Italian horse? and I dare say he would run from a stuffed pikeman in an old hall."

"Nay, nay; you do him wrong, Claude," replied Cinq Mars. "He has rather too much tongue, it is true; but that is not always the sign of a bad hound. I must speak to him, however, for he does me service.—Well, Signor Villa Grande," continued he, addressing the Italian, who now approached, swinging an enormous cane in his hand, and from time to time curling up the ends of his mustaches; "you remember that you are to be ready at a moment's notice. Be sure, also, that your mind be made up; for I tell you fairly, the service which you undertake is one of danger."

"Monsieur," replied the Italian with a strong foreign accent, "I will be ready, when you call upon me, in shorter time than you could draw your sword; and as for my mind being made up, if there were an army drawn out to oppose my progress, I would be bound to carry the despatch to the Duke of Bouillon, or die in the attempt. Fear not my yielding it to any body; *piutosto morir vol'io*, as the song has it," and he hummed a few bars of one of his native airs.—"Oh Dio!" continued he, recognising De Blenau, who had turned away on perceiving that Cinq Mars spoke to the Italian on some business of a private nature. "Oh Dio! Monsieur le Comte de Blenau, is it really you returned at last? *Benedetto quel giorno felice!* Doubtless you are aware of the glorious plans of your friend Monsieur le Grand."

"Good day, Signor," answered De Blenau; "I know of no one's plans but my own, the most glorious of which, within my apprehension at present, is to get to the Palace as soon as possible. Come, Cinq Mars, are you at leisure?" and he took a step or two in advance, while the Master of the Horse gave the Italian a warning to put a bridle on his tongue, and not to let it run so loosely without any regard to necessary caution.

"For Heaven's sake, take care what you are about, Cinq Mars!" said De Blenau, when he was again joined by his friend. "Of course you are the best judge of your own plans; but unless you have a mind to ruin them all, do not trust them to such a babbling idiot as that; and beware that, in attempting to catch a lion, you do not get torn yourself."

"Oh, no fear," replied the Grand Ecuyer; "that fellow knows nothing more than it is absolutely necessary for him to know, and as for the rest, I have plunged into a wide sea, Claude, and must swim to land somehow."

They had by this time reached the gates of the Palace, and Cinq Mars, knowing that some meetings are better in private, left his friend, and turned his steps towards the apartments of the King.

In the mean while, De Blenau proceeded with a rapid pace towards that part of the Palace which had been assigned to Madame de Beaumont; and his heart beat with that wild uncontrollable emotion, which the meeting with one dearly loved can alone produce. At that very moment similar sensations were throbbing in the bosom of Pauline de Beaumont, who from the window had seen the approach of Cinq Mars and another; and long before her eye could distinguish a feature, her heart had told her who it was. A sort of irresistible impulse led her, at first, to fly towards the door by which she expected him to enter; but before she was half across the room, some other feeling came over her mind. She returned to her seat at the window, and a blush stole over her cheek, though there was no other person present to observe her emotion or pry into its cause.

The door was partially open, and more than once she raised her eyes towards it, and thought that De Blenau was long in coming so short a distance. But presently she heard his step, and there was an impatient eagerness even in the sound of his footfall that convinced her he lost no time. Another moment and he entered the room—Every feeling but one was at an end, and Pauline was in his arms.

It is not at the moment when a lover has endured many sorrows, and escaped from many dangers, that a gentle heart can practise even the every-day affectations which a great part of the world are pleased to mistake for delicacy; and far less inclined to attempt it than any other person in the world, was Pauline de Beaumont. The child of nature and simplicity, her delicacy was that of an elegant mind and a pure heart. Of what she did feel she concealed little, and affected nothing; and De Blenau was happy.

Of course there was a great deal to be told, and De Blenau was listening delighted to an account of the considerate kindness with which the Countess de Chavigni had treated his Pauline, when the sound of voices approaching towards them stopped her in her history.

It is precisely at such moments as those when we wish every body but ourselves away, that the world is most likely to intrude upon us; and Pauline and De Blenau had not met more than five minutes, as it seemed to them, when the Queen and Madame de Beaumont entered the apartment.—How long they had been really together is another question, for lovers' feelings are not always the truest watches.

"Welcome, my faithful De Blenau," said the Queen. "We encountered the Grand Ecuyer but now, who told us where we should find you. For my own part, I suppose I must in all justice forgive your paying your devoirs here before you came to visit even me. However, ere there be any one near to overhear, I must thank you for all you have done for me, and for all you have suffered on my account. Nor must I forget my little heroine here, who went through all sorts of peril and danger in conveying my message to you in the Bastille."

"Your Majesty was very good in sending me such an angel of comfort," replied De Blenau. "And certainly, had it not been for the commands she brought me, I believe that his most Christian-like Eminence of Richelieu would have doomed me to the torture for my obstinacy."

"Put it in other words, De Blenau," said Anne of Austria. "You mean that you would have endured the torture sooner than betray your Queen. But truly, Pauline must have a stout heart to have carried through such an undertaking; and I think that the fidelity and attachment which you have both shown to me, offers a fair promise for your conduct towards each other. What say you, Madame de Beaumont?"

"I think, Madame," replied the Marchioness, "that Pauline has done her duty with more firmness than most girls could have commanded; and that De Blenau has done his as well as it could be done."

"Pauline merits more praise than her mother ventures to give," said the Queen. "But I had forgot the King's summons; and probably he is even now waiting for us. Come, Pauline; come, De Blenau. Louis gives high commendation to your demeanour in prison; let us see how he greets you out of it."

A message had been conveyed to Anne of Austria, just before the arrival of De Blenau, intimating that the King

desired to see her; and she now led the way to the *Salle Ronde*, as it was then called, or the *Salle des Muses*, as it was afterwards named by Louis the Fourteenth, where the King waited her approach. Although the uncertain nature of Louis's temper always made her feel some degree of apprehension when summoned to his presence, the kindness he had lately shown her, and the presence of a large proportion of her friends, made her obey his call with more pleasure than she usually felt on similar occasions.

Louis's object, in the present instance, was to inform the Queen of the journey he was about to make into the neighbourhood of Perpignan, in order to confirm the inhabitants of Roussillon in their new allegiance to the crown of France; and Cinq Mars, who had always sincerely wished the welfare of Anne of Austria, took this opportunity of insinuating to the King, that to show publicly his restored confidence in the Queen, so far from lessening his authority, even in appearance, would be in truth only asserting his own dignity, from which the proceedings of Richelieu had so greatly derogated.

De Blenau and Pauline followed a step or two behind the Queen and Madame de Beaumont, and would willingly have lingered still longer by themselves; but as something must always be sacrificed to appearance, they quickened their pace as Anne of Austria approached the door of the *Salle Ronde*, and came up with her just as she entered the room in which the principal part of the French court was assembled. The moment she appeared, Louis advanced towards the Queen from the brilliant circle in which he stood, and embraced her affectionately. "Welcome, my fair lady," said he. "I see you have brought the new returned exile with you.—Monsieur de Blenau, I am glad to see you at court;—this is a pleasanter place than where we met last."

"I can assure you, Sire," replied De Blenau, "that I will never be willingly in circumstances to meet your Majesty there again."

"I do not doubt it, I do not doubt it," said the King. "You should thank Heaven that delivered you from such peril, Sir Count.—Madam," he continued, turning to the Queen, "I requested to see you, not only for the pleasure which your presence must always give, but to inform you, that affairs of state will shortly call me to Narbonne, in Languedoc, from whence I shall return with all convenient speed."

"Your Majesty soon leaves St. Germain's," replied the Queen. "I do not think you love it for a sojourn, as in other days."

"Not so," answered Louis; "so well do I love it, that I had purposed to have worn out the rest of my days here, had not the duties of my station called me hence: but my return will be speedy if God give me life.—What man can say how long he may remain? and I feel many a warning that my time will be but short in this world.—Ha! what mean those drops in your eyes?—I did not know, Anne, that such were your feelings." And he pressed the Queen's hand, which he had continued to retain in his.

"Oh Louis!" replied Anne of Austria, and by that simple exclamation conveyed a more delicate reproach to the heart of her husband than she could have done by any other expression in the range of language. Louis felt it, and drawing her arm kindly through his own, he proposed aloud that the whole party should walk forth upon the terrace. It was the Queen's favourite spot, and she easily understood that it was meant as some atonement for many a former slight. Those, too, who stood round and saw what had taken place, began to perceive that a new star was dawning in the horizon, and turned their eyes to watch its progress and court its influence.

The King and Queen were followed by the greater part of the court; and during the walk Louis continued to manifest that kindness towards his wife, which had it been earlier shown, might have given him a life of happiness. "Let me beg you, Madam," said he, as at length they turned to enter the Palace, "not only to be careful of our children, for that I am sure you will be, but also to be careful of their mother, for my sake."

The Queen's feelings were overpowering; the tears rolled rapidly down her cheeks, taking from her all power of utterance, and quitting the King, after pressing his hand to her lips, she retired to her own apartments, to indulge in solitude the new and delightful emotions which her husband's unexpected kindness had excited.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Which shows that the Moment and the Manner have often more to do with Success than the Matter.

THE various preparations for the King's journey into Roussillon occupied no small space of time. Litters and carriages were to be provided; relays of horses to be stationed on the road; cooks and victuallers were to be sent forward; and a thousand other arrangements to be made, required either by the general difficulty of locomotion in those days, or by the failing health of the King. It was not then, as in the present time, when monarchs and subjects travel with equal facility all over the globe: when a king gets into his travelling chaise with no more to do than a private man, and is carried along over a level road without let or hindrance, jolt or jumbling, to whatsoever place his fancy may incline him. The journey of a sovereign was then as formidable an undertaking as the passage of the Great Desert to a modern traveller, and required fully as much provision and circumspection.

One great object of Richelieu's policy had been to diminish the feudal influence of the nobility, and by forcing them to reside with the Court, to break through their constant communication with their vassals. In pursuit of this, he had drawn the greater part of the nobles to Paris; and now that his absence and declining favour with the King dissolved the charm which seemed to hold them in the capital, they congregated at St. Germain's like a flock of bees, that, having lost their hive, flew forth in search of a new one. Many of these were bound, by their various offices in the household, to accompany the King in his present journey; others were particularly invited to do so either by Louis himself or by Cinq Mars and Fontrailles, who sought to surround the King with those who, on any sudden emergency, might support their party against the Cardinal; and a crowd of others, from vanity or interest, curiosity or ambition, were glad to follow in the train of the Monarch.

Thus the greater part of the nobles who had flocked to St. Germain's, on Richelieu's departure from Paris, now again left it in order to take part in the journey to Narbonne. As all the horses, and every sort of accommodation on the direct road, were engaged for the service of the King and those immediately attendant upon him, the greater part of the Court took the indirect roads by which they could always be near the Royal party; and the rest followed a day or two after, taking advantage of whatever conveniences might be left unappropriated.

There were one or two, however, who departed before Louis, and of these the principal was Chavigni, who set out accompanied by a few servants, two or three days prior to that appointed for the King's expedition. His ostensible destination was, like that of the rest of the Court, to Narbonne; but turning to the left, he directed his course towards Tarascon, and having travelled with the utmost rapidity, while Louis proceeded by easy stages, he had quite sufficient time to communicate fully with Richelieu, and proceed to Narbonne before the King's arrival.

The journey into Roussillon had been undertaken by the express advice of Richelieu; and though Cinq Mars ventured boldly to attack the conduct of the Cardinal in every respect, to place all his measures in the worst point of view, and to encourage every sentiment in the King's mind which was in opposition to those of the Minister, still no change, or even a proposal of change in the Government had been mentioned, up to the time of the Court reaching Narbonne. Richelieu was still Prime Minister, and the Council remained composed of persons devoted to his interest, though the views of Cinq Mars were already spoken of in more than one circle, and the consent of the King was so far assumed as a matter decided, that the two parties were distinguished by the names of Royalist and Cardinalist.

While the Court remained with the army near Perpignan, and after its removal to Narbonne, Richelieu still lay dangerously ill at Tarascon. His mind was deeply depressed, as well as his corporeal powers; and in the opinion of all, a few weeks were likely to terminate both his ministry and his existence, even if the eager hand of his enemies did not hurry him onward to more rapid destruction. But the fiery spirit of Cinq Mars brooked no delay: the lazy course of natural decay was too slow for his impatience; and though De Thou, who accompanied his friend to Narbonne, reiterated in his ears the maxims of caution and wisdom, on the other hand Fontrailles, fearful lest he should lose the merit and consequent influence he should acquire by the removal of Richelieu, never ceased to urge the favourite to hurry on the completion of their design.

In the mean time, every thing seemed favourable to the conspirators; and Cinq Mars felt confident that the secret inclination of Louis would second all his views; but nevertheless, he wished for some more public and determinate expression of the King's opinion, before he asked his consent to the measures which had been concerted. After the arrival of the Court at Narbonne, however, the Monarch's conduct in respect to Richelieu became of so decisive a character, that no farther delay appeared necessary. Within a few miles of the place where the Cardinal lay ill, the King seemed entirely to have forgotten that such a man existed, or only to remember him with hatred. His name, if it was ever mentioned, instantly called into Louis's countenance an expression of uneasiness and disapprobation; and by no chance was the King ever heard to pronounce it himself. By all these circumstances, Cinq Mars was determined to communicate to Louis, as soon as possible, the schemes which had been formed for freeing the country from the yoke of Richelieu. He suffered, however, several days to elapse in waiting for a favourable opportunity, and at length, as often happens, growing impatient of delay, took perhaps the most inauspicious moment that could have been selected. It was on a morning when every thing had gone wrong with Louis.

Notwithstanding his failing health, he still clung to his accustomed amusements, and very often rode forth to hunt when he was very unfit for any bodily exercise. On these occasions, the distressing consciousness of his decaying powers always rendered him doubly irritable; and on the day which Cinq Mars unfortunately chose to broach the subject of the dismissal of Richelieu, a thousand trivial accidents had occurred to increase his ill humour to the highest pitch. His horse had fallen with him in the chase; they had beat the country for hours without finding any game worthy of pursuit; and when at length they did rouse a fine boar, and had brought him to bay, he broke out after killing two of the King's best hounds, and plunged into the deepest part of the forest. Louis was returning home from this unsuccessful chase, when Cinq Mars, turning his eyes towards the towers of Tarascon, which just then were seen rising above the trees in the distance, pointed to them with his hunting-whip, saying, "There lies the Cardinal!"

"Well, Sir," exclaimed Louis eagerly, catching at any thing on which to vent his irritability—"do you wish me to go and see him? Doubtless he will be glad of the visit. Let us go." And he reined in his horse, as if with the intention of turning him towards Tarascon.

"Far be it from me to advise your Majesty so to do," replied Cinq Mars, who clearly perceived that the King's

answer proceeded only from casual irritation. "It was the sight of the old towers of the Chateau, that called the Cardinal to my mind. In truth, I had almost forgotten him."

"Forgotten him, Cinq Mars!" cried the King. "I think he has done enough to make himself remembered."

"He has indeed, Sire," replied Cinq Mars, "and his memory will long last coupled with curses in the heart of every true Frenchman. But there he lies; I trust, like the Tarasque, hideous but harmless, for the present."

"What do you mean by the Tarasque?" demanded Louis; "I never heard of it."

"It is merely a whimsical stone dragon, Sire," replied Cinq Mars, "that lies carved in the Church of St. Marthe, at Tarascon on the Rhone—a thing of no more real use than the Cardinal de Richelieu."

"Of no use, Sir!" exclaimed the King, his eye flashing fire. "Do you think that we would repose such trust, and confide our kingdom's weal to one who is of no use? Silence, Sir!" he continued, seeing Cinq Mars about to reply: "No more of this subject—we have heard too much of it."

Cinq Mars was too wise to add another word, and the King rode on to Narbonne, maintaining a sullen silence towards all around him.

Of the conversation which had passed not one word had escaped the ears of Fontrailles; and the moment the *cortège* had dismounted, he followed the Master of the Horse towards a distant part of the grounds which lay behind the Chateau. Cinq Mars walked on as if he did not see him, and at last finding that he persisted in following, he stopped abruptly, exclaiming, "Well, Fontrailles! well! what now? What would you say? I can guess it all, so spare yourself the trouble."

"You mistake me, Cinq Mars," replied Fontrailles, "if you think I would blame you. You did your best, though the time was not the best chosen; but all I wish to press upon you is, not to let this dispirit you. Let the subject die away for the present and seem forgotten, till the King is in a better mood. Every hour of his neglect is death to Richelieu; and besides, the King's consent is not absolutely necessary to us."

"To me, absolutely necessary," replied Cinq Mars, "for I stir not one step without it."

"Nay, the King's private consent to you is of course necessary," answered Fontrailles; "but you surely do not think of informing him of the treaty with Spain. After the affair is finished, and Richelieu's power at an end, Louis will see the necessity of it; but such, you must know, is his hatred towards Spain, that he would consider the very proposal as little better than high treason."

"I am not yet determined in that respect," answered Cinq Mars; "my conduct will of course be decided by how I find the King inclined. I like no concealments, where they can be avoided. But in the first place, Villa Grande must carry the treaty to——"

Cinq Mars paused; for, as he spoke, Chavigni turned sharp round from an alley close by, and passed on. The Statesman bowed, *en passant*, to the Master of the Horse, who but slightly returned his salutation, while, on the other hand, Fontrailles doffed his hat and inclined his head with a hypocritical smile, in which habitual servility was strongly blended with triumphant malice.

Chavigni spoke not, but there were two or three words had caught his ear as he passed, which at once turned his suspicions into the right channel, and stimulated him to know more. We have already said that it was a maxim with the Statesman, that in politics nothing is mean; and he would have felt not the slightest hesitation in listening to the conversation of Cinq Mars, could he have done so without being observed. To effect this, it was necessary to take a large round in order to approach the alley in which the two conspirators walked without drawing their attention to himself; but as he turned to do so, he observed the Master of the Horse separate from his companion and come towards the spot where he stood, and not wishing to put Cinq Mars on his guard, by showing that he was watched, he turned away and directed his steps towards the Château.

"Must carry the treaty—" thought Chavigni. "Who must carry the treaty? If I could but have heard that name, I should then have had the clue in my hands. However, Monsieur de Cinq Mars, you shall be well looked to, at least—take care that you trip not—for if you do, you fall." Thus thinking, he passed on to the stables, where his horses stood, intending, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, and the failing light, to ride over to Tarascon and communicate with Richelieu, even if he should be obliged to become a borrower of the night for a dark hour or twain. His grooms, however, taking advantage of his absence, had dispersed themselves in various directions in search of amusement to pass the hours in the dull town of Narbonne; and consequently Chavigni could find no one to saddle his horses for the proposed journey.

Irritated at this impediment, he was about to quit the stable in search of some of the truant grooms, when he again perceived Cinq Mars approaching, accompanied by the Italian Villa Grande. They were in earnest conversation, and Chavigni, knowing that Cinq Mars had horses lodged next to his own, drew back, and searching for a crevice in the wooden partition, which was as old and decayed as he could desire, he applied himself to listen to all that passed as soon as the Master of the Horse and his companion entered the adjoining stable. The first words he heard were from the Italian. "You know, Monseigneur," said he, "that the utmost a man can do, is to die in defence of his charge; and that will I do, sooner than yield to any man that which you intrust to my hands."

"Well, well," replied Cinq Mars, "there is no need of so many professions, good Sir. To-morrow morning then, at day-break, you set out. That is the horse—mind you use him well, but spare not his speed. Salute the noble Duke on my part with all kindness and love. At nine you come for the treaty: but mark that you keep your time, for at ten I must be with the King."

"But Monseigneur, Monseigneur!" cried Villa Grande, as Cinq Mars turned to leave him; "perhaps your lackeys will not let me have the horse."

"Well then, when you come to-night," replied the Grand Ecuyer, "you shall have an order for him."

"Now then, your secret is in my power," thought Chavigni, as Cinq Mars and his companion left the spot. "Monsieur de Villa Grande, I will instantly make out an order for your arrest to-morrow morning, and save you the trouble of your journey.—Salute the noble Duke!" he continued, meditating on the words of Cinq Mars—"What Duke?—It must be Gaston of Orleans—But he is a royal Duke—But we shall see." And as he walked on towards the Chateau he bent his eyes upon the ground, revolving in his mind the various plans which suggested themselves for withdrawing his patron and himself from the brink of that political precipice on which they stood.

His thoughts, however, which for a moment wandered to every different circumstance of his situation, seeking

amongst the many dangers that surrounded, some favourable point on which to found a hope, were all suddenly recalled to one object, by the approach of Cardinal Mazarin, who by his hurried step and anxious countenance appeared to be troubled by some unforeseen event.

Notwithstanding their being linked in one cause, notwithstanding their present interests drawing together, notwithstanding all the apparent friendship that existed between them, Chavigni looked upon the Cardinal as one who with less zeal had rivalled him in the favour of Richelieu, and who with less talent had insinuated himself as much into the affairs of Government; and Mazarin, although obliged to coalesce with Richelieu's favourite, looked forward to the day when the struggle for pre-eminence between them would come to a climax, and one would rise upon the ruin of the other: and he saw clearly that when that day did arrive, all his own subtlety would hardly qualify him to compete with the bold mind and vigorous talents of Chavigni, unless he could in the first instance gradually acquire for himself such a superiority of interest, as to enable him to command rather than contend for the highest station.

The natural effect of these conflicting interests was a feeling of jealous suspicion in the mind of each, which in Mazarin only appeared by the care he took to strengthen his influence wherever it was most opposite to that of Chavigni; while at the same time, he showed his fellow statesman an outward respect and deference almost amounting to servility. But on the other part, Chavigni's hasty disposition made his dislike more apparent, though he took no means of injuring his rival.

As they approached each other, the Cardinal made a sign to the Page who attended him to remain behind, and folding the train of his robe over his arm, he advanced quickly to Chavigni, embracing him with the greatest semblance of attachment. "My excellent friend," he exclaimed, "I have sought you everywhere: let me beg you to fly instantly to Tarascon, or all our hopes are ruined."

"In truth," replied Chavigni, not allowing Mazarin to explain the motives of his request; "your Eminence requires what I can hardly comply with; as I have but now got business on my hands which needs some time to manage. But may I crave the object which would be gained by my going to Tarascon? I should think that he who could stay two hostile armies on the point of battle, was fully sufficient to any stroke of policy."

There was a sarcastic smile on the lip of Chavigni, as he alluded to the peace which Mazarin had procured at Cazal, at the moment when the French and Spanish armies were about to engage; but the Cardinal would see only the compliment. "You are too kind," replied he; "but in this instance, you only can succeed; you only, I feel assured—and that not without the exertion of all your influence—can prevent the Cardinal Prime Minister from sending his resignation to the King."

"His resignation!" exclaimed Chavigni, starting back with unfeigned astonishment. "In the name of Heaven, what do you mean?"

"I mean this, Chavigni," replied Mazarin, "that unless you reach Tarascon before daylight to-morrow morning, and use every argument in your power to produce, the courier, who bears the official resignation of his Eminence of Richelieu, will have set out for this place. I saw the paper signed to-day, with my own eyes, before I came away; and all that my utmost entreaties could gain was, that it should be delayed till to-morrow morning, in hopes of your arrival before that time. His Eminence feels convinced that the King's favour and his own power are lost for ever; and in truth I begin to think so too."

"Madness and folly!" exclaimed Chavigni, striking his hand against his forehead with vexation. "Madness and folly!—Rascal, saddle me a horse," he continued to a groom, who now loitered into the court with that sort of slow indifferent air which would put an angel in a passion. "Where, in the name of all the devils, have you been lingering? Pardon me, your Eminence—but I am vexed. I did not think his great mind was so overthrown.—Saddle me a horse, I say. Slave, must you stand eaves-dropping? Better you had been born deaf than overhear my conversation. There are such things as oubliettes to cure listeners. Saddle me a horse, I say."

"Will you not take some of my servants with you?" said Mazarin; "they are all in readiness."

"No, no," replied Chavigni, "I go alone. Do not let it get abroad that I am gone. I will be back betimes to-morrow."

"You had better take one servant, at least," said the Cardinal. "The roads are not safe. It is dangerous."

"Dangerous!" exclaimed Chavigni. "Who thinks of danger when his all is at stake? Your Eminence has a great regard for human lives, I know—for mine more especially. But depend upon it, I shall come home safe to-morrow, though I go alone to-night. Now, Sir," he continued to the groom, who led forth a strong black hunter for his service, "girth up the saddle a little tighter: unbuckle that cross from his poitral; I am neither going on a pilgrimage nor a procession."

And now, walking twice round the horse to see that all the caparisons were in right order, he sprang into the saddle, and dashing his rowels into the hunter's flank, galloped out of the court-yard, bowing with a smile as he passed by Mazarin, who started back a step, as the horse's feet, in the rapidity of its course, struck fire with the stones of the pavement.

## CHAPTER IX.

Which shows how a King made reparation, and what came of it.

WHILE, as we have seen, Chavigni galloped off towards Tarascon, forgetting in the agitation produced by the tidings of Mazarin, to take those measures which he had proposed in regard to Villa Grande, Cinq Mars returned directly towards the palace, or rather, the house which had been converted into a palace for the King's use. It was one of those old buildings which at that time were common in France, and which even now are often to be met with in cities where the remains of ancient splendour, left alone to the less destructive power of time, have not been demolished by the violence of turbulent times, or the still more inveterate enmity of modern improvement. The whole front, with the two octagonal towers at the sides, and the long corridors on the right and left hand of the court, were ornamented with a multitude of beautiful arabesques and bas reliefs. These last, the bas reliefs, entirely covered the principal façade of the building, and offered a number of pictures in stone, representing in some parts battles and triumphs, and in others displaying the humbler and more peaceful subjects of pastoral life and religious ceremonies. Amongst the rest was one medallion which caught the attention of Cinq Mars; and as the failing light prevented him from seeing it where he stood, he approached to observe it. The chisel of the sculptor usurping the place of the pencil, had there portrayed a landscape with a flock of sheep pasturing quietly by the side of a brook, while a shepherd appeared sleeping under a hill, down which a wolf was seen stealing upon the flock. Underneath was written in old gothic characters, *Eveillez vous, le loup s'approche*.

Cinq Mars smiled as he read it, applying the warning to himself. "Let him come," said he, thinking of Richelieu; "he will be caught himself." So saying, he turned, and entering the Palace, retired to his own apartments. He had not remained there long, however, before he was once more joined by Fontrailles. "Follow me quick, Cinq Mars," cried the conspirator; "the King asks for you. Now is the moment to speak to him. He thinks that his peevishness hurt you this morning, and he is willing to make atonement."

It may be well supposed that Cinq Mars lost no time in following his companion up the great staircase to the King's apartments. It was, indeed, as Fontrailles had said. Since his return, Louis had enjoyed an hour of repose, which cleared from his mind the irritability induced by fatigue, and made him reproach himself for the unkindness he had shown to one so devotedly attached to him as the Master of the Horse. The remembrance of it oppressed him, and he sent for his favourite, not indeed to apologize, but to wipe away the impression that his irritability had caused, by more than usual kindness and familiarity. The two conspirators found Louis seated in a cabinet, which, being placed in one of the towers, partook of its octangular form. The walls were wainscoted with dark carved oak, and even the *plafond* was all of the same gloomy-coloured material, except a massy gilt cornice and projecting rose in the centre, from which hung a single silver lamp, the rays of which, falling on the figure of the King beneath, gave an additional paleness to his worn but fine countenance, and slightly touching upon his plain black velvet suit, shone full on the richly illuminated book in which he had been reading.

Louis raised his eyes as Fontrailles entered, and then turning them full on the noble countenance of Cinq Mars who followed, a pleased smile beamed for a moment on his lip, and he exclaimed, "Well, Cinq Mars, art thou Nimrod enough to hunt again to-morrow after our misfortunes of to-day? Come in, Monsieur de Fontrailles," he continued, seeing that Fontrailles remained near the door, hesitating whether he should retire or not, now that he had done the King's bidding in summoning the Grand Ecuyer. "Come in, I pray—Sit you down, Gentlemen—it is the King's request: you, Cinq Mars, here—Monsieur de Fontrailles, there is a seat. Now," he continued, glancing his eye round as the light of the lamp gleamed faintly on their several countenances—"now we look like some secret triumvirate met to decide the fate of nations."

"And that might be too," replied Cinq Mars: "your Majesty to command, and we to execute."

The King took no notice, but went on with what he had himself been saying: "There is Cinq Mars looks like a noble prince, and Fontrailles like a wily minister, and I—I believe," he continued laughing, "I have left myself no place but that of secretary."

"Alas!" said Cinq Mars with a deep sigh, "alas! that there should be any man in your Majesty's dominions more a king than yourself."

Fontrailles and the King both started; and the Conspirator internally pronounced "All is lost," while Cinq Mars himself, who had spoken without thought, only felt the imprudence of his speech when it was beyond recall.

"Cinq Mars! Cinq Mars!" cried Louis, "that is a daring speech,—but I know it proceeded from your love for me, and therefore I pardon it. But I will tell you that no man is more a King in France than I am."

"I crave your Majesty's gracious pardon," replied the Master of the Horse. "If I have offended your Majesty, it was from love for you alone that I spoke. My words were bolder than my thoughts, and I only meant to say that I could wish to see my Monarch show himself that great King which he naturally is. I would fain see the staff of command withdrawn from one who abuses it."

"Cinq Mars," answered the King, "that staff is in my own hand. It was but lent, my friend; and it is now resumed."

The Master of the Horse paused for a moment, not exactly certain how far he could rely upon the King's good humour, which he had already tried so incautiously, and turned his eyes towards Fontrailles, as if for counsel.

"Speak, Cinq Mars," said Louis, seeing his hesitation, "speak boldly, and fear not; for I fully believe that all your wishes are for my service, and I would fain hear the voice of those that regard me with affection, rather than for their own interest; and one of these do I hold you to be."

"Your Majesty does me justice," replied Cinq Mars. "Let me not offend you then, when I say that the power you lent is scarcely resumed while the title under which it was enjoyed remains. The Cardinal Duke of Richelieu, my liege, is still Prime Minister of France. He has still all the power (though not exercised), the revenues, the offices. Our soldiers are fighting at his command, our provinces are governed by his creatures, our high posts are filled by his friends. He has an army for his servants, and more than the riches of a prince. Why not—oh, why not, Sire, break the enchanter's wand that gave him so much sway, and sweep away the hordes that prey upon the State, like swarms of flies upon a slain deer? Why not direct the operations of your troops yourself, and let the armies of France be the armies of the King, and not of Richelieu? Why not chase from your councils a man who has so often abused the

generous confidence of his Sovereign, and make him disgorge the ill-gotten wealth which he has wrung from the hearts of your people?"

As he spoke, Cinq Mars grew warm with his subject; his eye sparkled, his arm was extended with that wild and graceful energy for which he was conspicuous; his words flowed uninterrupted, with all the eloquence of enthusiasm, and his fine and princely features acquired a new and striking expression, while, animated in the cause of his Country's liberty, he pleaded against the tyrant who had oppressed both king and people. Louis gazed on him at first as on one inspired; but as a host of consequences crowded on his mind, threatening him with a thousand vague and unsubstantial dangers, he placed his hands before his eyes, and remained for some moments in deep thought.

"My friend," said he at length, "what is it you would have me do? This man—this bad man if you will—but still this great man—is like an oak whose roots are deep in the earth; you may hew them asunder one by one, but it requires a giant's strength to pluck the tree up at once. Richelieu's power may be taken from him gradually; but to attempt what you propose, would instantly cause a rebellion amongst my subjects. He has so many who depend upon him; he has so many that are allied to him—"

"What!" exclaimed Cinq Mars, "shall it be said that King Louis was afraid to dismiss his own minister?"

"Not afraid for myself, Sir," replied the King, somewhat sharply; "but afraid of bringing the miseries of civil war upon my people."

Perceiving that Cinq Mars was urging the King too impetuously, Fontrailles, who had hitherto remained silent, now joined in the conversation in a soft insinuating tone, calculated to remove any newly raised irritation from Louis's mind. "All danger, Sire," said he, still labouring to quiet the King's fears without opposing his opinion, "all danger, which might otherwise be imminent, could easily be obviated, by commanding the noble Duke of Bouillon—"

At the name of the Duke of Bouillon Louis made an impatient motion with his hand. "He is Spanish at his heart," said he; "that Duke of Bouillon is Spanish, rank Spanish. But what of him, Monsieur de Fontrailles?"

"Believe me, my Liege," replied Fontrailles, "the Duke of Bouillon, whom I know well, is not so much a friend to Spain as he is an enemy to Richelieu. Remember, Sire, how he is linked with the Prince of Orange, the sworn adversary of Spain."

Louis shook his head doubtingly. "But what of him, Fontrailles? Come, to the point."

"Only this, Sire," said Fontrailles. "The Duke commands an army in Italy devoted to your Majesty's service; but permit me or Cinq Mars to give him private orders in your name to march them into France, and who shall dare to murmur at your royal will?"

"Why, that might be done, it is true," answered Louis; "but I am afraid, *mon Grand*," he continued, applying to Cinq Mars the term by which he distinguished him in his kindest and most familiar moments—"I am afraid, *mon Grand*, that though thou art a keen huntsman and a good soldier, thou wouldst make but a sorry minister."

"I minister!" exclaimed the Grand Ecuyer; "God forbid! No, no, my Lord! never did such a thought cross my imagination. Believe me, Sire, I had no view of personal aggrandizement in the proposal I submitted to your Majesty."

"But if you take from Richelieu his office, whom do you wish to substitute in his place?" demanded Louis; "some one must be minister."

"True, my Liege; but are there not thousands well fitted for the post?" said Cinq Mars—"Politicians as deep, but more humane than Richelieu—Men who can govern, and yet not tyrannize? I will undertake to find such a one for your Majesty, and yet remain myself fully satisfied with being the humble friend of my royal master, and the sincere well-wisher of my native Country. But let me order, in your name, the Duke of Bouillon to march into France; and then, provided with sufficient forces to disarm this usurping Minister, and overawe rebellion, your own royal will will be your only guide."

"At present," said Fontrailles, "the King's love for his people operates in two opposing directions, making him anxious to relieve them from the burden under which they groan, yet fearful of throwing a portion of them into rebellion. But by the presence of the Duke's army, the Minister might be removed, without endangering the tranquillity of the realm."

"True," said Louis; "true. Monsieur de Fontrailles, you say right;" and placing his hand before his eyes, the King thought for a moment, struggling inwardly to exert the powers of his mind, and call up sufficient resolution to deliver himself from the thralldom in which he had so long been held. But dangers, and doubts, and difficulties swam before his mental vision, like motes dancing in the sunbeam; and never destined in life to overcome his long-encouraged inactivity, he strove to cast the responsibility from himself. "Well, well," exclaimed he, "Cinq Mars, you shall decide it; I will leave the conduct of it all to you. But beware that you do not bring the miseries of civil war upon my kingdom; for be assured that if you do, I will require it of you deeply—It is your own seeking, and the consequences be upon your own head."

"Let it be so, then, my Liege," cried Cinq Mars, kissing the emaciated hand of the feeble Monarch; "it shall not be my fault if France and my Sovereign are not soon freed from the cloud that has so long overshadowed them both."

"Well, well," said Louis, "we will trust in God for the event. But beware of Bouillon; Cinq Mars, he is rank Spanish at his heart. And now, gentlemen, to bed, for we must rise in time for our sport. But, in truth, I fear I shall not hunt much longer—the body fails me, Cinq Mars, though I was once a thing of strength, as thou art."

## CHAPTER X.

How Chavigni rode fifty miles to ride back again.

WHILE these schemes for the downfall of his Patron were going forward at Narbonne, Chavigni spurred on rapidly towards Tarascon, where the falling Minister lay sick, both in body and in mind. Besides the personal attachment of the Statesman to Richelieu, who had formed his fortunes, and led him in the way to greatness, every consideration of his own interest bade him oppose the resignation of the Cardinal, which he clearly saw would bring inevitable destruction upon all persons connected with the existing ministry.

He had long perceived that a powerful party was forming against Richelieu, especially since his absence and illness gave facility to their operations. All Chavigni's talents and influence had been exerted to oppose them; but that the Cardinal would resign his high office, he had never suspected for a moment, and therefore the tidings brought by Mazarin came upon him like a thunder-stroke, taking from him all faculty of thought, but on that one thing. He was well aware too, that it was no easy task to turn Richelieu from his purpose; and as he rode on, his mind was solely occupied by a thousand tumultuous and ill-digested plans, for preventing the execution of what the Cardinal designed.

Daylight set in the west, and night fell heavily over the earth without exciting a thought in the bosom of Chavigni; for the irritation of his feelings took away all sensation of bodily fatigue, and almost all attention to external objects, till at length the failing pace of his horse showed him that he at least must have rest; and accordingly he paused for a short space at a little village, a few leagues from Tarascon, in order to refresh his beast. But even here the agitation of his mind prevented him from seeking any repose himself, and he continued walking up and down before the little auberge, for the time that he was thus compelled to remain.

It was considerably past midnight, when Chavigni arrived at the residence of the Minister. On entering the court-yard, all was in darkness, except where, in one spot, a light was seen burning in the chamber of the invalid, and throwing dark across the window the bent shadow of a sleeping attendant. The Statesman fastened his horse to one of the iron hooks in the court-yard, and advanced, intending to make himself heard by some one within, but he found that the grooms, grown negligent during their Lord's sickness, had left the door unfastened, and pushing it with his hand, it readily gave way. "It is like his fate," thought Chavigni: "while he is ill and sleeping, the gate is left open, and any one may enter."

Passing onward through the hall, he now mounted the grand staircase, lighted by a lamp that had been left to die out as it might, and approached the room where the Cardinal lay.

The door of the antechamber opened stiffly, but still the drowsy attendant did not awake; and Chavigni passed on into the bed-chamber of the Cardinal, without any one being aware of his presence. "Were this but known," thought the Statesman, "how many assassins' hands would now be armed for this one man's destruction!"

It was Richelieu alone, who, lying in feverish restlessness, caught the sound of approaching steps; and there was a sort of intensity in the glance which he fixed on the door communicating with the anteroom, which seemed to say that his judgment of the visitor's purpose was not very favourable. However that might be, whether from the recklessness of illness, or from the torpor of one who regards the future as a blank, he took no farther notice of the sound he heard, than by fixing his eyes sternly on the door. But the next moment, as the light fell strongly on the face of his friend, the countenance of Richelieu brightened with a smile; and perceiving that Chavigni, who did not see he was awake, approached silently towards the attendant to rouse him, the Cardinal pronounced his name in an under-tone, and beckoned him towards his bedside.

"It is grateful," said Richelieu, as the Statesman drew near, "to find that even declining fortunes cannot alienate some hearts. You have seen Mazarin, I suppose."

Chavigni was about to answer, but the sound of the Cardinal's voice had awakened the attendant, who was now gazing about in no small alarm, on perceiving a stranger standing by the Minister's bedside. Richelieu, however, without showing any anger at his negligence, calmly commanded him to leave them; and as soon as they were alone, Chavigni proceeded. "I have seen Cardinal Mazarin, my Lord, and from him I have learned a piece of news which grieves me most deeply. I cannot believe that illness can have so far depressed the spirits of your Eminence, as to make you entertain the thought of casting from you all those high honours, which you have so long enjoyed, and of leaving France, in a moment of her greatest peril, to be governed by the hands of the weak and the designing."

"It is not illness, Chavigni," replied the Cardinal, with a melancholy shake of the head. "No! but my day is over. The power has passed from my hands, and it only remains for me to yield the name of it, before that too is taken from me by my enemies."

"Pardon me, your Eminence," said Chavigni; "but indeed the power is not gone from you. Under whose orders are our armies fighting? Under whose command is every city and fortress in France? Is it the character of a great man—is it the character of a brave man, to yield all without a struggle?—to cast away the sword he has so long wielded, and to give himself bound into the hands of his adversaries?"

"Mark me, Chavigni," said Richelieu, raising himself upon his elbow, "Louis is now within the distance of a few leagues. He knows that I am ill—perhaps that I am dying; and yet, by no sign of common courtesy does he show that he remembers me. But that was not the beginning. I saw that my power was gone, when he dared, in the face of all the Council, to annul the sentence I had passed on that arrogant, stiff-necked Count de Blenau, who had the hardihood to defy the utmost extent of my power." And the Minister's eyes flashed with the memory of his anger.

"Had your Eminence followed my advice," replied Chavigni, "that business would never have occurred. There is that sort of gallant magnanimity about Claude de Blenau which carries all before it; and I felt assured that neither fear nor interest would ever induce him to disclose any thing intrusted to his honour. Depend upon it, Monseigneur, that it is better not to meddle with such men, when we can avoid it."

"Well, well, Sir," exclaimed the Cardinal, impatiently, "without doubt you were quite right and I was quite wrong. But do not teach me to believe that you too, Chavigni, lose your respect for my person when my power is failing."

"Pardon me, your Eminence," replied Chavigni, in a tone of deep feeling, "you wrong me much. Your Eminence has been more than a father to me. During the continuance of your power you have always exerted it in my favour;



and whether it remains with you or not, my respect and my affection will never fail to follow you in every situation. Believe me, Monseigneur, that it is that respect and affection, which brings me here even now, to petition that you will wave your intention of——”

“Chavigni, it is useless,” interposed the Cardinal. “I have only the choice left, to yield it of my own free will, or to have it wrenched from my unwilling hand. Judge which is the wisest—judge which is the best.”

“Were that certainly the case,” said Chavigni, thoughtfully.

“It *is* certainly the case,” replied the Minister. “There are many, many combined against me:—singly, they are but reeds, and one by one I would break them like reeds; but united together, and with the King at their head,”—and he shook his head despairingly,—“they are far too strong either for you or me!”

“But could no means be found to separate them? Bethink you, Monseigneur,—avarice, revenge, ambition, might sow the seeds of discord amongst them, and give them like sheep into our hands.”

“It is too late, my friend!” replied the Cardinal: “it is too late! Had I foreseen it, I might have prevented their combining. I might have crushed some, and bribed others; destroyed the powerful, and overawed the timid. But it is now too late!”

“But whom does your Eminence think particularly implicated?” demanded Chavigni.

“Oh, there are many—many—many!” replied Richelieu, withdrawing the thin pale hand he had stretched over his face as he finished the last desponding words “too late,” probably desirous of hiding the emotion produced by the conviction that his power was irretrievably gone. However, when that hand was removed, his countenance showed no traces of any remaining agitation. “There are many, Chavigni,” he said: “there are Vendome, and Bouillon, and noisy Beaufort, and turbulent Gaston of Orleans, and witty Marsillac, and cool, moralizing De Thou, who has so often dared to pry into my actions and condemn them;—then there is, above all, sly Fontrailles, and Cinq Mars, whom I ——”

“Ha!” exclaimed Chavigni, as the Cardinal’s words recalled to his mind the conversation between Cinq Mars and Fontrailles—“I had forgot—like an idiot, I had forgot!” and he struck his clenched hand violently against his brow, as if he sought to punish his own folly. “But it is not yet too late,” he cried, “it is not yet too late.”

“Forgot what, Chavigni?” demanded the Cardinal, seeing with astonishment the emotion which was called up in his friend by the remembrance of so great an oversight. “Forgot what? Too late for what? What is it moves you so deeply?”

“Pardon me, your Eminence,” replied Chavigni, “I have not time to explain; only I have to ask two favours. The first is, that you will let me take a stout horse from your stables; mine will go no farther. The next,” he added, in a tone of greater composure, but still one of earnest entreaty—“the next is, if you had ever a regard for me—if ever I served you well and faithfully, that you will promise me to take no step in the business we have spoken of, till my return; which shall be before to-morrow evening.”

“It can make but little difference waiting till that time,” answered the Cardinal. “But what is the matter, Chavigni? What is it agitates you thus?”

“Have I your promise, Monseigneur?” asked Chavigni quickly.

“You have,” said Richelieu. “Out of regard for you, and solely because you ask it, I will suspend my resolution till your return.”

“Well then, God protect your Eminence till we meet again!” exclaimed the Statesman. “I go upon your service; and if I do not succeed, I care not how soon my head may be brought to the block, as a just punishment for my mad forgetfulness.” Thus saying, he quitted the room, and descending to the stables, called up the grooms whose sleepy movements ill accorded with the rapid emotions of his bosom. Now the stirrups were not long enough, then the girths had to be buckled tighter, then the bit was mislaid, and then the crupper could not be found. At length, however, the horse was fully prepared, and calling for a cup of wine, Chavigni drained it to the bottom, and galloping out of the court, was soon once more on the road to Narbonne. But it was in vain that he used whip and spur to arrive at that town before the hour appointed for the Italian’s departure. Ere he had measured half the way, the day rose bright over the hills before him, and clenching his hands, he exclaimed in the bitterness of disappointment, “Too late! I am too late!” Still, however, he went on at full speed, hoping that by sending out couriers in every different direction he might yet overtake the messenger.

Every one who has ridden from Tarascon to Narbonne must remember the picturesque beauties of that part of the country. At the spot where Chavigni had now arrived, high rocks breaking forth from a thick covering of wood skirted his way on each side, and having ascended to the top of the hill, an immense valley lay before him, scattered with forests and broken into a thousand inferior ridges, some of which bore upon their summits the steeple of a village church, some the ruins of those ancient towers which had been erected in days gone by to defend the passes from the neighbouring Moors of Spain. At his feet thin waves of white mist floating in the morning light, partially obscured the road he was going, till, rising out of the trees, it was seen winding along the mountains on the other side. Chavigni paused for a moment to trace its direction; and as he did so, his eye fell upon the figure of a single horseman, descending into the valley from the opposite hill.

“Whom have we here?” thought the Statesman, not without a faint hope that it might be the person he sought. Spurring on his horse, however, he rode forward to meet him; but on reaching the bottom of the descent, the figure he had seen from above became hidden by the windings of the road amongst the trees, and Chavigni’s heart fluttered lest the horseman, whoever he was, might have taken the other road which turned through the valley to the left.

At length, however, the sound of a horse’s feet was heard approaching quickly towards him, and, certain that he must now pass that way, the Statesman drew in his rein, and stood with his eyes intently fixed upon the spot where the road verged into the forest. As there was still a considerable descent from the spot where Chavigni paused to the bottom of the valley, the sound was heard for a long time coming nearer and nearer before any one appeared. At length, however, the horseman came in sight, presenting to the glad eyes of the Statesman the identical figure of the Italian, Villa Grande, with his long sword, extensive mustaches, and a pair of heavy pistols at his saddle-bow.

Chavigni doubted not that to possess himself of the papers which the Italian carried, would require a desperate struggle, but without a moment’s hesitation he drew his sword, and galloped on to attack him. No sooner had Villa Grande perceived a stranger on the road before him, than he reined in his horse; but now, as Chavigni rode on full

speed towards him with a menacing attitude and drawn sword, the Italian, in his terror, conceived at once that it was a robber, and throwing himself to the ground in mortal fear, he fell on his knees, exclaiming—"I will give it you all—every ducat, only spare my life!"

"Rise, rise! cowardly villain!" cried Chavigni, catching the bridle of the Italian's horse, which was starting away with a wild toss of the head, as the Statesman rode up;—"rise, Sir Poltroon! do you not know me?"

"Know you! know you!" exclaimed Villa Grande, gazing wildly at Chavigni. "Oh, Monseigneur, is it you? How you frightened me!" But Villa Grande, who had trembled sufficiently when he thought it was a robber, trembled ten times more than ever as he recognised the Statesman; and he could scarcely find strength in his knees to raise himself from the ground.

"Rise, Sir!" exclaimed Chavigni impatiently; "and instantly give me the treaty."

"Treaty!" cried Villa Grande, still trembling, but endeavouring to put on a look of astonishment. "What treaty does Monseigneur mean? I know of no treaty."

"Lying slave!" exclaimed Chavigni, striking him with the flat side of his sword; "if you do not produce it within ten seconds of time, by Heaven I will cut it out of your base cowardly heart!"

"But if I do——" said the Italian, seeing there was no escape left.

"Come, Sir," cried the Statesman; "no *buts* for me. If you stand shuffling one minute more, I will run my sword through you, and search for it on your carcase myself."

"Well, well! Monseigneur, I see you know it all, and therefore it will be no stain on my honour if I give it to you."

"Honour!" cried Chavigni, with a scoff.—"Come, Sir, the treaty."

Villa Grande approached his horse, and raising the flap of the saddle, with shaking hands, drew forth, from a pocket concealed in the padding, a large paper sealed in an envelope. Chavigni caught it eagerly from his grasp, and running his eye over the address, he read—"To Monseigneur the Duke de Bouillon, Commander-in-Chief of all the armies of France, warring in Italy."—"Ha!" continued the Statesman, "this is not the road to Italy. What brings you here?" and he turned towards Villa Grande. But while the Statesman's eyes were fixed upon the paper, the wily Italian had begun to creep towards the wood; Chavigni, however, perceiving his design, caught one of the pistols from the horse's saddle-bow, and pointing it towards the fugitive, soon brought him back again. "Stand you there, Sir," said he. "Now tell me what makes you here, when this packet was intended for Italy?"

"Why, Monseigneur—why—why—to tell the truth, there was another little despatch to be delivered on the frontiers of Spain; here it is;" and diving into a deep pocket in his doublet, he produced a packet smaller than the other, and gave it into Chavigni's hand. "And now, Monseigneur, I have freely discovered all I know," continued Villa Grande, "I hope that you, Monseigneur, will promise me your protection; for if the other party get hold of me, they will murder me to a certainty."

Chavigni made no answer, but without any ceremony broke the seals of the two packets, and passing his horse's bridle over his arm while he read them, he opened the treaty, and turned to the list of names by which it was signed. In the mean while, Villa Grande kept his eyes fixed upon him, watching for a favourable moment to escape, if the Statesman's attention should be sufficiently engaged to allow him so to do.

"Ah! here I have them fairly written," proceeded Chavigni, speaking to himself. "Philip, the most Catholic!—Olivarez!—then follow Gaston of Orleans; Cinq Mars, Grand Ecuyer—Fontrailles;—and a space—for Bouillon of course. Now let us see the letter to the noble Duke;" and he opened the one which he found in the same packet with the treaty. But as he read, his eye fixed with painful earnestness upon the paper, and the colour fled from his cheek. "God of Heaven! what is this?" said he, reading. "'Though I doubt not, my noble friend, that after all which has lately passed, you would put your forces in motion at my simple desire, the King's command is yet higher authority; and that I now send you, to march with all speed to the frontier, embarking five thousand foot at Porto Longone, to land at Marseilles. All this in case the friends and adherents of Richelieu should attempt to make head against the royal authority.'—"

"All is lost!" muttered Chavigni. "But let us see the whole, at least, to provide for our own safety;" and he again turned to the paper, which proceeded—"I send you the treaty with Spain for your signature, which is especially necessary to the article relative to your principality of Sedan. The troops of his Catholic Majesty are on the frontier, ready to march at our command; but I have been obliged to conceal from the King our Spanish connexion, as his hatred to that country is as great as ever."

"I have you! I have you! Monsieur Cinq Mars," exclaimed Chavigni, clasping his hands with joy. "This treaty is your death warrant, or I know not King Louis.—Italian scoundrel!" he continued, turning to look for Villa Grande—"Ha! the slave has escaped—that must not be; he were the best witness in the world against them;" and springing from his horse, he tied him to a tree together with that of the Italian.

While Chavigni had been reading, with all his attention fixed upon the paper, and all his passions excited by its contents, Villa Grande, watching his moment, had crept gradually to the edge of the wood, and darted into a narrow path, half covered with branches. But though the way he had taken was thus, in a degree, concealed, it did not escape the quick eye of the Statesman; and as the motions of the Italian, till he had got into the wood, had been necessarily cautious, in order not to call his attention; Chavigni, following as fast as lightning, soon caught the sound of his retreating footsteps, reverberated from the rocks around. As he advanced, he called loudly to the Italian to stop, and that he should have a free pardon; but Villa Grande, trusting to the distance that was still between them, and hoping, if he could elude immediate pursuit, to be able to escape into Spain, continued running on, while Chavigni as perseveringly followed, threatening and promising by turns, but alike without effect.

At length the strength of the Italian, already diminished by fear, began to fail entirely; and Chavigni found that the distance between them was rapidly lessening, when in a moment the sound of footsteps, which had hitherto guided him, ceased entirely—a cry of agony reached his ear; and running still more quickly forward, he, too, had nearly been precipitated over the edge of a steep crag, which, in the hurry of his flight, the unhappy Italian had not noticed. The Statesman's first impulse was to start back, for he was on the very brink of the precipice before he was aware; but soon recovering himself, he approached the edge, and looking over, beheld the mangled form of Villa Grande lying on some rough stony ground at the bottom of the rock.

"God of Heaven!" cried Chavigni, "what a fall! The poor wretch must surely be dead. However, he must not lie there, for the wolves will soon be at him;" and looking around, he sought for some way to descend the rock. It was a

considerable time before he could accomplish his object, but at length he succeeded, and on arriving at the spot where Villa Grande lay, he found that the Italian, in his flight, had taken a diagonal path through the forest, which cut off a large bend in the main road, and joined it again by a zig-zag path down the rock at some distance. Thus the spot where Villa Grande was then lying, was about half a mile from the place at which he had first been encountered by Chavigni, if the high road was followed; but by the path through the wood the distance could not be more than a few hundred yards. Chavigni's first care was to examine the body of the Italian, who was so entirely deprived of sense, that at first the Statesman believed him to be dead; but in a moment or two some signs appeared which led him to conclude that life was not completely extinct; and taking him in his arms he carried him to the spot where the horses stood. Here he placed him on the stout black hunter which Cinq Mars had lent, and led him slowly to a small town about a mile farther on the road.

It has been already stated, that hardly was there a village so small in the whole extent of France as not to be furnished with one or more of those agents of Richelieu's minute policy, whose principal duty consisted in communicating every thing that passed around them to another class of superior agents, and also to facilitate all the secret operations of Government in the sphere ascribed to them. The actual pay received by these men was but small; but the favour shown to them on all occasions, and the facilities afforded to them in their more ordinary employments, put them above competition with others in the same class, and amply rewarded their private services: for it must always be remembered that their connexion with the Government was held as a profound secret, and consequently they always were seen to exercise some open trade, which, in most cases, prevented their less ostensible employment from being even suspected by their neighbours.

It was to the house of one of these inferior agents that Chavigni led the horse charged with the senseless body of Villa Grande; and having commanded that he should be taken in and placed in bed, he himself aided in endeavouring to recall him to life, partly from the natural humanity of his disposition, partly from those political considerations which were ever paramount in his mind. Villa Grande, if he could be restored, would prove, Chavigni knew, too excellent a witness against the conspirators whom he had served, to permit of his life being lightly cast away; especially as it was evident, that either fear or bribery would induce him to confess any thing: but even had it not been for this reflection, the Statesman's natural disposition would probably have led him to succour the unhappy man, in whose misfortune he had been so greatly instrumental.

After many efforts, Villa Grande once more began to evince that the vital spark was not yet extinguished; and having so far succeeded, Chavigni, upon whose mind a thousand subjects of deep import were pressing every moment for attention, gave directions to the agent we have already mentioned, to show every attention to the wounded man, and to keep him, for that day, at his own house, which was situated a quarter of a league out of Limoux; but as soon as night came, to have him privately removed to Corneille, at which place a surgeon could be more easily procured from Carcassonne; and having reiterated the most strict injunctions to keep the whole business profoundly secret, lest the conspirators should learn the fate of their envoy, and take their measures accordingly, Chavigni once more turned his steps towards Tarascon, to recount to Richelieu the events of the day.

## CHAPTER XI.

Which was written expressly to prove that there is many a Slip between the Cup and the Lip.

It was the small Chapel of St. Catherine, otherwise called the Queen's Chapel, attached to the Palace-church of St. Germain en Laye, to which Potier, Bishop of Beauvais, proceeded with slow steps from the door of private communication with the chateau, on a night in October, one thousand six hundred and forty-two. He was preceded by two young Abbés, carrying lighted tapers, and followed by a group, whose white garments spoke that they came on some occasion of joy. The first of these was Anne of Austria, with her eyes animated, and her countenance glowing with the interest she took in every thing which bore the least appearance of secrecy or romance. Her right arm was passed through that of the Marchioness de Beaumont, who moved on with a calm, rather grave countenance; while on the Queen's left, walked a young lady in the first gay spring of life, ever and anon turning a smiling, playful glance behind to Pauline de Beaumont, who, leaning on the arm of Claude de Blenau, followed, agitated, blushing, and happy, towards the altar at which they were to be united for ever. Seguin, the Queen's physician, and Henri de La Mothe, the Count's page, were admitted as witnesses to the ceremony; and an attendant was stationed at the door, to guard against any troublesome devotee entering the church during the time it was thus occupied.

The idea of marrying Pauline de Beaumont privately to the Count de Blenau, had entirely originated with the Queen, whose passion for any thing romantic often threw both herself and her friends into situations of great danger. In the present instance, she represented to Madame de Beaumont that a thousand circumstances might occur in those unhappy times, to tear De Blenau again from her he loved; or that the Cardinal might positively prohibit their marriage, and then, she asked, who would dare to oppose him? whereas their private union would obviate all difficulties, and incur no danger.

Madame de Beaumont made many objections, and her daughter hesitated; but the wishes of the Queen overcame all the Marchioness's scruples; and the entreaties of De Blenau were not less powerful with Pauline.

The appointed night being arrived, and all the arrangements having been made as privately as possible, Pauline, as we have said, followed her Mother and the Queen into the Chapel of St. Catherine. But as she did so, there was a sort of despondency fell upon her that she could not account for. As she leaned upon De Blenau, she felt that she was most happy in being united to him. She was agitated, it was true, but still it was natural that she should be so, she thought. All her duties, all her ideas, were, by one single word, about to suffer an entire change, yet that did not take from her happiness. But still there was an undefined fear, a sort of melancholy presentiment, which weighed upon her spirits she knew not why. She asked herself, was De Blenau less kind? Oh, no! And as the thought passed through her mind, she raised her eyes for a moment from the ground, on which they had been bent, and turned them on her lover. In so doing, they met the full, soft, affectionate gaze, with which De Blenau was at that moment regarding her, and a deep blush rose in her cheek, but soon faded away, and left her again pale and thoughtful. She had not, however, much time to analyse her feelings; for, by this time, the Bishop had reached the altar, and waited their approach.

Potier, Bishop of Beauvais, had little of that gentleness of disposition, or suavity of manner, calculated to re-assure Pauline. He had undertaken the office which he came there to fulfil, merely at the desire of the Queen, and that not without making considerable opposition. But, though Potier was obstinate, Anne of Austria was still more so. She had resolved that the ceremony should be performed, and that he should perform it, and she carried her point; but yet he made his dislike to the task very apparent, and regarded the innocent Pauline with no very friendly looks.

"Come, Mademoiselle," said he, as Pauline seemed to linger for a moment, "you and Monsieur le Comte will have enough of each other's society after my office is over. Let us proceed with the ceremony."

The group arranged themselves round the altar, and the Bishop opening the book began to read. The promise, which was to bind her to De Blenau for ever, trembled on Pauline's lips, when a confused noise at the private door leading to the Palace caught her ear, and she paused.

De Blenau, who had not heard it, turned towards her in surprise; but immediately the voice of the attendant, who had been stationed there as portgreve, was heard exclaiming to some one, who apparently endeavoured to make his way into the church, "Stand back, I say. You do not enter here! What is your authority?"

"My authority," replied another voice, "is a warrant of Council. Oppose it if you dare. Strike him down, if he does not let you pass." And immediately the door bursting open, an Officer of the Cardinal's Guard, with a file of soldiers, entered the church.

"Guard the doors," cried the Officer, "and let no one quit the place." And giving his partizan to one of the soldiers, he advanced towards the high Gothic arch, forming the boundary between the main aisle and the Chapel of St. Catherine.

Pauline clung to De Blenau. "Oh, Claude!" cried she, "they are going to tear you from me again. My heart misgave me.—I was sure that something dreadful would interpose between us."

De Blenau whispered a few words of comfort to her, and Potier himself was moved by her agitation. "Do not be afraid, young Lady," said he; "we are on sacred ground.—Stop, sir," he continued, advancing to the steps of the Chapel, which the Officer had just reached: "what seek you here? And how do you presume to bring armed men into this Church?"

"I come, sir," answered the Officer, "with a warrant from his Majesty's Council, to arrest Claude Count de Blenau;" and he made a step towards the Chapel.

"Hold!" exclaimed the Bishop, "You arrest him not here. This ground is sanctuary; and I command you, in the name of God and our holy religion, to withdraw your men, and instantly to quit this Church." And he waved his hand with an air of dignified authority.

The Officer paused. "But, Monseigneur," he replied, "the Count is charged with high treason."

"With high treason!" exclaimed the Queen.—"With high treason!" echoed Pauline, clinging still closer to De Blenau's arm, which she held encircled by both her own.

"He is charged with high treason," repeated the Officer; "and I must fulfil my duty."

"Were he charged with all the crimes which disgrace humanity," replied the Bishop, "here he is sanctuarized; and I command you, on pain of excommunication—you, Sir Officer, and your soldiers, to quit the church. I stand not here to see this altar violated, whatever be your authority."

The Officer paused a moment, uncertain how to act. "Well, holy Father," replied he at length, "I obey; but I shall take especial care to guard every door of the church; so that if there be any blame, it does not fall on me." And muttering between his teeth the discontent he did not dare to vent aloud, he slowly withdrew his men.

The eye of Anne of Austria watched them intently till the last soldier had passed through the door which communicated with the Palace. Then turning quickly to the Count, she exclaimed, "Fly quick, De Blenau, up that staircase, cross the *jube*, through the monks' gallery round the choir. You will find a door on the right that leads into the King's cabinet. Wait there till I send—Quick, fly—I desire—I command you."

"Oh fly, Claude, fly!" reiterated Pauline, "they will murder you surely this time, if you do not fly."

"Pardon me, your Majesty—pardon me, dear Pauline," replied De Blenau; "it cannot be. There is no man in France more innocent, in deed, word, or even thought, of treason against his King and Country than I am; and Claude de Blenau flies from no one, so long as his honour and integrity remain by him: when these fail, then he may become a coward. But to these will I now trust, and instantly surrender myself to his Majesty's warrant. I did not interfere while Monseigneur defended the rights of the sanctuary, for he did but the duties of his high office; nor indeed was I willing to yield my sword to a servant of Cardinal Richelieu. Take it, Henry," he continued, unbuckling it from his side, and giving it to the Page; "take it, and keep it for your master."

"De Blenau, you are an obstinate man," said the Queen. "I will urge nothing; but look at this pale cheek, and fancy what the feelings of that sweet girl must be." And she pointed to Pauline who stood by with the tears chasing each other down her face.

Notwithstanding the firmness with which he spoke, there had been many a bitter pang struggling in De Blenau's breast. The appeal of the Queen, and the sight of Pauline's distress, overcame his calmness; and starting forward, he caught her in his arms and pressed an ardent kiss upon her lips. "Dear, dear Pauline," he exclaimed, "all will go well, be assured. My innocence will protect me."

Pauline shook her head mournfully, but her heart was too full to reply.

"Then you will not fly?" demanded the Queen, with some degree of impatience.

"He is in the right, Madam," said the Bishop. "As a good subject, he is bound to obey the laws of his country; and in duty to himself, he ought not to give weight to the charge against him by seeming afraid to meet it."

Anne of Austria turned away with a look of angry disappointment. "Well, at all events," said she, "let us conclude the ceremony which has been thus interrupted, and afterwards the Count can act as he pleases."

De Blenau hesitated. He felt that what the Queen proposed, if carried into effect, would be the only consolation he could receive under the new misfortune that had befallen him; but he felt also that it was a selfishness to wish it, and he looked towards the Bishop who had so well supported his first resolution. But Potier bent his eyes gravely on the ground, disapproving the proposal, yet unwilling farther to oppose the Queen.

"It shall be as Pauline decides," said De Blenau, taking her hand and raising it gently to his lips. "Pauline," he continued, "you know how deeply I love you; you know how I have longed for the hour that should give me your hand. But I fear that I should be cruelly selfish, were I to ask you to become the bride of one whose fate is so uncertain—Speak, dear Pauline."

Mademoiselle de Beaumont spoke not, but she raised her eyes to De Blenau with an expression which told that every feeling of her heart was given to him. The Marchioness, however, interposed. "No!" said she: "Claude, you are right; it is better to wait. The time will come, I feel sure, when you will be able to claim Pauline in the midst of smiles and happiness, instead of tears and danger. Does not your Majesty think this delay advisable?"

"My opinion has been expressed already," replied Anne of Austria peevishly. "But it is not my affair—act as you think fit. But were I Pauline, and my lover gave me up so calmly, I would seek another in his absence to console me."

De Blenau, deeply hurt, bit his lip, and by a strong effort forced himself to silence: but Pauline placed her hand in his, and raising her eyes to his face: "Fear not, Claude," she said; "in life and in death, I am yours. None other shall ever possess the hand of Pauline de Beaumont."

"You are a noble girl, Pauline," exclaimed the Queen. "De Blenau, I was wrong; but it vexes me to see that you will always be more in the right than I am. Do not look so sad, Pauline. The more I think of it, the more I feel sure that De Blenau's innocence will stand him in good stead yet, in spite of the meager Cardinal: and I begin to reckon also somewhat on my own influence with Louis; he is far kinder than in former days; and I will make it a point of earnest prayer, that De Blenau be fairly used. Besides, they have now no plea against him. There are no secret letters to be discovered—no correspondence with the public enemy."

Pauline shook her head mournfully. A cloud had come over the sun of her days, and she fancied that he would never beam brightly again.

"If we could ascertain the reason of this arrest," said Madame de Beaumont, "it might in some degree satisfy our minds."

"That may be easily done," replied the Bishop, "as Monsieur de Blenau is resolved to surrender himself. We can question the Officer, in regard to what occurred at the place from whence he comes; and by that means discover what circumstances have arisen to cast suspicion on the Count."

What the Bishop proposed was instantly agreed to; and De Blenau sent forward his Page to inform the Officer of his determination.

Anne of Austria then took a few steps along the nave, and turned to see if he still held his resolution. De Blenau bowed. "I follow your Majesty," he said "I feel that I have nothing to fear." And they passed on slowly and sadly to the other end of the church.

As they went, Pauline still clung to the arm of her lover, as if she feared that every moment they would tear him from her; and tear after tear rolled silently down her cheeks. The heart of De Blenau also was too full for words, so that silence hung upon the whole party.

At the door which communicated with the Palace, stood the Cardinal's Officer, with two or three of his men; and as she approached, the Queen desired him to follow her to the saloon. The Officer bowed low, and replied, that he

would obey her commands; but immediately advancing to De Blenau, he laid his hand upon the Count's arm. "In the King's name, Monsieur le Comte de Blenau," said he, "I arrest you for high treason. Behold my warrant."

Pauline recoiled with a look of fear; and De Blenau calmly put the man's hand from off his sleeve. "Pass on, Sir," he said, "I am your prisoner." The Officer hesitated; "Pass on, Sir," repeated the Count; "you have my word. I am your prisoner."

The man passed on, but not before he had made a sign to the soldiers who were with him, who suffered the Count and Pauline to pass, and then closing in, followed at a few paces distance.

On reaching the saloon, the Queen took her seat; and beckoning to Pauline, who, faint and terrified, was hardly able to support herself, she made her sit down on the footstool at her feet. "Now, Sir Officer," said Anne of Austria, "what news bring you from Narbonne? How fares his Majesty the King?"

"May it please you, Madame," he replied, "I come not from Narbonne, as your Majesty supposes, but from Tarascon, where the King had just arrived when I departed."

"The King at Tarascon!" exclaimed Anne of Austria. "In the name of Heaven, what does he at Tarascon?"

"That is beyond my knowledge," answered the Officer. "All I can tell your Majesty is, that for the last week there has been strange flying of couriers from one place to another. Monsieur de Chavigni has almost killed himself with riding between Tarascon and Narbonne. Every thing is altered, evidently, but no one knows how or why; and just as Aleron, Monsieur de Brez 's *maitre d'hotel*, was about to give me the whole history, I received an order to set off for Paris instantly, and when I arrived there, to take twenty troopers from the *caserne*, and come on hither on the errand which I have the honour to perform."

"But did you hear nothing?" demanded the Queen, earnestly. "Did this Aleron tell you nothing?"

"Nothing, Madame," replied the Officer. "He had just made me promise inviolable secrecy, and we were interrupted before he began his tale; or I would have told your Majesty with pleasure."

"But from report?" said the Queen. "Did you gain no knowledge from rumour?"

"Oh, there were rumours enough, truly," answered the man; "but as fast as one came, it was contradicted by another. Some said that the troops at Perpignan had revolted, and some that Monsieur le Grand had killed Cardinal Mazarin. Others brought word that Monsieur de Noyers had tried to poison the King; and others, that the King had kicked Fontrailles for hunting in short boots."

"Nonsense!" said the Queen; "all nonsense.—It is unfortunate," she continued, musing, "that we can get no information. But tell me, where are you ordered to conduct Monsieur de Blenau?—To the Bastille?"

At the name of a place where both De Blenau and herself had suffered so much, and which was associated in her mind with every horrible idea, Pauline clasped her hands over her eyes, as if to shut out the frightful visions it recalled.

"No, Madame," replied the Officer, "I am commanded to conduct Monsieur de Blenau, as quickly as possible, to Tarascon; and allow me to remind your Majesty that the time is passing fast."

De Blenau made a sign to the Officer, indicating that he was ready. He saw that Pauline's hands still covered her eyes, and, wishing to spare her the pain of such a parting, he bowed profoundly to the Queen, and moved in silence to the door. The Queen and Madame de Beaumont saw his intention, and remained silent; but as he reached the door, he could not resist the desire to turn and look once more upon her whom he was leaving perhaps for ever—who had so nearly been his bride—whom he had loved so long—who had undergone so much for him. It was excusable, but the delay defeated his purpose. The sudden silence alarmed Pauline—she raised her eyes—she saw De Blenau in the act of departing, and the last fixed painful glance with which he regarded her. All but her love was that moment forgotten; and starting wildly forward, she threw herself into his arms, and wept bitterly on his bosom. But Madame de Beaumont advancing, gently disengaged her from his embrace: Pauline hid her eyes upon her mother's shoulder; and De Blenau, with a heart ready to break, fled quickly from a scene that his fortitude could support no longer.

## CHAPTER XII.

Which shows that a Man who has climbed a Mountain may stumble at a Pebble; or the Consequences of one Oversight.

WE must once more go back to Narbonne, in order to explain the events which had there taken place since the day on which Chavigni possessed himself of the treaty with Spain. Cinq Mars, hearing nothing of his agent, of course concluded that he was quietly pursuing his way; and willing to take every precaution to insure the success of his plans, he spent the next day in riding over to the camp at Perpignan, and endeavouring to ingratiate himself with the officers and soldiers of that part of the army. The splendour of his train and equipages, the manly beauty of his person, his dexterity in all warlike exercises, and the courteous familiarity of his manners, attracted all eyes, and won all hearts; and Cinq Mars, well contented with the day's success, did not return to Narbonne till very late at night.

The next morning had been appointed for hunting; but that day the King was rather later than usual, and Cinq Mars, as he waited in the saloon till Louis should be ready, took up a romance which some of the Pages had left behind, and stretching his tall elegant form at length in the window-seat, he began reading, to pass the time.

The book was *The true History of Don Cleofas of Castille*, and as Cinq Mars read on, he became interested in the fate of the hero. He had opened the volume at that part where the Knight rescues Matilda from the power of the Moors. He was in the act of persuading her to descend the staircase in the tower, at the foot of which the repentant Renegade waited with their horses; and Cinq Mars, whose whole heart was full of romance, at one moment entered entirely into the vehement and almost angry arguments of Don Cleofas, and then again felt for the alarm and doubt of the timid Matilda.

So much, indeed, was he occupied, that as some one passed to and from the King's chamber, he scarcely raised his eyes to notice who it was; and when at last he did so, he found it was only a Page.

The tale went on, and his eye ran from sentence to sentence, to see if the fears of Matilda had proved fatal to their hopes of escape; and his heart beat with anxiety and alarm as the wind blew the door to behind them, and they listened to hear whether the Moors had been awakened by the sound. It was at that moment that another step met his ear, whose firm, decided pace plainly told that it was not that of a domestic. Cinq Mars raised his eyes, and as he did so, they encountered those of Chavigni, who was passing on to the apartments of the King. Chavigni bowed, with a peculiar smile. Cinq Mars returned his salutation, and again began reading his book. "It is all over with your power, Monsieur de Chavigni," thought the Master of the Horse; "I will but read out this adventure of the two lovers, and then I will come to disturb your *tête-à-tête* with his Majesty."

Cinq Mars read on. "Don Cleofas and his fair Matilda descended the staircase in the city walls; but before they reached the gate, the alarm was given, and by the time they had mounted their horses, all the garrison was armed for their pursuit. Flights of arrows followed them from the ramparts as they fled, and a body of horse kept close upon their track. But still Don Cleofas pursued his way, the bridle of Matilda's horse thrown over his arm, and his right hand ready to grasp his sword, should the Moors overtake them. It was up the ascent of a steep hill that he took his way, and at the top he reined in his horse, on the edge of the crags which looked down into a peaceful valley below. Don Cleofas sprang to the ground, gave one look to the Moors who were following fast behind, and, as a last resource, catching Matilda in his arms, he leaped from the brink, bounding from rock to rock in the descent, with the agility of an izzard, till at length he reached the deepest part of the valley below."—All this was told at full length in the romance. The terrors of Matilda, the daring of the Knight, the angry gestures of the Moors, the steepness of the descent, and the calm beauty of the valley, were all dilated upon and described with the utmost minuteness and accuracy; which very much delighted Cinq Mars, but took him a long time to read; so that just at the moment he had got them safely to near the end of their journey, the door of the King's apartments again opened, and Chavigni passed through the room on his return. Perceiving this to be the case, Cinq Mars thought that he might as well go on with his book: which he had just begun to do, when Fontrailles entered the saloon and interrupted him. "In the name of Heaven, Cinq Mars," exclaimed he, "what are you about?"

"I am waiting till the King is ready," answered the Master of the Horse composedly, scarcely taking his eyes from the romance.

"And is it possible," asked Fontrailles in a tone of angry astonishment, "that you have lain here reading that drivelling book, and suffered Chavigni to be again so long with the King?"

"Again!" said Cinq Mars, becoming more attentive; "he only passed once that I saw."

"And ought he to have been there once, if that were all?" asked Fontrailles. "But let me tell you, Cinq Mars, he was there last night for more than an hour. Oh, Cinq Mars! Cinq Mars! is this a time, when our lives, our fortunes, and our country's weal are at stake, to sit there dozing over a romance, and see our bitterest enemy have access to the King's ear, but too easy to be abused? Depend on it, something more will come of this."

"But why did you not let me know," demanded the Master of the Horse, "that he had seen the King last night?"

"I learned it but this moment," replied Fontrailles. "But here comes a Page from the King's apartments. A message to you, Cinq Mars, on my life."

The Page approached. "I am commanded by the King's Majesty to acquaint you, Monseigneur," said he, addressing the Grand Ecuyer, "that he feels himself too unwell to enjoy the pleasures of the chase to-day. But he desires that his indisposition may not prevent you, and the other gentlemen invited, from following your sport."—And having delivered this message, the attendant withdrew without waiting for any reply.

"Well, now you see, Fontrailles," exclaimed Cinq Mars, "there is nothing wrong here. Nothing can be more kind and considerate than, when ill himself, to wish us to follow the sport without him."

An expression of heavy, deep-seated thought sat upon the brow of the clear-sighted, suspicious Fontrailles. He took two or three steps up and down the apartment, and then, turning to Cinq Mars with a countenance in which painful anxiety and bitter irony were strangely mingled, he considered his companion with an attentive glance, which ran rapidly over his tall elegant figure. "Cinq Mars," said he, "you are more than six feet high, and could spare a few inches of your height upon an occasion—even were they to make you shorter by the head, you would still be a tall man. As for me, I am short already, and cannot afford to be cut down. A word to the wise—I go to shelter myself from

pruning-knives. Do as you please. We shall meet in this world or the next. Adieu!" And turning on his heel, he quitted the saloon.

"The man is mad!" said Cinq Mars aloud as Fontrailles left him—"irretrievably cracked!" And jumping up from the window-seat, he descended to the court-yard, called the huntsmen together, mounted his horse, and led the chase as merrily as if nothing had happened but the ordinary trifles of a day.

Had he known all, very different would have been his feelings. The visit of Chavigni to the King was one on which the fate of France depended; and the wily Statesman had entered the apartments of the Monarch, prepared equally to guard every word he uttered himself, and to watch every turn of Louis's irritable and unsteady mind.

The King was leaning on a table in his Cabinet, dressed for the hunting expedition we have mentioned, and more than an usual degree of peevishness was expressed in his countenance. "Well, Sir," exclaimed Louis as Chavigni entered, "what other bad news have you the pleasure of bringing me? What other friends have turned traitors? What other power is about to invade my dominions? By the Holy Trinity! I never see your face but it makes me melancholy."

Chavigni was not sorry to perceive the King's irritability. The night before he had conveyed to him, in general terms, the news of a private treaty existing between Spain and some that Louis supposed his friends, and had promised to bring him that morning the names of the different parties engaged. He now came to fulfil that promise, and he saw that the former information had been working upon Louis's mind, and raised in it a degree of impatience and anger that would fall heavily on the first object presented to his resentment. Nor did Chavigni doubt that he would easily be able to turn it in the direction that he wished.

"My Liege," replied he, "when I find your Majesty's confidence betrayed, your dominions threatened, and even your person in danger, it is my duty to give your Majesty timely warning, although the news be as unpleasant for me to bear as for you to hear. To conceal treason is the part of a traitor, and as one of your Majesty's Council——"

"Well, well, Sir," cried Louis, interrupting him, "spare your exculpation. The executioner is doubtless guiltless of the blood he sheds, but it is not a right honourable trade."

An angry flush came over Chavigni's countenance, but it quickly subsided; and he replied calmly, "I came here, as your Majesty knows, to give you more minute particulars of the information I rendered you yesterday; and to prove to you that some whom you esteem your dearest friends, and some who are your nearest relations, are the veriest traitors in France. The affair for no one can be more unpleasant than for myself, for there are some to whom I wish well, that have in this merited their death: therefore, Sire, if you find it too painful to hear, in the name of Heaven, let it rest in silence. I will hie me home and burn the papers I have brought here; and satisfied with having done my duty, only hold myself ready, when the misfortunes which must follow, do arrive, to serve your Majesty with my hand and heart." And bowing profoundly, Chavigni took a step back, as if about to quit the presence.

"Hold, Monsieur de Chavigni," said the King, "you have done your duty, we do not doubt. But unpleasant tidings, Sir, are not to be received pleasantly. Were it ourself alone that they aimed at, perhaps we might leave treason to overreach itself; but as the welfare of our kingdom is at stake, we must look the frowning truth in the face, and prepare to punish the guilty, be they who they may, that we may insure the safety of the innocent."

"Louis the Just," said Chavigni, advancing and using a term which had been bestowed upon the King by the astrologers of the day from his having been born under the sign 'Libra,' "Louis the Just will not act otherwise than justly; and if I prove not to your Majesty's satisfaction that a most dangerous conspiracy is on foot, let your royal indignation fall upon me."

"I know not what you call a conspiracy, Sir," answered Louis, his mind reverting to the plans of Cinq Mars, to which, as we have seen, he had given his own sanction only a few nights before, and for the discovery of which he felt as much alarm as if Richelieu possessed the power of punishing him also.

"The conspiracy I speak of, Sire," rejoined the Statesman, "is formed not only to oblige your Majesty to change your Ministers, but——"

"I can conceive no plan for *obliging* me to change my Ministers," interrupted the King. "You must have mistaken, Monsieur de Chavigni; perhaps the persons whom you style conspirators, have only in view to make me dutiful petition and remonstrance, in which case I should give their arguments all due weight and consideration. Therefore, if this be the information you bring, I wish to hear no more."

Long accustomed to observe every particular point of weakness in the King's mind, Chavigni at once conceived the whole train of Louis's thoughts, and judged from the very alarm which he saw in the Monarch's countenance, that if the Cardinal's power could once be re-established, it would be more unbounded than ever; and as these ideas passed through his mind, they called a transient smile upon his lip.

"Why do you smile, Sir?" demanded the King, sharply.

"Pardon me, Sire," answered Chavigni. "But it was, that you should think me so weak as to trouble you upon such a subject. If leaguings with the enemies you have fought and conquered, be humble petition; if bringing foreign troops to invade your dominions, be dutiful remonstrance; if promising to deliver the strong places of France into the hands of Spain, be loyalty and faith,—then have I unnecessarily disturbed your repose."

Chavigni's speech worked upon the King, as he expected. "How say you!" exclaimed Louis, his eyes flashing fire. "Who has dared to conceive such a thought? Who has had the hardihood to unite himself to Spain—our sworn enemy—our mortal foe?—Prove your assertion, Sir—Prove that such a traitor exists in our dominions; and were he our own brother, we would doom him to death."

Chavigni instantly caught at the idea. "Sorry I am to say, Sire," he replied, "that your Majesty has but too truly divined the person. The Duke of Orleans, unhappily, is the chief of this dangerous conspiracy. Behold, my Liege, his name to this treaty with Spain;" and artfully contriving to conceal the greater part of the names with his hand in holding it before the King, he pointed out the great sprawling "*Gaston*," which stood the first on the list of signatures.

Louis instantly recognised his brother's hand-writing. "Gaston of Orleans! Gaston of Orleans!" he exclaimed, "will nothing satisfy you? Must you betray your country to her enemies, as well as plot against your brother's life with magicians and astrologers?"

We have already had occasion to remark, that Louis, deeply imbued with all the superstitions of the age, put full



faith in every part of astrology, and dreaded nothing more than the effects of enchantment. Nor could any thing free his mind from the idea, that his brother had, in former times, conspired against his life, with certain magicians who were actually executed for the crime; one amongst others being the famous Père Le Rouge, whom we have more than once noticed in this sage history. The Duke of Orleans himself escaped with a temporary banishment, but the circumstance still rankled in the King's mind; and at present the anger which might perhaps have turned aside from Cinq Mars, had Chavigni at first suffered the favourite's name to appear, now burst with full force upon the less favoured Gaston.

"Issue a warrant for his instant arrest," exclaimed the King. "By Heaven, he shall not escape more than another man."

"May it please your Majesty!" answered Chavigni, "to sign the warrant yourself. This is a case of no simple conspiracy, where the King's brother is at its head, and many of the first in the kingdom its supporters; and the warrants ought not to be simple *lettres de cachet* of Council, but ought to bear the royal signature."

"Well, Sir," replied the King, "have the warrants prepared, and I will sign them. I am going now to hunt, and at my return we will examine these papers and speak farther."

"I have the warrants drawn out here," said the Statesman, not choosing to let the first impression subside. "It will not detain your Majesty a moment; I felt convinced that you would not allow justice to slumber, and therefore had them prepared. This is against the body of Gaston of France, Duke of Orleans," he continued, looking at one of the papers.

"Well, give it to me!" exclaimed the King, taking up a pen; "it shall be done at once."

Chavigni put the warrant in Louis's hand, and looked at him with intense feeling, and a triumphant smile, as he hastily wrote his signature to it. "Now," thought Chavigni, "I have you, one and all. Now, proud Cinq Mars, and calculating Bouillon, you are in my power! He signs the warrant against his own brother, and he dare not let you escape;" and, countersigning the warrant, he put a second into the King's hand,—“That is against the Duke of Bouillon, Sire!” and he calmly took up the first, and placed it in his portfolio.

"The Duke of Bouillon!" exclaimed Louis, with a sudden start, remembering the orders he had sent him, and terrified lest Richelieu should have discovered them. "Is his name to that paper?"

"No, Sire!" answered the Statesman; "it is not. But in the treaty itself, there is abundant proof of his concurrence; and it was on its way to him in Italy when it was discovered. The same messenger bore it that conveyed to him your orders to march his troops into France:" and Chavigni fixed his keen penetrating glance upon the King's countenance. Louis turned away his head, and signed the warrant; while Chavigni proceeded to place before him that against Fontrailles, and subsequently one which authorized the arrest of Cinq Mars.

"How!" exclaimed the King, "here are the first and most loyal men in my kingdom. Monsieur de Chavigni, this is going too far!"

"Their names, my Liege," answered Chavigni, "are affixed to the treasonable treaty in my hand."

"It cannot be!" cried Louis, an expression of painful apprehension coming over his countenance: "It cannot be! My faithful, loyal Cinq Mars is no traitor. I will never believe it!" And he threw himself into a seat, and covered his eyes with his hands.

Chavigni opened the treaty calmly, and briefly recapitulated the principal articles. "The first item is, my Liege," he proceeded, "that Spain shall instantly furnish ten thousand men to enter France by the way of Flanders; and for a security to his Catholic Majesty, a second item provides, that the Duke of Bouillon shall place in his hands, for the time being, the Principality of Sedan. A third goes on to arrange, that five principal fortified towns of France shall be given into the hands of Spain; and the whole concludes, with a solemn alliance, offensive and defensive, between the conspirators and the Spanish King.—And to this treaty," added he, in a firm, deep tone of voice, "stand the names of Cinq Mars and Fontrailles."

"Cinq Mars has been deceived, misled, abused!" cried the King, with a degree of agitation almost amounting to agony.

"That will appear upon his trial, my Liege," rejoined Chavigni; and then wishing rather to soften the hard task he called upon Louis to perform, he added, in a gentler manner, "Your Majesty was born under the sign *Libra*, and have always merited the name of Just. If any thing in extenuation of his fault appear in the case of Monsieur le Grand Ecuyer, that can be taken into your merciful consideration after his arrest; but having calmly given an order for the imprisonment of your own Royal brother, your Majesty cannot—will not, show the manifest partiality of letting a person equally culpable escape. May I once more request your Majesty to sign the warrant?"

"Well, well!" cried Louis, snatching up the pen. "But remember, Cinq Mars must be pardoned. He has been deceived by that treacherous Duke of Bouillon and that oily Fontrailles. Oh, he is all honour and loyalty; have I not experienced a thousand instances of his affection?—It is false! it is false!" And he dashed down the pen without using it.

Chavigni gazed on him for a moment with a feeling very nearly allied to contempt. "Well then, your Majesty," he said at length, "is it your pleasure that I cause the arrest of the Dukes of Orleans and Bouillon, with Monsieur de Fontrailles, and others concerned in this conspiracy, and let Monsieur de Cinq Mars know that Louis the Just makes a distinction between him and other men?"

"No, no, Chavigni," replied Louis, mournfully; "give me the paper—I will sign it—But Cinq Mars must be saved. He has been deceived—I will sign it;" and turning away his head, he wrote his name with a trembling hand. But still he continued to hold the warrant, as if unwilling to part with it, repeating more than once in a tone rather of entreaty than command, "Indeed, indeed, Chavigni, he must be saved!"

"Will your Majesty look at this part of the treaty to see that I have stated it correctly?" said the Statesman, offering the papers to the King. Louis laid down the warrant to receive them; and Chavigni instantly raising the order for the arrest of Cinq Mars from the table, placed it in his portfolio with the rest. Louis saw that it was gone beyond recall; and dropping the treaty from his hands, hid his face in his cloak with feelings near akin to despair.

Chavigni's object was gained, and the power of Richelieu re-established. Not only all the conspirators were delivered bound into his hands, but the King himself was virtually in his power. Too weak, as the Statesman well knew, to stand alone, or to choose new ministers for himself, Louis had no resource but to yield himself once more

blindly to the guidance of the Cardinal; and from the moment he had signed the warrant against Cinq Mars, Chavigni looked upon him but as a royal tool to work out the designs of that great unshrinking politician, who had already so long used him for his own purposes.

The unfortunate Monarch, also, was but too well aware of his own want of energy, and of the unsupported situation in which he had left himself; and yielding to his ancient dread of Richelieu, he charged Chavigni with a multitude of exculpatory messages to the Minister, calling him *his best friend and his cousin*, and adding various civil speeches and professions, which both Chavigni and the Cardinal knew how to estimate.

"There are many other persons, Sire," said the Statesman, as he was about to depart, "who are implicated more or less in this unhappy conspiracy; but as their guilt is either in a minor degree, or their rank less elevated, I will not trouble your Majesty to put your personal signature to the warrants against them. In the mean time, allow me to hint that the King ought not to be seen hunting with traitors when they are known to be so."

"No, no," replied Louis, mournfully; "I am in no mood for hunting now. But where go you, Monsieur de Chavigni? You will not leave me for long," added the King, feeling that he must have some one to lean on, and little caring who, so that they yielded him support. "You will not leave me for long in this case of danger."

"I am about to proceed to Corneille," replied Chavigni, "to order up a body of the Cardinal's guard. At present, I have no escort but a few servants. We are surrounded by the retainers of the different conspirators, and, were I to attempt the execution of your Majesty's warrants, we might meet with opposition. But I will soon set that at rest, and before to-morrow morning there shall be a thousand men in Narbonne, truly devoted to your Majesty's service."

The King gave an involuntary shudder; and Chavigni, with a mockery of profound respect, which he felt but little, took leave and quitted the presence.

The moment he was gone, Louis called to one of the attendants, and carefully shutting the door when he had entered, "François," said he, "you are a silent, cautious man—I can trust you: Go to Monsieur le Grand Ecuyer, and, if he is alone, tell him, that France is a climate dangerous for his health, to betake himself elsewhere, and that speedily. But if there is any one with him, merely say, that the King feels himself too unwell to enjoy the pleasures of the chase to-day; but that he desires that his indisposition may not prevent the gentlemen invited from following their sport. But, François, watch well Cinq Mars's return; find him out alone, and give him the first message. Only beware, that in it the King's name is never mentioned. Do you understand?"

The Page bowed profoundly, but still maintained the same unbroken silence, and retired to fulfil the King's commands. The presence of Fontrailles, however, prevented him from delivering the warning, until the Master of the Horse returned from hunting, when he found an opportunity of speaking to him alone. Such a caution, delivered by the King's own Page, alarmed the favourite; and though it was by this time late, he sent a servant to see if the city gates were shut. The servant scarcely gave himself the trouble to inquire, but returning immediately, informed his master that they were. Cinq Mars stayed—and before the next morning, every avenue from Narbonne was occupied by the Cardinal's guard.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Containing a journey, a discovery, and a strange sight.

I HAVE known some persons in the world who, gliding quietly through life, have floated on upon the stream of time, like a boat on the waters of a broad and tranquil river, carried on by the unruffled tide of prosperity, and lighted to their journey's end by the cloudless sun of happiness. And I have met with others, whose star seemed to rise in clouds, to hold its course through storms, and to set in blacker darkness than that which gave it birth. But long continued joy loses its first zest, and uninterrupted sorrow its first poignancy; habit robs even misery of its acuteness; and care that is long endured, brings along with it the power of longer endurance. It is the sudden transition from joy to sorrow, that is the acme of human suffering, adding the bitterness of regret for past enjoyment to all the pangs of present distress.

It was thus with Claude de Blenau. All his wishes had been nearly fulfilled; Hope had almost grown into certainty; Pauline was almost his own; when he was snatched from the bosom of joy and security to new scenes of misery and danger. The few last hours came back to his memory like one of those bright visions that sometimes visit our slumber, with every part so truly told, so faithfully drawn, that they become too like reality, and then, when our hearts are full of scenes that we have loved, and pleasures that we have lost, the pageant fades, and we find it but a dream.

When once he had torn himself from Pauline, the objects round him called forth little of De Blenau's attention; and the carriage in which he was placed rolled on for many leagues, before he had sufficiently recovered his tranquillity even to think of the minor points of his situation. The moon, which at their departure shone bright and clear on the broad masses of the forest, had by this time sunk below the horizon; the darkness which had followed her decline had also passed away; the grey streaks of dawn had warmed into the bright blushes of the early morning, and the new-risen sun began to look over a dewy world, that awoke sparkling and smiling, as if for joy at his approach. But the scene which, at any other time, would have called up a thousand remembrances of the happy days and hunter sports of his youth, scarcely now roused him from the reverie in which he was plunged; and if he looked round, or spoke to the person who conducted him, it was merely to ascertain in what direction they were going, or what was the ultimate destination of their journey. Never before had he so completely abandoned himself to despondency; but as a second and third day passed, he began to recover from the first bitterness of his feelings, and endeavoured to draw from the Officer the precise crime with which he was charged, and what circumstances of suspicion had arisen against him. But no farther information was to be procured. The Officer continued firm in the same story he had told the Queen—that his orders were to conduct him to Tarascon, and that he was quite ignorant of the circumstances which led to his arrest. And with this De Blenau was obliged to be satisfied.

During the journey the Officer showed much civility and attention to the prisoner, though he took good care to place a guard at the door of his chamber when they stopped for the night, which was always at the house of one of those private agents of the Government, already mentioned, with whose dwellings the officers of the Cardinal's guard were generally acquainted. After proceeding, however, for several days, he plainly perceived that nothing could be farther from De Blenau's thoughts than any plan for making his escape, and, in consequence, the watch he kept over his prisoner became far less strict, which afforded the Count many opportunities of communicating freely with the persons at the various places where they stopped for horses or refreshment.

The arrest of Cinq Mars and several others, with the full restoration of the Cardinal's power, was at that moment, in France, one of those topics of wonder and interest, which seem necessary from time to time to keep up the spirits of the gossiping classes of society; and though the good folks at inns and elsewhere found the appearance of a prisoner, escorted by a body of the Cardinal's guard, to act as a great check upon their natural loquacity; yet, as the officer was somewhat of a *bon vivant*, and rather attached to his bottle, the awe inspired by his functions was not so strong as to prevent the news of the Grand Ecuyer's misfortune from reaching the ears of De Blenau, who easily concluded that, from their well-known intimacy, suspicion had fallen upon himself.

The prisoner and his conductors at length began to approach that part of the country where the re-established Minister held his court, to which all his old retainers and friends were now flocking, together with many others, who, led by hope or impelled by fear, hastened to offer their servile adulation to a man they in general detested. The roads were thus thronged with people, and many a gay cavalcade passed by the carriage in which De Blenau was borne along, the horsemen looking for a moment into the vehicle out of curiosity, but quickly turning away their eyes again, lest they should be obliged to acknowledge some acquaintance with a person who had fallen under the Cardinal's displeasure.

It was night when they arrived at Montolieu, and De Blenau asked his conductor if he intended to stop there till morning.

"No, Monsieur le Comte," replied the Officer; "we must proceed as speedily as possible to Mirepoix, where I expect orders for my farther conduct."

"Then you go to Tarascon, in the Pyrenees," said De Blenau. "I thought his Eminence was at the city of that name by the banks of the Rhone, opposite Beaucaire."

"He was there some time ago," replied the Officer; "but he has since gone to the mountains, where, doctors say, there are waters which have great virtues in sickness like his. For my part, I always thought the springs there very bad, and neither fit for man nor beast. But, nevertheless, we must hasten on, Sir."

The next place they stopped at was Corneille; and, according to his custom, the Officer remained with De Blenau in the carriage, while the troopers arranged every thing that was necessary for proceeding on their journey. There seemed, however, to be a considerable bustle amongst the men; and after waiting patiently for a few minutes, the Officer drew back the curtain, and thrusting his head from the window, inquired the cause of delay? The answer he received, imported that no fresh horses could be procured, and that those which had drawn them so far were incapable of proceeding even to the next town. "How happens it that there are no horses?" demanded he impatiently; "there ought always to be horses reserved for the use of the Government." To this it was replied, that so many people had passed to the court at Tarascon, that every horse which could be hired, even at an exorbitant price, had been carried away.

The Officer paused, as if doubting what course to pursue; but there being no remedy, he was obliged to alight, in order to pass the night at Corneille; taking care, however, to despatch one of the troopers to Mirepoix, to bring any orders which might be waiting for him in that town.

The moon was up, and as De Blenau descended from the carriage, he perceived a little stream dashing and glistening over the wheel of a mill, that stood dark and defined against the moonlight sky. It was to this they were apparently proceeding; and as they approached nearer, there was seen an irregular part of the building projecting from the rest, which seemed appropriated to the particular use of the Miller. At the same time, on a wooden staircase, which wound up the outside of the house, appeared a man, holding a light, and habited in one of those dusty jackets, which have been the insignia of flour-grinders from all generations. At the moment I speak of, he was holding a conversation with one of the troopers, and, by his quick articulation and busy gestures, seemed engaged in making remonstrances, without any great effect.

"What does he say?" exclaimed the Officer, who caught a few words of their conversation as he got out of the carriage. "That we cannot stop here the night? Give him a cuff of the head, Joly, to teach him better manners to the Cardinal's guard. By Heavens! he shall find me horses to-night, or he shall lodge me till to-morrow!"

"Stay if you will, Sir Officer," rejoined the Miller, raising his voice—"but I tell you that you ought not to stay; and as for laying a finger on me—you know I serve the Cardinal as well as you, and you dare not!"

"Dare not!" cried the Officer, who was by this time mounting the stairs, catching the Miller by the collar, and striking him a slight blow—"You are a refractory rascal, Sir!—Open the door of your house, or I will throw you over the staircase.—Come, Monsieur de Blenau, follow me."

The Miller offered no resistance, but threw wide the door, and let the Officer pass in. De Blenau came next, having taken little notice of the altercation; but as he went by the Miller, who held the door open, he heard him mutter to himself in an under voice, "He shall pay for it with his blood," in a deep bitter tone of determined hatred, that made the Count turn round, expecting to see the ferocious countenance of an assassin. Nothing, however, could be more different from the appearance of the speaker, who was a smooth, pale-faced man, whose look expressed little besides peaceful tranquillity and patient resignation.

The room into which they entered was a large uncouth chamber, filled with various articles of household furniture, the unusual assemblage of which showed that it was used for most of the different purposes of life. There was a bed in one corner, with a large screen, or paravent, half drawn before it. Beside the fire hung a row of copper saucepans and cooking utensils; round about were several saddles, and other pieces of horse furniture; and in the centre was a large table, with two or three half-emptied bottles and some glasses, which bore marks of having been recently used; and at the same time a long bench was placed at one side of the table, with three single seats on the other.

On the opposite side of the apartment was a wooden partition, evidently new, which seemed to separate what had once been one large chamber into two, with a door of communication between them.

"Oh, ho! Monsieur Godefroy!" exclaimed the Officer, looking at the table, and then turning a significant glance to the Miller. "So, you have been carousing, and did not like to let us share in your good cheer. But come, we will not be sent away like a dog without his dinner. Let us taste your Burgundy; and if you were to lay three of those plump *boudins* upon the fire, they might savour the wine."

"You are very welcome, Sir Officer, to any thing the house affords," replied the Miller, neither civilly nor sulkily. "Help yourself to the *boudins*, while I go down for the wine."

"They say in my province, Monsieur de Blenau," said the Officer, placing a seat for the prisoner near the fire, "*Qui dort dine, et qui fait l'amour soupe*. Now, as we have neither slept nor dined, and have no one to make love to, let us sup, at least."

De Blenau's only reply was, that he had no appetite; which seemed considerably to surprise the Officer, who, as soon as the Miller had brought in the wine, and his supper was ready, fell to with no small eagerness, and did not leave off till he had transferred the greater part of the trencher's contents to his stomach. The Miller seemed more inclined to follow the Officer's example than De Blenau; and his anger having apparently subsided, he pressed his guest to continue the meal in so sociable and friendly a manner, that De Blenau could scarcely conceive that the words he had heard as he entered, had been any thing but the effect of momentary irritation. But shortly after he had again cause to alter his opinion; the eagerness with which the Miller invited his companion to drink, producing bottle after bottle of different wines, generally denied by their price to persons in his station of life; and the subdued glance of triumph with which he viewed the various stages of intoxication at which the Officer gradually arrived, caught De Blenau's attention, and excited his suspicion. However, the vengeance, which the Miller meditated, was of a very different nature from that which the Count imagined. Nothing which could, by any chance, recoil upon himself ever entered his thoughts, and his plan reached no farther than to render the man who had offended him, deeply culpable in the eyes of Richelieu, thus calling upon his head that relentless anger which would be much more effectual vengeance than any punishment he could himself inflict.

Two or three hours had passed in this manner, during which time the Officer had made various efforts to resist the fascination of the bottle, often pushing it away from him, as if resolved not to taste another drop, and then again, as he became heated in conversation, drawing it back and filling his glass with an almost unconscious hand, when the sound of a horse's feet was heard without, and starting up, he declared that it was news from Mirepoix, and staggered towards the door.

The moment he had quitted the room, the Miller approached De Blenau, glanced his eyes round the chamber, and then addressed him in a whisper. "What a moment," said he, "for a prisoner to make his escape, while that drunkard's senses are confused with wine!"

De Blenau started at the suddenness of the proposal, and eyed his companion with an inquiring glance. "If you allude to me," he replied at length, "I thank you, but I have no thought of escaping."

"You have not!" said the Miller, apparently surprised. He thought for a moment, and then added—"Oh, you reckon on your innocence. But let me tell you, Sir Count, that there is both danger and uncomfot in a long imprisonment."

"I know it," answered De Blenau; "but I would rather submit to both, than cast a suspicion on my honour and my innocence, by attempting to fly."

This was a sort of reasoning the other did not understand; and his lip curled with a slight expression of contempt, which would have showed itself more visibly, had not De Blenau's rank, though a prisoner, kept the *bourgeois* in awe. He turned away, however, seemingly with the intention of quitting the room; but when he got to the other side, he paused, laid his hand upon his brow, and after thinking for a moment, again came back to De Blenau. "I advised you for your own good, Monsieur le Comte," he said; "and though you will not escape from the dangers of accusation, I will give you the means of proving your innocence. In that room," and he pointed to the small door in the partition, "you will discover two packets of papers exactly similar: take either of them, and in that you will find enough to disprove all that your enemies will say against you."

"But," said De Blenau, "what right have I to possess myself of papers belonging, probably, to another?"

"Pshaw!" cried the Miller, "one would think that your neck itched for the axe! Are you not in my house? Do not I bid you take them? Of course, you will not betray me to the Government; but take the papers, for I give them to you." And making a sign to De Blenau to use all speed, he went to the door which opened on the road. Before he passed it, however, he turned to the prisoner once more and cautioned him to make no noise, nor regard any thing else in the room, but after having taken one of the packets from the table on which they were placed, to quit it as speedily as possible. The precaution, however, was useless; for before De Blenau had even time to determine upon any line of conduct, the Officer again entered the room, and, balancing himself as well as he could, contrived to arrive at the table after many a zig-zag and many a halt. He had precisely reached that pitch of intoxication, when a man, having for some time suspected that he is tipsy, finds out that such a supposition was entirely a mistake, and that he never was more sober, or more in his senses in his life: consequently, he had not the slightest objection to drink a bottle of the *vin de Saint Peret*, which the miller set before him; although the Burgundy he had already imbibed had very considerably dulled his perception, and detracted from his locomotive power. The wine, as it creamed and sparkled in his glass, was raised to his head with increased difficulty at every renewed draught; and at last, feeling something the matter with him he knew not what, he started from the table, made an effort to reach a chair by the fire, but receiving instantly internal conviction of the impossibility of the attempt, he cast himself upon the bed behind the screen, which happened to be nearer at hand, and in a few minutes all his senses were steeped in oblivion. Immediately the Miller raised his hand, pointed to the door in the partition, and left the apartment as if unwilling to witness what was to follow.

De Blenau paused for a moment to reflect on this man's conduct; but however extraordinary it might be, he could see nothing to prevent his possessing himself of papers which, he was assured, would prove his innocence of the crimes with which he was charged—a thing not always easy to the most guiltless. Accordingly, rising from his seat, he passed by the bed where the Officer lay snoring in the fulness of ebriety, and opened the door in the partition to which he had been directed. The room with which it communicated was small, and dimly lighted by a lamp that stood flickering on a table, as if it scarcely knew whether to go out or not. Near the lamp lay various implements for writing, together with two papers, one folded up and marked, the other open, and seemingly hardly finished. Around were scattered various basnets and vials, which appeared to contain the medicaments for a sick man; and on one of the chairs was thrown a long sword, together with a poniard and a brace of pistols.

De Blenau advanced to the table, and taking up the open paper, ran his eye hastily over its contents. In so doing, his own name met his sight; and forgetting the caution he had received, to make speed and quit the apartment as soon as he had possessed himself of it, he could not refrain from reading on:—"With regard to Monsieur the Count de Blenau," the paper proceeded, "the prisoner feels perfectly convinced that he was always ignorant of the treaty and the designs of the conspirators. For, Monsieur de Cinq Mars particularly warned him (the prisoner) never to mention the circumstance before the Count, because that he was not to be made acquainted therewith; and moreover——"

As De Blenau read, a deep groan came upon his ear, evidently proceeding from some one in the same room with himself, and, holding up the lamp, he endeavoured to discover who it was that had uttered it; but in lifting it suddenly, the feeble light was at once extinguished, and the whole chamber remained in darkness, except where a gleam came through the doorway of the other room.

"Godefroy! Godefroy!" exclaimed a faint voice, "do not put out the light—why have you left me so long?—I am dying, I am sure I am dying."

"I will bring another light," said the Count, "and be with you instantly." And forgetting, in the hurry of the moment, his peculiar situation, and the caution which ought to have accompanied it, he hastened into the other apartment, where the Officer still lay undisturbed in his drunken slumbers, and taking one of the rosin candles from the table, returned to give what succour he could to the person whose faint voice he had heard.

On re-entering the chamber with the stronger light which he now brought, his eyes fell upon the drawn curtains of an alcove bed at the farther extremity; and approaching quickly, he pulled them back, shading the candle as well as he could, to prevent its glare from offending the eyes of the sick person.

But his precaution was in vain. Light and darkness had become the same to the pale inanimate form before him. De Blenau saw that, during the moment of his absence, being had passed away; and holding the light nearer to the bed, he thought he could trace, in the disfigured countenance that lay in ashy paleness upon the pillow, the features of the Grand Ecuyer's Italian lute-player, Villa Grande.

He was engaged in examining them more attentively, when some one silently laid their hand upon his arm, and turning quickly round, he beheld Chavigni, while the countenance of the Miller appeared in the doorway, very little less pale than that of the dead man. De Blenau's first impulse was to point to the dead man, while his eyes rested on the countenance of Chavigni, in which a slight degree of agitation showed itself for a moment, and then disappeared.

"So!" said the Statesman, regarding the lifeless body of Villa Grande, "he is dead, poor wretch!—Gone on that uncertain journey which lies before us all, like a land covered with a thick mist, whose paths, or whose termination, none of us can discover.—But to matters of life and moment," he continued. "What do you here, Monsieur de Blenau?"

"I should suppose, Sir, that you are better acquainted with the object of my journey than I am myself," replied the Count. "You must be well aware it was undertaken against my will."

"You have mistaken me, Sir," said Chavigni. "The end of your journey hither, I am well aware of. But how came you in this chamber? What do you with that paper which is in your hand? I expect a straightforward answer."

"Did I give you any, Sir," replied De Blenau, "my answer should be straightforward. But you ought to have known me better than so proudly to demand a reply, when you are unentitled to interrogate me. Being a prisoner, I must be guarded as such, though I tell you at once I have no intention of trying to escape; and being defenceless, you may take these papers from me, though they are material proofs of my innocence. However, I will rely upon your justice,—upon your honour,—that whatever charges be brought against me, the confession of this man may be opposed to them in my justification."

"Monsieur de Blenau," replied Chavigni, "I wish you would sometimes give me an excuse for doubting your sincerity; for then I could see the fate which is like to betide you, without regret. When you were liberated from the Bastille, I told you that the eye of an angry man was upon you, and warned you as a friend to avoid all cause for suspicion. The Minister has never forgotten you. You were the first who brought a shadow over his dominion—I hope, therefore, that your innocence can be proved beyond a doubt; for mercy or tenderness between you and the Cardinal are out of the question. Nevertheless, I cannot let you keep this paper, which belongs to the Council; but I will take care that any thing which it contains in your favour shall not be lost. In the mean while I shall be obliged to send you to Lyons; and Heaven speed you as safely out of this scrape as out of the last."

"If perfect innocence of any crime towards the State can save me," said De Blenau, following Chavigni into the outer room, "I have nothing to fear."

"I hope it is so," replied the Statesman. "And now," he continued, turning to the Miller, "let me tell you, Master Godefroy, that you are highly culpable yourself, for leaving a State prisoner wholly without guard when you saw the Officer, in whose custody he was, in such a state as this. Make no excuses, Sir—it shall be remembered."

Chavigni now approached the drunken man, and tried to rouse him; but finding it in vain, he called in the Sergeant, and writing a few words for his warranty, ordered him to conduct the Officer, next morning, to Tarascon under arrest.

"Monsieur de Blenau," he continued, turning to the Count, "you will do me the favour of accompanying me to Montolieu. The horses attached to my carriage are fresher than those which drew you."

The promptitude with which Chavigni's orders were given, brought all the preparations to a rapid conclusion. A few minutes sufficed him to issue the necessary commands for transferring the baggage which had been brought with De Blenau to the other carriage; and adding a few clear rapid directions to the Miller concerning the body of Villa Grande, the Statesman was ready to accompany De Blenau before he had been a quarter of an hour in the house.

At Montolieu, De Blenau was permitted to rest a day, and was then sent forward under a fresh escort to Lyons. The prisoner was now hurried rapidly on his journey, travelling the whole of the first night, and at last only stopping for a few hours to give him some repose at a village about eight leagues from the city to which he was proceeding. As soon as daylight dawned, they again began their journey; and taking the lower road by the banks of the Rhone, gradually approached the ancient town of Lyons.

The first pause they made was a compelled one, upon the wooden bridge, situated on the river just below the town. This entrance had been chosen to avoid the more populous suburbs; but the conductor of the escort had been mistaken in his calculation, for owing to some circumstances of general interest, which drew all the idle and the curious to that spot, the bridge and the alleys to it were entirely covered with dense masses of human beings, which completely obstructed the way. With difficulty the carriage was dragged half over the bridge; and then, notwithstanding the exertions of the guard, it was obliged to stop. De Blenau drew back the leather curtain which obstructed his view, and turning his eyes towards the river, a scene burst upon his sight which at once explained to him the cause of such an assemblage.

There was a small but magnificent galley making its way slowly to the landing-place. The rigging was adorned with streamers; the deck glittered with all the splendid apparel of a court, the rowers were clothed in rich uniform, scarcely different from that of the guards which flanked each bank of oars; gold, and jewels, and blazonry shone around. But the spot on which all eyes rested was a small canopy of rich embroidery, upheld above the deck on silver poles by four officers of the guard, in such a manner as to keep off the rays of the sun, but not impede the breeze of the river from playing round a pile of rich velvet cushions, on which, amidst the pomp and display of a sovereign prince, lay the emaciated form of the Cardinal de Richelieu. His countenance was calm and unmoved; indeed, he seemed hardly to regard the scene around, listening to the conversation of an Abbé, who stood beside him for the sole purpose of amusing him by various tales and anecdotes during the voyage. Sometimes, however, he would raise his eyes, and appear to speak to some of those who stood by; and then his glance would rapidly turn towards a smaller boat, which, attached by two long ropes, was towed on at the stern of his own galley. In that boat, seated between two of the Cardinal's guard, sat the imprudent and unfortunate Cinq Mars, and his companion in misfortune, De Thou. All the gay gallant spirit of the Master of the Horse, which once taught him to scoff at the very idea of adversity as at a bugbear of the imagination, was now quelled and lost, and with a bending head, and eyes cast down, he sat perfectly motionless, like a lifeless but elegant statue. De Thou, on the contrary, calmly surveyed the passing scene. He seemed to have forgot that he was there as a prisoner, borne, a part of that barbarous triumph which his enemy was enjoying; and, even when his glance met that of the Cardinal, his countenance remained undisturbed by any emotion of anger, or any expression of reproach.

I have said that Richelieu would sometimes turn his look towards the boat in which his captives were borne along; and still when he did so, a momentary gleam would lighten in his eyes, and he would hastily glance them round the multitude that lined the shores and the bridge. But there was no sound of gratulation met his ear, no acclamation for his regained ascendancy. The busy whisper of curiosity would stir amongst the people, or perhaps the murmur of compassion, as they gazed upon the victims about to be sacrificed to his vengeance. But there was no love to express; and fear changed their curses into the bitterness of silence.

Such was the scene in the midst of which De Blenau found himself, when the carriage stopped. He had just time to become aware of all its most painful circumstances, when the guards again opened a way through the people, and the vehicle passed on. The high round tower of Pierre-en-Scize, raising its dark mass above the rest of the prison, was the next thing that met his view, and he doubted not that the place of his imprisonment was before him; but the carriage rolled on into the great Place Terreaux, where it suddenly drew up.

"Then I am not to be taken to Pierre-en-Scize?" said De Blenau to the officer who had accompanied him from Montolieu.

"No, Monsieur le Comte," replied he, "Pierre-en-Scize will be sufficiently occupied with Messieurs Cinq Mars, De Thou, and others; and when Monsieur de Bouillon, and the Duke of Orleans—"

"Good God!" exclaimed De Blenau, "is the Duke of Orleans implicated in this unfortunate business?"

The officer smiled. "Why, they do say, Sir, that the King himself is in the conspiracy. But as to the Duke, you know more of his share in it than any one else—at least so we are told. But I must now beg you to descend."

"You are under a mistake, Sir," replied De Blenau. "I know nothing of the Duke, and as little of the conspiracy." And following the officer, he entered a house in the Place Terreaux, which had been changed for the time from one of the public offices of the city into a place of confinement, and offered all the security without the horrors of a prison. The windows were grated, it is true, but they looked out into the free world below, and the captive might sit there and forget that he was denied the power of joining the gay throng that passed along before his eyes in all the pride of liberty.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Giving a good receipt for proving a man guilty when he is innocent.

DE Blenau had not been long in his new abode, before he learned that the express orders of Chavigni had caused him to be carried thither, rather than to Pierre-en-Scize, where his confinement would have been more strict; and he felt grateful for this mark of the Statesman's consideration. For the first few days, too, he experienced every kind of attention, and was permitted to enjoy all sort of liberty consistent with his safe custody.

But this was not destined to endure long; and his imprisonment gradually became more rigorous than that which he had undergone in the Bastille. The use of books and writing materials was denied him, and every means of employing his thoughts seemed studiously withheld. This mode of weakening the mind, by leaving it to prey upon itself, had its effect even on De Blenau. He became irritable and desponding; and as he received no intimation in regard to the charge against him, he began to conjure up a thousand vague unreal images, and to destroy them as soon as raised.

After this had continued for some days, he was surprised by the door of his apartment opening one night, at the moment he was about to retire to rest, giving admittance to the corrupt Judge Lafemas, and a person habited as one of the *Greffiers* of the Court. There are some who are cruel from fear, and some from motives of interest; but few, I trust, who from natural propensity rejoice in the sufferings of a fellow-creature. Such, however, was the character of Lafemas—at least if we may believe the histories of the time; and in the present instance he entered the chamber of De Blenau with a countenance which certainly expressed no great unwillingness in the performance of what is always painful when it is a duty.

In this place we shall but give a small part of the conversation between De Blenau and the Judge; for the course of examination which the latter pursued toward the prisoner was so precisely similar in its nature to that which he followed on a former occasion in the Bastille, that its repetition is unnecessary, especially as our history is now hurrying rapidly to its awful and inevitable conclusion. A part of it, however, may serve to illustrate the charges brought against De Blenau, and the circumstances on which they were founded.

"Good night, Monsieur de Blenau," said Lafemas, approaching the table at which he sat. "I did not think to meet you again in prison: I had hoped that when last you escaped so well, you would have been careful to keep yourself free from any thing of this kind."

"Good night, Monsieur le Juge," replied De Blenau; "do me the favour of sitting down—for I suppose I may do the honours of my chamber, though it be but a prison. I am glad to see you, Sir; for I trust you can inform me why I am here confined."

"Monsieur de Blenau," said the Judge, seating himself, "we will be frank with one another. You are very well aware how deeply you are implicated in this conspiracy; and I will tell you that we have ample proofs of every thing. But at the same time I know of a way by which you can save yourself; a way which one or two highly honourable men have embraced, having been misled at first by designing persons, but having returned to a sense of duty and honour, and confessed all they knew, together with the names of those they supposed to be amongst the guilty."

"I have no doubt, Sir," replied the Count, "that all and every thing you say is correct and right. But there is one point, on which I am in the dark. I am not aware of what conspiracy you mean.—I have, it is true, conspired—" Lafemas turned an attentive ear, and De Blenau perceived that the Greffier who had followed the Judge was making a note of all that passed. "Stop, gentlemen," said he, nodding to the officer; "take the whole of my sentence, I beg. You shall have it in plain language—I have, it is true, conspired on more than one occasion, with sundry of his Majesty's lieges, to kill a fat buck or a lusty boar, in various of the royal forests in this kingdom. But this is the only conspiracy of which I have been guilty; and for that I can plead his Majesty's free permission and pardon."

"All this is very good, Monsieur le Comte," said Lafemas, his brows darkening; "but I must tell you that it will not serve the purpose you propose. I came here to you as a friend—"

"And as a friend," interrupted De Blenau, "you brought with you that gentleman in black to take down my words, in case I should be at a loss to remember what I had said."

"I must once more tell you, Sir," said the Judge, "that this will not answer your purpose, for a full confession has been made by Monsieur de Cinq Mars since his condemnation."

"Since his condemnation!" exclaimed De Blenau. "Good God! is it possible that he is condemned?"

Lafemas was little capable of understanding any of those finer feelings which brighten the dull void of human existence. He read from the black page of his own mind, and fancied that every other was written in the same dark character. All that he saw in the exclamation of De Blenau was fear for himself, not feeling for his friend; and he replied, "Yes, Monsieur le Comte, he is condemned to lose his head for the crimes of which he has been guilty: the question also formed part of his sentence, but this he has avoided by making a full confession, in which, as you may easily suppose, your name is very fully comprised."

"You may as well cease, Sir," replied the Count. "It may indeed be true that my unhappy friend is guilty and has confessed his guilt; but no language you can use will ever persuade me that, knowing my innocence, as he well does, he would say any thing that could implicate me.—I will farther answer every thing that can possibly be asked of me in a very few words. As to myself, I have nothing to confess, for I am perfectly guiltless towards the State: and as to others, I can give no information, for I am wholly ignorant of any plot, conspiracy, or treason whatsoever."

"I am sorry for your obstinacy, Monsieur de Blenau," said Lafemas rising; "for the Cardinal has resolved that you shall confess, and we have the means of making the most stubborn answer. I am, in fact, commanded this very night to use measures which might not be very agreeable to you. But I give you till to-morrow to consider, and so bid you farewell."

The plans of Cinq Mars had run into various ramifications, involving a multitude of persons in a greater or less degree; but all fell equally under the hatred of the Cardinal, and he spared no means, legal or illegal, to discover the most remote windings of the conspiracy, and to force or induce the various parties to it to make confessions, which were afterwards used as evidence against themselves, as well as others. As the proofs against De Blenau were, of course, very defective, the last command of Richelieu to Lafemas, before leaving Lyons, was to spare no power of intimidation, in order to make the prisoner criminate himself, before even granting him the form of a trial. In



pursuance of these directions, Lafemas ceased not for some days to torment De Blenau with continual interrogatories, mingled with menaces and irritation, ingeniously calculated either to frighten his victim into some confession of guilt, or to throw him off his guard by rousing his anger. More than once he was carried into the chamber of the Question, and once was even bound to the rack. But though, in the secret halls of the Bastille, Lafemas would not have scrupled to proceed to any act of cruelty, yet at Lyons, amidst people upon whose silence he could not rely, he dared not put the prisoner to the question, without some appearance of legal authority. At length, therefore, the day for his trial was fixed; but yet Lafemas prepared to make him previously undergo a species of refined torture, which none but a demon could have devised.

Denied all the privileges usually conceded to prisoners, unacquainted with the precise charges to be brought against him, refused all legal assistance, and debarred the use of pen and ink, De Blenau clearly saw that Richelieu had resolved on his destruction, and merely granted him the form of a trial to gloss over his tyranny, in the eyes of the people; nevertheless, he prepared to defend himself as far as possible, and at all events to establish his innocence; for the honour of his good name, though it might not even tend to save him from the injustice with which he was threatened. For this purpose he accurately examined his conduct since his liberation from the Bastille, and noted carefully every circumstance, that he might be enabled to prove the nature of all his occupations so correctly, that the impossibility of his joining in any conspiracy would be made evident. He found, however, that to do this effectually, some aid besides that of mere memory would be necessary, and possessing no other means of committing his thoughts to writing, he had recourse to the expedient of pointing some pieces of wood, which he procured from the gaoler, and then by charring them in the lamp, he was enabled to make notes upon some torn linen, preparatory to his trial. Being thus occupied the greater part of the night, his usual time of rest was from day-break to mid-day; but one night, a few days previous to the time appointed for his trial, he was disturbed in his occupation by the dull heavy clang of hammers in the great Square before his prison, and proceeding to the window, he endeavoured to ascertain the cause. Through the bars he could perceive various lights, and people moving about in different directions, but could not discern in what they were employed; and quitting the casement, he returned to the slow and laborious operation of writing his notes, in the manner we have described. At length, wearied out, he threw himself upon his bed, without taking off his clothes, and soon fell into a profound sleep, which remained unbroken till late the next day. It is probable that he might have slept still longer, had he not been aroused by his tormentor, Lafemas, who, standing by his bedside, with two of his inferior demons, roused him out of the happy forgetfulness into which he had fallen. "Rise, Monsieur de Blenau, rise!" said the Judge, his eyes gleaming with malicious pleasure; "rise, here is something in the *Place* which it is necessary you should behold."

De Blenau awoke suddenly from his sleep, suffered himself to be conducted to the window, where the Judge and his two followers placed themselves behind him, so as to obstruct his retreat, and in a manner to force upon him the sight of what was passing in the *Place*.

The Square of Terreaux was filled with an immense multitude, and there was a deep awful silence reigned amongst them. All eyes were turned towards a spot exactly opposite the window at which De Blenau stood, where there appeared a high raised scaffold, covered with black cloth, and surrounded by a strong body of troops, who kept the multitude at a distance, without impeding their view of the dreadful scene which was acting before them. A large log of timber lay across the front of the scaffold, and beside it stood a tall brawny man, leaning on an immense axe, which seemed as if a giant's force would hardly wield it, so ponderous was its form. The Prevost of Lyons, dressed in black, and bearing his staff of office, stood on the other side with several of the civil officers of the city; and a file of pikemen closed each flank of the scaffold, leaving the front open, as we have said, to the view of the spectators.

But it was the form of his unhappy friend, Cinq Mars, that first riveted De Blenau's attention; and he continued to gaze upon him with painful interest, while, standing beside the block on which he was to suffer, he calmly unloosed his collar, and made the executioner cut away the glossy curls of his hair, which otherwise, falling down his neck, might have impeded the blow of the axe. When this was over, Cinq Mars raised the instrument of his death, and running his finger over the edge, seemed to ascertain that it was sharp; and then laying it down, he turned to the good De Thou, who stood beside him, a sharer in his punishment, though not a sharer in his fault. Cinq Mars appeared to entreat his pardon for some offence; and it is probable that having implicated him at all in the conspiracy was the only circumstance that then weighed upon the mind of the Grand Ecuyer. The only reply of De Thou was a warm affectionate embrace; and then with the easy dignity of a mind at rest, Cinq Mars withdrew himself from his arms, and knelt down before the block—De Blenau turned away his head.

"You had better observe, Monsieur de Blenau," said Lafemas, "the fate which those two traitors undergo; for such will be your own, if you refuse the hand of mercy held out to you, and persist in obstinate silence.—Ah!—so much!" continued he, looking from the window, "so much for Monsieur de Cinq Mars! That new fellow is expert—he has the head off at one blow!"

"Wretch!" exclaimed De Blenau, forcibly passing him, and proceeding from the window, "unfeeling wretch!—Monsieur Lafemas," he added, after pausing a moment, "you were perhaps right in supposing that this torture was superior to any other you could inflict. But I have once more to tell you, Sir, that by this or by any other means you will wring from me nothing that can betray my innocence or my honour."

"Then die as you deserve!" replied Lafemas; and after once more looking from the window, and muttering to himself a few words, whose import De Blenau did not catch, he left the apartment with his two followers. De Blenau cast himself on the bed, and hiding his face in the clothes, endeavoured to drive from his memory the dreadful scene he had just beheld; but it still continued for many an after-hour to hover before his eyes, and deprive him of all rest or peace.

The hours of a prison are always slow, and they were now doubly slow to De Blenau, having no other pastime than painful reflections, and anticipations equally bitter.

At length, however, the day of his trial arrived, and he was conveyed in a carriage to Pierre-en-Scize, where, in the hall of audience, sat three of the devoted creatures of Richelieu, presiding over a body equally governed by themselves, and all prepared to pronounce a sentence already dictated by the Minister. Although the President of the parliament of Grenoble nominally directed the business of the Court, Lafemas was not absent, and in his eyes De Blenau instantly discerned his fate.

The charge against the prisoner was read by one of the clerks, declaring him to stand in danger of high treason, in having conspired with the Sieurs Cinq Mars, Fontrailles, De Thou, and others, to bring foreign troops into France,

and for having treated and combined with a power at open war with the kingdom for various treasonable and disloyal purposes.

The evidence brought forward to establish this, was as frivolous as the accusation was unfounded. Even the very semblance of justice was nearly abandoned, the Judges seeming to go through the trial as a useless and tiresome ceremony, which might very well be dispensed with.

It was proved, indeed, that the prisoner had often been seen in private with the unfortunate Cinq Mars; and it was also given in evidence by a servant of the Duke of Orleans, that he had carried a letter from that Prince to De Blenau at Moulins; and that in consequence of that letter, as he conceived, the Duke had gone, with a great air of secrecy, to a particular spot, where he was unaccustomed to ride upon ordinary occasions, and that there he was met by De Blenau. What conversation took place between them, he could not tell; but after they had separated, the Duke, he said, gave particular orders that their meeting should be mentioned to no man.

The next witness brought forward was the messenger who had carried to De Blenau the King's permission to return to court, and who proved that, instead of finding the Count at Moulins, or any where in the Bourbonnois, to which, according to the King's command, he was bound to confine himself, he had been conducted by the Count's page to Troyes in Champagne, where he found Monsieur de Blenau himself ready to set off for some other place. This witness also added, that he had learned in the town of Troyes, that Monsieur de Blenau had been absent one whole day, during which time he had visited the old Castle of Mesnil St. Loup; and that at his return he did not go to the same hotel from which he had proceeded in the morning.

When the evidence was gone through, the President of Grenoble signified to the prisoner that he might speak in his own defence; and though well assured that on his judges he could make no impression, De Blenau resolved not to allow the accusation to remain unrepelled, and replied at some length to what had been urged against him. He showed the impossibility of preparing any defence, when the nature of the charge had never reached his ears till that day. He pointed out that, though he had known and loved the unhappy Cinq Mars, their friendship was no proof that he was at all acquainted with the conspiracy for which the other had suffered; and that though he had met the Duke of Orleans, and received a letter from him, that was not sufficient to show him concerned in any plot against the State. He acknowledged that he had left the Bourbonnois without the King's permission; but he stated the powerful motives which had induced him to do so, and gave a correct account, from the notes he had prepared, of every moment of his time since he had been liberated from the Bastille. He farther declared his innocence: he proved that he had been absent from all the principal scenes of the conspiracy; and ended by demanding that the confession of the Italian Villa Grande should be produced.

The President of Grenoble turned his eyes upon Lafemas; but that worthy Judge assumed an air of perfect unconsciousness, and demanded, what Italian the prisoner meant?

De Blenau now clearly and distinctly stated all he knew concerning him, and again demanded that his confession should be brought forward. But still Lafemas appeared in doubt. "Monsieur de Blenau," said he, "although this seems to me but a manoeuvre to gain time, I have no objection that the papers of this Court should be searched, if you can give us the baptismal name of this Italian, of whom at present we know nothing; and even this is a mere matter of grace and favour."

De Blenau declared his incapacity to do so, but protested against the unjust proceedings of the Court, and showed that, if time and opportunity had been allowed for preparing his defence, he would have been enabled, by application to the Count de Chavigni, to bring forward the paper he mentioned, and to prove the truth of every thing he had asserted, by the evidence of persons now at a distance. He was still speaking when Lafemas rose and interrupted him. "Perceiving," said the Judge, with unblushing effrontery, "that the prisoner has concluded his defence, I will now occupy the Court for a few moments, in order to explain the reasoning on which my own opinion is founded, although I see but one conclusion to which any one can come upon the merits of the case before us. It has been shown that the prisoner was the sworn—the bosom friend of the traitor who has already suffered for his crimes; that he was in constant communication with almost all the conspirators; and that the Royal Duke, who has unfortunately dyed his name with so black a spot, at the very same time that he was engaged in plotting the ruin of his country, was in secret correspondence with the individual before us. It has farther been proved, that the prisoner, after having been *relegué* in Bourbon, quitted the place to which he was bound to confine himself, and went, upon what he cannot but own himself to be a wild romantic chase, into Champagne. This part of his story is a very strange one, according to his own showing; but when we come to compare it with the confession of the traitor Cinq Mars, the matter becomes more clear. It was in the old Castle of St. Loup, near the city of Troyes, says the confession, that the principal meeting of the conspirators was held; and it was to this very Castle of St. Loup that the prisoner directed his course from Moulins. Evidently for the purpose of concealment also, the prisoner, on his return to Troyes, instead of directing his course to the inn where he had formerly alighted, proceeded to another, at which, unfortunately for himself, he was overtaken by the King's messenger. I think it is unnecessary to say more upon these points. To my mind they are convincing. It is true, indeed, Monsieur de Blenau has shrewdly kept his handwriting from any paper which could prove him an active member of this conspiracy. But what man in his senses can doubt that he was criminally aware of its existence? This, then, is his crime: and I pronounce the concealment of treason to be as great a crime as treason itself. But if there were wanting a case in point to prove that the law considers it as such, I would cite the condemnation of De Thou, who, but two days ago, suffered with the traitor Cinq Mars. Let us now, my brethren," he added, "retire to consider of our sentence; for I have only spoken thus much, not to bias your opinion, but simply that the prisoner himself, before he leaves the Court, may know, at least, *my* sentiments."

The Judges now withdrew to the cabinet appointed for their deliberations, and De Blenau was removed from the court to a small apartment hard by. He had not been here a moment when his page, Henri de La Mothe, burst into the room. "My dear, dear master!" exclaimed the boy, throwing himself at his feet, "they tell me that you certainly will not be condemned, for that you have not been taken to what is called the *dead man's dwelling*: so the sentinel let me in to see you."

"Henry! how came you hither!" exclaimed De Blenau, hurriedly—"But we have no time to think of that—My fate is sealed—I have read it in the triumphant glance of that demon, Lafemas.—Mark me, my boy, and if ever you loved me, obey me well.—When I am dead—Do you hear?—When I am dead, near my heart you will find a portrait. Take it, with this ring, to Mademoiselle de Beaumont. Tell her, that the one was the likeness of all I love on earth; and the

other, the ring that was to have bound her to me for ever. Say that De Blenau sends them to her in death, and that his last thought was of Pauline de Beaumont."

"Alas! Mademoiselle de Beaumont!" said the Page. But as he spoke, the door opened and an officer of the court entered, followed by a priest. "Begone, boy!" said the officer, leading Henry to the door. "How came you in here? We have more serious matter in hand now."

"Remember!" said De Blenau, holding up his hand impressively, "remember!" And Henry, bursting into tears, was hurried from the apartment. "Now, Father," continued De Blenau, turning to the Priest, "let us to your business."

"It is a sad one, my son," he replied; "it is but to tell you, that you must prepare to leave a world of sorrow!"

"God's will be done!" said De Blenau.

## CHAPTER XV.

Which, if the reader can get through it, will bring him to the end of the history.

ALL delay in the execution of a sentence where there exists no hope of mercy, is but needless cruelty; yet De Blenau was suffered to linger fourteen weary nights and days between the day of his condemnation and that appointed for his death. It approached, however, at length. We are told, by those who have had the best opportunities of judging, that the last night of a condemned prisoner's existence is generally passed in slumber. It was so with De Blenau. Hope and fear were equally things gone by to him. The bitter sentence of death had rung in his ear. He had traced the last lines of affection to her he loved. He had paid the last duties of religion; and fatigued with the strong excitement which his mind had undergone, he threw himself on his couch and fell into that profound sleep which only despair can give, and which approaches near to annihilation.

He was yet buried in forgetfulness when the gaoler came to announce that the fatal hour was come, and for a moment, even after his spirit had resumed her powers, memory still wandered far from the reality. He had not dreamed, but all thought of the last few months had been obliterated, and remembrance escaping from the painful present, lingered fondly over all he had left behind.

It lasted not long, and as all the truth came rushing on his mind, he thought alone of his approaching fate, and to meet it as became him. His heart, indeed, was sick of all the instability of this world's things, and for an instant there was a feeling almost amounting to satisfaction, when he thought that the eternal balancing between hope and fear, between joy and disappointment, was soon to be over, and that his soul, wearied of change and doubt, would quickly have peace and certainty. But then again the lingering ties of earth, the fond warm fellowships of human existence came strongly upon him, with all the throng of kindly sympathies that bind us to this world, and made him shrink from the thought of breaking them all at once.

This also lasted but a moment—his fate was sealed, and hurrying over all that might in any degree undermine his fortitude, he followed into the court-yard, where the Prevost de Lyons and several of the authorities of the town, with a file of soldiers, waited his coming.

The distance was so short from the place of his confinement to the scaffold where he had beheld for the last time his unhappy friend Cinq Mars, that the use of a carriage was dispensed with; and the guard having formed an avenue through the crowd, the gates were thrown open to give him exit for the last time.

"Monsieur de Blenau, will you take my arm," said the Prevost of Lyons: "mine is a sad office, Sir, but the arm is not an unfriendly one."

De Blenau, however, declined it with thanks, saying that he needed no support, and with a Priest on one hand and the Prevost on the other, he proceeded calmly towards the scaffold, and ascended the steps with a firm unshaken footstep. The block, and the axe, and the masked executioner were nothing in De Blenau's eyes but the mere weak precursors of the one awful event on which all his thoughts were bent, and for which his mind was now fully prepared. There was but one thought which could at all shake his fortitude—there was but one tie to be broken which wrung his heart to break. He thought of Pauline de Beaumont—but he thought also that he had merited a better fate; and proudly spurning the weakness that strove to grow upon his heart, he resolved to die as he had lived, worthy of her he loved. The very feeling gave new dignity to his air, and he stood erect and firm while the soldiers were disposed about the scaffold, and his sentence was read aloud by the Prevost.

A great multitude surrounded the place, and fixed their eyes upon the victim of arbitrary power, as he stood calm and unmoved before them, in the spring of youth and the dignity of conscious innocence. There were few who had not heard of the Count de Blenau, and all that they had heard was good. The heart of man too, however fallen, has still one spot reserved for the dwelling of compassion, and its very weakness makes it soften to virtue in distress, and often even to forget faults in misfortunes. However that may be, there was a glistening in the eyes of many as they turned their looks towards De Blenau, who, according to the universal custom of the time, advanced to the front of the scaffold to address them. "Good friends," said he, "it is the will of Heaven that here I should give back the spirit which has been lent me; and so help me that God into whose bright presence I now go, as I am innocent of any crime towards my King and Country!" A murmur ran among the people. "This is my last asseveration," he continued; "and my last counsel to you is, to keep your hearts clear and guiltless, so that if misfortune should follow any one as it has followed me, he may be able to lay his head upon the block as fearlessly as I do now." And retiring a step, he unloosed his collar, and knelt for the stroke of the executioner.

"A horse! A horse! A council messenger! Pardon for the Count! Pardon for the Count!" cried a thousand voices from the crowd. De Blenau looked up. Headlong down the long narrow street that then led in a straight line from the square, his horse in foam, his hat left far behind, and his long grey hair flying in the wind, spurring as if for life, came a horseman, who ever and anon held up a packet in his hand, and vociferated something that was lost in the distance. He wore the dress of a Lieutenant of the King's forests, and dashing like lightning through the crowd, that reeled back on every side as he approached, he paused not till he reached the foot of the scaffold,—threw himself from his horse—passed unopposed through the guards—rushed up the steps, and Philip the Woodman of Mantes cast himself at De Blenau's feet. "My noble, noble Lord!" exclaimed the Woodman. It was all that he could utter, for his breath was gone with the rapidity of his progress.

"What is all this?" cried the Prevost of Lyons, coming forward. "And why do you stop the execution of the prisoner, Sir Lieutenant? What is all this?"—

Philip started on his feet, "What is it?" he exclaimed, "why, that none of you blood-sucking wolves dare put a fang to the Count's throat: that's what it is! There is his pardon, with the King's own signature; ay! and the Cardinal's to boot! At least, so Monsieur de Chavigni tells me; for being no great clerk, I have not read it myself."

The Prevost unfolded the paper and read, "'*Aujourd'hui,*' &c.—Ah! yes, all in form.—'The King having learned that the crimes of the Sieur Claude de Blenau, Count de Blenau, and Seigneur de Blancford, are not so heavy as at first appeared, and having investigated—&c. has ordained and does ordain—out of his great grace, &c.—that the sentence of death be changed and commuted to perpetual banishment, &c.—And if after sixteen days from the date hereof, he be found within the kingdoms of France and Navarre,' &c.—You understand, Monsieur le Comte.—Well, Sir, I congratulate you. Here is the King's name; 'Louis,' *et plus bas*, 'Richelieu'—Will you come and take some

refreshment at my poor lodgings?"

De Blenau was glad to accept the invitation, for his mind was too much confused to fix upon any plan of action at the moment. His resolution had borne him strongly up at the time when all hope seemed lost; but now the sudden change overpowered him; and amidst the acclamations of the multitude, he suffered himself to be conducted in silence to the house of the Prevost; where he was soon after discovered by his Page, Henri de La Mothe.

We shall now pass quickly over the means which he took to procure money for the expenses of the journey before him, merely saying that, through the kindness of the Prevost, he was soon furnished with the necessary funds for proceeding; and accordingly set out from Lyons the second morning after that, the events of which we have described. Two powerful reasons induced De Blenau to turn his steps towards Spain: in the first place, it was much nearer than either Germany or Flanders, which were the only other countries where he could hope for perfect security; and, in the next place, his road to the frontier passed not only close to his own estates, but skirted the property of Madame de Beaumont, and he was not without hopes of meeting there some that were the dearest to him of the earth; for he learned from Henri de La Mothe, that the vengeance of the implacable Richelieu had extended to Pauline, and her mother, who had been ordered once more to quit the Court of France, as a punishment for having conveyed information to him in the Bastille.

Philip the Woodman was not forgotten in De Blenau's new arrangements; and under the pretence of charging him with a letter back to St. Germain's, in case Madame de Beaumont should not be in Languedoc, the young Count seduced him into a promise of accompanying him to Argentière. His real motive, however, was, to recompense the Woodman's services, on arriving at his own property, in a manner which the scanty state of his finances prevented him from doing at Lyons.

Notwithstanding all the joy he felt at his deliverance, there was a heaviness hung over De Blenau as he rode out of Lyons, which he could not account for, and a sensation of fatigue which he had never felt before. To shorten the road, he beckoned to the Woodman, who, with Henri de La Mothe, had dropped a little behind, and made him relate the circumstances which led to his being despatched with the King's pardon to Lyons. Philip's story, which occupied a long while in telling, may be considerably shortened without disadvantage.

It must be remembered, that at the time of De Blenau's liberation from the Bastille, Chavigni had promised, as some compensation for all that Philip had suffered by his means, to have him appointed Sous-lieutenant of the forest of Mantes: and he kept his word.

Philip was placed in the office, and exercised its functions, but the actual brevet containing his official appointment had been delayed by a multitude of other affairs pressing for attention, till the Statesman's return from Narbonne. At length, Philip heard that Chavigni had returned, and that the King, with all the Ministers, were once more at St. Germain's; and he ventured to wait upon his patron, as he had been desired, to remind him of expediting the brevet. There were several persons waiting, and in his turn he was shown into the Statesman's cabinet.

Chavigni had forgotten his face, and asked the simple question, "Who are *you*?"

Such simple questions, however, often produce more important consequences. "I am the Woodman," replied Philip, "who was in prison with the Count de Blenau."

"The Count de Blenau!" exclaimed Chavigni, while an expression of horror passed over his countenance. "By all the Saints, I had forgot! Yet, let me see, to-day is Wednesday—there is yet time—stay here a moment!" and he rushed out of the room, leaving the astonished Woodman not knowing at all what he meant. In about a quarter of an hour the Statesman returned, breathless with the expedition he had used—"There!" he exclaimed, putting a paper into Philip's hand—"There is his pardon, signed by both the King and the Cardinal!—Away! take the swiftest horse in my stable!—lose not a moment, or you will be too late! Use the King's name for fresh horses, and show that signature.—Tell the Count, Chavigni has kept his word."

"And where am I to go?" demanded Philip, quietly, still completely ignorant of the cause of Chavigni's agitation.

"To Lyons, to Lyons! you fool!" cried Chavigni. "If you use not all speed, the Count's head will be off before you arrive with his pardon."

"The Count de Blenau?" demanded Philip.

"Yes, yes, I tell you!" reiterated the Statesman, "your good old friend, the Count de Blenau! So lose no time, if you would save his life."

Philip lost no time, and arrived at Lyons, as we have seen, just at the critical moment of De Blenau's fate.

Though Philip's narrative served to interest De Blenau, and the chattering of Henri de La Mothe to amuse him on the way, nevertheless he could not conceal from himself that there was a lassitude gradually growing upon him, which seemed to announce the approach of some serious sickness. Naturally of a strong constitution, and an ardent temperament, he never yielded to indisposition, till unable to sustain it any longer; and though fatigue, anxiety, and distress, had weakened him much, and his two attendants often hinted that he looked unwell, and required repose, De Blenau would not acknowledge that he was ill, until he arrived in the neighbourhood of Tournon. There, however, the powers of nature failed him, and he felt that he could proceed no farther. Scarcely able to sit his horse, he entered the town, and looked eagerly about for some place where he could repose, when suddenly the eyes of Henri de La Mothe rested upon the well-known sign of the *Sanglier Gourmand*, which, as they afterwards found, was still kept by no other person than the celebrated Jacques Chatpilleur, who had at last been driven from the neighbourhood of the Bastille by the wrathful Governor, for one of his drunken achievements, very similar to the one recounted in our second volume, and had taken refuge in his native place, Tournon. Here De Blenau alighted, and was conveyed to a bed-chamber, where he was soon attacked by a violent fever, which rapidly increased. Delirium followed; and he quickly lost all remembrance of surrounding objects, though the name of Pauline de Beaumont would often tremble on his tongue, and he fancied that he saw a thousand airy shapes hovering round his bed, and constantly reminding him of her he loved.

In about twenty days the disease had run its course, and passed away, leaving him in a state of excessive weakness; but, in the mean time, the fever, which had nearly destroyed De Blenau, had entirely ruined the unhappy Jacques Chatpilleur. The report spread through Tournon, that the *aubergiste* had a malignant sickness raging in his house; and instead of coming thither, as usual, for the good things of this life, the citizens not only passed his door without entering, but even crossed over the way, as they went through the street, to be as far as possible from the infected air. For some days after he discovered this defection, melancholy preyed upon the unhappy *aubergiste*; but

suddenly he seemed to have taken a bold resolution; pulled down his sign; put by his pots and pans; resumed his gaiety; and no sooner did De Blenau talk of once more proceeding, than Jacques Chatpilleur laid before him his sad condition, and prayed, as an act of justice, that he would take him with him into Spain, and suffer him to be his Lordship's cook.

De Blenau had not the heart to deny him; but another thing came now to be considered. The time which, according to the ordinance of the King, had been allowed him for the purpose of quitting the realm, had long expired, and he was now virtually an outlaw. Every one was called upon to deliver him up as an exile returned without grace, and by law his blood could be required at the hand of no one who shed it. These circumstances, though not very agreeable in themselves, would have given De Blenau but little concern, had not the Judge Lafemas been still in his immediate neighbourhood. But from his vindictive spirit he had every thing to fear if discovered within the precincts of France after the allotted time had expired; and in consequence he determined to travel by night, as soon as his strength was sufficiently restored, and to effect his escape into Spain with as little delay as possible.

Jacques Chatpilleur applied himself with all the vigour of an *ancien vivandier* to re-establish his new lord in his former robust health, and succeeded so well as to leave but little traces of all that fever and anxiety had done upon his frame. In the mean time, Henri de La Mothe took care to prepare secretly every thing for their departure; and Philip the Woodman, who had somewhat balanced between a wish to return to his family, and love for the good young Count, determined to follow him to the frontier, as soon as he heard that his life was at the mercy of any one who chose to take it.

Under these circumstances, one clear autumn night, towards twelve o'clock, De Blenau sallied forth from the little town of Tournon, accompanied by the somewhat curious escort of the Innkeeper, the Woodman, and the Page, and proceeding silently and cautiously, arrived safely in the neighbourhood of La Voulte, where, betaking themselves to one of the large open fields of the country, the party reposed themselves under the mulberry-trees, which by this time had been long stripped both of their green leaves and their silken balls, but which still offered some degree of concealment, and something to which they could attach their horses.

At noon, Jacques Chatpilleur, as the most expert, was despatched to the town for some provisions, which commission he executed with great zeal and discretion, and returning, informed De Blenau that he had seen a gentleman in black pass through the town, accompanied by a considerable train habited in the same sad colour.

As De Blenau conjectured that this might be Lafemas, it was determined to take additional precautions, and rather to live upon scanty fare than send into any town again; and setting off as soon as it was dark, they passed by Privas, and reached the skirts of the thick wood that began about Aubenas, and sweeping round La Gorce extended almost to Viviers on the one side, and to L'Argentière on the other. Near to Viviers lay the estates of the Marchioness de Beaumont, and within a league of Argentière was the Château de Blenau; but it was towards the former that De Blenau bent his steps as soon as the second night had come. Before they had gone far, it began to rain hard, and though the wood afforded some covering, yet the lateness of the season had stripped it of all that could yield any efficient shelter, except at a spot where two evergreen oaks, growing together like twin-brothers, spread their still verdant branches over a considerable space of ground. De Blenau was inclined to proceed as quickly as possible; but Jacques Chatpilleur, who now acted as body physician as well as cook, so strongly cautioned his lord to avoid the wet, that the whole party betook themselves to the shelter of the oaks, in hopes of the rain passing away.

Before them lay a considerable tract of road, upon which, after about half an hour of heavy rain, the moon began to shine once more; and De Blenau was about to proceed, when the sound of horses was heard upon the very path which they had just passed. De Blenau and his party drew back as quietly as possible behind the trees, and though the horses' feet still made some noise, the water dropping from the branches of the forest was enough to cover the sound. Scarcely, however, were they themselves concealed, when a horseman appeared upon the road in a sombre-coloured suit, with some one riding on his right hand, whom De Blenau judged to be an inferior, from the bending position in which he listened to what the other said. Six servants followed at a little distance, and a straggler brought up the rear, wringing the wet from the skirts of his doublet. One by one, they passed slowly by; the uncertain light showing them to be well-armed and mounted, but still not shining sufficiently to allow De Blenau the opportunity of considering their features, though he thought that the form of the first rider was in some degree familiar to him. It was not unlike that of Lafemas, yet, as far as he could judge, taller and more erect. The cavalcade passed on, and were seen winding down the road in the moonlight, till they came opposite to a spot where some felled timber and blocks of stone embarrassed the ground. Immediately that they arrived there, there was a bright flash, the report of a carbine, and one of the horses fell suddenly to the ground. In a moment, nine or ten horsemen, and two or three on foot rushed forth from the wood; and the clashing of steel, the report of pistols, and various cries of wrath or agony came sweeping upon the gale.

"Were it Lafemas himself," cried De Blenau, "this must not be! *En avant pour la France!*" and dashing his rowels into the horse's side, he galloped headlong down the road, followed by the Woodman, the Page, and the redoubtable Jacques Chatpilleur.

Two moments brought them to the scene of the combat, and the moon shining out seemed expressly to light the fray. The one party was evidently to be distinguished by their black habits, the other by their rusty cuirasses and morions. Directly in the way of De Blenau was the Cavalier he had marked as he passed, contending with a man of almost gigantic strength; but, notwithstanding the superior force of the latter, his antagonist still foiled him by his skilful defence, when suddenly one of the robbers on foot attacked the Cavalier also behind. Thus beset, he turned to strike him down, when the tremendous Norman (for it was no other) caught his bridle rein, and urging the horse back, threw him to the ground. The robber on foot shortened the pike he carried to plunge it in his body. But by this time De Blenau's party had come up; and the courageous *aubergiste* galloping on, bore the point of his long sword in a direct line forward, which catching the pikeman just below the cuirass, spitted him, to use Jacques Chatpilleur's own expression, just like a widgeon.

In the mean while, the Norman had turned upon De Blenau, and snapped a pistol at his head, which, however, missed fire. Enraged at his disappointment, he threw the weapon from him, and spurring on his horse, aimed a tremendous blow at the Count, which was instantly parried, and returned by a straightforward lunge that cut him above the eye, and deluged his face in blood. Mad with the pain, and half-blinded with the gore, Marteville attempted once more the feat by which he had overthrown his former antagonist; and, catching De Blenau's rein, urged his

horse back with Herculean strength. In vain the Count spurred him forward; he sank upon his haunches, and was floundering in the fall, when De Blenau, finding it inevitable, let go the rein, fixed his knees firm in the saddle, and raising his sword with both hands, discharged it with all his force upon the head of the Norman. The true steel passed clear on, hewed through the iron morion, cleft through hair and skull, and sank deep into his brain. He reeled in the saddle; his hands let go their grasp, and he fell headlong to the ground, while the horse of De Blenau, suddenly released from the pressure, rose up, and plunging forward trod him under its feet. De Blenau lost not his presence of mind for a moment, and while his horse was yet in the spring, he aimed a blow at the Gros St. Nicolas, who had been hurrying to the assistance of his captain, which disabled his shoulder, and threw him from his horse. "*Sauve qui peut!*" cried the Robber, starting up on his feet and running for the wood, "*Sauve qui peut!*" The Captain is dead!"

"*Sauve qui peut! Sauve qui peut!*" rang among the Robbers, and in a few minutes De Blenau and his party were left masters of the field. The Count drew up his horse, exclaiming, "Do not follow! Do not follow! Let us look to the wounded;" and dismounting, he hurried to assist the fallen Cavalier, who was struggling to disengage himself from his horse.

"Next to God, Sir, I have to thank you," said the stranger, as soon as he had risen. "But—is it possible! Monsieur de Blenau!" he exclaimed as the moonlight gleamed on the countenance of the Count. "God of heaven, I thought you were in Spain long ago!"

"Monsieur de Chavigni! or I am mistaken," said De Blenau. "But I know that I can trust to your honour, and therefore must say, that though my late illness may have rendered me an outlaw, by detaining me in France after my sentence of exile, yet I will not regret it, as it has given me the opportunity of serving the man to whom I am indebted for my life.—There, Sir, is my hand."

Chavigni embraced him warmly. "Let us look to the men who are wounded, Monsieur de Blenau," said he, "and then I will give you a piece of news which, however painful to me, will be satisfactory to you.—Cannot some one strike a light, that we may examine more carefully what has occurred on this unhappy spot; for I see many on the earth."

"It shall be done in the turning of a spit, Monseigneur," said Jacques Chatpilleur, who had already collected some dry wood; and who now quickly produced a fire by means of the flint of a pistol.

The scene that presented itself was a sad one. On the earth lay two of Chavigni's servants dead, and one desperately wounded. To these was added Henri de La Mothe, who had received a severe cut on the head, and was stunned with the blow. Not far from the body of the Norman lay his companion Callot, who was the pikeman despatched by the bellicose *aubergiste*. In addition to these was a robber, whose head had been nearly severed from his body by the cutlas which was borne by Philip the woodman, in his capacity of Lieutenant of the King's forests; and one so severely wounded by a pistol-ball from the hand of Chavigni, that his companions had been obliged to abandon him. From him they learned that the attack upon Chavigni had been preconcerted; that understanding he was bending his steps towards Montpellier, Marteville had obtained exact information of his course; and finding that he must pass through the forest by Viviers, had laid in wait for him, with the expectation both of revenge and plunder.

"And now, Monsieur de Blenau," said Chavigni, as soon as their investigation ended, "whither does your immediate path lay? You know you can trust me."

"I do," said De Blenau. "I go first towards Viviers, to the Chateau of the late Marquis de Beaumont."

"And I go there too," said Chavigni. "I am even now expected; for I sent forward a servant to announce my coming."

"Indeed!" exclaimed De Blenau, "May I ask your errand?"

A faint smile curled Chavigni's lip, which was uncommonly pale. "You will hear on my arrival," said he; "for I see you are ignorant of what has lately taken place, though the couriers must have arrived in all the towns three days ago.—But let us have our wounded brought along, and we will proceed to the Chateau.—It cannot be far distant."

The preparations were soon made—the Chateau was soon reached—and Pauline de Beaumont was soon once more clasped in the arms of her lover.—But let all that pass.

"Madame," said Chavigni, advancing to the Marchioness, "you doubtless wonder as much as Monsieur de Blenau, what can have brought me hither. But as I came to Montpellier, I had the King's commands to inform you, that the fine which was imposed upon your estates is remitted in full. And to you, Monsieur de Blenau, I have to announce, that your banishment is at an end, for his Majesty has given permission to all exiles to return to France, with a very few exceptions, amongst which you are not included.—I need not tell you from these circumstances, that—the Cardinal de Richelieu is dead!"

"Good God!" exclaimed De Blenau, "so soon!"

"Even so!" replied Chavigni. "Monsieur de Blenau, doubtless you are happy—for he was your enemy.—But he was to me a friend—he was nearly a father, and I mourn for him."

"May he rest in peace!" said De Blenau. "He was a great man. May he rest in peace!"

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Little more remains to be said; for this long history draws towards its close. The sorrows, the dangers, and the difficulties, which had so long surrounded De Blenau and Pauline, had now passed away, like the storms of a summer day, that overcloud the morning, but leave the evening calm and fair. They were united—in the beautiful valleys of Languedoc, and in the fair scenes where they had first met, they continued to live on in happiness and love, till the hand of time led them gently to the grave.

That generation and its events have passed away; but there still remains one record of the hero of this tale: for in a little village church, between Argentière and Viviers, stands a fine marble tomb, with the figure of a knight sculptured in a recumbent posture. Underneath is engraven the date—one thousand six hundred and eighty-five, with the simple inscription,

*"Ci git Claude, Comte de Blenau."*



## NOTES.

“Après toutes les persécutions qui furent faites à plusieurs particuliers, le Roy suivant son naturel s’abandonna tout entier au pouvoir de son favori. Il se vit réduit à la vie la plus mélancolique et la plus misérable du monde, sans suite, sans cour, sans pouvoir, et, par conséquent, sans plaisir, et sans honneur. Ainsi se sont passés plusieurs années de sa vie à St. Germain, où il vivoit comme un particulier, et pendant que ses armées prenoient des villes et gagnoient des batailles, il s’amusait à prendre des oiseaux.”

*Memoires pour servir à l’Histoire d’Anne d’Autriche.*

“Les ennemis de la Reine pour réussir encore mieux dans les desseins qu’ils avoient de la faire haïr du Roy son mari, se servirent fortement contre elle des intelligences qu’elle avoit en Espagne.”

*Madame de Motteville, Mem. de la Reine.*

“Mais la Reine m’a conté qu’un jour il (le Cardinal) lui parla d’un air trop galland pour un ennemi; et qu’il lui fit un discours fort passionné; mais qu’ayant voulu lui répondre avec colère et mépris, le Roy dans ce moment étoit entre dans le cabinet où elle étoit, qui par sa présence interrompit sa réponse.”

*Madame de Motteville.*

“Le Chevalier de Jars fut le plus maltraité, et comme il a été depuis tout à fait de mes amis, et que dans sa persécution il y a quelques choses qui sont dignes de l’estime des honnêtes gens, je veux en marquer les principaux endroits qui pourront faire voir de quelle trempe étoit son ame, quelle étoit sa probité, la vigueur de son esprit et la grandeur de son courage. Il fut onze mois dans la Bastille enfermé dans un cachot. Il fut pris en hyver, et l’habit de velours noir qu’il y porta demeura toujours sur son corps tant qu’il habita dans cette effroyable demeure. On l’interrogea quatre-vingt fois avec toute la severité possible, et il repondit toujours avec bon sens et fermeté, sans se laisser entamer sur aucun chapitre, sans se couper en ses reponses, ni sans embarrasser personne. On l’en fit sortir pour le mener à Troyes avec toutes les rudes apparences d’un homme qu’on alloit mener à la mort....

\* \* \* \* \*

A Troyes on lui donna pour Juge Lafemas, celui qui l’avoit déjà tourmenté dans la Bastille, qu’on appelloit le *Bourreau du Cardinal*. On accompagna celui-là d’un nombre suffisant de Juges pour lui faire son procès, qui ne furent pas plus honnêtes gens que lui. Il y travailla par toutes les voies que ces sortes de gens savent pratiquer, et il fut fortement secondé des autres. Ils voulurent lui acheter des faux temoins, &c....

\* \* \* \* \*

Lafemas avoit promis au Ministre qu’il le tourmenteroit si bien, qu’il en tireroit à peu pres ce qu’il en desiroit scavoir, et que sur peu de mal il trouverait les moyens de lui faire son procès; selon les manières mêmes du Cardinal, qui, à ce que j’ai ouï conter à ses amis, avoit accoutumé de dire qu’avec deux lignes de l’écriture d’un homme on pouvoit faire le procès au plus innocent, parceque on pouvoit sur cette matière ajuster si bien les affaires que facilement on y pouvoit faire trouver ce qu’on voudroit.

“Sur ce fondement Lafemas travaille au jugement du Chevalier de Jars; il le menace, il l’interroge et fait tout ce qu’une ame pleine de lâcheté est capable de faire....

\* \* \* \* \*

En effet, il fut mené sur la sellette, où fort constamment il récusa pour Juge Lafemas, lui reprocha toutes ses lâchetés, l’appella une seconde fois scélérat, et avertit ses autres Juges de ce que Lafemas avoit promis au Cardinal contre lui. Il fut interrogé tout de nouveau, et demeura trois heures en cet état. Il se defendit si courageusement qu’il confondit ceux qui le vouloient perdre et qui avoient du moins le dessein de lui faire trahir ses amis. Sortant de là, le Prevôt de l’Ile s’approcha de lui et lui dit, ‘Monsieur, bon courage! j’espère bien pour vous, car on m’a dit de vous ramener dans la prison où vous êtes, et c’est l’ordinaire de mener ceux qu’on va condamner à mort dans un autre lieu.’ Le Chevalier lui dit du même ton dont il avoit accoutumé de censurer les choses qu’il n’approuvoit pas. ‘Mon ami, ces pendants là me vont condamner, je le vois bien à leur mine. Il faut avoir patience, et le Cardinal enragera de voir que je me moque de lui et de ses tortures.’

\* \* \* \* \*

Ayant été condamné, on le mena sur l’échaffaut. Il y parut plein de courage et d’honneur. Il se moqua de ses ennemis, montrant de recevoir la mort avec une grande fermeté. Etant prêt d’avoir la tête tranchée, on lui vint apporter sa grace.”

*Madame de Motteville.*

THE END.

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