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THE WORKS

OF

G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

REVISED AND CORRECTED BY THE AUTHOR.
WITH AN INTRODUCTORY PREFACE.

"D'autres auteurs l'ont encore plus avili, (le roman,) en y mêlant les tableaux dégoutant du vice; et tandis que le premier avantage des fictions est de rassembler autour de l'homme tout ce qui, dans la nature, peut lui servir de leçon ou de modèle, on a imaginé qu'on tirerait une utilité quelconque des peintures odieuses de mauvaises moeurs; comme si elles pouvaient jamais; laisser le cœur qui les repousse, dans une situation aussi pure que le cœur qui les aurait toujours Ignorées. Mais un roman tel qu'on peut le concevoir, tel que nous en avons quelques modèles, est une des plus belles productions de l'esprit humain, une des plus influentes sur la morale des individus, qui doit former ensuite les mœurs publiques."--MADAME DE STAËL. *Essai sur les Fictions*.

"Poca favilla gran flamma seconda:
Forse diretro a me, con miglior voci
Si pregherà, perchè Cirra risonda."

DANTE. *Paradiso,* Canto I.

VOL. XVI.

DE L'ORME.

LONDON:
PARRY AND CO., LEADENHALL STREET.
M DCCCXLVIII.

DE L'ORME.

BY

G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

"MARGARET GRAHAM,"
"THE LAST OF THE FAIRIES," ETC.

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PREFACE

TO THE THIRD EDITION.

Romance writing, when rightly viewed and rightly treated, is of the same nature as the teaching by parables of the eastern nations; and I believe, when high objects are steadily kept in view and good principles carefully inculcated, it may prove far more generally beneficial than more severe forms of instruction.

The man who is already virtuous and wise, or who, at least, seeks eagerly to be so, takes up the Essay or the Lecture, and reads therein the sentiments ever present in his own heart. But while the same man may find equal pleasure in the work of fiction addressed to the same great ends, how many thousands are there who will open the pages of the Novel or the Romance, but who would avoid anything less amusing to their fancy? If, then, while we excite their imagination with pleasant images, we can cause the latent seeds of virtue to germinate in their hearts; if we can point out the consequences of errors, follies, and crimes; if we can recall good feelings fleeting away, or crush bad ones rising up under temptation,--and that we can do so with great effect, may be safely asserted,--we can benefit, in the most essential particular, a large body of our fellow-men; a much larger body, I fear, than that which can be attracted by anything that does not wear the form of amusement.

Such has been my conviction ever since I entered upon a career in which the public has shown me such undeserved encouragement; and with such a purpose, and for such an object, have I always written. In some works I have striven alone to impress those general principles of honour and virtue, and those high and elevated feelings, which do not seem to me to be increasing in the world. In others, I have endeavoured to advocate, without seeming too much to do so, some particular principle, or to warn against some particular error. In the following pages my purpose was to expose the evil consequences of an ill-regulated spirit of enterprise and a love of adventure, and to deter from errors, the magnitude of which I may have felt by sharing in them.

To do so, it was necessary to choose as my subject the life of a young man placed in circumstances of difficulty and temptation; and no writer can ever hope to produce a good effect by painting man otherwise than man is.

At the same time I have ever been convinced that no benefit can ensue from drawing the mind of the reader through long scenes of vice and guilt, for the sake of a short moral at the end; and in writing the history of the Count de l'Orme, I determined to show, as was absolutely necessary, that he was led by the love of adventure into error nearly approaching to guilt: but to dwell upon his errors no longer than was absolutely required; to point out, even while I related them, that their consequences were terrible; and to make the great bulk of the book display a life of regret, pain and difficulty, consequent upon the fault I sought to reprehend. This I have done to the best of my judgment, restricting all details of the error into which the principal character of the book fell, to some ten or twelve pages. Having read those pages again, after a lapse of many years, with the deepest attention and consideration, I send them forth with scarcely an alteration; being firmly convinced, that the mind which can contract any evil from the terrible scene which they depict--a scene which, I have every reason to believe, really occurred--must be foul and corrupt ere it sits down to the perusal. One thing I certainly know, that those pages were written in the spirit of purity, and with the purpose of good; and I will never believe that such feelings can generate, in the breast of others, likewise pure, aught but their own likeness.

De l'Orme was first published in 1830, and was written while I was residing in France. The incidents, however, had been collected and arranged long before, and only required form and compression. For some curious details regarding the battle of Sedan I was indebted to a gentleman of that city, and I believe the facts of the famous revolt of the Count of Soissons will be found historically correct, even to very minute particulars.

DE L'ORME.

CHAPTER I.

I was born in the heart of Bearn, in the year 1619; and if the scenery amongst which we first open our eyes, and from which we receive our earliest impressions, could communicate its own peculiar character to our minds, I should certainly have possessed a thousand great and noble qualities, that might have taught me to play a very different part from that which I have done, in the great tragic farce of human life. Nevertheless, in contemplating the strange contrasts of scenery, the gay, the sparkling, the grand, the gloomy, the sublime, wherein my infant years were passed, I have often thought I saw a sort of picture of my own fate, with its abrupt and rapid changes; and even in some degree of my own character, or rather of my own mood, varying continually through all the different shades of disposition, from the lightest mirth to the most profound gloom, from the idlest heedlessness to the most anxious thought.

However, it is not my own peculiar character that I sit down to depict--that will be sufficiently displayed in the detail of my adventures: but it is rather those strange and singular events which, contrary to all probability, mingled me with great men, and with great actions, and which, continually counteracting my own will, impelled me ever on the very opposite course from that which I straggled to pursue.

For many reasons, it is necessary to commence this narrative with those early years, wherein the mind of man receives its first bias, when the seeds of all future actions are sown in the heart, and when causes, in themselves so trifling as almost to be imperceptible, chain us to good or evil, to fortune or misfortune, for ever. The character of man is like a piece of potter's clay, which, when fresh and new, is easily fashioned according to the will of those into whose hands it falls; but its form once given, and hardened, either by the slow drying of time, or by its passage through the ardent furnace of the world, men may break it to atoms, but never bend it again to another mould.

Our parents, our teachers, our companions, all serve to modify our dispositions. The very proximity of their faults, their failings, or their virtues, leaves, as it were, an impress on the flexible mind of infancy, which the steadiest reason can hardly do more than modify, and years themselves can never erase. To the events of those early years I owe many of my errors in life; and my faults and their consequences are not without their moral: for in my history, as in that of every other man, it will be found that punishment of some kind never failed to tread fast upon the heels of each wrong action; and in one instance, a few hours of indiscretion mingled a dark and fearful current with the course of many an after year.

To begin, then, with the beginning:--I was, as I have said, born in the heart of the little mountainous principality of Bearn, which, stretching along the northern side of the Pyrenees, contains within itself some of the most fertile and some of the most picturesque, some of the sweetest and some of the grandest scenes that any part of Europe can boast. The chain of my native mountains, interposing between France and Spain, forms a gigantic wall whereby the unerring hand of nature has marked the limits of either land; and although this immense bulwark is, in itself, scarcely broken by any but very narrow and difficult passes, yet the mountainous ridges which it sends off, like enormous buttresses, into the plain country on each side, are intersected by a number of wide and beautiful valleys, rich with all the gifts of summer, and glowing with all the loveliness of bright fertility.

One of the most striking, though perhaps not one of the most extensive, of these valleys, is that which, running from east to west, lies in a direct line between Bagneres de Bigorre and the little town and castle of Lourdes.[1] Never have I seen, and certainly never shall I now see, any other valley so sweet, so fair, so tranquil;--never, one so bright in itself, or so surrounded by objects of grandeur and magnificence. I need not say after this, that it was my native place.

The dwelling of my father, Roger De l'Orme, Count de Bigorre, was perched up high upon the hill-side, about two miles from Lourdes, and looked far over all the splendid scene below. The wide valley, with its rich carpet of verdure, the river dashing in liquid diamonds amidst the rocks and over the precipices; the long far windings of the deep purple mountains, filling the mind with vague, but grand imaginings; the dark majestic shadows of the pine forest that every here and there were cast like a black mantle round the enormous limbs of each giant hill; the long wavy perspective, of the passes towards Cauteretz, and the Pont d'Espagne, with the icy Vigne Malle raising up his frozen head, as if to dare the full power of the summer sun beyond,--all was spread out to the eye, offering in one grand view a thousand various sorts of loveliness.

I must be pardoned for dilating upon those sweet scenes of my early childhood, whose very memory bestows a calm and placid joy, which I have never found in any other spot, or in any other feeling; neither in the gaiety and splendour of a court, the gratification of passion, the hurry and energy of political intrigue, the excitement and triumph of the battle field, the struggle of conflicting hosts, or the maddening thrill of victory.--But for a moment, let me indulge, and then I quit such memories for things and circumstances whose interest is more easily communicable to the minds of others.

The château in which my eyes first opened to the light was little inferior in size to the castle of Lourdes, and infinitely too large for the small establishment of servants and retainers which my father's reduced finances enabled him to maintain. Our diminished household looked, within its enormous walls, like the shrunken form of some careful old miser, insinuated into the wide and

hanging garments of his youth; and yet my excellent parent fondly insisted upon as much pomp and ceremony as his own father had kept up with a hundred and fifty retainers waiting in his hall. Still the trumpet sounded at the hour of dinner, though the weak lungs of the broken-winded old *maître d'hôtel* produced but a cacophonous sound from the hollow brass: still all the servants, who amounted to five, including the gardener, the shepherd, and the cook, were drawn up at the foot of the staircase, in unstarched ruffs and tarnished liveries of green and gold, while my father, with slow and solemn pace, handed down to dinner Madame la Comtesse; still would he talk of his vassals, and his seigneurial rights, though his domain scarce covered five hundred acres of wood and mountain, and vassals, God knows, he had but few. However, the banners still hung in the hall; and it was impossible to gaze upon the walls, the pinnacles, the towers, and the battlements of the old castle, without attaching the idea of power and influence to the lord of such a hold; so that it was not extraordinary he himself should, in some particulars forget the decay of his house, and fancy himself as great as his ancestors.

A thousand excellent qualities of the heart covered any little foibles in my father's character. He was liberal to a fault; kind, with that minute and discriminating benevolence which weighs every word ere it be spoken, lest it should hurt the feelings of another; brave, to that degree that scarcely believes in fear, yet at the same time so humane, that his sympathy with others often proved the torture of his own heart; but----

Oh! that in this world there should still be a *but*, to qualify everything that is good and excellent!--but, still he had one fault that served greatly to counteract all the high qualities which he possessed. He was invincibly lazy in mind. He could endure nothing that gave him trouble; and, though the natural quickness of his disposition would lead him to purpose a thousand great undertakings, yet long ere the time came for executing them, various little obstacles and impediments had gradually worn down his resolution; or else the trouble of thinking about one thing for long was too much for him, and the enterprise dropped by its own weight. Had fortune brought him great opportunities, no one would have seized them more willingly, or used them to better or to nobler purposes; but fortune was to seek--and he did nothing.

The wars of the League, in which his father had taken a considerable part, had gradually lopped away branch after branch of our estates, and even hewn deeply into the trunk; and my father was not a man, either by active enterprise or by court intrigue, to mend the failing fortunes of his family. On the contrary, after having served in two campaigns, and distinguished himself in several battles, out of pure weariness, he retired to our château of De l'Orme, where, being once fixed in quiet, he passed the rest of his days, never having courage to undertake a longer journey than to Pau or to Tarbes; and forming in his solitude a multitude of fine and glorious schemes, which fell to nothing almost in the same moment that they were erected: as we may see a child build up, with a pack of cards, many a high and ingenious structure, which the least breath of air will instantly reduce to the same flat nonentities from which they were reared at the first.

My mother's character is soon told. It was all excellence; or if there was, indeed, in its composition, one drop of that evil from which human nature is probably never entirely free, it consisted in a touch of family pride--and yet, while I write it, my heart reproaches me, and says that it was not so. However, the reader shall judge by the sequel; but if she had this fault, it was her only one, and all the rest was virtue and gentleness. Restricted as were her means of charity, still every one that came within the sphere of her influence experienced her kindness, or partook of her bounty. Nor was her charity alone the charity that gives; it was the charity that feels, that excuses, that forgives.

A willing aid in all that was amiable and benevolent was to be found in good Father Francis of Allurdi, the chaplain of the château. In his young days they said he had been a soldier; and on some slight, received from a world for which he was too good, he threw away the corslet and took the gown, not with the feeling of a misanthrope, but of a philanthropist. For many years he remained as cure at the little village of Allurdi, in the Val d'Ossau; but his sight and his strength both failing him, and the cure being an arduous one, he resigned it to a younger man, (who, he thought, might better perform the duties of the station,) and brought as gentle a heart and as pure a spirit as ever rested in a mortal frame, to dwell with the two others I have described in the Château de l'Orme.

It may be asked, if he too had his foible? Believe me, dear reader, whoever thou art, that every one on this earth has some; nor was he without one: and, strange as it may appear, his was superstition--I say, strange as it may appear, for he was a man of a strong and vigorous mind, calm, reflective, rational, without any of that hurried and perturbed indistinctness of judgment which suffers imagination to usurp the place of reason. But still he was superstitious to a great degree, affording a striking instance of that union of opposite qualities, which every one who takes the trouble of examining his own bosom will find more or less exemplified in himself. His superstition, however, grew in a mild and benevolent soil, and was, indeed, but as one of those tender climbing plants which hang upon the ruined tower or the shattered oak, and clothe them with a verdure not their own: thus he fondly adhered to the imaginative tenets of ancient days fast falling into decay. He peopled the air with spirits, and in his fancy gave them visible shapes, and in some degree even corporeal qualities. However, on an ardent and youthful mind like mine, such picturesque superstitions were most likely to have effect; and so far, indeed, did they influence me, that though reason in after-life exerted her power to sweep them all away, imagination often rebelled, and clung fondly to the delusion still.

Such as I have described them were the denizens of the Château de l'Orme at the time of my birth, which was unmarked by any other peculiarity than that of my mother having been married, and yet childless, for more than eight years. The joy which the unexpected birth of an heir produced, may easily be imagined, though little indeed was the inheritance which I came to claim. All with one consent gave themselves up to hope and to gladness; and more substantial signs of rejoicing were displayed in the hall than the château had known for many a day.

My father declared that I should infallibly retrieve the fortunes of my house. Father Francis, with tears in his eyes, exclaimed that it was evidently a blessing from Heaven; and even my mother discovered that, though futurity was still misty and indistinct, there was now a landmark to guide on hope across the wide ocean of the years to come.

CHAPTER II.

I know not by what letters patent the privilege is held, but it seems clearly established, that the parents of an only child have full right and liberty to spoil him to whatsoever extent they may please; and though, my grandfathers on both sides of the house being dead long before my birth, I wanted the usual chief aiders and abettors of over-indulgence, yet, in consideration of my being an unexpected gift, my father thought himself entitled to expend more unrestrictive fondness upon me than if my birth had taken place at an earlier period of his marriage.

My education was in consequence somewhat desultory. The persuasions of Father Francis, indeed, often won me for a time to study, and the wishes of my mother, whose word was ever law to her son, made me perhaps attend to the instructions of the good old priest more than my natural volatility would have otherwise admitted. At times, too, the mad spirit of laughing and jesting at everything, which possessed me from my earliest youth, would suddenly and unaccountably be changed into the most profound pensiveness, and reading would become a delight and a relief. I thus acquired a certain knowledge of Latin and of Greek, the first principles of mathematics, and a great many of those absurd and antiquated theories which were taught in that day under the name of philosophy. But from Father Francis, also, I learned what should always form one principal branch of a child's education--a very tolerable knowledge of my native language, which I need not say is, in general, spoken in Bearn in the most corrupt and barbarous manner.

Thus, very irregularly, proceeded the course of my mental instruction; my corporeal education my father took upon himself, and as his laziness was of the mind rather than the body, he taught me thoroughly, from my very infancy, all those exercises which, according to his conception, were necessary to make a perfect cavalier. I could ride, I could shoot, I could fence, I could wrestle, before I was twelve years old; and of course the very nature of these lessons tended to harden and confirm a frame originally strong, and a constitution little susceptible of disease.

The buoyancy of youth, the springy vigour of my muscles, and a good deal of imaginative feeling, gave me a sort of indescribable passion for adventure from my childhood, which required even the stimulus of danger to satisfy. Had I lived in the olden time, I had certainly been a knight errant. Everything that was wild, and strange, and even fearful, was to me delight; and it needed many a hard morsel from the rough hand of the world to quell such a spirit's appetite for excitement.

To climb the highest pinnacles of the rocks, to plunge into the deepest caverns, to stand on the very brink of the precipices and look down into the dizzy void below, to hang above the cataract on some tottering stone, and gaze upon the frantic fury of the river boiling in the pools beneath, till my eye was wearied, and my ear deafened with the flashing whiteness of the stream, and the thundering roar of its fall--these were the enjoyments of my youth, and many, I am afraid, were the anxious pangs which my temerity inflicted on the bosom of my mother.

I will pass over all the little accidents and misadventure of youth; but on one circumstance, which occurred when I was about twelve years old, I must dwell more particularly, inasmuch as it was not only of import at the time, but also affected all my future life by its consequences.

On a fine clear summer morning, I had risen in one of those thoughtful moods, which rarely cloud the sunny mind of youth, but which, as I have said, frequently succeeded to my gayest moments; and, walking slowly down the side of the hill, I took my way through the windings of a deep glen, that led far into the heart of the mountain. I was well acquainted with the spot, and wandered on almost unconsciously, with scarcely more attention to any external object than a casual glance to the rocks that lay tossed about on either side, amidst a profusion of shrubs and

flowers, and trees of every hue and leaf.

The path ran along on a high bank of rocks overhanging the river, which, dashing in and out round a thousand stony promontories, and over a thousand bright cascades, gradually collected its waters into a fuller body, and flowed on in a deep swift stream towards a more profound fall below. At the side of the cataract, the most industrious of all the universe's insects, man, had taken advantage of the combination of stream and precipice, and fixed a small mill-wheel under the full jet of water, the clacking sound of which, mingling with the murmur of the stream, and the savage scenery around, communicated strange, undefined sensations to my mind, associating all the cheerful ideas of human proximity, with the wild grandeur of rude uncultivated nature.

I was too young to unravel my feelings, or trace the sources of the pleasure I experienced; but getting to the very verge of the rock, a little way above the mill, I stood, watching the dashing eddies as they hurried on to be precipitated down the fall, and listening to the various sounds that came floating on the air.

On what impulse I forget at this moment, but after gazing for some time, I put my foot still farther towards the edge of the rocky stone on which I stood, and bent over, looking down the side of the bank. The stone was a detached fragment of grey marble, lying somewhat loosely upon the edge of the descent--my weight overthrew its balance--it tottered--I made a violent effort to recover myself, but in vain--the rock rolled over, and I was pitched headlong into the stream.

The agony of finding myself irretrievably gone--the dazzle and the flash of the water as it closed over my head--the thousand regrets that whirled through my brain during the brief moment that I was below the surface--the struggle of renewed hope as I rose again and beheld the blue sky and the fair face of nature, are all as deeply graven on my memory as if the whole had occurred but yesterday. Although all panting when I got my head above the water, I succeeded in uttering a loud shout for assistance, while I struggled to keep myself up with my hand; but as I had never learned to swim, I soon sunk again, and on rising a second time, my strength was so far gone, I could but give voice to a feeble cry, though I saw myself drifting quickly towards the mill and the waterfall, where death seemed inevitable. My only hope was that the miller would hear me; but to my dismay, I found that my call, though uttered with all the power I had left, was far too faint to rise above the roar of the cascade and the clatter of the mill-wheels.

Hope gave way, and ceasing to struggle, I was letting myself sink, when I caught a faint glimpse of some one running down amongst the rocks towards me, but at that moment, in spite of my renewed efforts, the water overwhelmed me again. For an instant there was an intolerable sense of suffocation--a ringing in my ears, and a flashing of light in my eyes that was very dreadful, but it passed quickly away, and a sweet dreamy sensation came over me, as if I had been walking in green fields, I did not well know where--the fear and the struggle were all gone, and, gradually losing remembrance of everything, I seemed to fall asleep.

Such is all that my memory has preserved of the sensations I experienced in drowning--a death generally considered a very dreadful one, but which is, in reality, anything but painful. We have no means of judging what is suffered in almost any other manner of passing from the world; but were I to speak from what I myself felt in the circumstances I have detailed, I should certainly say that *it is the fear that is the death*.

My next remembrance is of a most painful tingling, spreading itself through every part of my body, even to my very heart, without any other consciousness of active being, till at length, opening my eyes, I found myself lying in a large barely furnished room in the mill, with a multitude of faces gazing at me, some strange and some familiar, amongst the last of which I perceived the pimpled nose of the old *maître d'hôtel*, and the mild countenance of Father Francis of Allurdi.

My father, too, was there; and I remember seeing him with his arms folded on his breast, and his eyes straining upon me as if his whole soul was in them. When I opened mine, he raised his look towards heaven, and a tear rolled over his cheek; but I saw or heard little of what passed, for an irresistible sensation of weariness came over me; and the moment after I awoke from the sleep of death, I fell into a quiet and refreshing slumber, very different from the "cold obstruction" of the others.

I will pass over all the rejoicing that signalized my recovery--my father's joy, my mother's thanks and prayers, the servants' carousing, and the potations, deep and strong, of the pimple-nosed *maître d'hôtel*, whose hatred of water never demonstrated itself more strongly than the day after I had escaped drowning. As soon as I had completely regained my strength, my mother told me, that after having shown our gratitude to God, it became our duty to show our gratitude also to the person who had been the immediate means of saving me from destruction; and it was then I learned that I owed my life to the courage and skill of a lad but little older than myself, the son of a poor procureur, or attorney, at Lourdes. He had been fishing in the stream at the time the rock gave way under my feet, and seeing my fall, hurried to save me. With much difficulty and danger he accomplished his object, and having drawn me from the water, carried me to the mill, where he remained only long enough to see me open my eyes, retiring modestly the moment he was assured of my safety.

In those young days, life was to me so bright a plaything, all the wheels of existence moved so easily, there was so much beauty in the world, so much delight in being, that my most enthusiastic gratitude was sure to follow such a service as that I had received. Readily did I assent to my mother's proposal, that she should accompany me to Lourdes to offer our thanks--not as with the world in general, in mere empty words, as unsubstantial as the air that bears them, but by some more lasting mark of our gratitude.

Upon the nature of the recompense she was to offer, she held a long consultation with my father, who, unwilling to give anything minute consideration, left it entirely to her own judgment, promising the fullest acquiescence in whatever she should think fit; and accordingly we set out early the next day for Lourdes, my mother mounted on a hawking palfrey, and I riding by her side on a small fleet Limousin horse, which my father had given me a few days before.

This was not, indeed, the equipage with which the Countess de Bigorre should have visited a town once under the dominion of her husband's ancestors; but what was to be done? A carriage, indeed, we had, which would have held six, and if required, eight persons; though the gilding was somewhat tarnished, and a few industrious spiders had spun their delicate nets in the windows, and between the spokes of the wheels. Neither were horses wanting, for on the side of the mountain were eight coursers, with tails and manes as long as the locks of a mermaid, and a plentiful supply of hair to correspond about their feet. They were somewhat aged, indeed, and for the last six years they had gone about slip-shod amongst the hills, enjoying the *otium cum dignitate* which neither men nor horses often find. Still they would have done; but where were we to find the six men dressed in the colours of the family, necessary to protect the foot-board behind? where the four stout cavaliers, armed up to the teeth, to ride by the side of the carriage? where the postilions? where the coachman?

My mother did much more wisely than strive for a pomp which we were never to see again. She went quietly and simply, to discharge what she considered a duty, with as little ostentation as possible; and when the worthy *maître d'hôtel* lamented, with the familiarity of long service, that the Countess de Bigorre should go without such a retinue as in his day had always made the name respected, she replied, quietly, that those who were as proud of the name as she was, would find no retinue needful to make it respectable. My father retired into his library, as we were about to depart, saying to my mother, that he hoped she had commanded such a body of retainers to accompany her as she thought necessary. She merely replied that she had; and set out, with a single groom to hold the horses, and a boy to show us the way to the dwelling of the procureur.

Let it be observed, that, up to the commencement of the year of which I speak, Lourdes had never been visited with the plague of an attorney; but at that epoch, the father of the lad who had saved my life, and who, like him, was named Jean Baptiste Arnault, had come to settle in that place, much to the horror and astonishment of the inhabitants. He had, it was rumoured, been originally *intendant*, or steward, to some nobleman in Poitou, and having, by means best known to himself, obtained the charge of procureur in Bearn, he had first visited Pau, and thence removed to Lourdes.

The name of an attorney had at first frightened the good Bearnois of that town; but they soon discovered that Maître Jean Baptiste Arnault was a very clever, quiet, amiable, little man, about two cubits in height, of which stature his head monopolised at least the moiety. He was not particularly handsome; but, as he appeared to have other better qualities, that did not much signify, and they gradually made him their friend, their confidant, and their adviser; in all of which capacities, he acted in a mild, tranquil, easy little manner, that seemed quite delightful: but, notwithstanding all this, the people of the town of Lourdes began insensibly to get of a quarrelsome and a litigious turn, so that Jean Baptiste Arnault had his study in general pretty full of clients; and, though he made it appear clearly to the most common understanding, that his sole object was to promote peace and good-will, yet, strange to say, discord, the faithful jackal of all attorneys, was a very constant attendant on his steps.

Such were the reports that had reached us at the Château de l'Orme; and the *maître d'hôtel*, when he repeated them, laid his finger upon the side of his prominent and rubicund proboscis, and screwed up his eye till it nearly suffered an eclipse, saying as plainly as nose and eye could say, "Monsieur Jean Baptiste Arnault is a cunning fellow." However, my father had no will to believe ill of any one, and my mother as little; so that, when we set out for Lourdes, both were fully convinced that the parent of their child's deliverer was one of the most excellent of men.

After visiting the church, and offering at the shrine of *Notre Dame du bon secours*, we proceeded to the dwelling of the procureur, and dismounting from our horses, entered the *étude*, or office, of the lawyer; the boy, who had come to show us the way, throwing open the door with a consequential fling, calculated to impress the mind of the attorney with the honour which we did him. It was a miserable chamber, with a low table, and a few chairs, both strewed with some books of law, and written papers, greased and browned by the continual thumbing of the coarse-handed peasants, in whose concerns they were written.

Jean Baptiste Arnault was not there, but in his place appeared a person, plainly dressed in a suit of black, with buttons of jet, without any embroidery or ornament whatever. He wore a pair of riding boots, with immense tops, shaped like a funnel, according to the mode of the day, and the dust upon these appendages, as well as the disordered state of his long wavy hair, seemed to

announce that he had ridden far; while a large Sombrero hat, and a long steel-hilted Toledo sword, which lay beside him, led the mind naturally to conclude that his journey had been from Spain.

To judge of his station by his dress, one would have concluded him to be some Spanish merchant of no very large fortune; but his person and his air told a different tale. Pale, and even rather sallow in complexion, the high broad forehead, rising almost upright from his brow, and seen still higher through the floating curls of his dark hair, the straight, finely turned nose, the small mouth curled with a sort of smile, strangely mingled of various expressions, half cynical, half bland, the full rounded chin, the very turn of his head and neck, as he sat writing at a table exactly opposite the door, all gave that nobility to his aspect, which was not to be mistaken.

On our entrance, the stranger rose, and in answer to my mother's inquiry for the procureur, replied, "Arnault is not at present here; but if the Countess de Bigorre will sit down, he shall attend her immediately," and taking up the letter he had been writing, he left the apartment. The moment after, the door by which he had gone out again opened, and Jean Baptiste Arnault entered the room, at once verifying by his appearance everything we had heard of his person. He was quite a dwarf in stature; and, in size at least, dame Nature had certainly very much favoured his head, at the expense of the rest of his body. His face, to my youthful eyes, appeared at least two feet square, with all the features in proportion, except the eyes, which were peculiarly small and black; and not being very regularly set in his head, seemed like two small boats, nearly lost in the vast ocean of countenance which lay before us.

I do not precisely remember the particulars of the conversation which took place upon his coming in, but I very well recollect laughing most amazingly at his appearance, in spite of my mother's reproof, and telling him, with the unceremonious candour of a spoiled child, that he was certainly the ugliest man I had ever seen. He affected to take my boldness in very good part, and called me a fine frank boy; but there was a vindictive gleam in his little black eyes, which contradicted his words; and I have since had reason to believe that he never forgot or forgave my childish rudeness. It is a very general rule, that a man is personally vain in proportion to his ugliness, and hates the truth in the same degree that he deceives himself. Certain it is, no man was ever more ugly, or ever more vain; and his conceit had not been nourished a little by marrying a very handsome woman.

Of course the first subject of conversation which arose between my mother and himself was the service which his son had rendered me; and as a recompense, she offered that the young Jean Baptiste should be received into the Château de l'Orme, and educated with its heir, which she considered as the highest honour that could be conferred on the young *roturier*; and in the second place, she promised, in the name of my father, that five hundred livres per annum should be settled upon him for life,--a sum of no small importance in those days, and in that part of the country.

The surprise and gratitude of the attorney can hardly be properly expressed. Of liberality he had not in his own bosom one single idea; and, I verily believe, that at first he thought my mother had some sinister object in the proposals which she made; but speedily recovering himself, he accepted with great readiness the pension that was offered to his son; at the same time hesitating a good deal in regard to sending him to the Château de l'Orme. He enlarged upon his sense of the honour, and the favour, and the condescension; but his son, he said, was the only person he had who could act as his clerk, and he was afraid he could not continue his business without him. In short, his objections hurt my mother's pride, and she was rising with an air of dignity to put an end to the matter, by taking her departure, when, as if by a sudden thought, the procureur besought her to stay one moment, and as her bounty had already been so great, perhaps she would extend it one degree farther. His son, he said, was absolutely necessary to him to carry on his business; but he had one daughter, whom, her mother being dead, he had no means of educating as he could wish. "If," said he, "Madame la Comtesse de Bigorre will transfer the benefit she intended for my son to his sister, she will lay my whole family under an everlasting obligation; and I will take upon myself to affirm, that the disposition and talents of the child are such as will do justice to the kindness of her benefactress."

These words he pronounced in a loud voice, and then starting up, as if to cut across all deliberation on the subject, he said he would call both his children, and left the room.

After having been absent some time, he returned with the lad who had saved my life, and a little girl of about ten years old. Jean Baptiste, the younger, was at this time about fifteen; and though totally unlike his father in stature, in make, or in mind, he had still a sufficient touch of the old procureur in his countenance, to justify his mother in the matter of paternity.

Not so the little Helen, whose face was certainly not the reflection of her father's, if such he was. Her long soft dark eyes alone were sufficient to have overset the whole relationship, without even the glossy brown hair that curled round her brow, the high clear forehead, the mouth like twin cherries, or the brilliant complexion, which certainly put Monsieur Arnault's coffee-coloured skin very much out of countenance.

Her manners were as sweet and gentle as her person: my mother's heart was soon won, and the exchange proposed readily conceded. The young Jean Baptiste was thanked both by my mother and myself, in all the terms we could find to express our gratitude, all which he received

in a good-humoured and yet a sheepish manner, as if he were at once gratified and distressed by the commendations that were showered upon him. Helen, it was agreed, should be brought over to the château the next day; and having now acquitted ourselves of the debt of obligation under which we had lain, we again mounted our horses and rode away from Lourdes.

CHAPTER III.

Though I have not gone very far into my history, I have learned to hate being my own historian, stringing I, and I, and I, together to the end of the chapter. Nevertheless, I believe that no man's history can be so well told as by himself, if he will but be candid; for no one can so completely enter into his feelings, or have so vivid an impression of the circumstances amidst which he has acted. Notwithstanding this, it shall be my endeavour to pass over the events of my youth as rapidly as possible, for the purpose of arriving at that part of this history where the stirring nature of the scenes in which I mingled may cover the egotism of the detail; but still, as there are persons and occurrences yet unmentioned, by which my after life was entirely modified, I must still pause a little on this part of my tale.

Faithful to the charge she had undertaken, my mother made the education of Helen Arnault her particular care. At first, she confined her instructions to those arts alone that were likely to be useful to her in the *bourgeoise* class in which she had been born; but there was a degree of ready genius mixed with the infinite gentleness of Helen's disposition, which gradually seduced my mother into teaching her much more than she had at first intended. Nor was she ill qualified for the task, possessing every female accomplishment, both mental and corporeal, in as much perfection as they had received in those days. At first, the education of the sweet girl, thus placed under her protection, formed a sort of amusement for her, when my father and myself were absent in any of the long rides we used to take through the country--gradually it became so habitual as to be necessary to her comfort; and Helen so completely wound herself round the Countess's heart, that she could not bear to be without her for any considerable length of time.

Perhaps it was the very attachment which she herself experienced towards Helen, that made my mother feel how strong might be the effect of such sweetness and such beauty at some after time upon the heart of an ardent, sensitive, imaginative youth--and my mother from the first knew me to be such. Whatever was the cause, certain it is she took care that between Helen and myself should be placed a barrier of severe and chilling formality, calculated to repress the least intimacy in its very bud. Whenever she mentioned my name to her young *protégée*, it was always under the ceremonious epithet of Count Louis. Whenever I entered the room, Helen Arnault was sent away, upon some excuse which prevented her return; or if she was permitted to remain, there was a sort of courtly etiquette maintained, well calculated to freeze all the warmer blood of youth.

All this my mind has commented on since, though I only regarded it, at the time, as something very disagreeable, without in the least understanding why my mother chose to play so very different a part from that which suited her natural character. She certainly acted for the best, but I think she was mistaken in her judgment of the means to be employed for effecting her object. It is probable, that had she suffered me at the first to look upon Helen Arnault as a sister, and taught her to consider me as her brother, the feelings which we acquired towards each other at ten and twelve years old would have remained unchanged at a later period. God knows how it would have been! I am afraid that all experiments upon young hearts are dangerous things. The only remedy is, I believe, a stone wall; and the example of Pyramus and Thisbe demonstrates that even it must not have a crack in it.

As it was, the years rolled on, and I began to acquire the sensations of manhood. I saw Helen Arnault but by glimpses, but I saw nothing on earth so lovely. Every day new beauties broke forth upon me; and it was impossible to behold her hour by hour expanding into the perfection of womanhood, without experiencing those feelings with which we see a bud open out into the rose--a wish to possess so beautiful a thing.

In the meanwhile, several changes took place in our vicinity; the most important of which was the arrival of a neighbour. The Château de l'Orme stood, as I have said, upon the side of the hill, commanding an extensive view through the valley below. It had originally been nothing more than one of those towers to be found in every gorge of the Pyrenees, built in times long past to defend the country from the incursions of the Moors of Spain.

After the expulsion of the infidels from the Peninsula, it had been converted into a hunting residence for the counts of Bigorre, and a great many additions had been made to it, according to the various tastes of a long line of proprietors, who had each in general followed the particular

style of architecture which accorded with his own immediate pursuits. The more warlike had built towers, and walls, and turrets, and battlements. One of the counts dying without children, it had fallen into the hands of his brother, who was a bishop. He added a Gothic chapel and a dormitory for ecclesiastics. His nephew, a famous lawyer and President de Grenoble, no sooner succeeded, than he built an immense hall, exactly copied from the hall of justice in which he had so often presided; and others of different dispositions had equally taken care of the stables, the dairy, and the kitchen.

In short, they had been like the fairies called to the birth of a child in our nursery tales; each had endowed the building with some particular gift, so that on the whole, though somewhat straggling and irregular, it contained an apartment of every kind, sort, and description, that could be wanted or wished for.

In one of the square towers, built upon the edge of a steep rock, some ninety feet in height, my father had fixed his library. Here he could read whatever book he chose, in a quiet, dozy sort of manner, without hearing any noise from the rest of the house; though, at the same time, he just caught, through the open windows, the murmuring of the waterfall below, and could look up from what he was perusing, and run his eye through all the windings of the valley, with a dreamy contemplative listlessness, in which he was very fond to indulge.

At about a quarter of a mile from the château, and amongst the first objects within the scope of my father's view as he sat in this library, was a small house, which had belonged to some of the wealthier retainers of the family, when it had been in its flush prosperity. This had since passed into the hands of a farmer, at the time that my grandfather had judged proper to diminish the family estate, and expend its current representative in gunpowder and cannon balls; but a year or two before the time to which I refer, it had become vacant by the death of its occupier, and had remained shut up ever since.

Little care being taken to keep this house in repair, it formed a sort of eye-sore in my father's view, and regularly every month he declared he would repurchase it, and arrange it according to his own taste, with a degree of energy, and even vehemence of manner, which would have led any one, who did not know him, to suppose that within an hour the purchase would be completed, and the alterations put in train; but the moment he had shut the library door behind him, he began to think of something else, and before he was in the court-yard, he had forgotten all about it.

One morning, however, he was not a little surprised to see the windows of the house opened, and two or three workmen of various kinds employed in rendering it habitable. Without giving himself time to recover from his astonishment, or to forget the change, he sent down the lackey to inquire the name of its new occupier, and, in short, the whole particulars.

How the man executed his commission I know not; but the reply was, that the Chevalier de Montenero would do himself the honour of waiting upon the Count de Bigorre. My father said, "Very well," and resolved to have everything prepared to receive this new neighbour with ceremony; but finding that the arrangements required a good deal of thought, he resolved to leave them all to my mother, and was proceeding to her apartments for the purpose of casting the weight of it upon her shoulders, when, in the corridor, he met little Helen Arnault, who had then been with us about six months--began playing with and caressing her--forgot the Chevalier de Montenero, and went out to ride with me towards Bigorre.

On our return, we found a strong iron grey horse saddled in the court-yard, and were informed that the Chevalier de Montenero was in the apartments of Madame la Comtesse. On following my father thither, I instantly recognised the person we had seen in the *étude* of the procureur at Lourdes. The sight, I will own, was a pleasing one to me, for from the moment I had first beheld him I had wished to hear and see more. There was a sort of dignity in his aspect that struck my boyish imagination, and captivated me in a way I cannot account for. I am well aware that on every principle of right reasoning, the theory of innate sympathies is one of the most ridiculous that ever the theory-mongers of this earth produced, but yet, though strange, it is no less a fact, which every one must have felt, that there are persons whom we meet in the world, and who, without one personal beauty to attract, and, even before we have had any opportunity of judging of their minds, obtain a sort of hold upon our feelings and imagination, more powerful than long acquaintance with their qualities of mind could produce. Perhaps it may proceed from some association between their persons and our preconceived ideas of goodness.

The Chevalier de Montenero, however, in his youth must have been remarkable for personal beauty, and the strongest traces of it remained even yet, though, in this respect, years had been the less merciful, inasmuch as they had been leagued with care. Deep lines of painful and anxious thought were evident on the Chevalier's forehead and in his cheek--but it was not thought of a mean or sordid nature. The grandeur of his brow, the erect unshrinking dignity of his carriage, all contradicted it. Powerful, or rather overpowering passions, might perchance speak forth in the flash of his dark eye, but its expression for good or bad was still great and elevated. There was something also that might be called impenetrable in his air. It was that of a man long accustomed to bury matters of much import deep in his own bosom; and very few, I believe, would have liked to ask him an impertinent question.

In manner he was mild and grave; and though his name was evidently Spanish, and his whole

dress and appearance betrayed that he had very lately arrived from that country, yet he spoke our language with perfect facility, and without the slightest foreign accent. I believe the pleasure I felt in seeing him again showed itself in somewhat of youthful gladness; and as he was not a man to despise anything that was pure and unaffected, he seemed gratified by my remembrance, and invited me to visit him in his solitude. "I mean, madame," said he, turning to my mother, "to make the house which I have bought in the valley a hermitage, in almost everything but the name; but if you will occasionally permit your son to cheer it with his company, I shall be the happier in the society of one who as yet is certainly uncorrupted by this bad world, and, in return, he may perhaps learn from me some of that lore which long commerce with my fellow-creatures, and much familiarity with great and strange events, have taught me."

I eagerly seized on the permission, and from that day, whenever my mood turned towards the serious and the thoughtful, my steps naturally followed the path towards the dwelling of the Chevalier. I may say that I won his affection; and much did he strive to correct and guide my disposition to high and noble objects, marking keenly every propensity in my nature, and endeavouring to direct them aright. There was a charm in his conversation, an impressive truth in all he said, that both persuaded and convinced; and, had I followed the lessons of wisdom I heard from his lips, I should have been both happier and better in my after life; but the struggle of youthful passion was ever too strong for reason: and for many years of my being I was but a creature of impulse, carried away by the wish of the moment, and forgetting, at the time I most needed them, all the resolutions I had founded upon the experience of others.

The Chevalier evidently saw and regretted the wildness of my disposition, but I do not think he loved me the less. There was something in it that harmonized with his own character; for often, notwithstanding all that he had learned in the impressive school of the world, the original enthusiasm of his heart would shine out, in spite of the veil of stern coldness with which he covered his warmer feelings. This I remarked afterwards; but suffice it in this place to say, that his regard for me assumed a character of almost paternal tenderness, which I ever repaid by a respect and reverence I am afraid more than filial. In his manners, to every one but the members of our family, he was distant and cold, but it seemed as if towards us his heart had expanded from the first. My mother he would often visit, behaving on such occasions with the calm, elegant attention of high bred courtesy, never stiffening into coldness or sinking into familiarity. With my father he would sit for many hours at a time, conversing over various subjects of life and morals, with which, even to my young mind, it was apparent that he was actively and practically acquainted; while my father, though perhaps his reasoning was as good, spoke evidently but from what he had read and what he had heard, without the clear precision of personal knowledge.

Other acquaintances, also, though of an inferior class, and very different character, must now be mentioned, though neither their habits of life, or rank in society, were calculated to throw much lustre on those who in any way consorted with them.

The excessive height to which the gabelle had carried the price of salt acted as one of the greatest encouragements to those Spanish smugglers, who have in all times frequented the various passes of the Pyrenees, and distinguished themselves by a daring and reckless courage, and a keen penetrating sagacity, which might have raised them individually to the highest stations of society, if employed for the nobler and better purposes of existence.

It unfortunately happens in the world, that talent is less frequently wanting than the wisdom to employ it; and many men, who, to my knowledge, might have established their own fortune, served their country, and rendered their name immortal, have wasted grand abilities upon petty schemes, and heroic courage upon disgraceful enterprises. So was it, though in a minor degree, with many of the Spanish smugglers that were continually passing to and fro in our immediate neighbourhood; and a braver or more ingenious race of men never existed.

Of course they were not without their aiders and abettors on the French side of the mountains; and it was very generally supposed that the mill, near which I had fallen into the water, was a great receptacle for the contraband goods which they imported. However, nothing of the kind was to be discovered, although the officers of the gabelle, called Gabellateurs, and the Douaniers, or custom-house officers, had visited it at all times and seasons. The mill had ever been found clear and fair, and the miller, a quiet, civil sort of person, who let them look where they listed, and took it all in good part.

Notwithstanding all this fair appearance, which baffled even the keen eyes of those interested in the discovery, and deceived completely all who were not interested in the smuggling itself, whenever my father wanted some good Alicante wine, or Xeres, or anything else of the same nature, he sent to the miller, who was always found ready to oblige *Monseigneur le Comte*. Often also, in my childhood, did I visit the mill in company with the old *maître d'hôtel*, whose predilection for the good things of this life, especially in the form of liquids, would have led him to cultivate the acquaintance of the Devil himself, if he had appeared with a bottle of wine under his arm. Many was the curious scene that I thus saw, now floating faintly before my memory as a remembered dream; and many were the means employed to make the amiable practice of smuggling palatable to the taste of the heir of Bigorre. Oranges, and pomegranates, and dates, were always brought forward to gratify the young Count, and my bold and daring spirit, even as a child, excited the admiration and delight of many of the dark smugglers, who used, in return, to tell me long stories of their strange adventures, which, heightened by the barbarous yet picturesque dialect that they spoke, excited my fancy to the utmost, and sent me away with my

brain full of wild imaginations.

Very often, if any of these men had something peculiarly rare or curious to dispose of, they went so far as to bring it up to the Château de l'Orme, where my father generally became a purchaser, notwithstanding a remonstrance which my mother would occasionally venture to make against the encouragement of persons habitually infringing the law of the land. Our family thus acquired the reputation amongst the smugglers of being their patrons and benefactors; and violent in all their passions, whether good or bad, their gratitude was enthusiastic in proportion. One of them, named Pedro Garcias, deserves more particular notice than the rest on many accounts. When I first knew him, he was a man of about forty, perhaps more; but time and danger, and excited passion and fatigue, had made as little impression upon him as the soft waves of some sheltered bay do upon the granite rocks that surround it. He was born at the little village of Jacca, on the other side of the mountains, the son of a wealthy farmer, who afforded him an education much superior to his rank in life. The blood of his ancestors, they said, was mingled with that of the Moors; but instead of feeling this circumstance as a stain upon his race, like most of his countrymen, he seemed rather to glory in his descent from a valiant and conquering people, and to exult in the African fire that circled in his veins.

His complexion was not peculiarly swarthy, though his long stiff black hair, and flashing eyes, spoke out in favour of his Moorish origin. In height he was nearly six feet three inches; but instead of any of the awkward disproportion which we sometimes see in tall people, his form was cast in the most exquisite mould of vigorous masculine beauty.

There existed between his mind and person that similarity which we more frequently find amongst the uncultivated children of nature, than where education has changed the character, or impeded its development. His intellect and all his perceptions were strong, powerful, and active, with a certain cast of fearless grandeur about them, that gave something great and fine even to the employment he had chosen. His disposition also was quick, hasty, and unsparing, but full of a rude enthusiastic generosity, that would have taught him to die for those he considered his friends, and also a bold dignity, which led him to trust to daring more than cunning. He had in his nature much of the beast of prey, but it was of the nobler kind.

Heaven knows how, with so many qualities of mind and person--qualities calculated to raise him above, rather than sink him below, the station in which he was born--Heaven knows how he fell into the perilous but inglorious life of a simple *contrabandisto* between France and Spain.

This man was one of the smugglers who most frequently visited the château, and it sometimes happened that the intermediation of the old *maître d'hôtel* was dispensed with, and that he would be admitted to an audience of my father himself, which generally lasted a considerable time; for Garcias possessed that sort of natural eloquence which, mingled with a degree of caustic humour, was sure to command attention, and to engage without wearying. There was something, too, in his very appearance that attracted and interested. Certainly never was a more picturesque, I may say, a more striking figure seen, than he presented, as I have beheld him often, coming down amongst the mountains, whose child he seemed to be: his long black hair gathered into a net under his broad sombrero; his cloak of chequered cloth, mantling all the upper part of his figure, and only leaving free the left hip, with the steel hilt of his sword, and the right arm ready to make use of it; while his legs, whose swelling muscles told of their gigantic strength, appeared striding underneath, covered to the knees with the tight elastic silk breeches of the Aragonese mountaineers. The rest of his dress generally consisted of a brown cloth jacket, a crimson sash round his waist, containing his pistols and long knife, white stockings, and a pair of mountain sandals, made of untanned cowhide, laced up to his ankle.

Such were the various persons that surrounded me in my youth; and such indeed were the only ones with whom I had any communication, except the young Jean Baptiste Arnault, who used to come frequently to see his sister. Her father troubled himself very little about her, after she was once fairly under the protection of my mother; but her brother was not so remiss, and, whenever he came, was received with kindness by all the family, nor suffered to depart without some little token of regard. For my own part, the memory of the service he had rendered me remained ever upon my mind, and showed itself in every way that my youthful imagination could devise; till, at length, the good simple-hearted lad, from the person obliging, began to feel himself the obliged, and both feelings mingling in his heart together, produced towards me the most generous and disinterested attachment.

I have said that I was between twelve and thirteen years old when Helen Arnault first became an inmate of the same dwelling. Two years rapidly passed by, and not long after I had reached the age of fourteen, I was sent to the college of Pau, where three years and a half more glided away in unperturbed tranquillity--calm--quiet--slow; but what a change had taken place in all my thoughts and feelings by the time they had passed! I was farther advanced both in stature, in form, and ideas, than most youths of my age. Childhood was gone--manhood was at hand. I left the placid, innocent bowers of infancy, with their cool and passionless shades; and I stood with my footstep on the threshold of man's busy and tumultuous theatre, ready to plunge into the arena and struggle with the rest. My heart full of strong and ardent passions, my imagination vivid and uncontrolled, with some knowledge gained from books, and some shrewd sense of my own, but with little self-government, and no experience, I set out from Pau, to return to my paternal mansion; and as from that day I may date the commencement of a new existence, I will pause, and begin my manhood with a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER IV.

I was now eighteen; slim, tall, and vigorous, inheriting some portion both of my father's and of my mother's personal beauty, and superadding all those graces which are peculiarly the property of youth; the flowers which partial nature bestows upon the spring of life, and which are rarely compensated by the fruits of manhood's summer. I know not why I should refrain from saying I was handsome. Long before any one reads these lines, that which was so, will be dust and ashes--a thing that creatures composed of the same sordid materials, cemented by the same fragile medium of life, will turn from with insect disgust. With this consciousness before me, I will venture, then, to say, that I *was* handsome:--if ever I was personally vain, such a folly is amongst those that have left me.

However, with some good looks, and some knowledge that I did possess them, it is not very wonderful that I should try to set them off to the best advantage, on my return home after a long absence. There might be a little native puppyism in the business; there might be, also, some thought of looking well in the eyes of Helen Arnault, for even at that early age I had begun to think about her a great deal more than was necessary; and to pamper my imagination with a thousand fine romances which need the lustrous air, the glowing skies, the magnificent scenes, of the romance-breathing Pyrenees, to make them at all comprehensible. Certain it is, that I did think of Helen Arnault very often; but never was her idea more strongly in my mind than on that morning when I was awakened for the purpose of bidding adieu to my college studies, and of returning once more to my home, and my parents, and the scenes of my infancy. I am afraid, that amongst all the expectations which crowded upon my imagination, the thought of Helen Arnault was most prominent.

At five o'clock precisely, old Houssaye, who had been trumpeter to my grandfather's regiment of royalists in the wars of the League, and was now promoted to the high and dignified station of my valet-de-chambre and gouverneur, stood at my bed-side, and told me that our horses were saddled, our baggage packed up, and that I had nothing to do but to dress myself, mount, and set out. He was somewhat astonished, I believe, at seeing me lie, for some ten minutes after he had drawn the curtains, in the midst of meditations which to him seemed very simple meditations indeed, but which were, in fact, so complicated of thoughts, and feelings, and hopes, and wishes, and remembrances, that I defy any mortal being to have disentangled the Gordian knot into which I had twisted them. After trying some time in vain, I took the method of that great Macedonian baby, who found the world too small a plaything, and by jumping up, I cut the knot with all its involutions asunder. But my farther proceedings greatly increased good master Houssaye's astonishment; for instead of contenting myself with my student's dress of simple black, with a low collar devoid of lace, which he judged would suit a dusty road better than any other suit I had, I insisted on his again opening the valise, and taking out my very best slashed pourpoint, my lace collar, my white buskins, and my gilt spurs. Then, having dressed myself *en cavalier parfait*, drawn the long curls of my dark hair over my forehead, and tossed on my feathered hat, instead of the prim looking conceit with which I had covered my head at college, I rushed down the interminable staircase into the courtyard, with a sudden burst of youthful extravagance; and, springing on my horse, left poor Houssaye to follow as he best might.

Away I went out of Pau, like a young colt when first freed from the restraint of the stable, and turned out to grass in the joy-inspiring fields. Over hill and dale, and rough and smooth, I spurred on, with very little regard to my horse's wind, till I came to the rising ground which presents itself just before crossing the river to reach Estelle. The first object on the height is the Château of Coarasse, in which Henry IV. passed the earlier years of his youth, and wherein he received that education which gave to the world one of the most noble and generous-hearted of its kings. I had seen it often before; and I know not what chain of association established itself between my own feelings at the time, and the memories that hovered round its old gray walls, but I drew in my horse's bridle on the verge, and gazed upon the building before me, as if interrogating it of greatness, and of fame, and of the world's applause. There was, however, a chill and a sternness about all that it replied, which fell coldly upon the warm wishes of youth. It spoke of glory, indeed, and of honour, and the immortality of a mighty name; but it spoke also of the dead--of those who could not hear, who could not enjoy the cheerless recompence of posthumous renown. It told, too, of Fortune's fickleness--of a world's ingratitude--of the vanity of greatness--and the emptiness of hope.

With a tightened bridle, and slow pace, I pursued my way to Estelle, and dismounting in the yard of the post-house, I desired the saddle to be taken off my horse, which was wearied with my inconsiderate galloping up and down hill, and to be then placed on the best beast which was disengaged in the stable.

While this was in execution, I walked into the kitchen with some degree of sulkiness of mood, at not being able to press out some brighter encouragement from a place so full of great memories as the château of Henri Quatre, and laying my hat on the table, I amused myself, for some time, with twisting the straws upon the floor into various shapes with the point of my sword; and then returned to the court to see if I had been obeyed. The saddle, it is true, had been placed upon the fresh horse; but just as this was finished, a gentleman rode into the yard with four or five servants--smooth-faced, pink-and-white lackeys--with that look of swaggering tiptoe insolence which bespeaks, in general, either a weak or an uncourteous lord. Seeing my saddle on a horse that suited his whim, the stranger, without ceremony, ordered the hostler to take it off instantly, and prepare the beast for his use.

He was a tall, elegant man, of about forty, with an air of most insufferable pride; which--though ever but tinsel quality at the best--shone like gold in the master, when compared with the genuine brass of his servants, who, while their lord dismounted, treated the hostler with the sweet and delectable epithets of villain, hog, slave, and ass, for simply setting forth that the horse was pre-engaged.

There have been many moments in my life, when either laziness, or good-humour, or carelessness, would have prevented me from opposing this sort of infraction of my prior right; but, on the present occasion, I was not in a humour to yield one step to anybody. Without seeking my hat, therefore, I walked up to the cavalier, who still stood in the court, and informed him that the saddle must not be removed, for that I had engaged the horse. Without turning round, he looked at me for a moment over his shoulder, and seeing a face fringed by no martial beard, yet insolent enough to contradict his will, he bestowed a buffet upon it with the back of his hand, which deluged my fine lace collar in blood from my nose.

The soul of Laure de Bigorre, my ancestress, who contended for her birthright with a king, rose in my bosom at the affront, and drawing my sword, without a moment's hesitation, I lunged straight at his heart. The dazzling of my eyes from the blow he had given me just gave him time to draw and parry my thrust, or that instant he had lain a dead man at my feet. The scorn with which he treated me at first now turned to rage at the boldness of my attack; and the moment he had parried, he pressed me hard in return, thinking, doubtless, soon to master the sword of an inexperienced boy. A severe wound in his sword-arm was the first thing that showed him his mistake, and in an instant after, in making a furious lunge, his foot slipped, and he fell; his weapon at the same time flying out of his hand in another direction, while his thunder-struck lackeys stood gaping with open mouths and bloodless cheeks, turned into statues by a magical mixture of fright and astonishment.

I am ashamed to say, that anger overpowered my better feelings, and I was about to wash out the indignity he had offered me in his blood, when I heard some one opposite exclaim, "Ha!" in an accent both of surprise and reproach. I looked up, and immediately my eyes encountered those of Chevalier de Montenero, standing in the yard, with his arms crossed upon his bosom, regarding us intently.

I understood the meaning of his exclamation at once, and dropping the point of my weapon, I turned to my adversary, saying, "Rise, sir, and take up your sword."

He rose slowly and sullenly; and while his servants pressed round to aid him, returned his blade into its scabbard, bending his brows upon me with a very sinister frown:--"We shall meet again, young sir," said he, with a meaning nod; "we shall meet again, where I may have better space to chastise your insolence."

"I dare say we shall meet again," answered I; "what may come then, God knows;" and I turned upon my heel towards the Chevalier, who embraced me affectionately, whispering at the same time, "Wash the blood from your face, and mount as quickly as you can; your adversary is not a man who may be offended with impunity."

I did as he bade me, and we rode out of the court together, taking our way onward towards Lourdes. As we went, the Chevalier threw back his hat from his face, and with one of those beaming smiles that sometimes lighted up his whole countenance, bestowed the highest praises on my conduct.

"Believe me, my dear Louis," said he, "such is the way to pass tranquilly through life: for with courage, and skill, and moderation, such as you have shown to-day, bad men will be afraid to be your enemies, and good men will be proud to be your friends." He then informed me that my opponent was the famous Marquis de Saint Brie, who had been strongly suspected in two instances of having used somewhat foul means to rid himself of a successful rival. "He prevailed on the Chevalier de Valençais to sup with him," proceeded the Chevalier. "The supper was good, the wine excellent, the marquis fascinating; and poor De Valençais returned home, believing that he had lost an enemy and gained a friend. Ere he had been half an hour in bed, he called his valet in great agony, and before morning he had lost all his enemies together, and gone to join his friends in heaven. The physician shook his head; but after having had an hour's conversation with the marquis, he became quite convinced that the poor youth had died of an inflammation.

"The other is not so distinct a tale," continued the Chevalier, "or I have not heard it so completely; but from this man's general character, I have no doubt of his criminality. He some

years ago proposed to marry the beautiful Henriette de Vergne, and offered himself to her father. The old man examined his rents, and finding that he had three hundred thousand livres per annum, he felt instantly convinced the Marquis de St. Brie was the most noble-minded, honourable, sweet-tempered, and amiable man in the world; and possessed all these qualities in exactly the proportion of three to one more than the Count de Bagnols, to whom he had before promised his daughter, and who had but one hundred thousand livres per annum. His calculation was soon made; and sending for the young Count, he informed him that he was not near so good a man as the Marquis de St. Brie, and gave him his reasons for thinking so, at the same time breaking formally his former engagement. De Bagnols instantly sent his cartel to the Marquis de St. Brie, who accepted it, but named a distant day. Before that day arrived, the young Count was accused of aiding the Huguenots at Rochelle, and was arrested; but he contrived to escape and transfer great part of his property to Spain. Now comes the more obscure part of the tale. The marriage of the Marquis with Mademoiselle de Vergne approached, and great preparations were made at her father's château; but a man was seen lurking about the park, whom many of the servants recognised as the Count de Bagnols. They were wise, however, and said nothing, though it was generally rumoured amongst them that the Count had been privately married to their young lady some weeks before his arrest. The night, however, on which Monsieur de St. Brie arrived, and which was to precede his marriage by one week, an uneasy conscience having rendered him restless, he by chance beheld a man descend from the window of Mademoiselle de Vergne's apartment. He gave the alarm, and with much fury declared he had been cheated, deceived, betrayed; and it then appeared, they say, that the fair Henriette had really married her lover. He was now, however, an exile, and a wanderer; and her father declared he would have the marriage annulled if the Marquis de St. Brie would but do him the honour to stay and wed his daughter. The Marquis, however, sternly refused, and that very night departed, and took up his lodging at the village hard by. The Count de Bagnols was never heard of more. Two mornings afterwards, there was found in the park of M. de Vergne a broken sword, near the spot where it was supposed the lover used to leap the wall. The ground round about was dented with the struggling of many feet, died and dabbled with gore. Part of a torn cloak, too, was found, and a long train of bloody drops from that place to the bank of the river; a peasant also deposed to having seen two men fling a heavy burden into the stream at that spot--he would not swear that it was a dead body, but he thought it was."

"And what became of Mademoiselle de la Vergne?" demanded I.

"The Countess de Bagnols," said the Chevalier,--"for no doubt remained of her marriage, removed, or was removed, I know not precisely which, to a convent, where she died about five or six months afterwards."

The Chevalier ceased, and we both fell into a deep silence. The fate of the two lovers, whose story he had just told, was one well calculated to excite many of those feelings in my young heart, which, when really strong, do not evaporate in words. I could have wept for the fate of the two lovers, and my heart burned like fire to think that such base wrongs should exist--and exist unpunished. All the sympathy I felt for them easily changed into indignation towards him whom I looked upon as the cause of the death of both; and I regretted that I had not passed my sword through the heart of their murderer when he lay prostrate on the ground before me.

"Had I known," cried I, at length--"had I known but half an hour ago, who was the man, and what were his actions, yon black-hearted assassin should have gone to another world to answer for the crimes he has committed in this.

"You did wisely to refrain," replied the chevalier, with a tone of calmness that, to my unrepressed heat, smacked of apathetic frigidity. "Viewed by an honourable mind, my dear Louis, his very fall covered him with a shield more impenetrable than the sevenfold buckler of Telamon. Never regret an act of generosity, however worthless the object. If you act nobly to one that deserves nobly, you confer a benefit on him and a benefit on yourself: if he be undeserving, still the very action does good to your own heart. In the present instance, had you slain that bad man, you would probably have entailed ruin on yourself for ever. Allied as he is to all the most powerful of the land, the direst vengeance would infallibly follow his fall, from whatever hand it came, and instant flight or certain death must have been your choice. Even as it is, you have called upon yourself the hatred of a man who was never known to forgive. When the first heat of his rage is past, he may seem to forget the affront he has received, but still it will be remembered and treasured up till occasion serves for wiping it out in the most remorseless manner. At present, I would certainly advise your father to take advantage of the temporary peace that exists with Spain, and send you into that land, till the man you have offended has quitted this part of the country, and it is possible you may never meet with him again. If you do, however, beware of his anger. Believe me, it is as imperishable as the fabled wrath of Juno. I am going to Saragossa myself upon business of importance, and will willingly take all charge of you, if you will join me there. Tell the Count what has happened--tell him what I say, and bid him lose no time--I would urge it upon him personally, but the affairs that call me into Spain admit of no delay."

CHAPTER V.

As the chevalier concluded, he put his horse into a quicker pace, and in a minute or two after, the road opened out into the beautiful valley of Lourdes. It would be difficult to express the thrilling feelings of exquisite delight with which I beheld again the scenes of my early remembrances. One must be a mountaineer to feel that strange attachment to one particular spot of earth which makes all the rest of the world but a desert to the heart. I have read a thousand theories, by a thousand philosophers, intended to show the latent causes of such sensations, and on comparing them with the living feelings of my own breast, I have found them what I believe the theories of philosophers generally are, chains of reasoning as fragile and unsubstantial as those links which the children in the country weave out of flowers, graceful in formation and apparently firmly united, but which the slightest touch will snap asunder. Such feelings are too fine, too subtle for the grasp of reason; they cannot be analyzed; they cannot be described; and even while we experience them, we can render to ourselves no account of why they are felt. The first sight of the Castle of Lourdes, perched upon its high rock, with its battlements, and turrets, and watch-towers; while the mountains sweeping round it formed a glorious purple background to its bold features, and the sparkling stream seemed playing at its feet--the very first sight made my heart beat like a young lover's, when he sees again after a long absence the first inspirer of his airy dreams.

Each blue hill, each winding path, each detached rock, each ancient tree, that my eye rested upon, was a landmark to guide the wanderer, memory, back through the waste of years, to some joy, or some sport, or some pleasure, long left behind. Eagerly I followed the chevalier on, from one object to another, gleaning bright remembrances as I went along; while the rapid mind, with every footfall of my horse, still ran through a thousand associations, and came back like light to mark some new theme of memory. Even the dirty, little, insignificant town of Lourdes had greater charms, in my eyes, than a city of palaces would, at that moment, have possessed, and I looked upon all the faces that I saw as if I recognised them for my kinsfolk.

When we arrived at the market-place, the Chevalier, who was about to visit the house of Arnault, his procureur, left me, and I proceeded alone, riding rapidly on, till the path, winding through the narrow gorge beyond Lourdes, opened out into the wide basin of Argelés. I paused for a moment to look over its far extent, rich in sunny magnificence. All seemed brightness, and tranquillity, and summer; every asperity was smoothed and harmonized, and the lustrous purple of the distant air spread a misty softness over each rough feature of the mountains; while a thousand blue and indistinct passes wound away on every side, promising to lead to calm and splendid lands beyond. It was like the prospect of life to a young and ardent imagination, before years have clouded the scene, or experience has exposed its ruggedness. There, was the dazzling misty sunshine with which fancy invests every distant object--there, the sweet valleys of repose where we promise ourselves peace and enjoyment--there, the mighty steps whereby ambition would mount unto the sky; while the dim passes, that branched away on either hand, imaged not ill the thousand vague and dreamy schemes of youth for reaching fancied delights which shall never be attained.

There were, however, real and substantial joys before me, which I hurried on to taste, and in the expectation of which was mingled no probable alloy, although I had been so long absent from my native home. The meeting of long-separated friends is rarely indeed without its pain. To mark the ravages that Time's deliberate, remorseless hand has worked upon those we love--to see a grace fled--or a happiness--any, any change in what is dear, is something to regret. But I was not at a time of life to anticipate sorrow; and my parents had seen me at Pau some four months before, so that but little alteration could have taken place.

Nothing, therefore, waited me but delight. My horse flew rather than ran, and the dwelling of my sires was soon within sight. I sprang to the ground in the courtyard, and, without a moment's pause, ran up the stairs to my mother's apartments, not hearing or attending to the old *maître d'hôtel*, who reiterated that she was in the garden.

There was delight in treading each old-accustomed step of my infancy, of gazing round upon objects, every line of which was a memory. The gloom of the old vestibule, the channeled marble of the grand staircase, the immense oaken door of my mother's apartments, all called up remembrances of the sweet past; and I hurried on, gathering recollections, till I entered the embroidery-room, where I had sprung a thousand times to her arms in my early boyhood.

The only person that I found there was Helen. She had risen on hearing my step, and what was passing in her mind I know not, but the blood rushed up through her beautiful clear skin till it covered her whole forehead and her temples with a hue like the rose; and I could see her lip quiver, and her knees shake, as she waited to receive my first salutation. I was carried on by the joyful impetus of my return, or, perhaps, I might have been as embarrassed as herself; but springing forward towards her, without giving myself time to become agitated, I kissed the one fair cheek she turned towards me, and was going on, in the usual form, to have kissed the other; but in travelling round, my lips passed hers, and they were so round, so full, so sweet, for my life

I could not get any farther, and I stopped my journey there.

Helen started back, and, gazing at me with a look of deep surprise and even distress, sunk into the chair from which she had risen at my coming; while I, with a brain reeling with strange and new feelings, and a heart palpitating with I knew not what, hurried away to seek my mother; unable even to find one word of excuse for what I had done, and feeling it wrong, very wrong, but finding it impossible to wish it undone.

The garden consisted of about an acre of ground, disposed in a long parallelogram, and forced into a level much against the will of the mountain, which invaded its rectilinear figure with several unmathematical rocks. Luckily my mother was at the extreme end, leaning on the arm of my father, who, with an affection that the chilly touch of Time had found no power to cool, was supporting her in her walk with as much attentive kindness as he had shown to his bride upon his wedding-day.

I had thus time to get rid of a certain sort of whirl in my brain, which the impress of Helen's lips had left, and to turn the current of my thoughts back to those parents, for whom in truth I entertained the deepest affection.

My mother, I found, had been ill, and was so still, though in some degree better; so that my sorrow to see her so much enfeebled as she appeared to be, together with many other feelings, drove my adventure of the morning, the Marquis de St. Brie, and the advice of the chevalier, entirely out of my thoughts, till poor Houssaye, whom I had left at Pau, arrived, bringing a sadly mangled and magnified account of my rencontre, gathered from hostlers and postilions at Estelle.

As his history of my exploits went to give me credit for the death of five or six giants and anthropophagi, I thought it necessary to interrupt him, and tell my own tale myself. The different effects that it produced upon a brave man and a timid woman may well be conceived. My father said I had acted right in everything, and my mother nearly fainted. Perceiving her agitation, I thought it better to delay the message of the chevalier till dinner, when I judged that her mind would be in some degree calmed, for she wept over the first essay of my sword, as if it had been a misfortune. My father and myself conducted the Countess to her apartments, where Helen still sat, hardly recovered from the agitation into which I had thrown her. On seeing me again, she cast down her look, and the tell-tale blood rushed up into her cheek so quickly, that had not my mother's eyes been otherwise engaged in weeping, she must have remarked her sudden change of colour. Observing the Countess's tears, Helen glided forward, and cast her arms round the neck of her patroness, saying, that she hoped that nothing had occurred to give her alarm or discomfort.

"Both, Helen," replied my mother; "both!" and then proceeded to detail the whole story, foreboding danger and sorrow, from my early initiation into strife and bloodshed. Yet, although not knowing it, my mother, I am sure, did not escape without feeling some small share of maternal pride at her son's first achievement. I saw it in her face, I heard it in her tone; and often since I have had occasion to remark, how like the passions, the feelings, and the prejudices, which swarm in our bosoms, are to a large mixed society, wherein the news that is painful to one is pleasing to another, and joy and sorrow are the results of the same cause, at the same moment. Man's heart is a microcosm, the actors in which are the passions, as varied, as opposed, as shaded one into the other, as we see the characters of men, in the great scene of the world.

As my mother spoke, Helen's lovely face grew paler and paler, and I could see her full snowy bosom, which was just panting into womanhood, heave as with some strong internal emotion, till at length she suddenly fell back, apparently lifeless.

It was long ere we could bring her back to sensation; but when she was fully recovered, she attributed her illness to having remained the whole day stooping over a miniature picture, which she was drawing of my mother; and the Countess, whose love for her had by this time become nearly maternal, exacted a promise from her that she would take a mountain walk every morning before she began her task.

This may seem a trifle; but I have learned by many a rude rebuff to know, that there is no such thing as a trifle in this world. All is of consequence--all may be of import. Helen's mountain walks sealed my fate. At dinner I delivered the message and advice, with which the chevalier had charged me; and after some discussion, it was determined that it should be followed. My father at first opposed it, and indignantly spurned at the idea of any one attempting injury to the heir of Bigorre in his paternal dwelling; but my mother's anxiety prevailed, backed by the advice and persuasions of good Father Francis of Allurdi, who offered to accompany me for the short time that my absence might be necessary. My father soon grew weary of making any opposition; and it was agreed that myself, Father Francis, and Houssaye, my valet, should take our departure for Spain within two days, and, joining the chevalier at Saragossa, should remain there till we received information that the Marquis de St. Brie had quitted Bearn.

That day ended, and another began, and, springing from my bed with the vigorous freshness that dwellers in cities never know, I took my gun, and proceeded to the mountain, purposing to search the rocks for an izzard. Gradually, however, I became thoughtful; and, revolving the events just past, many a varied feeling rose in my mind; and I found that one stirring and active day had changed me more than years of what had gone before--that it was, in fact, my first day of

manhood.

I had staked and won in the perilous game of mortal strife. I had shed blood--I had passed the rubicon--I was a man. Onward! onward! onward! was the cry of my heart. I felt that I could not--and I wished not that I could--go back from that I was to that which I had been.

And yet there was a regret--a feeling of undefinable clinging to the past--a sort of innate conviction that the peaceful, the quiet, the tranquil, was left behind for ever; and even while I joyed in the active and gay existence that Fancy and Hope spread out before me, I looked back to the gone, and yielded it a sigh, for the calm enjoyments that were lost for ever.

From these ideas, my mind easily turned to the latter part of that day which formed the theme of my thoughts, and I could not help hoping, nay, even believing, that the fainting of Helen Arnault was linked in some degree with concern for me. I had remarked the blush and the agitation when first I came; I had noted her behaviour on the kiss which I had taken; and from the whole I gathered hope.

Yet, nevertheless, I reproached myself for having used a liberty with her, which her dependent situation might lead her to look upon less as a token of love than as an insult, and I resolved to justify myself in her eyes. And how to justify myself? it may be asked. By taking that irrevocable step, which would clear all doubt from her mind. But whether it was solely to efface any bad impression that my conduct might have caused, or whether it was, that I gladly availed myself of that pretext to act as my heart rather than my reason prompted, I cannot tell. Certain it is, that I loved her with an ardour and a truth that I did not even know myself; and such a passion could not long have been concealed, even if the impatience of my disposition had not hurried me on to acknowledge it to her so soon.

By the time I had taken this resolution, I had climbed high amongst the hills, and was wandering on upon the rocky ridge that overhung the valley of the Gave, when I caught a glimpse of some one strolling slowly onward along the path by the riverside. It wanted but one look to tell me that it was Helen. High above her as I was, I could distinguish neither her figure nor her face; but it mattered not--I felt as well convinced that it was she, as if I had stood within a pace of her, and began descending the rocks as quickly as I could to join her in her walk, watching her as I did so, to see that she did not turn back before I could reach her.

After having gone some way up the valley, looking back every ten steps towards the château, as if she had imposed on herself the task of walking a certain distance, and would be glad when it was over, Helen at length seated herself on a piece of rock, under the shade of an old oak, that started out across the stream; and there, with her head bent over the running waters, she offered one of the loveliest pictures my eyes ever beheld. She was, as I have said, in the spring of womanhood. Time had not laid his withering touch upon a single grace, or a single beauty; it was all expanding loveliness--that perfect moment of human existence, when all has been gained, and nothing has been lost; when nature has done her utmost, and years have yet known nothing of decay.

I approached her as quietly as I could, and when I came near, only said, "Helen," in a low tone, not calculated to surprise her. She started up, however, and the same blush mantled in her cheeks which I had seen the day before. The good-morrow that she gave me was confused enough; and, in truth, my own heart beat so fast, that I did not know how to proceed, till I saw her about to return to the château.

"Stay, Helen," said I, taking her hand, and bringing her again to the rock on which she had been sitting--"stay for one moment, and listen to me; for I have something to say to you, which, perhaps, I may never have an opportunity of saying hereafter."

The colours varied in her cheek like the hues of an evening sky, and she trembled very much, but she let me lead her back; and for a moment raising her eyes from the ground, they glanced towards my face, from under their long dark lashes, with a look in which fear and timidity, and love, too, I thought, were all mingled; but it fell in a moment, and I went on with a greater degree of boldness; for all that love well, I believe, are, in some degree, cowards, and but gain courage from the fears of those they seek to win.

"There is a secret, Helen," I said, assuming as calm a tone as I could, "which I cannot go into Spain without communicating to some one, as it is one of the greatest importance, and I have fixed upon you to tell it to, because, I am sure, you will keep it well and truly; without, indeed," I added, "I were by any chance to die in Spain, when you may freely reveal it--nay, more, I request you would do so to both my parents."

Helen was deceived, and looked up with some degree of curiosity, brushing back the dark ringlets from her clear fair brow. "Will you promise me, Helen," I asked, "by all you hold most sacred, never to reveal my secret so long as I am in life?"

"Had you not better make some other person the depositary of so serious a trust?" she answered, half afraid, half curious still.--"Think, Count Louis, I am but a poor inexperienced girl--tell it to Father Francis, he will both respect your secret and counsel you as to your actions."

"He will not do," I replied. "Besides, he is going with me. Will you promise me, Helen? It is

necessary to my happiness."

"Oh, then I will," replied she, with a tone and a look that went to my very heart, and had almost made me cast myself at her feet at once.

"You must know, then, Helen," I proceeded, "that there is, on this earth, one sweet girl that I love more than any other thing that it contains"--while I spoke, she turned so deadly pale, that I thought she was going to faint again. "Listen to me, Helen," I continued, rapidly--"listen to me, dear Helen--I love her, I adore her, and I would not offend her for the world. If, therefore, I pained her for one instant, by robbing her lips of a kiss in the full joy of my return, I am here to atone it by any penance which she may think fit to impose."

While I spoke, my arm had glided round her waist, and my hand had clasped one of hers. Helen's head sunk upon my shoulder, and she wept so long, that I could have fancied her deeply grieved at the discovery of my love, but that the hand which I had taken remained entirely abandoned in mine, and that, from time to time, she murmured, "Oh, Louis!" in a voice indistinct to anything but the ears of love.

At length, however, she recovered herself, and raised her head, though she still left her hand in mine:--"Oh, Louis," she said, "you have made me both very happy and very unhappy: very happy, because I am sure that you are too generous, too noble, to deceive, even in the least, a poor girl that doubts not one word from your lips; but I am very unhappy to feel sure, as I do, that neither your father nor your mother will ever consent that you should wed any one in the class bourgeoise, even though it were their own little Helen, on whom they have already showered so many bounties. It cannot be, indeed it cannot be! The very mention of it would make them wretched, and that must never happen, on account of one who owes them so deep a debt of gratitude."

I tried to persuade her, as I had persuaded myself, that in time they would consent; but I failed in the endeavour, and as the first agitation subsided, and she began to reflect upon her situation at the moment, she became anxious to leave me.--"Let me return home," she said; "and oh, Louis! if you love me, never try to meet me in this way again, for I shall always feel like a guilty thing when I see your mother afterwards. I have your secret, and as I have promised, I will keep it: you have mine, and let me conjure you to hold it equally sacred. Forget poor Helen Arnault as soon as you can, and marry some lady in your own rank, who may love you perhaps as----"

The tears prevented her going on.

"Never, Helen, never!" exclaimed I, still holding her hand. "Stay yet one moment:--we are about to part for some months; promise me before I go, if you would make my absence from you endurable, that sooner or later you will be my wife!"

"No, Louis, no!" answered she, firmly, "that I will not promise; for I will never be your wife without the consent of your parents. But I *will* promise," she added, seeing that her refusal to accede to what I asked had pained my impatient spirit more than she expected, "I will *vow*, if you require it, never, never, to be the wife of another."

With these words she withdrew her hand, and left me, turning her steps towards the château; while I, delighted to find myself loved, yet vexed she would not promise more, darted away into the hills; and, as if to escape the pursuit of feelings which, though in some degree happy, were still too strong for endurance, I sprang from rock to rock after the izzards, with agility and daring little less than their own, making the crags ring with my carbine, till I could return home sufficiently successful in the chase to prevent any one supposing I had been otherwise employed.

CHAPTER VI.

We were very young to feel such passions as then throbbed within our bosoms, so strong, so keen, so durable; but our hearts had never known any other--they had not been hardened in the petrifying stream of time, nor had the world engraved so many lines upon the tablets of feeling as to render them unsusceptible of any deep and defined impression. Our whole hearts were open to love, and we loved with our whole hearts.

The two days of my stay soon drew to an end, and on the morning of the third, my horse, and that of Houssaye, together with a mule for Father Francis, were brought into the courtyard; and, after receiving my mother's counsel and my father's blessing, I mounted and rode forth with few of those pleasurable feelings which I had anticipated in setting out to explore foreign lands. But love was at that moment the predominant feeling in my bosom, and I would have resigned all,

abandoned all, to have stayed and passed my life in tranquillity beside Helen.

It was not to be, and I went forth; but a sensation of swelling at my heart prevented me from either conversing with Father Francis, or noticing the beautiful country through which we travelled--a thing seldom lost to my eyes.

By the time we reached Pierrefitte, however, a distance of about ten miles, the successive passing of different objects, though each but called my attention in the very slightest degree, upon the whole, began to draw my mind from itself; and when proceeding onward we wound our horses through the narrow gorge leading towards Luz, the magnificent scenery of the pass, with its enormous rocks, its luxuriant woods, and its rushing river, stole from me my feelings of regret, and left me nothing but admiration of the grand and beautiful works which nature had spread around. By this time the day had somewhat waned, for we were obliged to conform our horses' pace to the humour of Father Francis' mule, which was not the most vivacious of animals. The sun had got beyond the high mountains on our right, which, now robed in one vast pall of purple shadow, rose like Titans against the sky, and seemed to cover at least one third of its extent; but the western hills still caught the rays, and kept glowing with a thousand varied hues as we went along, like the quick changes of hope as man advances along the tortuous and varied path of existence.

Amongst other objects on which the sunshine still caught, was a little woody mound projecting from the surface of the hill, and crowned with an old round tower beginning to fall into ruins. As we passed it, the good priest, who never loved to see me in any of those fits of gloom which sometimes fell upon me--the natural placidity of his disposition leading him to miscomprehend the variability of mine--pointed out to me the mound and the crumbling tower as the spot where a great victory had been gained over the Moors, in times long gone; and our conversation gradually turned to war and deeds of renown: but Father Francis had abjured the sword, and little appreciated the word *glory*.

"Glory, my dear Louis," said he, "according to the world's acceptation of the word, is, I am afraid, little better in general than the gilding with which mighty robbers cover over great crimes. When I was young, however, I thought like you, and I am afraid all young men will think so, till reason teaches them that the only true glory which man can have, is to be found in the love of his fellow-creatures, not in their fears. All other glory is but emptiness. You remember the Italian poet's lines on the field of Cannæ.

I.

"Glory! alas! what is it but a name?
  Go search the records of the years of old,
And thou shalt find, too sure, that brightest fame,
  For which hard toiled the skilful and the bold,
Was but a magic gift that none could hold--
  A name, traced with an infant's finger in the sand,
O'er which dark Time's effacing waves are rolled--
  A fragile blossom in a giant's hand,
Crushed with a thousand more, that die as they expand.

II.

"I stand on Cannæ:--here for endless years,
  Might fond remembrance dream o'er days pass'd by,
Tracing this bitter place of many tears:
  But mem'ry too has flown, and leaves the eye
To rest on nought but bleakness, and the sigh
  To mourn the frailty of man's greatest deeds--
Oh, would he learn by truth such deeds to try,
  Lo! how devouring Time on conquest feeds;
Forgot the hand that slays, forgot the land that bleeds.

III.

"Time! mighty vaunter! Thou of all the race
  That strive for glory, o'er thine acts canst raise
The monument that never falls, and place
  The ruins of a world to mark thy ways.
Each other conq'ror's memory decays
  To heap the pile that comments on thy name;
Thy column rises with increasing days,
  And desolation adds unto thy fame;
But Cannae was forgot--Time, 'tis with thee the same."

It is astonishing how chilly the words of age fall upon the glowing enthusiasm of youth. As we go on through life, doubtless we gather all the same cold truths; but it is by degrees, not all at once, as when the freezing experience of many years is poured forth, like a sudden fall of snow upon our hearts. Lucky, most lucky is it, that we cannot believe the lessons which the old would

teach us; for certainly if we were as wise when we come into life as we are when we go out of it, there would be nothing great, and very little good, done in the world; I mean that there would be no enthusiasm of wish or of endeavour.

Nevertheless, there is always some damp rests upon the mind from such views of human existence, however warm may be the fire of the heart; and when Father Francis had repeated his lines upon Glory, he left a weight upon me which I found difficult to throw off.

We were now near Luz, and the good father's mule--which, by the way, was the best epitome I ever saw of a selfish and interested spirit--as if it entertained a presentiment of approaching hay and oats, suffered its sober legs to be seduced into an amble that speedily brought us to the door of the little cabaret where we were to pass the night. The accommodations which its appearance promised, were not of the most exquisite description, and one must have been very charitable to suppose it contained anything better than pumpkin soup and goose's thighs.[2] Father Francis, however, was tired and exhausted with a longer ride than he had taken for more than fifty years. Houssaye was an old soldier, and I was too young and in too high health to trouble myself much about the quality of my entertainment. Dismounting then, our horses were led into the stable, and we ourselves were shown to the room of general reception, which we found already tenanted by a fat monk, all grease and jollity; and a thin gentleman in black, who, for grimness and solemnity, looked like a mourning sword in a black scabbard. It seemed as if nature, having made a more fat and jovial man than ordinary in the capuchin, had been fain to patch up his companion out of the scrapings of her dish.

Father Francis did not appear to like the couple, and indeed he had reason; for it wanted no great skill in physiognomy to read in the jovial countenance of the monk a very plain history of the sort of self-denial and sensual mortification which he practised on himself. As for his companion, had I known as much of the world as I do now, I should instantly have understood him to be one of those solemn villains, who, if they sometimes lose a good opportunity by want of conversational powers, often catch many a gull by their gravity, and escape many an error into which a talkative rascal is sure to fall by his very volubility.

However, I was at an age when every one, more or less, pays for experience; and if I took upon me to judge the pair of worthies before me, I did not judge them rightly. Immediately after our entrance, Father Francis, as I have said, being very much fatigued, retired to bed, whispering to me that I had better get my supper and follow his example as soon as I could. To this, however, I was not very well inclined, my stock of animal powers for the day not being yet half exhausted; and as I saw the aubergiste beginning to place on the table, before the monk and his companion, various savoury dishes, for which my ride had provided an appetite, I whispered to Houssaye, and proposed to them to join their table. The matter was soon arranged, my Capuchin professing a taste for good cheer and good company, somewhat opposed to his vows of fasting and meditation, and my thin cavalier, laying his hand on his heart, and making the most solemn bow that his stiff back-bone could achieve.

The viands set before us offered a very palatable contradiction to what the appearance of the house had promised: and the conversation was as savoury as the dishes, for the monk was a man whose fat and happiness overflowed in a jocose and merry humour; and even the thin person in black, though his mustachios were rather of a grave cast, would occasionally venture a dry and solemn joke, which was a good deal enhanced by his appearance. The wine, however, was the most thin, poor, miserable abortion of vinegar that ever I tasted; and, after having made every tooth in my head as sharp as a drawn sword by attempting to drink it, I inquired of the Capuchin whether any better could be procured within twenty miles for love or money.

"Most assuredly," answered he, "for money, though not for love. No one gives any thing for love, except a young girl of sixteen, or an old woman of seventy. But the truth is, my host tells us always that this is the best wine in the world, till he sees a piece of silver between the fingers of some worthy signor who desires to treat a poor Capuchin to a horn of the best Cahors."

"Oh, if that be all," I answered, "we will soon have something better;" and I drew a crown piece from my purse.

"Ho! aubergiste!" exclaimed the Capuchin, as soon as he saw it; "a flagon of your best for this sweet youth; and mind, I tell you, 'tis a mortal sin to give bad wine when 'tis well paid for, and a Capuchin is to drink it."

I was not at the time of life to estimate very critically every propriety in the demeanour of a companion for half an hour. Man, unlike the insect, begins the being as a butterfly, which he generally ends as a chrysalis. Amusement, or as it should be called, excitement, is everything at nineteen; and the butterfly, though it destroys not like the worm, nor hoards like the bee, still flies to every leaf that meets its sight, if it be but for the sake of the flutter. The Capuchin's gaiety amused me, and I saw no deeper into his character. The wine was brought; and having passed once round and proved to all our tastes, the jovial monk set the flagon between himself and me, and enlivened the next half-hour with a variety of tales, at the end of each taking a deep draught, and exclaiming, "If it be not a true story, may this be the last drop I ever shall drink in my life!" At length, with a story far more marvellous than any of the others, the Capuchin emptied the flagon, adding his usual asseveration in regard to its truth.

"I don't believe a word of it," said the man in black.

"And I say it's true," reiterated the Capuchin, laughing till a stag might have jumped down his throat. "Order another flagon of wine, and I will drink upon it till the death."

"Nay," replied the other, "I will play you for a flagon of the best at trictrac, and treat the company."

The Capuchin readily accepted the defiance; the cards were brought, the window shut, and mine host lighted six large candles in an immense sconce, just behind the Capuchin and myself. The thin gentleman with his mustachios was on the other side of the table with old Houssaye, who, though an indefatigable old soldier, seemed tired out, and, laying his head upon his folded arms, fell asleep.

In the meanwhile, the wine made its appearance, and passed round; after which the game began, and the poor player in black lost his flagon of wine in the space of five minutes, much to the amusement of the Capuchin, who chuckled and drank with much profane glee.

The whole scene amused me. I flattered myself I was fond of studying character, and I would have done a great deal to excite the two originals before me to unfold themselves. This they seemed very well inclined to do, without my taking any trouble to bring it about. The thin gentleman got somewhat angry, and claimed his revenge of the Capuchin, who beat him again, and chuckled more than ever. The other's rage then burst forth: he attributed his defeat to ill luck, and demanded what the monk meant by laughing, and whether he meant to say he had played ill.

"Ay, truly!" replied the Capuchin, "and so ill, that I will answer for it this young gentleman, even if he knows nothing of the game, will beat you for a pistole;" and, turning round, he asked me "if I knew the game?" or if I was afraid to play with so skilful an antagonist.

I said that I knew very little of it, but that I was willing to play, and took the cards, only intending to sit one game, seeing that my opponent played miserably ill. He lost as before, and, still cursing his luck, demanded his revenge, which was worse. Nothing could be more diverting than the fury into which he cast himself, twisting up his mustachios, and wriggling his back into contortions, of which I had not deemed its rigidity capable, while the Capuchin chuckled, and, looking over my cards, advised me what to do. At length my adversary proposed to double, to which I agreed, hoping heartily that he would win, and thus leave us as we had sat down; but fortune was still against him, or rather his bad playing, for he laid his game entirely open, and suffered me to play through it. He lost, and drawing forth a leathern pouch, was about to pay me, when the Capuchin said, that perhaps I would play one more game for the twelve pistoles. The thin gentleman said it would be but generous of me, but, however, he could not demand it, if I chose to refuse. So much foolish shame did I feel about taking his money, that, to tell the truth, I was glad to sit down again, and we recommenced, each staking twelve pistoles. Fortune had changed, however; the dice favoured him; he played more carefully, and won the game, but by so slight a matter, that it showed nothing but extraordinary luck could have made him gain it.

It was now my turn to be anxious. I had lost six pistoles out of the money my father had given for my journey to Spain. How could I tell Father Francis? I asked myself, especially when I had lost them in such a manner, and in such company. My antagonist, too, had won by such a mere trifle, that it made me angry; I therefore resolved to try again--and again I lost. The sum was so considerable, I dared not now stop, and I claimed my revenge. My adversary was all complaisance, and, as before, we doubled our stake. An intolerable thirst had now seized upon me, and pouring out a cup of wine, I set it down beside me while I played. The game went on, and I never suspected false play, though my opponent paused long between each of his cards; but that was natural, as the stake was large, and I fancied that he felt the same palpitating anxiety that I did myself. To conceal this as much as possible, while he pondered, I fixed my eyes upon the cup of wine, in which the lights of the sconce were reflected very brilliantly. Suddenly, two of the flames seemed to become obscured, for I lost the reflection in the wine. This surprised me; but I had still sufficient presence of mind to take no notice, and keep my eyes fixed, when presently the lights appeared again. The moment after the same eclipse took place, and, raising my eyes to my opponent's countenance, I perceived that his glance was fixed upon a point immediately above my head.

The matter was now clear; my good friend, the Capuchin, who was kindly giving me his advice and assistance, seeming all the while most anxious that I should recover my loss, and assuring me that it was a momentary run of ill luck, which must change within five minutes, took care, at the same time, to communicate to my adversary, by signs above my head, the cards I had in my hand, and what I was likely to play.

What was to be done I knew not. To be cheated in so barefaced a manner was unendurable; and yet, how to avoid paying what I lost, unless I could prove the fraud, was a question difficult to solve. In this dilemma, I resolved to wake my faithful Houssaye, by touching his foot under the table, at the moment the Capuchin was executing his fraud. What was my joy then, when, on glancing towards the *ci-devant* trumpeter, I perceived his eyes twinkling brightly just above his arms, notwithstanding that he still pretended to sleep, and I immediately saw that he had, from the first, appreciated the talents of my companions.

My resolution was instantly taken; and letting the game proceed to its most anxious point, I saw, in the accidental mirror that the wine afforded me, the signs of the worthy Capuchin proceeding with vast celerity, when, starting suddenly up, I caught his wrist, as the hand was in the very act, and held it there with all the vigour of a young and powerful frame, excited to unusual energy by anger and indignation.

Houssaye was upon his feet in a moment, and, catching the collar of the black cavalier, who was beginning to swear some very big oaths, he flung him back upon the ground with little ceremony, at the same time dislodging from the lawn frills which adorned his wrists a pair of dice, that the honest gentleman kept there to meet all occasions.

For a minute or two the presence of mind, which is part of a sharper's profession, abandoned our two amiable companions; the Capuchin, especially, remaining without motion of any kind, his mouth open, his eyes staring, and his hands up in the air, with three fingers extended, exactly in the same attitude as he was when I detected his knavery. He soon, however, recovered himself, and jerking his hand out of my grasp with a force I knew not he possessed, he burst into a fit of laughter--"Very good; very good indeed," cried he: "so you have found it out. Well, are you not very much obliged to us for the lesson? Remember it, young man; remember it, to the last day you have to live; for you may chance to fall into the hands of sharpers, from whom you may not escape very easily."

The impudence of the fellow was beyond my patience, especially as, while he was speaking, I had split one of the dice produced from his companion's sleeve, and found it loaded with a piece of lead the size of a pea. "Whenever I meet with sharpers," said I, "I shall treat them but one way--namely, if they do not get out of the room whenever they are found out, I shall kick them down stairs, from the top to the bottom."

"Suppose there are no stairs?" said the Capuchin, coolly, moving towards the door at the same time.

"Then I shall throw them out of the window," replied I.

"I weigh two hundred weight," answered the monk, with the same imperturbable composure. "Good night, my young Wittol; you'll be caught yet, though your wings are so free. Come along, Count Crack!" he continued to his companion, whom I suffered to take up his own money after I had repossessed myself of the pistoles which he had won before I had discovered his fraud. "Your game is over for to-night. Goodnight, fair sirs; good night! God bless you, and keep you from *sharpers*," and leering his small leaden eyes, with a look strangely compounded of humour and cunning, and even stupidity, he rolled out of the room with his companion, leaving us to our own reflections.

When they were gone, my worthy attendant and myself stood looking at each other for some moments in silence. At length, however, he began laughing. "I saw," cried he, "what they were about from the first, but I did not think your young wit was sharp as my old knowledge; so I pretended to be asleep, and lay watching them. But you served them a famous trick, Count Louis, that you did; your father would laugh heartily to hear it."

"Hush, hush!" cried I; "for Heaven's sake, never mention it to my father, or to any one; but, above all, on no account to Father Francis." I then exacted a promise to this effect from the good old soldier, feeling heartily ashamed of my night's employment; and turning as red as fire every time the thought crossed my mind, that I had been sitting drinking and playing with a couple of vulgar sharpers, who had nearly succeeded in cheating me of all the money which my father had given me from his own limited means. To get rid of these pleasant reflections, I hurried to bed; and meeting the rotund form of the Capuchin on the stairs, nearly jostled him to the bottom in pure ill-humour.

CHAPTER VII.

Early the next morning we arose, and took our departure for Gavarnie. Mine host at Luz, however, drew me aside as we were setting out, and said he hoped we had not suffered ourselves to be cheated by the Capuchin or his companion, each of whom he was sure was a great rogue, and the Capuchin, he believed, had no more of the monk about him than the gown and shaved head. "Be cautious, be cautious," said he, "and if ever you meet them again, have nothing to do with them." I thanked this candid host for his information, giving him at the same time to understand, that he had better have warned me the night before, and that I took his tardy caution at no more than it was worth; after which I spurred on, and joined Father Francis and Houssaye,

who had not proceeded far on their journey ere I reached them.

Our road to Gavarnie lay through scenery of that grand and magnificent nature, which mocks the feeble power of language. The change was still from sublime to sublime, till the heart seemed to ache at its own expansion. The vast, the wonderful, the beautiful, the sweet, were spread around in dazzling confusion. The gigantic rocks and precipices, the profuse vegetation, the peculiar lustrous atmosphere of the mountains, the thousand rare and lovely flowers with which every spot of soil was carpeted and every rock adorned, the very butterflies which, fluttering about in thousands, seemed like flying blossoms; all occupied my mind with new and beautiful objects, till it was almost wearied with the exhaustless novelty. All was lovely, and yet I felt then, and always do feel, in such scenes, a degree of calm melancholy, so undefined in its nature, that I know not in what to seek its cause. Whether it is, that man feels all the weaknesses and follies of his passions reproved by the calm grandeur of nature's vaster works; or whether his spirit, excited by the view of things so beautiful, seemed clogged and shackled by the clay to which she is joined, and longs to throw off those earthly trammels which circumscribe her powers to enjoy, to estimate, to comprehend--I know not.

Had the scenery through which we passed needed a climax even more sublime than itself, it could not have been more exquisitely terminated than by the famous Circle of Gavarnie, where above an amphitheatre of black marble fourteen hundred feet in height--perpendicular as a wall, and sweeping round an extent of half a league--rises the icy summit of the Pyrenees, flashing back the rays of the sun in long beams of many-coloured light. When we arrived in the centre of the amphitheatre, a light cloud was stretched across the top of the cascade, while the stream, shooting over the precipice above us, fell with one burst full fourteen hundred feet; and, before it reached the ground, also spread out into another cloud. Gazing upon it, as we did, from a distance, we saw it thus pouring on, between the two, without perceiving whence it came, or whither it went; so that the long defined line of its waters, streaming from the one indistinct vapour to the other, offered no bad image of the course of mortal time flowing on between two misty eternities. At the same time, the bright diamond heads of the mountains shone out above the clouds, with a grand, unearthly lustre, like those mighty visions of heaven seen by the inspired apostle at Samos.

I could have gazed on it for ever, but the evening light soon began to fail; and as we had to rise early also the next morning, our stay in the amphitheatre was necessarily curtailed. Winding round the little lakes[3] that the stream forms after its fall, we returned to the filthy hut in which we were to pass the night, often looking back by the way to catch another glance of that grand and wonderful scene, whose very remembrance makes every other object seem small and insignificant.

By sunrise we were once more upon our way, and passing through what is called the Porte de Gavarnie, entered Spain, after having been examined from top to toe by the officers of the Spanish custom-house. A wide and wavy sea of blue interminable hills now presented themselves; and a guide, whom we had hired at Gavarnie, pointed out a spot in the distance which he called Saragossa. Had he called it Jerusalem, he might have done so uncontradicted by any object visible to our eyes, for nothing was to be seen but hill beyond hill, valley running into valley, till the far distance and the blue sky mingled together, with scarcely a perceptible line to mark the division.

Thitherward, however, we wended on, and some hours after reached Jacca, where, out of complaisance to Father Francis's mule, we remained for the night, and set off before daybreak the next morning, hoping to escape the heat of the middle of the day. In this we were deceived, making less progress than we anticipated, and enjoying the scorching of a meridian sun till we reached the gates of Saragossa.

On arriving at the inn, we inquired for the Chevalier, as we had been directed, but found that he had ridden out early in the morning. He returned, however, soon after, and having welcomed us cordially to Spain, as no apartments could be procured in the house, he led us out to seek for a lodging in the immediate neighbourhood. It was some time before we could discover one to our mind, for it is with great difficulty that the Spaniards can be induced to receive any foreigner into their dwelling; and even when we did so, we had to undergo as strict an examination by the old lady of the house, as we had bestowed upon her apartments. She said it was but just that both parties should be satisfied, she with us as well as we with her; and not content with asking all manner of questions, which had as much to do with her lodgings as with her hopes of heaven, she actually turned me round to take a more complete view of my figure.

This was carrying the ridiculous to so high a point, that I burst out into a fit of laughter, which, far from offending the good dame, tickled her own organs of risibility, and from that moment we were the best friends in the world. Our baggage being brought, and it being agreed that we should eat at the *posada* with the Chevalier, nothing remained but to distribute the three chambers upon the same floor, which constituted our apartments, according to our various tastes. As Father Francis sought more quiet than amusement, he fixed upon the large room behind, where he certainly could be quiet enough, for if ever even the distant voice of an amorous cat on the house-top reached his solitude, it must have been a far and a faint sound, like the hymns of angels said to be heard by monks in the cells of a monastery. Houssaye took up with the small chamber between the two larger ones, and I occupied the front room of a tall house in a

narrow street, whose extreme width of which might possibly be two ells. Nevertheless, whatever was to be seen, was to be seen from my window; and my very first determination was to see as much of Spain while I was in it, as I possibly could.

At eighteen, one has very few doubts, and very few fears; much passion, and much curiosity; and for my own part, I had resolved if I did not view the Spaniard in all situations, it should not be my fault. In short, by the time I arrived at Saragossa, I was willing to enter into any sort of adventure that might present itself, and though the memory of Helen might act as some restraint upon me, yet I am afraid I wanted that strong moral principle, which ought ever to guide us in all our actions. I make this acknowledgment, because I look upon these sheets to be a sort of confession, which in making at all, I am bound to write truly; and though I shall not dwell upon any of those scenes of vice which might lead others by the mere detail into the very errors that I commemorate, be it remembered, that I seek not to show myself at any period of my life as better or purer than I was. With regard to every feeling that came within the direct code of honour, or even its refinements, I had imbibed them from my earliest days; but I was a countryman of Henri Quatre, and not without a great share of that weakness, which in the gallant monarch was redeemed by a thousand great and shining qualities. But the love of adventure was my principal failing, which is a sort of mental spirit drinking, as hard to be overcome as the passion for strong waters itself.

I know not why or how, but the Chevalier seemed to have an instinctive perception of my character which almost frightened me; and while Father Francis was seeking in his bags for a parcel which Arnault at Lourdes had intrusted to his care, my keen-sighted companion drew me to the window of the front chamber, and after having, by a few brief observations on my disposition, shown me that he saw into my bosom even more clearly than I did myself, he warned me of many of the dangers of a Spanish town. "Remember, my dear Louis," continued he, "that I only tell you that such things exist--I do not tell you to avoid them. Your own good sense, as far as the good sense of a very young man can go, will tell you how to act, and I am afraid that all men in this world must buy experience for themselves; for if an angel from heaven were to vouch its truths, they would not believe the experience of others. However, loving you as I do--and you do not know how much I love you--there is one thing I must exact--if you want advice, apply to me--if you want assistance, apply to me--if you want a sword to back your quarrel, you must seek none but mine."

As he spoke, Father Francis entered the room with a look of much consternation and sorrow. "I hope and trust," said he, advancing to the Chevalier, "that the packet which your procureur Arnault intrusted to me for you is of no great value, for on my honour it has been stolen by some one out of my bags."

The pale cheek of the Chevalier grew a shade paler, and though no other emotion was visible, that one sign led me to think that the packet was of the utmost import, for never before did I see him yield the least symptom of agitation to any event whatever. "I did expect," replied he, in a calm, unshaken voice, "some papers of much consequence, but I know not whether this packet you mention contained them. There is no use, my good Father Francis, of distressing yourself upon the subject," he added, seeing the very great pain which the accident had caused to the worthy old man; "if by calling to mind the circumstances you can find a probability of its recovery, we will immediately take measures to effect it. If not, the packet is lost, and we will forget it."

"How it has been abstracted, or when," answered the good priest, "I know not. On arriving at Luz, at the end of our first day's journey, I opened my valise on purpose to put that packet in safety, wrapping it up with some small stock of money that I had laid by for the purpose of doing alms; but both are gone."

"Stolen for the sake of the money!" said the Chevalier, shutting his teeth, and compressing his lips, as if to master the vexation he felt. "Well," proceeded he, with a sigh, "it is in vain we struggle against destiny. For sixteen years I have been seeking those papers, but always by some unfortunate accident they have been thrown out of my reach; destiny wills not that I shall have them, and I will give it up."

"And what do you mean by destiny, my dear son?" demanded Father Francis, with the anxious haste of an enthusiastic man, who fancies he discovers some great error or mistake in a person he esteems. "Many people allow their energies to be benumbed, and even their religion, by a theory of fatalism which has its foundation in a great mistake."

"It appears to me, my good father," replied the Chevalier, with a smile, "that fate grasps us, as it were, in a cleft stick, as I have seen many a boor catch a viper--there we may struggle as much as we like, but we are fixed down, and cannot escape."

"Nay, nay," said Father Francis, "it is denying the goodness of God. Every one must feel within himself the power of choosing whatever way or whatever conduct he thinks fit. A man standing at a spot where two roads separate, does he not always feel within himself the power to follow whichever he likes? and yet, perhaps, death lies on the one road, and good fortune on the other."

"But if he is destined to die that day, that day will he die," replied the Chevalier. "And if you allow that God foresees which the traveller will take, of course he must take it, and his free will is

at an end."

"Nay, my son, not so," replied the old man. "What you call foresight, is in the Deity what memory would be in man, if it were perfect. It is knowledge. Standing in the midst of eternity, all is present to the eye of God; and he knows what man will do, as well as what man has done; but that does not imply that man has not the liberty of choice, for it is his very own choice that conducts him to the results which God already knows. When a lizard runs away frightened from before your footsteps, you may know positively that it will fly to its hole, but your knowledge does not affect its purpose; nor would it, if your knowledge was as certain as Omniscience. If you ask me why, if man's choice will be bad, the Omnipotent does not will it to be good? I say, it is to leave him that very freedom of choice which you deny. Farther, if there were no evil in the world, morally or physically,--and it would be easy to show that one cannot exist without the other--what would the world be? There would be no virtue, because there could be no possibility of vice; there would be no passions, because there would be nothing to excite them; there would be no wishes, because privation being an ill, no desire for anything could possibly exist; there could be no motion, for the movement of one thing would displace another, which was in its proper place before; there would be no action, for there being neither passions nor wishes, nothing would prompt action. In short, the argument might be carried on to show that the universe would not be, and that the whole would be God alone. No one will deny that the least imperfection is in itself evil, and that without God created what was equal to himself--which implies, as far as the act of creation goes, a mathematical impossibility--whatever he created must have been subject to imperfection, and consequently would admit of evil. Evil once admitted, all the rest follows; and if any one dare to ask, why then God created at all? let him look round on the splendid universe, the thousand magnificent effects of divine love, of divine bounty, and of divine power, and feel himself rebuked for thinking that such attributes could slumber unexerted."

"But," said the Chevalier, "it appears to me that your argument militates against the first principle of our religion--the divinity of Christ: for you say it implies an impossibility that God should create what was equal to himself."

"Christ was not created," replied the priest, and laying his hand on his breast he bowed his head reverently, repeating the words of Scripture: "This is my only begotten Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Whether the Chevalier retained his own opinions or not I cannot tell; but most probably he did, for certain it is, that nothing is more difficult to find in any man, than the *faculty* of being convinced. However, he dropped the subject, and never more to my knowledge, resumed it.

Father Francis, whose whole heart was mildness and humility, began to fancy after a few minutes that he had been guilty of some presumption in arguing so boldly on the secrets of Providence. "God forgive me," said he, "if I have done irreverently in seeking, as far as my poor intellect could go, to demonstrate by simple reasoning, that which we ought to receive as a matter of faith; but often, in my more solitary hours, in thinking over these subjects I would find a degree of obscurity and confusion in my own ideas, which impelled me to endeavour to clear and to arrange them."

"I am convinced you did very right, my good father," replied the Chevalier, "and that one great object in the good regulations of one's mind is to obtain fixed principles on every subject which comes under our review, carrying to the examination an ardent desire for truth; and to religious inquiries, that profound reverence and humble diffidence of human reason, that so deep and so important a subject imperatively requires."

Here dropped the conversation, leaving both parties better satisfied with each other than usually happens after any discussion, but more especially where religion is at all involved.

CHAPTER VIII.

My first care, after finding myself completely settled at Saragossa, was to overcome the difficulties of the Spanish language. I had studied it superficially long before, and, thanks to my Bearnaise tongue, I now accomplished the hardest part of the undertaking, namely, the pronunciation, which is very rarely acquired by Frenchmen in general. By the time this was gained, I had been three months in Spain, living in a state of high ease and tranquillity, very much against my will; finding nothing to excite or to romance upon; and, at best, meeting with but those little adventures which are unworthy, if not unfit for detail. It was not, however, my fault. I went continually to the Teatro, to the Plaza de Toros, and to all those places where one may most easily get one's self into mischief, without accomplishing my object; going from one to the other with the most provoking, quiet, uninterrupted facility that fortune could furnish forth to annoy me withal. Every one was calm, polite, and cold; no one fell in love with me; no one

quarrelled with me; no one took any notice of me, and I was beginning to think the Spaniards the most stupid, sober, mole-like race that the world contained, when some circumstances occurred, which, from the very first excited my curiosity, if they did not reach any more violent passion.

I have said, that the room which I had chosen looked into the street wherein we lodged, and also that that street was very narrow. At first, I had hoped to draw something from this circumstance, having always entertained high ideas of the pleasures and agitations of making love across a street, and for the whole first night after our arrival, I amused myself with fancying some very beautiful lady, with some very horrible guardian, who would find means of conversing with me from the *jalousies* on the other side.

I was soon undeceived; a very little knowledge of the localities showing me that the windows opposite to my own were placed in the back of a row of houses, forming one side of the principal street, to which our own was parallel; and I had reason to believe that none but servants and inferior persons in general dwelt in those rooms, the windows of which might communicate with mine. This was a disappointment, and I thought no more of it till one evening, when I had been riding in the environs with the Chevalier de Montenero, who, in general, gave me about an hour of his society every day. The rest of his time was principally spent, I understood, in reading and writing, and in bringing to a conclusion some affairs of importance, which had accumulated during a long absence in the New World, where, my talkative landlady assured me, he had won high honours both as a statesman and a warrior. On the day which I speak of, however, we had been absent nearly three hours, and, returning somewhat heated, I threw myself down before the open window, with a book in my hand. How I happened to raise my eyes to the opposite houses, I know not; but doing so, I saw the fingers of a hand so fair, that it could belong to no servant, resting on the bars of the *jalousie*, while, at the same time, a very bright pair of eyes glittered through the aperture, apparently rather turned down the street, as if watching for the coming of some one.

My own *jalousie* was drawn for the sake of the shade, so that I could observe without being remarked; and, approaching the window, in a few minutes after, I saw a priest enter at a small door, just below the window, where the eyes were watching. I concluded that this was the father confessor, and I took care to see him depart; after which I partly opened my blind, and remarked, behind the one opposite, the same eyes I had before seen, but now evidently turned towards myself, and I determined not to lose, for lack of boldness, whatever good fortune should fall in my way.

Love, of course, was out of the question: for I certainly loved Helen now as deeply as ever; and having no excuse, I shall not seek one, nor even try to palliate my fault. The only incentives I had, were idleness, youth, and a passion for adventure; but these were quite sufficient to carry me headlong on, upon the first mad scheme that opened to my view. Every one, I believe, feels, or must have felt, sensations somewhat similar, when the heart's wild spirit seems rioting to be free, and hurrying on reason, and thought, and virtue tumultuously along the mad course of passion, till each is trodden down in turn beneath the feet of the follies that come after. What I sought I hardly know. It was not vice--it was adventure.

From that day forward, I was more frequently at my window than anywhere else; and I cannot say that the fair object of my watchings seemed, after a time, to find the proximity of her own blind the most disagreeable part of her apartment. Indeed, the weather was so warm and so oppressive, that on more than one occasion she partially opened her *jalousie* to admit a freer current of air, giving me, at the same time, an opportunity of beholding one of the loveliest faces and forms I ever beheld, though so shadowed by the semi-darkness of the room, as to throw over the whole a mysterious air of dimness, doubly exciting. Of course the matter paused not here. I had heard and read a thousand tales of such encounters; I was as deeply read in all romances of love, as the Knight of La Mancha was in those of chivalry; and I had recourse to the only means in my power of commencing a communication with my fair neighbour--namely, by signs. At first she withdrew, as if indignant; then endured them; then laughed at them; and, in the end, somewhat suddenly and abruptly seemed to return them, though so slightly, that all my ingenuity would not serve me to comprehend what she sought to express. I had heard that the ladies of Spain were so skilful in finding the means of carrying on these mute conversations, that many a tender tale had been told in silently playing with a fan; and I somewhat wondered to find even one Spanish girl so ignorant of the language of signs. She had evidently, however, endeavoured to return an answer to mine, and that was enough to make my heart beat high.

As soon as night followed upon the day which had beheld this gracious and favourable change, I returned to my station at the window. The *jalousies* were closed, and no sign or symptom announced that any one was within for near half an hour, when suddenly I heard them move, and beheld them slowly and cautiously open, to perhaps the extent of three inches. I could see nothing, but that they were open, though I strained my eyes to discover what was beyond. However, after a moment's silence I had my recompense, by hearing a very soft and musical voice demand, in a low tone, "Are you there?"

"I am," answered I, in the hyperbolic style usual to Spanish gallants,--"I am, fairest of earth's creatures! and ready to serve you with life and----"

"Hush!" said the voice. "Go instantly to the theatre, and ask for the box marked G. Wait there, whatever betide--and say no more."

The *jalousie* immediately closed; and snatching up my hat, I prepared to obey the command, when my door opened, and Father Francis appeared with a light.

"In the dark, my dear Louis!" said he, with some astonishment; "what are you doing in the dark? Better come and read Seneca with me."

"I am just going to the play," replied I, holding up my hand to my eyes, as if the sudden light affected them, but, in reality, to cover a certain crimsoning of the cheek, which the mere presence of so good and pure a being called up, in spite of my efforts to prevent it. "They play to-night Calderon's *Cisma de Inglaterra*."

"You are all too fond of that bad place, a theatre," said Father Francis; "but I suppose, Louis, that it will always be so at your age. I must not forget now, when I can no longer enjoy, that you are in the season of enjoyment, and that I was once like you. However, I hope that your love of theatres will soon pass. They were instituted, doubtless, to promote morality, and to do good, but they are sadly perverted in our day. Well, God be with you!"

I could have well spared the interruption, but more especially the good father's recommendation to God, when my purpose was not what my own heart could fully approve. Not that I had any formed design of evil--not that I had any wish of wronging innocence--nay, nor of breaking my faith to Helen. 'Twas but excitement I sought; and though perhaps I wished I had not advanced so far, I was ashamed of drawing back, and I hurried on to the theatre.

A great crowd was going in; and, following the course of the stream, I sought for the box marked G. On finding it, I was surprised to discover that it was one of the curtained boxes reserved for the principal officers of the city. An old woman had the keys of these boxes in charge, and to her I applied for admission. The face of surprise which she assumed I shall not easily forget. "Heyday!" she exclaimed, "let you into the box of the corregidor! I dare say! Pray, young sir, where is your order?"

"Here!" said I, nothing abashed, and resolved to accomplish my object; and, putting my hand in my pocket, I seemed to search for the order till some persons who were near had passed on. I then produced a pistole, which the old lady found to be an order in so good and authentic a form, that she drew forth the key, and proceeded towards the door, saying, "The corregidor went out of town this morning, and will not return for two days, so there can be no great harm in letting you in; but keep the curtains close. You can see and hear very well through the chinks, without showing yourself in the corregidor's box, I warrant."

I promised to observe her directions, and entered the box, which was empty. I seated myself behind the curtains, which, drawn completely across the front, hid me from the spectators, though I had still a good view of the stage. The play, indeed, was not what I came to see; and at first I listened with eager and attentive ears to the sound of every foot that passed by the door of the box. Actually trembling with anxiety and excitement, I could hear one person after another go by, till the tide of spectators began to slacken, and, at last, but the solitary step of some late straggler sounded along the passage, hurrying on to make up for his delay. Two or three times, when the foot was lighter than the rest, or when it seemed to pause near the door, I started up, and my heart beat till it was actually painful to feel it throbbing against my side: but, after a while, in order to calm such sensations, I endeavoured to fix my mind upon the play; and, won by the cunning of the scene, I gradually entered into the passions I saw portrayed.

The play (La Cisma de Inglaterra) contained all Calderon's rigour and wit, and also all his extravagance. The first scene, representing the dream of Henry VIII., King of England, and his reception of the two letters from the pope, and from Martin Luther, was too full of petty conceits to engage me for a moment; but the description of Anne Bullen, as given by Carlos in the second scene, caught my young imagination, and the exquisite wit of the court-fool, Pasquin, soon riveted my attention. This character had been allotted to one of the best performers of the company; and it was wonderful what point he gave to the least word of the jester. Calderon had done much, but every theatrical writer must leave much for the player; and, in this instance, nothing he could have wished expressed was either omitted or caricatured. It was all true and simple, from the broad childish stare, half folly, half satire, with which he exclaimed, "*Que soy galan de galanes*," to the face of moralizing meditation, half bewildered, half severe, with which he commented on the king's melancholy:--

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"Triste està Rey, de què sirve
 Quanto puede, quanto manda
 Si no puede, estàr alegre
 Quando quiere?"
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The play had proceeded for some time, and I was listening with deep interest to the exquisite dialogue between the king and Anne Bullen, in which he first discovers his passion to her, when the door of the box opened, and a lady entered, wrapped in a black mantilla. Her face was also concealed with a black velvet mask; and though, after shutting the door of the box carefully, she dropped the mantilla, discovering a form on whose beauties I will not dwell, she still retained the mask for some moments, and I could see her hand shake as it leaned on the back of one of the seats. My heart beat so violently, that I could scarcely speak; and I would have given worlds for

one word from her lips, to which I might have replied. Time, however, was not to be lost, and advancing, I offered my hand to lead her forward; but she raised her finger, saying, in a very low voice, "Hush! Is there any one in the box to the left?"

"I have heard no one," replied I, rejoicing to recognise the same tones in which the appointment had been made with me. "Nay, do not tremble so," I added, laying my hand on hers; and I believe the agitation which that touch must have told her I experienced myself, served more to re-assure her than my words. "Why should you fear, with a friend, a lover, an adorer? Why, too, should you hide your face from one to whom its lightest look is joy? Will you not take off your mask?"

The lady made no reply; but, seating herself in the back part of the box, leaned her head for some time upon her hand, over which the ringlets of her rich black hair fell in glossy profusion. My agitation gradually subsided; I added caresses to tender language--I held her hand in mine--I ventured to carry it to my lips, and I am afraid many a burning word did passion suggest to my tongue. For a moment or two she let me retain her hand, seeming totally absorbed by feelings which gave no other sense power to act; but at length she gently withdrew it from mine, and, untying a string that passed through her hair, let the mask drop from her face. If her figure had struck me as lovely, how transcendently beautiful did her face appear when that which hid it was thus suddenly removed. She could not be more than eighteen, and each clear, exquisite feature seemed moulded after the enchanting specimens of ancient art, but animated with that living grace which leaves the statue far below. Her lip was all sweetness, and her brow all bland expanse; but there was a wild energetic fire in her eye, which spoke of the strong and ardent passions of her country; and there was also an occasional gleam in it, that had something almost approaching the intensity of mental wandering. Let me not say that those eyes were anything less than beautiful. They were of those full, dark, thrilling orbs, that seem to look deep into the heart of man, and exercise upon all its pulses a strange, attracting influence, like that which the bright moon holds over the waters of the world; and round them swept a long, black, silky fringe, that shaded and softened without diminishing their lustre by a ray.

As soon as she recovered herself sufficiently to speak, she replied to my ardent professions in language which, though somewhat wild and undefined, left me no doubt of her feelings. She told me, too, that she was the daughter of the corregidor; that her mother was dead, and that her father loved her even to idolatry; that she returned his affection; and that never, even were it to wed a monarch, would she leave him. At the same time she spoke enthusiastically, even wildly, of love and passion, and to what it might prompt a determined heart. She spoke, too, of jealousy, but she said it was incompatible with love, for that a mind which felt like hers would instantly convert its love into hate, if it once found itself deceived: and what was there, she asked, that such hate would not do?

On this subject she threw out some dark and mysterious hints, which, at any other moment, might have made me estimate the dangerous excess of all her passions; but I was infatuated, and would not see the perils that surrounded the dim gulf into which I was plunging. We talked long, and we talked ardently, and in the end, when, some little time before the play was concluded, she rose to leave me, my brain was in a whirl that wanted little but the name to be madness.

"Though I have unlimited power over my own actions," said she, "even perhaps too much so--for, ungrateful that I am!--I sometimes wish my father loved me less, or more wisely;--but, as I said, though I have unlimited power over my own actions, some reasons forbade me to-night receiving you in my own house. To-morrow night you may come. You have remarked," she added, putting on her mask, and wrapping her mantilla round her, "a small door under the window of my dressing-room; at midnight it will be open--come thither, for there are many things I wish to say." She then enjoined me not to leave the theatre till the play was completely over, and left me, my whole mind and thoughts in a state of agitation and confusion hardly to be expressed. I will not say that conscience did not somewhat whisper I was doing wrong; but the tumult of excited passion, and the gratification of my spirit of romance, prevented me even from calculating how far I might be hurried. There was certainly some vague point where I proposed to stop short of vice; and I trust I should have done so, even had not other circumstances intervened to save me therefrom. However that may be, let it be marked and remembered, from the first, that *the steps I took in wrong, by an extraordinary chain of circumstances, caused all the misery of my existence*.

CHAPTER IX.

Never, perhaps, in my existence--an existence varied by dangers, by difficulties, by passions, and by follies--never did any day seem to drag so heavily towards its conclusion as that which lay

between me and the meeting appointed for the following night. It was not alone that impatient expectation which lengthens time till moments seem eternities, but it was, added to this, that I had to find occupation for every moment, lest tardy regrets should interpose, and mingle bitter with what was ever a sweet cup to me--excitement. Verily do I believe that I crowded into that one day more employments than many men bestow upon a year. I rode through the whole town; I witnessed the bull-fight; I wrote a letter to my father--God knows what it contained, for I know not, and I never knew; I read Plato, which was like pouring cold water on a burning furnace; I played on my guitar--I sung to it; I solved a problem of Euclid; I read a page of Descartes: and thousands of other things did I do to fill up the horrid vacancy of each long-expectant minute. At length, however, day waned, night came, and the hour approached nearer and more near. At ten o'clock I pretended fatigue, and leaving Father Francis, who seemed well inclined to consume the midnight oil, I retired to my apartment as if to bed. Old Houssaye came to assist me, but I made an excuse to send him away, which, though perhaps a lame one, he was too old a soldier not to take at once. He was a man that never asked any questions; whatever the order was, he obeyed it instantly, and he was unrivalled at the quick conception of a hint. Thus I had scarcely finished my first sentence, explanatory of my reasons for not requiring his services, than running on at once to the conclusion, he made his bow, and quitted the room.

Being left alone, two more long hours did I wear out in the fever of expectation. All noises gradually subsided in the town and in the house, and everybody was evidently at repose before half-past eleven. This was now the longest half-hour of all. I thought the church clock must have gone wrong, and have stopped; and I was confirmed in this idea when I heard the midnight round of the patrol of the Holy Brotherhood pass by the house, as usual pushing at every door to see that all were closed for the night. Shortly after, however, the chimes of midnight began; and, with a beating heart, I descended the stairs, having previously insured the means of opening the door without noise. In a moment after, the fresh night air blew chill upon my cheek, and conveyed a sort of shudder to my heart, which I could scarce help feeling as a sinister omen; but, closing the door as near as I could, without shutting it entirely, I darted across the street, pushed open the little door, and entered. As I did so, the garments of a woman rustled against me, and I caught the same fair soft hand I had held the former night. It burned like a living fire; and, as I held it in mine, it did not return or even seem sensible to the pressure, but my fingers felt almost scorched with the feverish heat of hers.

Cautiously shutting the door, she led me by the hand up a flight of stairs to a small, elegant dressing-room, wherein, on the toilet-table, was a burning lamp. It shone dimly, but with sufficient light to show me that my fair companion, though lovely as ever, was deadly pale; and, attributing it to that agitation which she could not but feel a thousand times more than even I did, I attempted to compose her by a multitude of caresses and vows, which she suffered me to lavish upon her almost unnoticed, remaining with a mute tongue and wandering eye, as if my words scarcely found their way to the seat of intellect. At length, laying her hand upon the hilt of my sword, with a faint smile, she said, "What! a sword! You should never come to see a lady with a sword;" and unbuckling it with her own hand, she laid it on the table.

"Now," proceeded she, taking up the lamp, and leading the way into a splendid room beyond--"now you must give me a proof of your love;" and she shut the door suddenly behind us with a quickness which almost made me start. Her whole conduct, her whole appearance was strange. That a girl of such high station should appear agitated at receiving in secret the first visit of one whom she had every right to look upon as a lover, was not surprising; but her eye wandered with a fearful sort of wildness, and her cheek was so deadly, deadly pale, that I scarcely ever thought to see such a hue in anything living. At the same time, the hand with which she held one of mine, as she led me on, confirmed its grasp with a tighter and a tighter clasp, till every slender burning finger seemed impressing itself on my flesh. "Have you a firm heart?" asked she at length, fixing her eyes upon me, and compressing her full beautiful lips, as if to master her own sensations.

I answered that I had; and, indeed, as the agitation of passion gave way to other feelings, called forth by her singular manner and behaviour, the natural unblenching courage of my race returned to my aid, and I was no longer the tremblingly empassioned boy that I entered her house.

"It is well!" said she. "Come hither, then!" and she led me towards what seemed a heap of cushions covered with a large sheet of linen. For a moment she paused before them, with her foot advanced, as if about to make another step forward, and her eye straining upon the motionless pile before her, as if it were some very horrible object; then, suddenly taking the edge of the cloth, she threw it back at once, discovering the dead body of a priest weltering in its gore. He seemed to have been a man of about thirty, both by his form and face, which was full, and unmarked by any lines of age. It was turned towards me, and had been slightly convulsed by the pang of death; but still, even in the cold, meaningless features, I thought I could perceive that look of an habitually dissolute mind, which stamps itself in ineffaceable characters; and there was a dark determined scowl still upon the brow of death, which, to my fancy, spoke of the remorseless violation of the most sacred duties. The limbs were contracted, and one of the hands clenched, as if there had been a momentary struggle before he was mastered to his fate; while the other hand was stretched out, with all the fingers wide extended, as while still striving to draw the last few agonizing breaths. His gown was gashed on the left side, and dripping with gore; and it is probable that the wound it covered went directly to his heart, from the great effusion of blood that had taken place.

It was a dreadful sight; and, after looking on it for a few moments in astonishment and horror, I turned my aching eyes towards the lovely girl that had conducted me to such a strange and awful exhibition. She, too, was gazing at it with that sort of fixed intensity of look, which told that her mind gathered there materials for strong and all-absorbing thoughts. "In the name of Heaven!" cried I, "who has done this?"

"I!" answered she, with a strange degree of calmness;--"I did it!"

"And what on earth could tempt you," I continued, "to so bloody and horrible a crime?"

"You shall hear," she replied. "That man was my confessor. He took advantage of his power over my mind--he won me to all that he wished--and then--he turned to another--fairer, perhaps, and equally weak. I discovered his treachery, but I heeded it the less, as I had seen you, and, for the first time, knew what love was; but I warned him never to approach me again, if he would escape that Spanish revenge whose power he ought to have known. He came, this very night--perhaps from the arms of another,--and he yet dared to talk to me of passion and of love! thinking me still weak enough to yield to him. Oh! with what patience I was endued not to slay him then! I bade him go forth, and never to approach me again. He became enraged--he threatened to betray me--to publish my shame--and he is--what he is!" There was a dreadful pause: she had worked herself up by the details to a pitch of almost frenzied rage; and, gazing upon the body of him that had wronged her with a flushed cheek and flashing eyes, she seemed as if she would have smote him again. "The story is told," cried she at length; "and now, if you love me, as you have said, you must carry him forth, and cast him into the great fosse of the city. Ha! you will not! You hate me!--you despise me! Then I must speak another language. You shall! Yes, you shall! or both you and I will join him in the grave!" and, drawing a poniard from her bosom, she placed herself between me and the door.

"And do you think me so great a coward," replied I, hastily, "to be frightened into doing what I disapprove, by a poniard in the hand of a woman? No, lady, no," I continued, more kindly, believing her, as I did, to be disordered in mind by the intensity of her feelings; "I pity you from my heart--I pity you for the base injuries you have suffered; and even, though I cannot but condemn the crime you have committed, I would do much, very much, to soothe, to calm, to heal your wounded spirit; but----"

I spoke long--gently--kindly to her. It reached her heart--it touched the better feelings of what might have been a fine, though exquisitely sensitive, mind; and, throwing away the poniard, she cast herself at my feet, where, clasping my knees, she wept till her agony of tears became perfectly fearful. I did everything I could to tranquillize her; I entreated, I persuaded, I reasoned, I even caressed. There was something so lovely, yet so terrible in it all--her face, her form, her agitation, the sweetness of her voice, the despairing, heart-broken expression of her eyes, that, in spite of her crime, I raised her from my feet, I held her in my arms, and I promised to do all that she would have me.

After a time she began to recover herself; and, gently disengaging herself from me, she gazed at me with a look of calm, powerful, painful regret, that I never can forget. "Count Louis," she said, "you must abhor me; and you have, alas! learned to do so at a moment when I have learned to love you the more. Your kindness has made me weep. It was what I needed,--it has cleared a cloud from my brain, and I now find how very, very guilty I am. Do not take me to your arms; I am unworthy they should touch me;--but fly from me, and from this place of horror, as speedily as you can, for I will not take advantage of the generous offer you make, to do that which I so ungenerously asked. I asked it in madness; for I feel that, within the last few hours, my reason has not been with me. It slept:--I have now wept; and it is awake to all the misery I have brought upon myself. Go--go--leave me; I will stay and meet the fate my crime deserves. But, oh! I cannot bear to think upon the dishonour and misery of my father's old age!" and again she wept as bitterly as before.

Again I applied myself to soothe her; and imprudently certainly, perhaps wrongly, insisted upon carrying away the evidence of her guilt, and disposing of it as she had at first demanded. But two short streets lay between the spot where we were and the old boundary of the city, over which it was easy to cast the body into the water below. At that hour I was not likely to meet with any one, as all the sober inhabitants of the town were by this time in their first sleep, and the guard had made its round some time before. I told her all this, and expressed my determination not to leave her in such dreadful circumstances; so that, seeing me resolved upon doing what I had proposed, the natural horror of death and shame overcame her first regret at the thought of implicating me, and she acquiesced.

As I approached the body for the purpose of taking it in my arms, I will own, a repulsive feeling of horror gathered about my heart, and a slight shudder passed over me. She saw it, and casting her beautiful arms round my neck, held me back with a melancholy shake of the head, saying, "No, no, no!" But I again expressed myself determined, and suddenly pressing her burning lips to mine, she let me go. "Pardon me!" said she; "it is the last I shall ever have, most generous of human beings." And turning away, she kneeled by her bed-side, hiding her face upon the clothes, while I raised the body of the priest in my arms, and bore it down stairs.

Being fortunately of a very strong and vigorous mould, and well hardened by athletic exercises, I could carry a very great weight, but never did I know till then, how much more

ponderous and unwieldy a dead body is than a living one. I however gained the street with my burden; and with a beating heart, and anxious glaring eye proceeded as fast as I could towards the walls. Everything I saw caused me anxiety and alarm; the small fountain at the corner of the Calle del Sol made me start and almost drop the body; and each shadow that the moon cast across the street, cost me many a painful throb. At length, however, I reached the old rampart, where it looks out over the olive grounds, and advancing hurriedly forward, I gave a glance around to see that no one was there, and cast the corpse down into the fosse, which was full of water; I heard the plunge of the body and the rush of the agitated waters, and a shudder passed over me to think of thus consigning the frail tabernacle, that not long since had enshrined a sinful but immortal spirit, to a dark and nameless grave. All the weaknesses of our nature cling to the rites of sepulture, and at any time I should have felt, in so dismissing a dead body to unmourned oblivion, that I was violating the most sacred prejudices of our nature; but when I thought upon the how, and the wherefore, my blood felt chill, and I dared not look back to see the full completions of that night's dreadful deeds.

My heart was lightened, however, that it was now done, and I turned to proceed home, having had enough of adventure to serve me for a long while. Before I went, I gave an anxious glance around to see whether any one was watching me, but all seemed void and lonely. I then darted away as fast as I could, still concealing myself in the shadowy sides of the streets, and following a thousand turnings and windings to insure that my path was not tracked. At length, approaching the street wherein I lived, I looked round carefully on all sides, and seeing no one, darted up it, sprang forward, and pushed open the door of my lodging. At that moment a figure passed me coming the other way; it was the Chevalier de Montenero, and though he evidently saw me, he went on without remark. I closed the door carefully, groped my way up to my own chamber, and striking a light, examined my doublet, to see if it had received any stains from the gory burden I had carried. In spite of every precaution I had taken, it was wet with blood in three places, and I had much trouble in washing out the marks, though it was itself of murrey-coloured cloth, somewhat similar in hue.

Difficult is it to tell my feelings while engaged in this employment--the horror, the disgust, at each new stain I discovered, mingled with the painful anxiety to efface every trace which the blood of my fellow-being had left. Then to dispose of the water, whose sanguine colour kept glaring in my eye wherever I turned, as if I could see nothing but it, became the question; and I was obliged to open the casement, and pour it gently over the window-sill, without unclosing the *jalousies*, so as to permit its trickling down the front of the house, where I knew it must be evaporated before the next morning. This took me some time, as I did it by but very cautious degrees: but then, when it was done, all vestiges of the deed in which I had been engaged were effaced, and to my satisfaction I discovered, on examining every part of my apparel with the most painful minuteness, that all was free and clear.

Extinguishing my light, I now undressed and went to bed, but of course not to sleep. For hours and hours, the scenes in which I had that night taken part floated upon the blank darkness before my eyes, and filled me with horrible imaginations. A thousand times did I attempt to banish them, and give myself up to slumber, and a thousand times did they return in new and more horrible shapes; till the faint light of the morning began to shine through the openings of the blinds, when I fell into a disturbed and feverish sleep. It was no relief--it was no oblivion. The same dreadful scenes returned with their full original force, heightened and rendered still more terrific by a thousand wild accessories that uncontrolled fancy brought forward to support them. All was horror and despair; and I again woke, haggard and worn out, as the matin bell was sounding from the neighbouring convent: I tried it once more, and at length succeeded in obtaining a temporary forgetfulness.

CHAPTER X.

I was still in a most profound sleep, when I was woke by some one shaking me rudely by the arm; and starting up, I found my chamber full of the officers of justice. By my side stood an alguacil, and at my table, a sort of escribano was already taking a precise account of the state of the apartment, while in conjunction with him, various members of the Holy Brotherhood were examining without ceremony every article of my apparel.

For a moment or two, the surprise, mingled with the consciousness of what might be laid to my charge, confounded and bewildered me, and I gazed about upon all that was taking place with the stupid stare of one still half asleep. I soon, however, recovered myself, and hurriedly determined in my own mind the line of conduct that it was necessary to pursue, both for the purpose of saving myself, and shielding the unfortunate girl, of whose crime I doubted not that I should be accused.

The alguacil was proceeding, with a face in which he had concentrated all the stray beams of transmitted authority, to question me in a very high tone respecting my occupations of the foregoing night; when I cut him short by demanding what he and his myrmidons did in my apartment, and warning him, that if he expected to extort money from me by such a display, he was labouring in vain. The worthy officer expressed himself as much offended at this insinuation as if it had been true, and informed me that he had come to arrest me on the charge of having the night before murdered in cold blood one Father Acevido, and cast him into the fosse below the old wall. He farther added, that a messenger had been sent for the corregidor, who was at a small town not far off, and that he was expected in an hour.

"Well, then," replied I, boldly, "wake me when he comes, and make as little noise as possible at present," and I turned round on my other side, as if to address myself to sleep. My real purpose, however, was twofold: to gain time for thought, and to avoid all questions from the alguacil, till I had learned upon what grounds I was accused.

But in this I was defeated by Father Francis, who interfered with the best intentions in the world, and advancing, addressed me in French, whereupon the alguacil instantly stopped him, declaring he would not have any conversation in a foreign tongue.

"Houssaye!" cried I, turning to the old soldier, and pointing to the alguacil, while I spoke out in Spanish,--"if that fellow meddles any more kick him down stairs. And now, my good father, what were you about to say?"

This conduct, impudent as it was, I well knew was the only thing that could save me from being questioned and cross-examined by the inferior officers before the arrival of the corregidor. If I answered, I might embarrass myself in my after-defence, and if I refused to answer, my contumacy would be construed into guilt; all that remained, therefore, was to treat the alguacils with a degree of scorn which would check their interrogation in its very commencement, and which was in some degree justified by the well-known corruption and mercenary character of the inferior officers of the Spanish police. This proceeding seemed to have the full effect which I intended; for the pompous official not only ceased his questions, but at the hint of being kicked, suffered Father Francis to go on, judging very wisely, that, however justice might afterwards avenge him, his posteriors would at all events suffer in the meantime.

"My dear Louis," said the good priest, "you had better rise and clear yourself from the accusation of these men. Every one in this house knows your innocence; but here is an officer of the *real hacienda* without, who swears that he saw the murderer enter this house, and we have all suffered ourselves to be examined previous to your having been disturbed. Rise, then, and when you have dressed yourself, permit him to see that you are not the person, and probably by answering the questions of these people, you may save yourself from being dragged before the corregidor, like a culprit."

I replied with the same bold tone which I had at first assumed, and still speaking aloud in Spanish, "In regard to answering any questions put to me by these knaves, who are but as the skirts of the robe of office, I shall certainly not demean myself so far; but, to whatever the corregidor chooses to demand, I will reply instantly, for I am sure that he will not countenance a plot of this kind, which, beyond all doubt, has been contrived to extort money from a stranger; I will rise, however, as you seem to wish it, and then all the world may look at me as long as they will."

I accordingly rose and dressed myself, putting on, though I own it was not without much reluctance, the same murrey-coloured suit I had worn the night before. As soon as I was dressed, the officer of the *real hacienda* was called in, and immediately pointed me out, saying, "That is the man!" in so positive a tone, that it required all the resolution I possessed to demand, with a contemptuous smile, "Pray, sir, how much is it you expect to extort from me, by averring such a notorious falsehood?--Take notice, if it be above half a rial, you shall not have it."

"If you were to give me all that you possess, young gentleman," answered the man, calmly and civilly, "I would still aver the same thing--that you are the man who cast the dead body of Father Acevido into the fosse last night, while I was on duty, seeing that no contraband things were brought into the city. I tracked you through the streets till you entered this house, and I took good care to remark your person so as to identify it anywhere."

The man was so clear in his statement, and I knew it to be so true, that the blood mounted up into my face, in spite of every effort I could make to maintain my air of scornful indignation.

"Ha, ha! you colour!" said the alguacil; "what do you say to that, my young don?"

"I say," replied I, turning upon him fiercely, "that this man's story has been well contrived, and that he tells it coolly; but, depend on it, my good friend, when I have cleared myself of this, my remembrance and thanks shall light upon your shoulders in the most tangible form I can discover. But now, take me to the corregidor; only, while I am gone, let some honest person stay and watch these gentry who are fingering my apparel, or they will save Senor Escribano the trouble of making a very long catalogue."

A crowd of persons were round the door, gossiping with an alguacil, who had been left there

as a sort of guard; and the moment I was brought out, the noise they were making very much increased with the vociferous delight which all vulgar minds experience on beholding criminals. It is a strange, devilish propensity that in human nature: the child loves to torture the fly or the worm, the serf runs to see the victim struggling at the gallows, or writhing on the wheel; and it is in the child and the vulgar that human nature shines out in its original metal, unsilvered over by the false hue of education. Those who have best defended man, attribute his passion for scenes of blood and horror to the renewed feeling which he thence derives of his own security. And is there, then, no way of showing him not cruel, but by proving him base? Must he ever be vilely selfish, if he is not savagely brutal?

The populace roared, as I came forth, with such a shout as we may suppose those refined tigers the Romans bestowed on the devoted gladiator when he entered the arena. I felt certain the sounds must reach another person, to whose bosom they would convey greater pangs than even to mine; and though I could not pause to observe anything minutely, as I was hurried on, I glanced my eye up towards the window on the other side of the way, and I am sure I saw a female hand rest on one of the bars of the *jalousie*.

Scarcely two minutes were occupied in bringing me round to the great entrance of the corregidor's house; and finding that he had not arrived, the alguacils made me sit down in a large hall, keeping every one else out, even Father Francis and Houssaye; and enjoying my society, uninterrupted by the presence of any one but the servants of the corregidor.

Whether it was done on purpose, or not, I cannot say; but first one dropped away, and then another, till I was left alone with the chief alguacil, who, the moment they were all gone, addressed me with a meaning sort of smile--"Now, young sir," said he, "what would you give to get off?"

Doubtless, as many bargains are made in halls of justice as on the exchange, and I was even then very well aware that such is the case; but I knew not whether, if my offers did not equal the incorruptible officer's expectation, my words might not be made use of against myself, and therefore I simply replied, "Nothing!" At the same time, I cannot deny that I would willingly have given my whole inheritance to have been safe on the other side of the Pyrenees.

No long time was allowed for deliberation, for a moment after, the corregidor arrived, and, as if by magic, I found myself instantly surrounded by all the alguacils and servants who had before disappeared.

The magistrate did not pass through the hall wherein I was detained, but after a few minutes, probably spent by him in receiving an account of the whole transaction, an officer approached, and led me to a small audience-room, in which he was seated. Before him was a table with a clerk, and behind him two doors leading to the domestic parts of his dwelling.

He appeared to me about sixty, and was as noble a looking man as I had ever beheld. In his face I could trace all his daughter's features, raised and strengthened into the perfection of masculine beauty; and, though his hair was as white as snow, and time had laid a long wrinkle or two across the broad expanse of his forehead, yet age, in other respects, had dealt mildly with him, and left the fine arch of his lip unbroken, nor stolen one ray of light from his clear intellectual eye.

As I approached the table at which he was seated, he gazed at me with a steady, but yet a feeling glance, and pointed to a seat:--"I am sorry, sir," he said, "that one so young, so noble in appearance, and especially a stranger to this country, should be accused before me of a great and dreadful crime, by an officer who, having in all relations of life conducted himself well, leaves no reason to suppose he acts on culpable motives. The duty of my office is a strict one; and whatever prepossession I may feel in your favour, all I can do is to receive the accuser's evidence before you; and then, if no evident falsehood appears in his testimony, to order your detention till the case can be examined at large, and judged according to its merits."

In the calm dignity of his manner, and the mild firmness of his tone, there was something far more appalling to my mind, knowing well, as I did, the truth of the charge against me, than any menaces could have been. I felt no inclination, and indeed no power, to treat the accusation with that scorn and indignation which I had formerly affected, but advancing towards the table at which the corregidor was seated, I replied as calmly as I could, "You seem, sir, well inclined to do me justice, and I must consequently leave my fate in your hands; but before you commit me to a prison, which is in itself a punishment, and consequently an act of injustice to an innocent man, permit me to make one or two observations in my own defence."

"Certainly," replied the corregidor. "I hold myself bound to attend to every reasonable argument you can adduce, although I am afraid my duty will not permit me to interpose between an accused person and the regular course of investigation. But proceed!"

"In the first place, then," I replied, "I have to protest my innocence of the blood which is laid to my charge, in the most solemn manner--on my honour as a gentleman, on my faith as a Christian. In the next place, I have to ask whether there exists the least probability that I should murder in cold blood a stranger, with whom I had no acquaintance; for I defy any one to show that I knew one single priest in this city, or was ever seen to speak to one. In addition to this, which makes

my guilt highly improbable, let me beg you to examine my preceptor, my valet, and the proprietors of the house in which I lodge."

"I am afraid that will be impossible in this stage of the business," replied the magistrate, "without some glaring discrepancy appears in the accuser's testimony; but let him be called in."

Hitherto the audience-chamber had been occupied alone by the corregidor, his secretary, two alguacils, and myself, but the moment afterwards the doors were opened, and a rush of people took place from without, filling up the space behind me. The presence of the multitude made my heart beat, I confess, and turning my head, I beheld amongst other faces those of Father Francis, of Houssaye, of the landlady of our dwelling, and, lastly, of the Chevalier de Montenero. The last was a countenance I wished not to behold, and the one glance of his eye pained me more than all the busy whispering and observations of the mob. The officer of the *real hacienda* was now called forward, and immediately swore positively to my person, as well as to having tracked me through various turnings and windings to the end of the street wherein I lodged, from whence he saw me enter the house in which I was taken. He then clearly described the manner in which I had cast the body over into the water, and its state and situation when he found it, after having called the city guard to his assistance.

At this moment the Chevalier advanced through the crowd, and passing round the table, took a seat beside the corregidor, who seemed to know him well. "Will you permit me," said he, addressing the magistrate, "to ask this man a few questions? I am deeply interested in the young gentleman whom he accuses, and who, I feel sure, is incapable of committing an action like that attributed to him. Do you permit me?"

The corregidor signified his assent; and the Chevalier, without a word or a look towards me, proceeded to question my accuser with the keen and rapid acumen of one long accustomed to hunt out truth through all the intricacies in which human cunning can involve her. He did not, indeed, attempt to puzzle or to frighten him, but by what he wrung from him he gave a very different colouring to his evidence against me. He made him own that he had but seen me in the shadow; that I had never for a moment emerged into even the moonlight; and that when he arrived at the end of the street where I lodged, he was so far behind that he but caught a glimpse of my figure entering the house. The Chevalier did more; he drew from him an acknowledgment that he had entertained some doubts as to which house it was; and then he argued how liable one might be to mistake the person of another under such circumstances. "Even I myself," said the Chevalier, in a tone full of meaning to my ears--"even I myself have been sometimes greatly deceived in thinking I recognised those even I know best, when circumstances have afterwards proved that it could not have been them"--and he glanced his eye to my face with a look that I could not misunderstand.

The man, however, still swore decidedly to my person; and my good friend the pompous alguacil, probably to repay me for the disrespect with which I had treated him in the morning, now advanced, and pointed out to the corregidor that my pourpoint had been washed in more than one place.

This was quite sufficient. A loud murmur ran through the crowd; the Chevalier clenched his teeth and was silent, and the corregidor's brow gathered into a heavy frown:--but as he was in the very act of ordering me to be conveyed to the town prison, one of the doors behind him opened, and a servant entering, whispered something in his ear.

"I cannot come now!" cried the corregidor, hastily; "I am busy--engaged in the duties of my office--and I will not be disturbed."

"Then I am to give you this, sir," replied the servant, and, placing in his hand a small note, he bowed and retired.

The corregidor opened the paper, and glanced his eye over its contents. As he did so, his cheek became deadly pale, and the ball of his eye seemed straining from its socket. "Wait, wait!" cried he at length to the alguacils; "wait till I come back!" and, starting from his seat, he retired by the same door which had admitted the servant.

As soon as he was gone, the restraint which respect for his person and office had before imposed upon the people, seemed at once thrown off, the murmur of voices canvassing the whole affair became loud and general, and many persons advanced to look at me, though the officers would not allow any one to speak to me. The Chevalier turned away, and walking to one of the windows, folded his arms upon his breast, and continued to look into the street, without offering me even a look of consolation. I understood all the doubts that now tenanted his bosom, and yet, though I knew their cause, I felt hurt and offended that he should entertain them. In the meanwhile, I heard the tongue of our good landlady, whose favour I had won by joking with her whenever I met her on the stairs, now loud in my defence; and however weak an organ may seem the tongue of an old woman, it in this instance, by continual reiteration and replication, completely effected a revolution in the popular feeling towards me; so much so, indeed, that two monks, who had before been whispering that I ought to be given up to the holy Inquisition, now took a different view of the case, and declared they believed me innocent.

Half an hour--an hour elapsed, and yet the corregidor did not return, during which time the

feelings of my heart may easily be conceived. At length, however, he came, but never, before or since, have I beheld such a change take place in any man so rapidly. I have seen age come on by slow degrees, one year after another, stealing still some faculty or some power, till all was nothing--I have seen rapid disease wear quickly away each grace of youth, and each energy of manhood; but never but that once have I seen the pangs of the mind, in one single hour, change health, and vigour, and noble bearing to age, infirmity, and almost decrepitude.

A murmur of astonishment and grief ran through the people, by whom he was much beloved. Casting himself recklessly in the chair, he turned to his secretary. "Call the witnesses," said he, "that the accused proposed to adduce.--This case is an obscure one.--Take their evidence--I am not capable."

The clerk immediately desired me, in the name of the corregidor, to bring forward any persons who were likely to disprove the testimony against me.

Father Francis was of course the first I called. He swore that I had left him, and entered my own chamber for the purpose of going to bed, at ten o'clock on the night of the murder. He farther said, that he had remained reading till one in the morning, and must have heard me if I had gone down the stairs--which, indeed, would have been the case if my step had been as heavy as it usually was.

As to Houssaye, he swore through thick and thin, and, could he have known my wishes, would have witnessed anything I liked to dictate. In the first place, he declared he had undressed me, and seen me in bed. In the next, he vowed he had washed out several oil spots upon my doublet the day before: and in the third, that he lay with his door, at the top of the stairs, open all night; that he had never closed an eye till daybreak, and, finally, that I had certainly never passed that way. "I might have got out at the window, it was true," he observed; "but that, my window being forty feet from the street, it was not very probable I should have chosen such a means of descent."

I need scarcely say, that though his deposition was assuredly a very splendid effort of genius, yet there was, nevertheless, not a word of truth in it.

The next person I called was the landlady, who gave evidence that she found the door (which she had fastened the night before with various bolts, bars, and locks, which she described,) exactly in the same state as that in which she left it; and, in the end, availing herself of her privilege, she turned round, and abused my accuser with great volubility and effect.

The uncertain wind of popular opinion had now completely veered about; and many of those who were behind me scrupled not to proclaim aloud that I had established my innocence, the news of which, spreading to a multitude of persons collected without, produced a shout amongst them, which seemed painfully to affect the corregidor. "Hush!" cried he, raising his hand,--"Hush! I entreat--I command! This young gentleman is evidently innocent; but do not insult my sorrow. My good friends and fellow-citizens," he proceeded, making a great effort to speak calmly, "I have always tried to act towards you all as a common father, and I am sure that you love me sufficiently to leave me, and retire quietly and in silence, when I tell you, that I have now no other children but yourselves. My daughter--is dead!" and covering his eyes with his hands, he gave way to a passionate burst of tears.

A deep silence reigned for a moment or two amongst the people, as if they could scarcely believe what they had heard: then one whispered to another, and dropping gradually away, they left the audience chamber. A momentary murmur was heard without, as the sad news was told and commented in the crowd: it also died away, and all was silence.

But what were my own sensations? I can hardly tell. At first I stood as one thunder-struck, with power to feel much, but not to reason on it. It seemed as if I had killed her; and for long I could not persuade myself that I was in no way accessory to her death. After a moment or two, however, my thoughts were interrupted by the corregidor, who recovered himself, and, wiping the tears from his eyes, rose and turned towards Father Francis.

"Your pupil, sir," said he, in a calm, firm tone, "is free; but yet, notwithstanding the melancholy event which has occurred in my family, I will ask a few minutes' private conversation with him, as I wish to give him some advice, which he may find of service. He shall return home in half an hour. Signor Conde de Montenero," he proceeded, speaking to the Chevalier, "I know you will pardon me in leaving you. Young gentleman, will you accompany me?"

The Chevalier bowed, and retired with Father Francis and Houssaye, and the corregidor led me into a long gallery, and thence into private room beyond.

On the table lay my sword, which I had left behind the night before, forgetting it in the agitation of the moment. The corregidor shut the door, and pointed to the weapon with a look of that unutterable, heart-broken despair, which was agonising even to behold. The thoughts of all that had passed--the lovely enchanting girl that he had lost--his passionate affection towards her--the knowledge he must now have of her crime--the desolation of his age--the void that must be in his heart--the horrid absence of love and of hope--the agony of memory--I saw them all in that look, and they found their way to every sympathy of my nature.

I must have been marble, or have wept--I could not help it; and the old man cast himself upon my neck, and mingled his tears with mine.

"Count Louis," said the corregidor, after we had somewhat mastered our first agitation, "I know all. My unfortunate child, before the poison she had taken had completed her fatal intention, told me everything. Her love for you--your generous self-sacrifice to her--all is known to me. You pity me--I see you pity me. If you do, grant me the only solace that my misery can have--respect my poor child's memory!--Promise me--and I know your promise is inviolable--never while you are in Spain, or to a Spaniard, on any account, or for any reason, to divulge the fatal history, of which you are the only depository; and even if you tell her story in other countries, oh! add that her crimes were greatly her weak father's fault, who, with a foolish fondness, gave way to all her inclinations, and thus pampered the passions that proved her ruin and her death."

I could not refuse him; I promised--and was glad, at least, to see that the assurance of my secrecy took some part, even though a small one, from the load of misery that had fallen upon him. He spoke to me long and tenderly, advising me to quit Spain as soon as possible, lest the Inquisition should regard the matter as within their cognisance, from the murdered man having been a priest. At length I took leave of him, renewing my promise, and returned home, with a heart saddened and rebuked, but I hope amended and improved.

CHAPTER XI.

With a slow and thoughtful step I mounted the staircase, glad to escape, by the quiet tardiness of my return, the importunate congratulations which my landlady, attributing my delivery entirely to her own eloquence, was prepared to shower upon me as soon as I came back.

Cutting her off then from this very laudable exercise of her tongue and gratification of her vanity, I ascended the stairs, as I have said, in silence, and was first met by Father Francis, who, after embracing me, drew me into his own apartment, and informed me that a letter had arrived from my father, requiring my immediate return to France; "and, God be praised! my dear son," said the old man, "that you are at liberty to quit this dark and fearful country, and return to your parents and happy native land. But go," continued he, "into your own apartment, where your good friend the Chevalier waits you. I know not why, but he seems in a strange agitation, speaks abruptly, and appears to me displeased, though with what I know not, without it be your sudden recall to your own home. In truth, I never saw him so affected."

I well understood the meaning of the Chevalier's agitation; I myself was agitated, and embarrassed how to act, and consequently I acted ill.

When I entered, my friend was walking up and down the room, with his eyes fixed upon the ground; but, on hearing my step, he raised them, and fixed them sternly on my face. The fear of appearing guilty, and the impossibility of clearly exculpating myself, had a greater effect upon my countenance than perhaps real guilt would have had, and the rebellious blood flew up with provoking hurry to my cheek. Angry at my own embarrassment, I resolved to master it; but the effort communicated something of bitterness to my manner towards the Chevalier, who had hitherto said nothing to call it forth. He remarked it, and striding towards the door, which I had left open, he shut it impatiently; then turned towards me, and with a straining eye, demanded--"Tell me, Count Louis de Bigorre, after all the evidence brought forward to prove that you passed last night in this house--tell me, was it, or was it not you, that I saw enter this door at two o'clock this morning?"

"I should think," replied I, coldly, "that what satisfied the judge before whom I was accused, would be enough to satisfy any one really my friend."

"Not when their own eyes were evidence against you," answered the Chevalier, indignantly. "I thought you incapable of a subterfuge. Once more, was it you, or was it not?"

"Though I deny your right to question me," I replied, growing heated at the authority he assumed, "yet to show that I seek no subterfuge, I answer it was; but, at the same time, I repeat, that I am innocent--perfectly innocent of the crime with which I was charged."

"Pshaw!" cried the Chevalier, with an air of scorn that almost mastered my patience--"Pshaw!" and turning on his heel, he quitted the room and the house. When what we have done produces a disagreeable consequence, whether we have really acted right or not, we are apt to call to mind every line of conduct which we might have pursued, and fix upon any other as preferable to that which we have adopted. Thus, no sooner had the Chevalier left me, than I thought of a thousand

means whereby I might have persuaded him of my innocence, without breaking my promise to the corregidor; and I resolved to seek him, as soon as the preparations for my return to France were completed, and explain myself, as far as I could, without violating the confidence reposed in me.

My resolution, however, came too late. About an hour after his departure, one of the servants of the house where he lodged, brought me a letter from him, of the following tenure:--

"I leave you, and for ever. You have done me the greatest injury that one man can inflict upon another. You have shown me what human nature really is, and you have made me a misanthrope. I had watched you from your infancy, and I had fancied that amongst the many faults and errors, from which youth is never exempt, I perceived the germ of great and shining qualities of heart and mind. I devoted myself to cultivate them to maturity, and to train them aright. Perhaps I was selfish in doing so; for what man is not selfish? but bitter is the atonement which you have forced me to make. Adieu! seek me not henceforth--know me not if we meet--be to me as a stranger. Though, for the sake of your unhappy father, I rejoice in your escape from the punishment your crime deserves, my interest in yourself is over; and I would fain rase out from the tablets of memory all that concerns one so unworthy of the esteem I once entertained for him."

This was hard to endure, especially from one that I both respected and loved. My heart swelled with a mixture of indignation and sorrow, both at the loss of a friend, and at his unjust suspicions; and though my consciousness of innocence guarded me from bitterer regrets, yet it increased my painful irritation at the wrong I suffered, and at my disappointment in not being able to exculpate myself. Occupation, however--in every situation of life the greatest blessing and relief--now came to my aid, and called my attention for a time from the dark and gloomy views that the circumstances of my fate presented at the moment. Our departure was fixed for the next morning, and all the thousand petty accumulations of business, which always hang about the last day of one's sojourn in any place, now came upon me at once.

The weather had much altered since our arrival at Saragossa; for three months had tamed the lion of the summer, and it was not, at all events, heat that we had to fear on our journey. Cold autumn winds were now blowing, and saluted us rudely the moment we got beyond the sheltering walls of the city, piercing to our very bones. I would have given a pistole for half an hour of the hot-breathed *siroc* to warm the air till we could heat ourselves by exercise.

As we approached the mountains, however, it became colder and more cold, and the prospect of their snowy passes fell chill and cheerless upon our anticipations. Yet there was something vast and majestic in their aspect, which raised and elevated the mind above the petty cares and sorrows of existence. I had been grave, I had been gloomy--I had been perhaps peevish--but the contrast between the transitory littleness of all human things, and the eternal grandeur of such objects, reproved the impatient repinings of my heart. I felt a consolation in looking upon them as they stretched along before me, in the same bold towering forms that they had presented unmemoried centuries ago. It seemed as if they said, "Ages and generations, nations and languages, have passed away and been forgotten, with all their idle hopes and vain solicitudes, while we have stood unmoved, unaged, unaltered. Even Time, the inexorable enemy of all man's works, lays not upon us his profaning finger; and while he overthrows the arch that records man's glory, and hurls down the column that monuments his grave, he dares not spoil the fabrics of that great God who created him and us."

Under the influence of such thoughts, the recollections of the last two days gradually lost themselves; and though I rode along, grave and perhaps melancholy, my melancholy was not of that bitter and gloomy nature produced by worldly cares and griefs. Father Francis was well acquainted with the many changes of my mood, and, consequently, found it not at all extraordinary that I was silent and thoughtful; but, attributing my seriousness to the events which had happened at Saragossa, he wisely let them sleep, hoping that they would soon pass from my memory.

Towards the evening, on the second day of our journey, we arrived at a little village consisting of about half a dozen shepherds' huts, situated at the very foot of the mountains; and here we learned that the *Port de Gavarnie*, by which we intended to have entered France, was completely blocked up with snow; but that less had fallen near Gabas, and that, consequently, the passes in that direction were practicable. Thither, then, we directed our steps the next morning, having procured a guide amongst the shepherds, who agreed to conduct us as far as Laruns, though he often looked at the sky, which had by this time become covered with heavy leaden-looking clouds, and shook his head, saying, that we must make all speed. There was but little good augury in his looks, and less in the prospect around us; for, as we began to ascend, the whole scene appeared covered with the cold robe of winter. All the higher parts of the mountains showed but one mass of snow; and every precipice under which we passed seemed crowned with an impending avalanche, which nothing but the black limbs of the gigantic pines, in which that region abounds, held from an instantaneous descent upon our heads.

No frost, however, had yet reached the bottom of the ravines through which we travelled. The path was rather damp and slippy, and the stream rushed on over the rocks without showing one icicle to mark the reign of winter. Father Francis's mule, which had delayed us on our former journey, now proved more sure-footed, at least, than either of the horses; and the good priest, finding himself quite secure and at his ease, dilated on the grandeur of the scenery and the

magnificence of nature, even in her rudest forms.

"I am nothing of a misanthrope," said he, "and yet I find in the contemplation of the works of God a charm that man and all his arts can never communicate. When I look upon the mighty efforts of creation, I feel them to be all true and genuine--all unchangeable--the effect of universal Beneficence acting with Almighty power: but when I consider even the greatest and most splendid deeds of man, I am never certain in what base motives they originated, or for what bad ends they were designed; how much pain and injustice their execution may have cost, or how much misery and vice may attend upon their consequences. In all man does there is that germ from which evil may ever spring, while the works of God are always beautiful in themselves, and excellent in their purpose."

"And yet, my good father," said I, willing enough to shorten the tedious way with conversation, "though you pronounce the flash of glory to be but a misleading meteor, and power a dangerous precipice, and love a volcano as full of earthquakes as fertility, yet still there are some things amongst men's deeds which even you can contemplate with delight and admiration,--the protecting the weak, the assuaging grief, the dispensing joy, the leading unto virtue and right."

"True, Louis! true!" answered he; "and yet I know not whether my mind is saddened to-day; but though all these actions are admirable, how rare it is we can be certain that the motives which prompted them were good! Only, I believe, when we look into our own breast; and then--if we examine steadfastly, clearly, accurately, how many faults, how many weaknesses, how many follies, how many crimes, do we not find to make us turn away our eyes from the sad prospect of the human heart! Here I can look around me, and see beauty springing from Beneficence, and everything that is magnificent proceeding from everything that is wise. And oh! how happy, how full of joy and tranquillity is the conviction, that death itself, the worst evil which can happen to this frail body, is the work of that great Creator who made both the body and the soul, and certainly made them not in vain."

A moment or two after, indeed, but so close upon what he said that no other observation had been made, I heard a kind of rushing noise; and, looking up towards the cloud above us, which hid with a thick veil the whole tops of the mountains, I saw it agitated as if by a strong wind, while a roar, more awful than that of thunder, made itself heard above. I knew the voice of the *lavange*, and with an instant perception, I know not how nor why, that it was rather behind than before us, I laid my hand upon Father Francis's bridle, and spurred forward like lightning. To my surprise, the obstinate mule on which he was mounted, instead of resisting my effort to make it go on, put itself at once into a gallop, as if it were instinctively aware of the approaching danger. Houssaye and the guide followed with all speed; and, in a moment after, we reached a spot where the valley, turning abruptly to the left, afforded a certain shelter.

Here I turned to look, and never shall I forget the scene that I witnessed. Thundering down the side of the hill, rushing, and roaring, and devastating in its course, came an immense shapeless mass of a dim hue, raising a sort of misty atmosphere round itself as it fell. The mountain, even to where we stood, shook under its descent; the valleys, and the precipices, and the caverns, echoed back the tremendous roar of its fall. Immense masses of rock rolled down before it, impelled by the violent pressure of the air which it occasioned; and long ere it reached them, the tall pines tottered and swayed as if writhing under the consciousness of approaching destruction, till at length it touched them, when one after another fell crashing and uprooted into its tremendous mass, and were hurled along with it down the side of the steep.

Down, down it rushed, dazzling the eye and deafening the ear, and sweeping all before it, till, striking the bottom of the valley with a sound as if a thousand cannon had been discharged at once, it blocked up the whole pass, dispersing the stream in a cloud of mist, and shaking by the mere concussion a multitude of crags and rocks down from the summit of the mountain. Long after it fell, the hollow windings of the ravines prolonged its roar with many an echoing sound, dying slowly away till all again was silence, and the mist dispersing left the frowning destruction that the *lavange* had caused exposed to the sight in all its full horrors.

Father Francis raised his hands to heaven; and though I am sure that few men were better prepared to leave this earth, and had less of man's lingering desire still to remain upon it, yet with that instinctive love of life, which neither religion nor philosophy can wholly banish, he thanked God most fervently for our preservation from the fate which had just passed us by. We had, indeed, many reasons to be thankful, not only for our escape from the immediate danger of the *lavange*, but also for having been enabled to accomplish our passage before its fall had blocked up the path along which we were proceeding. The guide, indeed, seemed little disposed to prophesy good, even from what we had escaped. The avalanches, he said, were very uncommon at that season of the year, and when they did happen, they were always indicative of some great commotion likely to take place in the atmosphere. Neither did he love, he proceeded to say, those heavy clouds that rested halfway down the sides of the mountains, nor the dead stillness of the air; both of which seemed to him to forbode a snow-storm, the most certain agent of the traveller's destruction in the winter.

Nothing remained, however, but to urge our course forward as fast as possible; but the mule of the good priest had now resumed her hereditary obstinacy, and neither blows nor fair words would induce her to move one step faster than suited her immediate convenience; so that it bade fair to be near midnight before we could reach the first town in the valley *D'Ossau*.

After many a vain attempt upon the impassible animal, we were obliged to yield, and proceed onward as slowly as she chose, while occasionally a sort of low howling noise in the gorges of the mountain gave notice that the apprehensions of the guide were likely to be verified. A large eagle, too, kept sailing slowly before us, breaking with its ill-omened voice, as it flitted down the ravine, the profound death-like silence of the air. Over the whole of the scene there was a dark, inexpressible gloom, which found its way heavily to our own hearts. All was still, too, and noiseless, except the dull melancholy sounds I have mentioned: it seemed as if nature had become dumb with awe at the approaching tempest. No bird enlivened the air with its song, no insect interrupted the stillness with the hum, no object of life presented itself, except a hawk or a raven, shooting quickly across, evidently not in pursuit of prey, but in search of shelter. The hills and rocks were all cold and grey, except where the snow had lodged in large white masses, which rendered their aspect still more cheerless and desolate. The sky was dark, heavy, and frowning, and every object seemed benumbed by the hand of death; so that it was impossible, on looking around upon that sad, chill, powerless scene, to fancy it could ever re-awaken into life, and sunshine, and summer.

Gradually the howling of the mountains increased, and the wind began to break upon us with quick sharp gusts, that almost threw us from our horses, while a shower of small, fine sleet drove in our faces, fatiguing and teasing us, as well as impeding our progress. The guide began now to grumble loudly at the slowness of Father Francis's mule, and to declare that he would not stay and risk his life for any mule in France or Arragon.

We were now upon the French side of the mountains, and, as the road was sufficiently defined, I doubted not that we should be able to find our way without his assistance. As his insolence became louder, therefore, I told him, if he were a coward, and afraid to stay by those persons he had undertaken to guide, to spur on his horse, and deliver us from his tongue as speedily as possible. He took me at my word, replying that he was no coward, but that having his wife and children to provide for, his life was of value; that if we would go faster, he would stay with us and guide us on; but that if we would not, the path was straight before us, and that we had nothing to do but follow it by the side of the stream till it led us to a town. Seeing him thus determined, I thought it better to send forward Houssaye along with him, giving him directions to return with some people of the country to lead us right if we should have missed our way, and to relieve us in case we should be overwhelmed by the snow. Houssaye still smacked too much of the old soldier to say a word in opposition to a received order, and though he looked very much as if he would have willingly stayed with Father Francis and myself, yet he instantly obeyed, and putting spurs to his horse, followed the guide on towards Laruns.

The storm every moment began to increase, and so sharp was the wind in our faces, that we could hardly distinguish our way, being nearly blinded with snow, mingled with a sort of extremely fine hail. The atmosphere, also, loaded with thin particles, was now so dim and obscure, that it was not possible to see more than fifty yards before us, and, while wandering on through the semi-opaque air, the objects around appeared to assume a thousand strange and fantastic shapes, of giants, and towers, and castles, as their indistinct forms were changed by the hand of fancy. Even to the animals that bore us, these transformations seemed to be visible, for more than once my horse started from a rock which had taken the shape of some beast; and once we were nearly half-an-hour in getting the mule past an old pine, which the tempest had hurled down the mountain, and which, leaning over a mass of stone, looked like an immense serpent, stretching out its neck to devour whatever living thing should pass before it.

In the meanwhile, the ground gradually became thickly covered with snow, and every footfall of the horse left a deep mark, telling plainly how rapidly the accumulation was going on. Still we made but little progress, and, what between slipping and climbing, both the mule and the horse soon lost their vigour with fatigue, and we had now much difficulty in making them proceed.

Not long after the guide left us, it evidently began to grow dark, and it was with feelings I have seldom felt that I observed the gathering gloom which grew around. The white glare of the snow did, indeed, afford some light, but so confused and indistinct, that it served to dazzle, but not to guide.

All vestige of a path was soon effaced, and the only means of ascertaining in which way our road lay, was by the murmuring of the stream that still continued to rush on at the bottom of the precipice over which we passed. Even the black patches which had been left, where some large stone or salient crag had sheltered any spot from the drift, were soon lost, and it became evident that much more snow had fallen on the French side of the mountains, even before that day, than we had been led to expect.

Our farther progress became at every step more and more perilous, for none of the crevices and gaps in the path were now visible, and the tormenting dashing of the snow in our eyes, and in those of our beasts, prevented us or them from choosing even those parts which appeared most solid and secure. I had hitherto led the way, but Father Francis now insisted upon going first, on account of the sure-footed nature of the mule, whose instinctive perception of every dangerous step was certain to secure him, he observed, from perils of the nature we were most likely to encounter. The mule might also, he continued, in some degree serve to guide my horse, who had more than once stumbled upon the slippery and uneven rocks, concealed as they were by the snow.

After some opposition, I consented to his doing so, feeling a sort of depression of mind which I can only attribute to fatigue. It was not fear: but there was a sort of deep despondency grew upon me, which made me give up all hope of ever disentangling ourselves from the dangerous situation in which we were placed. The cold, the darkness, the chilly, piercing wind, the void, yawning expanse of the dim hollow before me, the melancholy howling of the mountains, the rush and the tumult of the swelling stream below, the whispering murmur of the pine-woods above, beginning with a gentle sigh, and growing hoarser and hoarser, till it ended in a roar like the angry billows of the ocean--all affected my mind with dark and gloomy presentiments;--I never hoped to save my life from the rude hand of the tempest--I hardly know whether I wished it; despair had obtained so firm a hold of my mind, that it had scarcely power even to conceive a desire.

After we had changed the order of our progression, however, we went on for some time much more securely, the mule stepping on with a quiet caution and certainty peculiar to those animals, and my horse following it step by step, as if perfectly well understanding her superiority in such circumstances, and allowing her to lead without one feeling of jealousy.

Still the snow fell, and the wind blew, and the irritating howling and roaring of the mountains continued with increasing violence, while the blank darkness of the night surrounded us on all sides; when suddenly the mule stopped, and showed an evident determination of proceeding no farther. Fearful lest there should be any hidden danger which she did not choose to pass, I dismounted as carefully from my horse as I could, and proceeding round the spot where she stood, I went on a few paces, trying the ground at each step I took; but all was firm and even--indeed, much more smooth than any we had hitherto passed. The path, it is true, ran along on the verge of the precipice, but there wanted no room for two or three horses to have advanced abreast, and, consequently, seeing that the beast was actuated by a fit of obstinacy, I mounted again, and proceeded to ride round for the purpose of leading the way, to try whether she would not then follow. Accordingly, I spurred on my horse to pass her, but he had scarcely taken two steps forward, when the vicious mule struck out with her hind feet full in his chest. He reared--plunged--reared again, and in a moment I found his haunches slipping over the precipice behind. It was the work of a moment; but, with the overpowering instinct of self-preservation, I let go the bridle, sprang forward from his back, and catching hold of the rhododendrons and other tough shrubs on the brink, found myself hanging in the air with my feet just beating against the face of the rock. My brain turned giddy, and an agonising cry, something between a neigh and a scream, from the depth below, told me dreadfully the fate which I had just escaped.

Slowly, and cautiously, fearing every moment that the slender twigs by which I held would give way, and precipitate me down into the horrid abyss that had received my poor horse, I contrived to raise myself till I stood once more upon firm ground; and then replied to the anxious calls of Father Francis, who had dimly seen the horse plunge over, and had heard his cry from below, but knew not whether I had fallen with him or not.

My heart still beat too fast, and my brain turned round too much to permit of our proceeding for some minutes; the loss of my horse, also, was likely to prove a serious addition, if not to our danger, at least to my fatigues. Nothing, however, could be done to remedy the misfortune; and, after pausing for a while, in order to gain breath, we attempted to recommence our journey. For the purpose of leading her on, I laid my hand upon the mule's bridle, but nothing would make her move; and the moment I tried to pull her forward, or Father Francis touched her with the whip, she ran back towards the edge of the precipice, till another step would have plunged her over. Nothing now remained but for the good priest to descend and take his journey forward also on foot. As soon as he was safely off the back of the vicious beast which had caused us so much uncomfort and danger, I again attempted to make her proceed; resolving, in the height of my anger, if she again approached the side, rather to push her over than save her: but with cunning equal to her obstinacy, she perceived that we should not entertain the same fear as when her rider was upon her back, and instead of pulling backwards as before, she calmly laid herself down on her side, leaving us no resource but to go forward without her.

The most painful part of our journey now began. Every step was dangerous--every step was difficult; nothing but horror and gloom surrounded us on all sides, and death lay around us in a thousand unknown shapes. Wherever we ascended, we had to struggle with the full force of the overpowering blast, and wherever the path verged into a descent, there we had slowly to choose our way with redoubled caution, with a road so slippery, that it was hardly possible to keep one's feet, and a profound precipice below; while the wind tore us in its fury, and the snow and sleet beat upon us without ceasing. For nearly an hour we continued to bear up against it, struggling onward with increasing difficulties, sometimes falling, sometimes dashed back by the wind, with our clothes drenched in consequence of the snow melting upon us, and the cold of the atmosphere growing more intense as every minute of the night advanced. At length hope itself was wearied out; and at a spot where the ravine opened out into a valley to the right and left, while our path continued over a sort of causeway, with the river on one hand, and a deep dell filled up with snow on the other, Father Francis, who had hitherto struggled on with more vigour than might have been expected from his age, suddenly stopped, and resting on a rock, declared his incapacity to go any farther. "My days are over, Louis," said he: "leave me, and go forward as fast as you can. If I mistake not, that is the pass just above Laruns. Speed on, speed on, my dear boy; a quarter of an hour, I know, would put us in safety, but I have not strength to sustain myself any longer: I have done my utmost, and I must stop."

He spoke so feebly, that the very tone of his voice left me no hope that he would be able to proceed, especially across that open part of the valley, where we were exposed to the full force of the wind. It already dashed against us with more tremendous gusts than we had yet felt, whirling up the snow into thick columns that threatened every moment to overwhelm us, and I doubted not that the path beyond lay still more open to its fury. To leave the good old man in that situation was of course what I never dreamed of; and, consequently, I expressed my own determination to wait there also for the return of Houssaye, who, I deemed, could not be long in coming to search for us.

"No, Louis, no!" cried Father Francis; "the wind, the snow, the cold, are all increasing. You must attempt to go on, for, if you do not, you will perish also. But first listen to an important piece of information which has been confided to me. As I cannot bear the message myself, you must deliver it to your mother.--Tell her----"

I could hardly hear what he said, his voice was so faint, and the howling of the storm so dreadful: a few more broken words were added; but before he had concluded, a gust of wind more violent than any we had hitherto encountered whirled round us both with irresistible power. I strove to hold by the rock with all my force, but in vain. I was torn from it as if I had been a straw, and the next moment was dashed with the good priest into the midst of the snow that had collected in the dell below. We sunk deep down into the yielding drift, which, rising high above our heads, for a moment nearly suffocated me. Soon, however, I found that I could breathe, and though all hope was now over, I contrived to remove the snow that lay between myself and Father Francis, of whose gown I had still retained a hold. I told him I was safe, and called to him to answer me. He made no reply--I raised his head--he moved not--I put my hand upon his heart--it had ceased to beat!

CHAPTER XII.

I have told all that I remember of that night,--a night whose horrible events still haunt my memory like the ghosts of the unburied on the banks of Styx, often flitting across my mind's eye, when it would fain turn to scenes of happiness and joy. If ever a horrible dream disturbs my slumber, it is also sure to refer to that night, and I find myself labouring on in the midst of wilds and darkness, rocks and precipices, the tempest dashing in my face, and the wind hurling me into the midst of the suffocating snow.

My recovery from the sort of stupor into which I had fallen after I had discovered the death of poor Father Francis was very different in all its sensations from my resuscitation after drowning. I remember nothing of the actual return to life, and it must, indeed, have been some weeks before I regained my powers of reason and perception in their full force, passing the interval in a state of delirium, brought on by the cold, and also, perhaps, by the excessive excitement in which I had been for some hours previous to my losing my recollection.

When I first woke, as it were, from this state of mental alienation, I found myself lying on a bed, stretched in my mother's toilet chamber. I believe I had been asleep, and felt excessively enfeebled--so much so, indeed, that, though I plainly saw my mother just rising from beside me, I could not summon sufficient energy to speak to her, and I reclosed my eyes. I heard her say, however, "He wakes! try, dear Helen, to soothe him to sleep again, while I go and endeavour to rest myself, for I am very much worn with watching last night." Her steps retreated, for she fancied me still delirious; and I could hear some one else glide forward--though the footfall was, perhaps, the lightest that ever touched the earth--and take the seat my mother had left. So acute had become my sense of hearing, that the least sound was perceptible to my ears, even for many weeks afterwards, to such a degree as to be positively painful to me.

I was well aware that it was Helen Arnault--my beloved Helen--that sat beside me; and yet, though I can scarcely say my senses were sufficiently restored for me positively to exercise that faculty which is called *thinking*, there was upon my mind a vague dreamy remembrance that I had acted wrong in her regard, which made me still keep my eyes closed, trying to call up more clearly the images of all my adventures at Saragossa. As I lay thus, I felt a soft sweet breath fan my cheek, like the air of spring, and then a warm drop or two fall upon it, like a spring shower. I opened my eyes, and saw Helen gazing upon me and weeping. She raised her head slightly, for her lips had been close to my cheek; but thinking that my mind was still in the same wandering state, she continued to gaze upon my face, and I could see in her eyes the look of that deep, devoted, resolute affection, with which woman is pre-eminently endowed--her blessing or her curse! I laid my hand gently upon one of hers which rested on the side of my bed, and drawing it towards me, I pressed it to my lips. She instantly started up, and looked at me with a glance of surprise and joy that I can see even now.

"Oh, is it possible!" cried she: "are you better really?" and she seemed as if to start away to convey the tidings to my mother; but I beckoned her to bend her head down towards me, and when she had done so, I thanked her, in a low voice, but with energetic words, for her care, her kindness, and for her love. Her blushing cheek was close to my lips, but sickness, which had rendered all my sensations morbidly acute, had also made my feelings of delicacy much more refined, and had given a degree of timidity I did not often otherwise feel. I would not for the world have taken advantage of the opportunity which her kindness and confidence afforded; and though, as I have said, her cheek, looking like the summer side of a blooming peach, was within the reach of my lips, I let her raise it without a touch, when I had poured forth my thanks into her ear; and I then suffered her to do her joyful errand to my mother, only venturing to tell her, ere she went, how much I loved, and how much I would love her to the end of my existence.

A moment after, my mother returned herself, her eyes streaming with tears of joy; and, kneeling by my bedside, she covered my cheek with those fond maternal kisses, whose unmixed purity gives them a sweet and holy balm, which love with all its fire and brightness can seldom, seldom attain.

My convalescence was tedious, and months elapsed before I regained anything like the robust health which I had formerly enjoyed. Months of sickness are very apt to make a spoilt child; and had I not lately received some lessons hard to be forgot, such might have been the case with me, when I saw the whole happiness of the three persons I myself loved best depending upon my slightest change of looks. My father's delight at my recovery was not less than my mother's; and every day that I met Helen, I could see her eye rest for an instant upon my face, as if to watch what progress returning health had made since the day before; and when, by chance it gained a deeper touch of red, or my eyes had acquired a ray of renewed fire, the happiness of her heart raised the blood into her cheek, and made her look a thousand times lovelier than ever.

We now also met oftener than formerly. The ties which she had entwined round my mother's heart had been, during my illness, drawn more tightly than ever. That restraint no longer existed which had formerly proved so irksome to me; Helen was in every way treated as a child of the family; and, had she chosen it, might have yielded me many an hour of that private conversation which I was not remiss in seeking. But far from it; with an ingenuity, which mingled gentleness, perhaps even affection, with reserve, she avoided all opportunity of hearing what her heart forbade her to reprove, and to which she yet felt it wrong to listen.

When before my father or mother, instead of appearing to feel a greater degree of timidity, it seemed as if the restraint was removed, and she would behave towards me as a gentle and affectionate sister; but if ever she encountered me alone, she had still some excuse to leave me, ere I could tell her all that was passing in my heart, or win from her any reiteration of her once acknowledged regard.

Her conduct made me grave and melancholy. My bosom was full of a passion that I burned to pour forth with all the ardour of youth, and it drove me forth to solitude to dream over the feelings I was denied the power to communicate. My father observed my long and lonely rambles; and remonstrated with me on giving way to such melancholy gloom, when I had so many causes for happiness and for gratitude to Heaven. "Not," said he, "that I contemn an occasional recourse to the commune of one's own thoughts; it enlarges, it elevates, it improves the mind; and I am convinced that the beautiful Roman fable of Numa and Egeria was but a fine allegory, to express that the Roman king learned wisdom by a frequent intercourse with the divine and instructive spirit of solitude. But your retirement, my dear Louis, seems to me of a gloomy and dissatisfied nature; perhaps it originates in a desire to see more of courts and cities than you have hitherto done. If so, it is easy to gratify you, however painful it may be to your mother and myself to lose your society."

In reply, I assured him that I entertained no desire of the kind; but he had persuaded himself that such was the case, and still retained his first opinion, though God knows to leave Helen was the last thing I sought. He continued, however, to turn in his own mind his project of sending me to the court, notwithstanding which, it is probable that the whole would have gradually passed away from his memory, had not my mother, to whom he had communicated his wishes, from other motives, determined upon the same proceeding; and with her calm but active spirit, while my father spoke of it every day, yet took no step towards its accomplishment, she hardly mentioned the subject, but carried it into effect.

As I recovered my health, there was of course much to hear concerning all that had occurred, both during my absence in Spain, and my illness after my return.

In regard to the first, I shall merely notice the circumstance which occasioned my father to recal me: this was nothing else than a visit from the Marquis de St. Brie, of whom the Chevalier had instilled into our minds so unfavourable an opinion.

On his presenting himself at the château, my father received him coldly and haughtily; but the Marquis soon, by the polished elegance of his manners, and the apparent frankness of his character, did away the evil impression which had been created against him. He spoke of his rencontre with me, and he praised my conduct in the highest manner. Courage, and skill, and generous forbearance, were all attributed to me; and the ears of the parent were easily soothed by the commendation bestowed upon his child. Besides, my father was too lazy to hold his

opinion steadfastly, when any one strove to steal it from him; and he gradually brought himself to believe that the Marquis de St. Brie was a very much slandered person, and that, so far from having any evil intent towards me, the Marquis was my very good friend and well-wisher.

My mother was slower to be convinced; but the language of my former adversary was so high whenever he spoke of me, that she also gradually yielded her unfavourable impressions, and willingly consented to my recal--the Marquis having promised to revisit the Château de l'Orme in the spring, and expressed a wish to see me, offering at the same time, if his interest could be of service to my views, to use it to the utmost in my behalf. My mother looked upon this, at the worst, as an empty profession, and my father almost believed him to be sincere.

Thus I was recalled; and my adventures on my return being already told, I have only farther to relate the means by which I was saved from the fate that menaced me. Immediately on quitting Father Francis and myself, my faithful Houssaye had ridden on with the guide to Laruns, as hard as he could. The wind, however, and the snow had delayed them far longer than he had anticipated; and, anxious for my safety, he galloped to the little cabaret in search of some one to return and lend their assistance in finding me out, and rescuing me from the peril in which he had left me.

The first persons whom he encountered in the auberge were Arnault, the procureur of Lourdes, and his son, the latter of whom instantly proffered to join the party, and aid with all his heart. But the old procureur was thereupon immediately smitten with a fit of paternal tenderness, such as had not visited him for many years before; and he not only positively prohibited Jean Baptiste from encountering the dangers of the snow himself, but he also pronounced such a pathetic oration upon the horrors and dangers of the undertaking, that of the whole party collected in the cabaret not one could be found to venture.

Houssaye's next resource was amongst the cottagers round about, and, by promises and persuasion, he induced eight sturdy mountaineers to accompany him with the resin torches for which they are famous in that part of the country, and which are almost as difficult to extinguish as the celebrated fire of Callinicus. With these they began their search on the road towards Gabas; but scarcely had they passed the defile immediately above Laruns, than the light of the torches flashed over a spot where the snow had evidently been disturbed, and on examining they found a part of my clothes not yet covered with the drift which had come down since the wind had swept Father Francis and myself from the path. We were soon extricated, and carried to Laruns apparently dead.

Here all means were applied to recall us to life, but they proved successful only with me; on Father Francis they had no effect, though Houssaye assured me that everything which could be devised was employed in vain.

Amongst the most active in rendering me every assistance after I was extricated was the good youth who had saved me before from a watery grave; but in the midst of his endeavours, his father checked him, and calling him on one side, spoke to him for long in a low voice.

"The old fox thought I could hear nothing," said Houssaye; "but enough reached me to make me understand he would rather have had you die than live. If he dies, I heard him say, you shall have both--something which I did not hear--and all the property; but if he lives, mark if he do not thwart us, though I will take care to throw obstacles enough in his way! The lad seemed well enough inclined to help you still," proceeded Houssaye, "but his father would not let him; though he came the next morning himself, fawning and asking if he could bear any message back to Lourdes, whither he was about to return, finding that he could not pass into Spain as he had intended."

This latter part of the worthy old trumpeter's narration astonished and embarrassed me a good deal; and after turning it in every way that my imagination could suggest, without being able to discover any solution of the mystery, I was obliged to conclude that, in what the narrator declared he had overheard, fancy had full as great a share as matter of fact. Arnault might dislike me--indeed, I was very sure that he did so--but how my life might thwart his views, or my death might profit him, I was at a loss to discover.

One thing, however, I remarked--Arnault, after my recovery, came more than once to see his daughter, which he had not done more than twice before, since she had been at the château. Her brother, also, was more frequently with her; and on these occasions, the father, if he met any member of my family, was humble and fawning, the son awkward and sheepish; and it struck me that the behaviour of the latter was very much changed towards myself, as if he were playing a part learned by rote, which neither assimilated with his character nor suited his inclination.

I also perceived a change take place in Helen--she grew silent, pale, thoughtful. When she looked at me, it seemed as if her eyes would overflow with tears, were it not for the restraint imposed upon her by the presence of others. Her gaiety was gone; and even the servants, amongst whom she was almost adored, began to remark the sadness of *Mademoiselle Helene*, and comment on its cause. All this was to me a mystery; and doubt of any kind, even concerning a trifle, has ever been to me a thousand times more painful than evident danger or real misfortune. Doubt is to my mind what the darkness of night is to a ghost-frightened school-boy--I go on gazing anxiously about me on every side, conjuring up a thousand ideal spectres, and distorting

every dim object that I see into the likeness of some fearful phantom of the imagination. Nor can all the reasoning in my power divest my mind of the credulity with which I listen either to hope or to apprehension: though I well know that apprehension is to sorrow what hope is to joy--a sort of *avant courier*, who greatly magnifies the importance of the personage whom he precedes.

In the present instance, I determined to change my doubts to certainties, if human ingenuity might do so. Probably I should have accomplished it, but passion--which generally interferes with the best laid schemes of human wisdom, suggesting that the gratification which the heart seeks may easily be blended with the designs which the brain has formed--was ingenious enough to persuade me that the very best thing I could do for the accomplishment of my object was suddenly to explain myself with Helen. She avoided giving me any opportunity of doing so. I persisted with all the ardour of my nature, watching with unwearied assiduity even to gain a quarter of an hour; but I watched in vain.

Thus lapsed first a week, and then another, at the end of which the Marquis de St. Brie arrived at the château, full ten days before he had been expected. He came, however, with no train which could incommode his host and hostess. Two servants were all that accompanied him; and the seeming frankness of this conduct even won much upon my opinion. I found him a different person from what I had conceived. He was proud, perhaps, in manner, but not haughty; he was witty--he was well informed--he was pleasing. In short, he was the opposite to that Marquis de St. Brie whom I had more than once regretted not having sent to his long account at the time it was in my power to do so.

Was he changed--or was I? Perhaps both; and I am afraid that a degree of pique towards the Chevalier did certainly make me easily receive every favourable impression that the manners and appearance of my former adversary were calculated to produce. In latter years I have tried to judge my own motives in the various events of life--I have judged them strictly--as strictly as it is possible for a man to do; but not too much so, for it is impossible that any one can be too severe upon himself. The result of my self-investigation on this point has been, that had my friendship for the Chevalier been as lively as ever, I should have found less charms in the society of the Marquis de St. Brie.

CHAPTER XIII.

By a long system of exact economy, my mother had, by this time, repaired, in some degree, the ravages which many generations of extravagance had committed on our family estates; and though the pimple-nosed *maître d'hôtel* and old Houssaye, with two other septuagenarian lackeys, who might be considered as heirlooms in the family, still maintained their faces in the hall, yet four other more youthful attendants had been added to the number; and on the first day of the Marquis de St. Brie's arrival, all eight figured in new bright liveries of green and gold, with well-starched ruffs, and white sword scabbards. This was an expansion of liberality on the part of my mother which I had not expected; not that for a moment I mean to insinuate that the spirit of frugality was in her the effect of a sordid heart--far, far from it; it was an effort of her mind, and had ever been a painful one. She had herself experienced all the uncomforts of that miserable combination, a great name and an inferior fortune; and she was resolved, if possible, to save her son from the same distresses.

In the present instance, she was actuated by a feeling of that refined delicacy towards her husband, which ever taught her not only to respect him herself, but to throw a veil even round his foibles, for the purpose of hiding them from the eyes of the others. She had heard my father calmly talk to the Marquis de St. Brie, on the former visit, of his retinue and his vassals; and a slight smile had played about the guest's lip, which my father never saw, but which wounded my mother for him. She instantly determined to sacrifice some part of her system of economy, without attempting any vain display, or going beyond what she could reasonably afford; and the present effect was that which I have described.

We dined in general a little after noon; but on the day of the Marquis's arrival, which was looked upon by the servants as one of those occasions of ceremony, when their rights and privileges were to be as strictly enforced as the official tenures at a royal coronation, the announcement of dinner was somewhat delayed by a contest between Houssaye and the *maître d'hôtel*, in regard to which should sound the trumpet. Houssaye grounded his claim upon patent of office, as the trumpeter-general to the Counts of Bigorre; and the *maître d'hôtel*, contended for the honour as a right prescriptive, which he had exercised for thirty years. The *maître d'hôtel* would certainly have carried the day, being in possession of the brazen tube in dispute; but Houssaye, like a true old soldier, hung upon his flanks, embarrassed his manœuvres, and at length defeated him by a *coup de main*. The *maître d'hôtel* having possession, as I have said,

resolved to exercise his right; and, at the hour appointed, raised the trumpet to his lips, and prepared an energetic breath. His red cheeks swelled till they looked like a ripe pomegranate; his eyes stared as if they would start from their sockets; his long, pimpled nose was nearly eclipsed by its rubicund neighbours, the cheeks, and would hardly have been seen but for a vibratory sort of movement about the end, produced, probably, by the compression of his breath. All announced a most terrible explosion, when suddenly the undaunted Houssaye stepped up, and applying his thumb to the cheek of this unhappy aspirant to *tubicinal* honours, expelled the breath before the lips were prepared. The cheeks sunk, the eyes relapsed, the nose protruded, and a hollow murmur died along the resonant cavities of the brass--a sort of dirge to the pseudo-trumpeter's defeat.

The whole scene was visible to me through the open door of the vestibule, and so irresistibly comic was it altogether, that I could not refrain from staying to witness its termination. Again the *maître d'hôtel* essayed the feat, and again the malicious Houssaye rendered his efforts abortive; upon which the discomfited party declared he would carry his cause before a higher tribunal, and was proceeding towards my father's apartments to state his grievances. But he committed one momentous oversight which completed his defeat.

In the agitation of the moment he laid the trumpet down; Houssaye pounced upon it like lightning, started upon a chair, and applied the brass to his lips. The *maître d'hôtel* threw his arms round him to pull him down, but Houssaye's weight overbalanced his adversary, and both rolled upon the floor together.

The old trumpeter, however, had blown many an inspiring blast on horseback and on foot, in the charge, in the retreat, in the camp, or in the rage of the battle; all situations were alike to him, and as he rolled over and over with the *maître d'hôtel*, he still kept the trumpet to his lips, and blew, and blew, and blew, till such a call to the standard echoed through the château as had never before disturbed its peaceful halls.

After I had seen the conclusion of this doughty contention, I was proceeding towards my father's library, when I was met in the corridor by the whole party coming from their various apartments. My father resigned to no one the honour of handing down the Countess; and the Marquis turned to offer his hand to Helen, who followed her, giving a slight sort of start as his eye fell upon so much loveliness.

"I did not know, madam," said he, "that you had so fair a daughter."

"She is no farther my daughter," replied the Countess, looking back to Helen with a smile, "than in being the daughter of my love. Mademoiselle Arnault, Monsieur le Marquis de St. Brie!"

The hall, as we entered it, looked more splendid than ever I had seen it. With infinite labour, the old banners, that flaunted in the air above the table, had been cleared of their antique dust; all our family plate was displayed upon the buffet; and the eight liveried lackeys, in their new suits, gave an air of feudal state to the hall, that it had not possessed since the days of Henri Quatre.

During the first service but little was said by any one. After the grave employment of half an hour, however, the mind would fain have its share of activity; and, though somewhat impeded by the gross aliments of the body, found means to issue forth and mingle with the banquet.

"The bird of Juno," said the Marquis, pointing to a peacock that, with its spread tail and elevated crest, ornamented the centre of the table, "is a fitting dish in such a proud hall as this. I love to dine in a vast and antique room, with every haughty accessory that can give solemnity to the repast."

"And is it," demanded my father with a smile, "from a conviction of the importance, or the littleness of the employment?"

"Oh, of its meanness, certainly!" replied the Marquis; "it needs, I think, all the ingenuity of man's pride--all that he can collect of grand or striking, associated with himself--to soothe his vanity under the weight of his weaknesses and necessities; and what can be more painfully degrading than this propensity to devour!"

"It is a philosophy I can hardly admit," replied my father; "the simple act of eating is surely not degrading, and, when employed but as the means of support, it becomes dignified by the great objects to which it tends--the preservation of life, the invigorating the body, and, consequently, the liberation of the mind from all those oppressive chains with which corporeal weakness or ill health is sure to enthral it. In my eyes, everything that nature has given or taught, is beautiful; and never becomes degrading but by the corruption with which it is mingled by man himself."

"I know not," answered the Marquis, smiling at the enthusiasm with which my father sustained what was one of his most favourite theses, "but I can conceive no dignity in eating the mangled limbs of other animals slaughtered for our use."

"You look not so cynically, I hope, on all other failings of humanity?" demanded my mother, willing to change the subject; and changing it to one on which every Frenchwoman thinks or has thought a great deal, she added, "Love for instance?"

The Marquis bowed. "No one can be more devoted," replied he, "to the lovelier part of the creation than I am, and yet I cannot but think that the ancients did well to represent Venus as springing from the foam of the sea."

"Somewhat light, you would say, in her nature," rejoined my father, "and variable as her parent waves----"

"And sometimes as cold and as uncertain too," said I; but, as I did so, I saw a slight flush pass over Helen's brow, and I added, "But you forget, Monsieur le Marquis, or rather, like a skilful arguer, you do not notice, that the blood of Cœlus, which we translate, almost literally, a drop from heaven, was mingled with the foam of the sea to produce the goddess."

"Happily turned!" replied the Marquis with a smile; "but I trust, my young friend, you are aware that the queen of love is only to be won by thes god of arms, as our sweet and tumid Raccan would put it. Have you yet entered the path in which you are born to distinguish yourself; I mean the service of your king?"

With somewhat of a blush, I replied that I had not, and the Marquis proceeded:--"Fie, now! 'tis a shame that a sword, which I know, to my cost, is a good one, should rust in its scabbard. Every gentleman, whatever may be his ultimate objects in life, should serve his country for at least one campaign. It is rumoured that our wars in Italy will infallibly be renewed: in that case, I shall of course take the command of my regiment; and if your noble father will allow you to accompany me, we will turn the two good swords, that once crossed upon a foolish quarrel, against the enemies of our king and our country."

Without a moment's hesitation I should have accepted the proposal; but my mother interposed. "I have already," said she, after having expressed her thanks to the Marquis for the honour he proposed to her son--"I have already written to her highness the Countess de Soissons, who honoured me in my youth with her favour and affection, soliciting, if it be possible, that Louis may, for a short period, enjoy the advantage of being near Monsieur le Comte, her son. I have no doubt that she will comply with my request; and, at all events, we must, of course, suspend every other plan till her highness's answer is received."

The Marquis appeared somewhat mortified, but immediately changed the conversation to other subjects, and certainly no man I ever met could render himself more fascinating when he chose to do so. His language was as elegant as his manners, and he mingled, with a playful, shining, unforced wit, a slight degree of cynical bitterness, which rendered it more exciting by its pungency. He had the great art, too, of suiting his conversation exactly to those with whom he conversed; not precisely as the cameleon, taking its hue from the object next to it, but rather like a fine piece of polished china, receiving a sufficient reflection from whatever salient colour was placed near, without losing the original figures with which it was itself marked. Thus he never lost in manner a certain degree of pride, which was the great master-passion of his soul; but when he wished to please or win, he made even this pride subservient to his purpose, by acting as an opposition to his courtesy and condescension. Nor did he ever in the fits of that cynical humour, which he either affected or possessed from nature, go beyond the exact point at which it could amuse or stimulate those that listened to him; and he calculated, with wonderful insight into their characters, the precise portions that each could bear or relish.

With whatever feelings one entered his society, one quitted it struck and fascinated. I did so myself, notwithstanding the warning I had received with regard to him--notwithstanding a strong prepossession against him. I felt attracted, amused, and pleased; and every minute that I passed in his company, I had to recall the demoniacal passions his countenance had expressed at Estelle, and ask myself--Can this be the same man? It was; and when closely observed, there was a glance of malignity in the eye, which, if rightly read, would have told that there the real man shone out, and that the rest was all a mask. The nations of the East have a superstition, that their *Dives*, *Afrits*, and other evil spirits, have the power of transforming themselves into the most beautiful and enticing shapes; but that some one spot of their body is always exempt from this change, and remains in its original hideousness. Thus I believe it is with the human character; give it what gracious form you will, there is still some original feature will rest unchanged, to show what shape it has at first received from Nature.

The Marquis de St. Brie, however, maintained the doubtful favour he had gained with the inhabitants of the Château de l'Orme as long as he remained within its walls, which was during the space of three days. Each passed much like the former, with the exception of the second, in the course of which we went out upon the mountains to shoot the izzard.

At the hour appointed for setting forth, it so happened that I was a moment later than my father and the Marquis. My mother, too, was in the court seeing the preparations for our departure; when, on going from my bedchamber into the corridor, I was met by Helen, who, instead of passing me hastily, as she usually did, paused a moment, as if anxious to speak. Her cheek was rather flushed, and never did I behold her looking more lovely. The temptation to delay was not to be resisted, and besides, such a moment might never come again. "Helen!" said I, taking her hand, "dearest Helen, I would give a world to speak with you alone, for but five minutes. You once said you loved me--you promised you would always love me. Helen, you must have seen how much I have wished for such an opportunity, and yet you have never, since my return, given me one moment of your private time."

"Indeed, Louis," she answered, still letting me keep her hand, "I could not then--I thought it would be wrong. Now, perhaps, I may think differently; and I will no longer avoid you as I have done. But what I sought you for now, was to say, beware of that Marquis de St. Brie. I am sure--I *feel* sure--that he is a villain. And oh, Louis, beware of him! for your sake--for mine." So saying, she waited for no reply, but drawing away her hand, glided back to the Countess's apartments.

Oh what a nicely balanced lever is the mind of youth! a breath will depress it, or a breath will raise. For days before, I had been gloomy and desponding. Existence, and all that surrounded it, I had looked upon with a jaundiced eye, which saw only defects. I could have quarrelled with the sunbeam for ever casting a shade--the summer breeze for ever bearing a vapour on its wings; and now I went away from Helen with a heart beating high with expectation and delight! One kind word, one affectionate look, one expression of interest and love, and every cloud was banished from my mind; and all was again sunshine, and summer, and enjoyment. My father and the Marquis had already set out, but a few steps brought me to their side; and, speeding on towards the heights above the valley of Argelez, we separated, to beat a narrow lateral dell, while the servants, spreading in a larger circle, drove the game in towards us. My father took his range along one side of the hollow, and I on the other; while the Marquis chose a path above mine, having a view of the whole side of the hill.

For some time we met with little success, when suddenly an izzard bounded away along the path, about three hundred yards in advance. Before I could fire, it was out of shot; but springing after it, I followed eagerly along the shelf of rock, knowing that a little farther a precipice intervened, which I did not believe the animal could leap; and consequently, if it escaped me, it must run up the hill and cross the Marquis, or go down into the valley and come within my father's range. As I went on, circling round the mountain, a piece of rock jutted out across the path about thirty yards in advance, and hid the precipice from my view. The izzard I doubted not was there, hesitating on the brink, as they often do when the leap is dangerous; and hoping to obtain a shot at it before it turned, I was hurrying on, when suddenly I heard the ringing of a carbine, and a bullet whistled close to my ear. Its course must have lain within two inches of my head; and, not a little angry, I turned, and saw the Marquis standing on a rock a little way above me.

"There! there!" cried he, pointing with his hand: "there, I have missed him! Why don't you fire?"

At that moment I caught a sight of the izzard actually springing up the most perpendicular part of the mountain. It was almost beyond the range of my carbine, but, however, I fired, and the animal rolled down dead into the valley. Neither the Marquis nor myself alluded to the shot which he had discharged, and it remains a very great doubt in my mind whether he had missed me or the izzard.

CHAPTER XIV.

It may seem strange, very strange, that with such suspicions on my mind, I should accept an invitation to visit the man who had excited them. Nevertheless I did, and what is perhaps still more strange, those very suspicions were in some degree the cause of my doing so.

When the Marquis first proposed that I should spend a day or two with him at his *pavilion de chasse*, in the neighbourhood of Bagneres, I felt a doubt in regard to it, of which I was ashamed--I was afraid of feeling afraid of anything, and I instantly accepted his invitation. I know not whether this may be very comprehensible to every one, but let any man remember his feelings when he was nineteen--an age at which we have not learned to distinguish between courage and rashness, prudence and timidity--and he will, at least, in some degree, understand, though he may blame my having acted as I did.

I would willingly have suffered the Marquis to be a day in advance before I fulfilled my engagement, longing for that promised half-hour of conversation with Helen, which was to me one of those cherished anticipations on which the heart of youth spends half its ardour. Oh, how often I wish now-a-day that I could long for anything as I did in my childhood, and fill up the interval between the promise and the fulfilment with bright dreams worth a world of realities. But, alas! the uncertainty of everything earthly gradually teaches man to crowd the vacancy of expectation with fears instead of hopes, and to guard against disappointment instead of dreaming of enjoyment. However, as the Marquis was only to remain three days at his *pavilion* ere he set out for Paris, he insisted on my accompanying him when he left the Château de l'Orme.

The ride was delightful in itself, but he contrived to withdraw my attention from the scenery

by the charms of his conversation. The first subject that he entered upon was my proposed visit to the court; and he drew a thousand light, yet faithful sketches of all the principal courtiers of the day.

"Amongst others," said he, after specifying several that I now forget, "you will see the Duke of Bouillon, brave, shrewd, yet hasty, always hurrying into danger with fearless impetuosity, and then finding means of escape with a coolness which, if exerted at first, would have kept him free from peril. He puts me in mind of a rope-dancer, whose every spring seems as if it would be his last, and yet he catches himself somehow when he appears inevitably gone. In his brother, Turenne, a very different character is to be met with, or rather, perhaps, the same character without its defects. What in Bouillon is rashness, in Turenne is courage; what is cunning in the one is wisdom in the other. I believe Turenne would sacrifice himself to his country; but if Bouillon were to erect an altar to any deity, it would be, I am afraid, to himself. Then there is the young and daring Jean de Gondi, who is striving for the archbishopric of Paris; the most talented man in Europe, but gifted or cursed with that strange lightness of soul which sports with everything as if it were a trifle--who would overthrow an empire but to re-model it, or raise an insurrection but to guide the wild horses that draw the chariot of tumult. Had he lived in the ancient days, he would have burnt the temple of the Ephesian goddess to build, in one olympiad, what cost two hundred years. His mind, in short, is like the ocean, deep and profound; that plays with a feather, or supports a navy; that now is rippling in golden tranquillity, and now is raging in fury and in tumult; that now scarce shakes the pebble on the shore, and now spreads round confusion, destruction, and death. In regard to the Count de Soissons, to whom you go, his character is difficult to know: but yet I think I know it. He has many high and noble qualities, and though at present he appears intolerably proud, yet that is a fault of his education, not of his disposition; he has it from his mother, and will conquer it, I doubt not. But there is one virtue he wants, without which talents, and skill, and courage are nothing--he wants resolution. He is somewhat obstinate, but that does not imply that he is resolute; and a man without resolution may be looked upon in the light of a miser: all the riches that nature can give are useless to him, because he has not the courage to make use of them."

"You must have been a very keen observer," said I, "of those persons with whom you have mingled, and doubtless also of human life in general."

"Life," replied he, "as life, is very little worth considering. It is a stream that flows by us without our knowing how. Its turbulence or its tranquillity, I believe, depend little upon ourselves. If there be rain in the mountains, it will be a torrent; if it prove a dry season, it will be a rivulet. We must let it flow as it will till it come to an end, and then we have nothing to do but die."

"And of death," said I, "have you not thought of that? As it is the very opposite of life it may have merited some more thought."

"Less, far less!" said he: "with some trouble, we may change the course of the rivulet, but with all our efforts we cannot alter the bounds of the sea. Look on death how we will, we can derive nothing from it. The pleasures and pains of existence are so balanced, we cannot tell whether death be a relief or a deprivation; and as to the bubble of something after death, it is somewhat emptier than that now floating down the stream."

I started, and said nothing, and gradually the conversation dropped of itself. After a pause, he again turned it into other channels, speaking of pleasure, and the excesses and gratifications of a court; and though he recommended *moderation*, as the most golden word that any language possessed, yet it was upon no principle of virtue, either moral or religious. It was for the sake of pleasure alone--that it might be more durable in itself, and never counterbalanced by painful consequences.

My mind naturally turned to my many conversations with the Chevalier, and, by comparison, I found his morality of a very different quality. I merely replied, however, that I believed, if people had no stronger motives to moderation than the expectation of remote effects, they would seldom put much restraint upon their passions.

Soon after, we arrived at the *pavilion de chasse*; and, I must own, that never did a more exquisitely luxurious dwelling meet my eye. It was not large, but all was disposed for ease and pleasure. Piles of cushions, rich carpets, easy chairs, Persian sofas, exquisite tapestries, filled every chamber. Books, too, and pictures were there, but the books and the pictures were generally of one class. Catullus, Ovid, Petronius, or Tibullus, lay upon the tables or on the shelves; while the walls were adorned with many a nymph and many a goddess, liberal of their charms: though, at the same time, Horace and Virgil appeared cast upon one of the sofas; and, every now and then, the eye would fall on one of the sunshiny landscapes of Claude de Lorraine, and dream for a moment amidst the sleepy splendour of his far perspectives.

"And is it possible," said I, turning to the Marquis as he led me through this luxurious place--"is it possible that you can quit such a spot willingly, for the dangers and hardships of war?"

"There are various sorts of pleasure," replied he, "and without varying, and changing, and opposing them one to another, we cannot enjoy any long. Every man has his particular pleasures, and his particular arrangement of them. I, for instance, require the stimulus of war, to make me

enjoy these luxuries of peace. But you have yet seen little of the beauties of the place. Let us go out into the park. The perfection of a house of this kind depends, almost entirely, upon the grounds that surround it."

The two days that I spent at the pavilion of Monsieur de St. Brie passed like lightning. Not a moment paused, for he contrived to fill every hour with some pleasure of its own; but it was all too sweet. One felt it to be luscious. Like the luxurious Romans, he mingled his wine with honey, and the draught was both cloying and intoxicating.

On the third morning, I rose early from my bed to take a review of the beautiful grounds which surrounded the house; and after wandering about for half-an-hour, I turned to a river that ran through the park, resolving to take my way towards the house by the side of the waters. The path that I followed was hidden by trees, but there was a transverse alley that came down to the water, and joined the one in which I walked, about one hundred yards farther on. As I advanced, I heard the voice of the Marquis talking earnestly with some other person; and though at first what he said was very indistinct, yet I soon heard more without seeking to do so, or, indeed, wishing it. "Hold him down," said the Marquis, "when you have got him safely on the ground, and cut his throat just under the jaws--if you go deep enough he is dead in a moment."

As he gave this somewhat bloody direction, he turned into the same path with myself, accompanied by another person, whose appearance is worthy of some description. He was about my own height, which is not inconsiderable, but, at the same time, he was remarkably stout--I should say even fat, with a face in which a great degree of jollity and merriment was mingled with a leering sort of slyness of eye, and a slight twist of the mouth, that gave rather a sinister expression to the drollery of his countenance. He wore short black mustachios, and a small pointed beard; and from his head hung down upon his shoulders a profusion of black wavy hair. His dress also was somewhat singular. Instead of the broad, low-crowned plumed hats which were then in fashion, his head was surmounted with an interminable beaver, whose high-pointed crown resembled the steeple of a church. We have seen many of them since amongst the English and the Swiss, but, at that time, such a thing was so uncommon, and its effect appeared so ridiculous, that I could scarce refrain from laughing, though my blood was somewhat chilled with the conversation I had just overheard. The rest of this stout gentleman's habiliments consisted of a somewhat coarse brown pourpoint, laced with tarnished gold, and a slashed *haut de chausse*, tied with black ribands; while a huge sword and dagger ornamented his side, and a pair of funnel-shaped riding-boots completed his equipment.

The Marquis's eye fell upon me instantly, and, advancing without embarrassment, he embraced me, and gave me the compliments of the morning. Then turning, he introduced his friend, Monsieur de Simon. "The greatest fisherman in France," said he: "we were speaking just now about killing a carp," he continued, "which, you know is dreadfully tenacious of life. Are you a fisherman at all?"

I answered, "Not in the least;" and the conversation went on for some time on various topics, till at length Monsieur de Simon took his leave.

"I am sorry you cannot take your breakfast with us," said the Marquis; "but remember, when I am gone, you are most welcome to fish, whenever you think fit, upon my property."

"I thank you, I thank you, most noble Marquis," said the other, with a curious sort of roguish twinkle of the eye; "I will take you at your word, and will rid your streams of all those gudgeons which you dislike so much, but which I dote upon. Oh, 'tis a dainty fish--a gudgeon!"

At about one o'clock my horse was ready, and I took leave of the Marquis--I cannot say with feelings either of reverence or regard; and I have always found it an invariable fact, that when a man has amused us without gaining our esteem, and pleased without winning our confidence, there is something naturally bad at the bottom of his character, which we should do well to avoid.

As I mounted my horse, I remarked that my worthy valet, Houssaye, had imbibed as much liquor as would permit him to stand upright, and that it was not without great difficulty and scrupulous attention to the equipoise that he at all maintained his vertical position.

"Your servant is tipsy," said the Marquis; "you had better leave him here till he recovers his intellects."

"I am as sober as a priest," hickupped Houssaye, who overheard the accusation the Marquis brought against him, and repelled it with the most drunken certainty of his own sobriety. "Monseigneur, you do me wrong. I am sober, upon my conscience and my trumpet!" So saying, he swung himself up to his horse's back, and forgetting to wait for me, galloped on before, sounding a charge through his fist, as if he was leading on a regiment of horse.

The Marquis laughed; and once more bidding him adieu, I followed the pot-valiant trumpeter, who, without any mercy on his poor horse, urged him on upon the road to Lourdes as fast as he could go. Very soon, I doubt not, he quite forgot that I was behind, for, following much more slowly, as I did not choose to fatigue my jennet at the outset, I soon lost sight of him, and for half an hour perceived no traces of him whatever.

I have heard that the effect of the fresh air, far from diminishing the inebriation of a drunkard,

greatly increases it. Probably this was the case with Houssaye; for at the distance of about four miles from the park of the Marquis, I found him lying by the side of the road, apparently sound asleep, while his horse was calmly turning the accident of his master to the best account, by cropping the grass and shrubs at the roadside.

This accident embarrassed me a good deal, for I had set out late; and, of course, I could not leave the poor drunkard to be gnawed by the bears, or devoured by the wolves, whose regard for a sleeping man might be found of somewhat too selfish a nature. After having shaken him, therefore, two or three times for the purpose of recalling him to himself, without producing any other effect than an inarticulate grunt, I returned to a village about a mile nearer Bagneres, and having procured the aid of some cottagers, I had the overthrown trumpeter carried back, and left him there in security, till he should have recovered from the state of intoxication in which he had plunged himself.

All this delayed me for some time, so that it was near four o'clock before I again resumed my journey. Nor was I sorry, indeed, that the sun had got behind the mountains, whose long shadows saved my eyes from the horizontal rays, which, as my way lay due west, would have dazzled me all along the road had I set out earlier. In about two hours it began to grow dusk, and I put my horse into a quicker pace, lest the family at the château should conclude that I intended to remain another night. There was one person also that, I knew, would be anxious till they saw me return safe; and, for the world, I would not have given Helen a moment's unnecessary pain. What made her suspect the Marquis of any evil designs towards me I knew not, but I knew that she did suspect him, and that was sufficient to make me hurry on to assure her of my safety.

There is a thick wood covers the side of the mountain about five miles from the Château de l'Orme, extending high up on the one hand, very nearly to the crest of the hill, and spreading down on the other till the stream in the valley bathes the roots of its trees. In a few minutes after I had entered this wood, I suddenly heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs close behind me--so near, it must have sprung out of the coppice. I instantly turned my head to ascertain what it was, when I received a violent blow just above the eyebrow, which nearly laid my skull bare, and struck me headlong to the ground, before I could see who was the horseman.

Though bruised and dizzied, I endeavoured to struggle up; but my adversary threw himself from his horse, grappled with me, and cast me back upon the ground with my face upwards. Oh how shall I describe the fearful struggle for life that then ensued?--the agonising grasp with which I clenched the hands wherewith he endeavoured to reach my neck--the pressure of his knees upon my chest--the beating of my heart as I still strove, yet found myself overmastered, and my strength failing--the dreadful, eager haste with which he tried to hold back my head, and gash my throat with the knife he held in his hand--and the muttered curses he vented, on finding my resistance so long protracted.

Five times he shook off my grasp, and five times I caught his hands again, as they were in the act of completing his object. At the same time, I could hear his teeth cranching against each other with the violence of his efforts. My hands were all cut and bleeding, his dress was nearly torn to pieces, the strength of both was well nigh exhausted, when we heard the sounds of voices advancing along the road. Though our struggle had hitherto been silent, I now called loudly for assistance. He heard the noise also. "This then shall settle it," cried he, raising his arm to plunge the knife into my chest, but I interposed my hand; and though the force with which he dealt the blow was such as to drive the point through my palm, yet this saved my life, for before he could repeat the stroke the horsemen had come up, attracted by the cries I continued to utter. One of them sprang from his horse, beheld the deathly struggle going on, and not knowing which was the aggressor, but seeing that one held the other at a fatal disadvantage, called to my assailant instantly to desist or die. The assassin again raised his arm: the horseman saw him about to strike--levelled a pistol at his head--fired--and the murderer, dropping the weapon from his hand, staggered up upon his feet--reeled for a moment, and then fell dead across my chest.

CHAPTER XV.

Oh, life! thou strange mysterious tie between the spirit and the clay; what is it makes the bravest of us shrink from that separation which the small dagger or the tiny asp can so easily effect.

For a moment I lay to recover myself from all the agitated feelings that hurried through my heart, and then struggling up, I rolled the ponderous mass of the dead man from off my breast, and rose from the ground.

"Is it Count Louis de Bigorre?" said the voice of the Chevalier de Montenero. I answered that it was; and he proceeded,--"I thought so: infatuated young man, why would you trust yourself in the hands of your enemy, when you were warned of his cruelty and his baseness?"

"Because," I answered, "I thought that a person who had done injustice to me, might also do injustice to him."

"When a man has the means of clearing himself, and does not choose to do so," replied the Chevalier, well understanding to what I alluded, "he must rest under the imputation of guilt till he does. Now, sir, I leave you. Arnault, give him your assistance, and rejoin me to-morrow morning;" and so saying, without farther explanation, he turned his horse and galloped away.

Though the evening light was of that dim and dusky nature which affords, perhaps, less assistance to the eye than even the more positive darkness of the night, yet I could very well distinguish by the height and form, that the person the Chevalier called Arnault was not the little, large-headed procureur of Lourdes, but rather his son; and as soon as we were alone, he confirmed my conjecture by his voice asking if I were hurt.

"Not much, Jean Baptiste," replied I: "my hands are cut, and he has grazed my throat with his knife; but he has not injured me seriously. Catch my horse, good Arnault," I continued, "and ride on to the cottage, about half a mile on the road--bring some one with lights, that we may see who this is--though, in truth I guess."

"You had better take my pistols, Monsieur le Comte," said the honest youth, "lest there should be a second of these gentlemen in the wood."

I took one, and leaving him the other for his own defence, sent him on as fast as possible to the cottage; for although, from the manner in which my assailant had attempted to effect my death, so like the Marquis de St. Brie's directions for killing the carp, I had little doubt in regard to whom I should find in the person of the dead man, yet I wished to ascertain the fact more precisely, that no doubt should remain upon my mind in regard to Monsieur de St. Brie himself.

Soon after Jean Baptiste was gone, the moon began to raise her head over the mountain; and, streaming directly down the road, showed me fully the person of the dead man, through whose head the ball of the Chevalier's pistol had passed in a direct line, causing almost instantaneous death.

All doubt was now at an end: there lay the large heavy limbs of the man, who had been called Monsieur de Simon, while his steeple-crowned hat appeared rolled to some distance on the road. The effects of the dreadful struggle between us were visible in all his apparel. His doublet was torn in twenty different places with the straining grasp in which I had held him, and an immense black wig, which he had worn as a sort of disguise, had followed his hat, and left his head bare. In rising I had rolled him off me on his back, so that he was lying with the beams of the moon shining full in his face.

I advanced and gazed upon him for a moment; and now, as he appeared with his shaved head, and the fraise, or ruff torn off his neck, I could not help thinking that his countenance was familiar to me. The mustachios and the beard, it was true, made a great alteration, but in every other respect it was the face of the Capuchin who had joined in attempting to plunder me at Luz. I looked nearer, and remembering that in six months his beard would have had full time to grow, I became convinced that it was the same.

As I examined him attentively, I perceived a sort of packet protruding from a pocket in the breast of his doublet, and taking it out I found it to be a bundle of old, and somewhat worn papers, wrapped in a piece of sheep's skin, and tied round with a leathern thong.

Amongst these I doubted not that I should find some interesting correspondence between the subordinate assassin and his instigator, and, consequently, took care to secure them; after which I waited quietly for the return of Jean Baptiste, who I doubted not would relieve me from my troublesome guard over the dead body, as soon as he could procure lights and assistance. His absence, of course, appeared long; but after the lapse of about ten minutes I began to perceive some glimmering sparks through the trees, and a moment after the inhabitants of the cottage appeared, men and children, with as many resin candles as their dwelling could afford.

Jean Baptiste was with them; but another personage of much more extraordinary mien led the way, bearing in his hand a candle about the thickness of his little finger, but which he brandished above his head in the manner of a torch, striding on at the same time with enormous steps, and somewhat grotesque gestures. "Where is the body?" exclaimed he with a loud tone and vast emphasis,--"Where is the body of the sacred dead?"

The person who asked this question was a man of about five feet three in height, fluttering in a pourpoint, whose ribands and rags vied in number, while the brass buttons with which it was thickly strewed might, by their irregularity of position, have induced me to believe him to be a poet, had not his theatrical tone and air stamped him as a disciple of Thespis.

"'Percé jusqu'au fond du c[oe]ur
D'une atteinte imprévue, aussi-bien que mortelle,'"

cried he, when he beheld the dead body. "Oh what would I have given to have been here when he was killed. Did he fall so at once--I beseech you tell me, did he fall thus?" and down he cast himself upon his back, in the attitude of the dead body.

If anything could have rendered so dreadful a sight as the corpse of the murderer with his blackened temples, clenched hands, and cold meaningless glare of eye, in any degree ridiculous, it would have been to see the little player cast upon the ground beside the vast bulk of the dead man, striving to imitate the position in which he lay; and every now and then raising his pert head from his mockery of death's stillness, and peeping over the corpse to see how the arm or the hand had fallen in dying.

I was in no mood, however, for such fooleries; my head ached violently from the blow I had received above the eye; my hands, especially the one that had intercepted the stab of the knife, gave me intolerable pain. I was fatigued also, and fevered with the struggle and the agitation, so that my corporeal sensations were not at all favourable to the wretched player's buffoonery, even had the scene been one that admitted of merriment.

Stirring him then rather rudely with my foot, I bade him rise and assist in carrying the body to the cottage. Up started the actor in a moment, and, taking the corpse by the feet, replied he was ready to do anything the manager bade him: one of the cottagers lent his aid, and we soon reached the cottage with our burden. Here all the women made a vast outcry at the sight of the dead body, but more still on beholding the state in which the assassin's efforts had left their young Count Louis, for I was now within the old domain of our own château.

I know not whether from the loss of blood, or the irritating pain of the wounds, but I certainly felt very faint, and probably my countenance showed how much I was suffering, for while the young Arnault and some others were examining the person of the dead man, and taking what papers and effects he had upon him, the player stepped forward, and offered to render me his assistance as a surgeon. Thinking that the devil of buffoonery still possessed him, I repulsed him somewhat rudely; but yet unrepelled, he laid his hand upon his heart, made me a low bow, and said, "Listen, noble youth, scion of an illustrious house, and you shall hear that which shall make you yield yourself to my hands, as willingly as Maladine gave herself up to Milsenio. Know then, before my superior genius prompted me to fit on the buskin, I trod the stage of life in a high-heeled shoe--not, indeed, the Cothurnus; far, far from it, for in those days, alas! though I was clothed in tragic black, and held the dagger and the bowl, I shed real blood behind the curtain, and inflicted my cruelties on the real flesh and blood."

"I begin somewhat to understand you," I replied; "but if you would have me attend to you seriously, my friend, you must drop that exalted style, and speak common sense in common language."

"Well, then, sir, I will," he answered, instantly changing his tone, and taking one which strangely blended in itself insignificance and sharpness, but which harmonized much better with his little eager countenance and twinkling black eyes, than his tumid, bombastic loudness had done. "What I mean is, that before I went on the stage, I studied under an apothecary. My disposition is not naturally cruel, and I was not hard-hearted enough to succeed in that profession. Now, though, with the devil's assistance and my master's skill, I aided in conveying many a worthy patient from their bed to their coffin, yet I think I remember some few simples which would allay the irritation of your wounds, and I will undertake for their innocuousness."

No surer aid was at hand, and therefore I willingly allowed the metamorphosed apothecary to bandage up my forehead with such applications as he thought fit, as well as to use his skill upon my hands; and certainly the ease which I derived from his assistance fully repaid the confidence I had placed in him.

In the meanwhile, the body of the murderer had been searched, and the various objects found upon him being brought to me, proved to consist of nothing more, besides the packet of papers which I had already taken, than a few pieces of gold, one or two licentious letters and songs, a pack of cards, some loaded dice, a missal, two short daggers, and a rosary, all articles very serviceable in one or other of his callings. One of the cottage-boys had by this time caught the horse which this very respectable person had ridden, and strapped upon it behind was found what at first appeared a cloak, but which proved, upon examination, to be a Capuchin's gown, confirming my opinion in regard to the owner's identity with the card-player at Luz.

When this examination was over, I prepared to mount my horse and proceed home, but before I went, I turned to gaze once more upon the lifeless form of my dead adversary; and in looking upon his clumsy limbs and obesity of body, I could not understand how he could have so easily overcome me, endowed, as I felt myself to be, with equal strength and far superior agility. The sudden surprise could alone have been the cause, and I resolved through my future life, to struggle for that presence of mind which in circumstances of danger and difficulty is a buckler worth all the armour of Achilles. After this, I bestowed a gold piece upon the player-apothecary for the ease he had given me, and bade him come over to the Château de l'Orme the next day for a farther reward, and then escaping as fast as I could from his hyperbolical thanks, I mounted, and, accompanied by Jean Baptiste, rode on towards my home.

My first question, as we went, was how long the Chevalier had returned from Spain, and what

had brought him on the road towards Lourdes at that time of night. At first, Jean Baptiste seemed somewhat reserved, but upon being pressed closely on the subject, his frank nature would not let him maintain his silence; and he informed me, that the Chevalier had returned that very morning from Spain; but on hearing that the Marquis de St. Brie had been received as a visitor at the château, and that I, in return, had gone to pass some time with him, he had desired the young procureur to accompany him and set out for Bagneres without delay, saying that I must be saved at all risks. "But still," continued Jean Baptiste, "you have done something in Spain to lose the Chevalier's love; for though he would come away after you to-night, in spite of all my father could do to prevent him, he always took care to say, 'for his father's sake--for his mother's sake, he would rescue Count Louis from the dangers into which he was plunged.'"

The gloomiest knell that rings over the fall from virtue must be to hear of the lost esteem of those we love. That must be the dark, the damning scourge which drives on human weakness to despairing crime. Could the great fallen angel ever have returned? I do not believe it. The glorious confidence of Heaven was lost, and mercy would have been nothing without oblivion.

I felt that my friend did me wrong, but even that did not save me from the whole bitterness of having lost his regard. And I internally asked myself, what would my feelings have been, had I really merited his bad opinion?

"Where is the Chevalier?" demanded I. "Is he at his own house?"

"No," answered the young man; "he is at my father's, at Lourdes."

My determination was taken immediately, to ride over to Lourdes the next day, and explain to the Chevalier my conduct, as far as I could with honour; to represent to him, that I was under a most positive promise not to disclose to any Spaniard the events of that night wherein his suspicions had been excited, and to add my most solemn asseverations to convince him of my innocence. My pride, I will own, struggled against this resolution, but still I saw, in the Chevalier's conduct towards me, a degree of lingering affection, which I could not bear to lose. The good spirit triumphed; and I determined to sacrifice my pride for the sake of his esteem.

These thoughts kept me silent till our arrival at the Château de l'Orme, where my appearance in such a state, I need not say, created the most terrible consternation. But I will pass by all that; suffice it, that I had to tell my story over at least one hundred times, before I was suffered to retire to bed. Helen, happily, was not present when I arrived, but my mother's embroidery woman did not fail to wake her, as I afterwards heard, for the purpose of communicating the agreeable intelligence, and doubtless made it a thousand times worse than it really was. My poor Helen's night, I am afraid, was but sadly spent.

However, when I had satisfied both my father and mother that I was not dangerously injured, and related my story to every old servant in the family, who thought they had a right to be as accurately informed in regard to all that occurred to Count Louis as his confessor, I retired to my chamber; and while the *maître d'hôtel* fulfilled the functions of Houssaye in assisting to undress me, I opened the packet I had found upon the monk, and examined the papers which it contained, but to my surprise I found nothing at all relating directly to the Marquis de St. Brie.

The first thing that presented itself was a regular certificate of the marriage of Gaston Francois de Bagnol, Count de Bagnol, with Henriette de Vergne, dated some seventeen years before, with the names of several witnesses attached. Then followed a paper of a much fresher appearance, containing the names of these witnesses, with the word *dead* marked after one, and the address of their present residence affixed to each of the others. Then came a long epistolary correspondence between the above Count de Bagnol and various persons in the town of Rochelle, at the time of its siege; by reading which I clearly found that though influenced by every motive of friendship or relationship to give his aid to the rebellious Rochellois, had constantly refused to do so, and, that in consequence, the accusation which the Chevalier informed me had been brought against that young nobleman, must have been false. On remembering, also, the cause of enmity which the Marquis de St. Brie had against him, and associating that fact with the circumstance of my having found these papers on the body of an assassin hired by the same man, I doubted not for a moment that the charge had been forged by the Marquis himself, and these letters withheld on purpose to prevent the Count from establishing his innocence. Why the Marquis had let them pass from his own hands I could not divine; without, indeed, he considered them as valueless, now he had taken care that the justice or injustice of this world could no way affect his victim. I knew that he was far too much a lover of this life alone, to value, in his own case or that of others, the cold meed of posthumous renown.

Long before I had finished these reflections and the reading of the letters, the *maître d'hôtel*, who, as I have said, supplied Houssaye's place, had done his part in undressing me; and soon, after ordering my horse to be ready early, I dismissed him and slept.

Before closing this chapter, however, I must remark that, for many reasons, I had restricted to the safe guardianship of my own breast the various reasons that led me to suppose the Marquis de St. Brie had instigated the attack under which I had so nearly fallen. The suspicions of both my parents turned naturally in that direction; but I well knew that if my father had possessed half the knowledge which I did upon the subject, he would have allowed no consideration to prevent his pursuing the Marquis with the most determined vengeance, to the destruction, perhaps, of all

parties. I therefore merely described the attack, but withheld the circumstances which preceded it; and though there are few actions in a man's life which do not either afford him regret or disappointment, this piece of prudence is amongst the scanty number I have never had cause to wish undone.

CHAPTER XVI.

I slept soundly, and I rose refreshed, although my hands were very stiff, and my head was not without its pains from the rude treatment that each had undergone. No one in the house was up when I woke, and saddling my own horse as well as I could, I left word with the old gardener that I should return before the hour of breakfast, and set out for Lourdes.

If I was not always very considerate in forming my resolutions, as the wise axiom recommends, I was certainly not slow in executing them; and I now proceeded at full speed to fulfil my determination of the night before in regard to the Chevalier. Stopping at Arnault's house, I threw myself off my horse, and entered his *étude*, which appeared to be just opened; nor did the least doubt enter my mind that the person I sought was still there.

The first thing, however, that I perceived was the enormous head of the old procureur himself, looking through the sort of barred screen that surrounded his writing-table, like some strange beast in a menagerie. I was not very much inclined to treat this incubus of the law with any great civility on my own account, as I was aware that, for some reason to himself best known, he bore me no extraordinary love; but as Helen's father, he commanded other feelings, and I therefore addressed him as politely as I could.

In answer to my inquiries for the Chevalier, he bowed most profoundly, replying that the Monsieur de Montenero would be quite in despair when he found that I had come to honour him with a visit only five minutes after his departure.

"What! is he gone already?" cried I. "When did he go?--where did he go to?"

"He is indeed, I am sorry to say, gone, Monsieur le Comte," replied the procureur; "and in answer to your second interrogatory, I can reply, that he has been gone precisely nine minutes and three quarters; but in regard to the third question, all I can depone is, that I do not at all know--only that he spoke of being absent some three months or more."

Angry, vexed, and disappointed, I turned unceremoniously on my heel; and as I went out, I heard a sort of suppressed laugh issue through the wide, unmoved jaws of the procureur, whose imperturbable countenance announced nothing in the least like mirth; and yet I am certain that he was at that moment laughing most heartily at the deceit he had put upon me; for, as I afterwards learned, the Chevalier was in his house at the very time.

The distance between Lourdes and the château was narrowed speedily; and on my arrival, I found the domestic microcosm I had left behind sound asleep an hour before, now just beginning to buzz. My father had not yet quitted his own room, but the servants were all bustling about in the preparations of the morning; and as I rode up, old Houssaye himself, recovered from his drunkenness, sneaked into the court like a beaten dog--not that he was at all ashamed of having been drunk--it was a part of his profession; but upon the road he had heard my adventures of the night before detailed in very glowing language; and he justly feared that the indignation of the whole household would fall upon his head for having been absent in the moment of danger.

Beckoning him to speak to me, I gave him a hint that I had been tender of his name, and that, if he chose to keep his own counsel, he might yet pass scathless from the rest of the family. "I shall punish you myself, Maître Houssaye," continued I; "for I *will* teach you to get drunk at proper times and seasons only."

"As I hope to live," answered the trumpeter, "I did but drink two cups; and you well know, monsieur, that two cups of wine to me, or the *maître d'hôtel*, who have drunk so many hundred tuns in our lives, is but as a cup of cold water to another man. They must have been drugged those two cups--for a certainty, they must have been drugged."

At breakfast, I found Helen with my father. They were alone; for my mother was ill from the agitation of the night before, and had remained in her own chamber, desiring not to be disturbed. The moment my step sounded in the vestibule, Helen's eyes darted towards the door, and I could see the flush of eagerness on her cheek, and the paleness that then overspread it, as she saw my head bound up; and then again the blood mounting quickly, lest any one should see the busy feelings of her swelling heart. It was a mute language which I could read as easily as my own

thoughts; but still I would have given worlds to have been permitted to hear and speak to her with the openness of acknowledged love. The breakfast passed over. Helen left the hall; and after a few minutes' conversation, my father went to the library, while I gazed for a moment from the window, meditating over a thousand hopes, in all of which Helen had her part--letting thought wander gaily through a thousand mazy turns, like a child sporting in a meadow without other object than delight, roaming heedlessly here and there, and gathering fresh flowers at every step.

As I gazed, I saw the figure of Helen glide from the door of the square tower, and take her way towards the park.--Now, now then was the opportunity. She had promised not to avoid me any longer. Now then was the moment for which my heart had longed, more than language can express; and snatching a gun to excuse the wanderings, which indeed needed no excuse, I was hastening to pour forth the multitude of accumulated feelings, and thoughts, and dreams, and wishes, which had gathered in my bosom during so many months of silence, when I was called to speak with my father, just as my foot was on the step of the door.

I will own, that if ever I felt undutiful, it was then. However, I could not avoid going, and certainly with a very unwilling heart I mounted the stairs, and entered the library. My father had a letter in his hand, which I soon found came from the Countess de Soissons, and contained a reply favourable to my mother's request, that I might be placed near the person of the prince, her son, so well known under the name of *Monsieur le Comte*. My father placed it in my hands, and seemed to expect that I should be very much gratified at the news; but I could only reply, as I had done before, that I had not the least inclination to quit my paternal home, without, indeed, it was for the purpose of serving for a campaign or two in the armies of my country. "Well, Louis," replied my father, thinking me doubtless a wayward and whimsical boy, "if you will look at the *proscriptum*, you will perceive that you are likely to be gratified in that point at least, for the Countess states that his highness, her son, though at present at Sedan, from some little rupture with the court, is likely to receive the command of one of the armies. However, take the letter, consider its contents, and at dinner let me know when you will be prepared to set out."

Glad to escape so soon, I flew out into the park in search of my beautiful Helen. It was now a fine day in the beginning of May, as warm as summer--as bright, as lovely. Nature was in her very freshest robe of green: the air was full of sweetness and balm; and as I went, a lark rose up before my steps, and mounting high in the sunshine, hung afar speck upon its quivering wings, making the whole air thrill with its melodious happiness. I love the lark above all other birds. Though there is something more tender and plaintive in the liquid music of the nightingale, yet there seems a touch of repining in its solitude and its gloom: but the lark images always to my mind a happy and contented spirit, who, full of love and delight, soars up towards the beneficent heaven, and sings its song of joy and gratitude in presence of all the listening creation.

All objects in external nature have a very great effect upon my mind; whether I will or not, they are received by my imagination as omens. And catching the lark's song as a happy augury, I sped on upon my way. As much had been done as possible to render the park, which extended behind the château, regular and symmetrical; but the ground was so uneven in its nature, so broken with rocks, and hills, and streams, and dells, that it retained much more of the symmetry of nature than anything else; which, after all, to my taste, is more beautiful than aught man can devise.

If Helen had wandered very far from the house, it would have been a difficult matter to have found her; but a sort of instinct guided me to where she was. I thought of the spot, I believe, which I myself would have chosen for lonely musing--a spot where a bower of high trees arched over a little cascade of about ten feet in height, whose waters, after escaping from the clear pool into which they fell, rushed quickly down the slanting ravine before them, nourishing the roots of innumerable shrubs, and trees, and flowers, and spreading a soft murmur and a cool freshness wherever they turned.

Helen was sitting on the bank over which the stream fell; and though she held in her hand some piece of female work, which, while my mother slept, she had brought out to occupy herself in the park, yet her eyes were fixed upon the rushing waters of the fall. At that moment, catching a stray sunbeam that found its way through the trees, the cascade had decorated itself with a fluttering iris, which, varied with a thousand hues, waved over the cataract like those changeful hopes of life, which, hanging bright and beautiful over all the precipices of human existence, still waver and change to suit every wind that blows along the course of time. My footstep was upon the greensward, so that Helen heard it not; and she continued to sit with her full dark eyes fixed upon the waterfall, her soft downy cheek resting upon the slender, graceful hand, which might have formed a model for the statuary or the painter, and her whole figure leaning forward with that untaught elegance of form and position, which never but once *did* painter or statuary succeed in representing.

When she did hear me she looked up; but there was no longer the quick start to avoid me, as if she feared a moment's unobserved conversation. Her cheek, it is true, turned a shade redder, and I could see that she was somewhat agitated; but still those dear, tender eyes turned upon me; and a smile, that owned she was happy in my presence, broke from her heart itself, and found its way to her lips.

"Dear, dear Helen," said I, seating myself beside her, "thank you for the promise that you would not avoid me, and thank you for its fulfilment; and thank you for that look, and thank you

for that smile. Oh, Helen! you know not how like a monarch you are, in having the power, by a word, or a glance, or a tone, to confer happiness, and to raise from misery and doubt, to hope, and life, and delight."

"Indeed, Louis," answered she, in a very different manner from that which I had ever seen in her before--"if I do possess such power, I am not sorry that it is so; for I am sure that while it remains with me to make you happy, you shall never be otherwise.--You think it very strange," she added, with a smile, "to hear me talk as I do now; and I would never, never have done so had not circumstances changed. But they have changed, Louis; and as I now see some hope of----" she paused a moment, as if seeking means to express herself, and I saw a bright, ingenuous blush spread over her whole countenance. "Why should I hesitate to say it?" she added, "as I see some hope now of becoming your wife, without entering into a family unwilling to receive me, I know not why I should not tell *you* also *this* that has made me so happy."

"A thousand and a thousand thanks, dearest Helen," answered I; "but tell me on what circumstance you, who once doubted my parents' consent so much more than I ever did, now found expectations so joyful--let me say, for us both."

"You must not ask me, Louis," answered Helen; "the only reason that could at all have influenced me to withhold from you what I hoped--what I was sure would make you happy--was, that I felt myself bound to be silent on more than one subject. You cannot fancy how I dislike anything that seems to imply mystery and want of confidence between two people that love one another; and, indeed, it is the greatest happiness I anticipate in being yours, that then I shall have neither thought, nor feeling, nor action, that you may not know--but in the present case you must spare me. Do not ask me, Louis, if you love me."

Of course, however much my curiosity might be excited, I put no farther question, merely asking, as calmly as I could, fearful lest I should instil some new doubts in Helen's mind, if she was sure, very sure, that the joyful news she gave me was perfectly certain; for I owned that it took such a burden from my heart, I could scarce believe my own hopes.

"All I can say, Louis," answered she, "is, that I feel sure neither your father nor your mother will object to our union, when the time arrives to think that it may take place--of course we are yet far too young."

"Too young!" said I; "why too young, dear Helen?"

"Oh, for many reasons," she answered, smiling. "You have yet to mingle with the world; at least, so I have heard people, who know the world, say that it is necessary for a young man to do before he dreams of marriage. You have to see all the fair, and the young, and the gay, which that world contains, before you can rightly judge whether your poor Helen may still possess your heart."

"And do you doubt me?" demanded I. "Helen, you have promised me never to give your hand to another; and, without one doubt, or one hesitation, do I promise the same to you--by yourself--by my hopes of happiness in this world or the next--by all that I hold sacred----"

"Hush, hush, dear Louis!" replied she; "do not swear so deeply. There are many, many temptations, I have heard, in the great world, which are difficult for a young man to resist. Louis, have you not found it so already?"

There was a peculiar emphasis in her question, which surprised and hurt me; but in a moment it flashed through my mind--the Chevalier had communicated his suspicions of me to Arnault, and Arnault had taken care to impart them to his daughter. I stood for a moment as one stupified--then, taking her hands in mine, I asked, "Helen, what is it that you mean? Can you--do you in the least believe me guilty?"

"No, Louis--no, dear Louis!" answered she, with a look of full, undoubting, unhesitating confidence; "if all the world were to declare you guilty, mine should be the dissenting voice; and I would never, never believe it.--I will not deny that tales have reached me, which I do not dwell on, because I am sure they are false--basely, ungenerously false, or originating in some mistake which you can correct when you will, and will correct when you ought. Do not explain them to me--do not waste a word or a thought upon them, as far as I am concerned," she added, seeing me about to speak, "for I believe not a word of them--not one single word."

Oh, woman's love! It is like the sunshine, so pure, so bright, so cheering; and there is nothing in all creation equal to it! I threw my arms round her unopposed--I pressed my lips upon hers; but the kiss that I then took was as pure as gratitude for such generous affection could suggest--I say not that it was brotherly, for it was dearer--sweeter; but if there be a man on earth who says there was one unholy feeling mingled therein, I tell him, in his throat, he lies!

At that moment the figure of a man broke at once through the boughs upon us. Helen turned, and, confused and ashamed at any one having seen her so clasped in my arms, fled instinctively like lightning, while the intruder advanced upon me in a menacing attitude.--It was Jean Baptiste Arnault; and with a flushed cheek and a raised stick he came quickly upon me, exclaiming, "Villain, you have seduced my sister, and, by the God above, your nobility shall not protect you!"

"Hear me, Arnault!" cried I; but he still advanced with the stick lifted, in an attitude to strike. My blood took fire. "Hear me," repeated I, snatching up my carbine,--"hear me, or take the consequences;" and I retreated up the hill, with the gun pointed towards his breast. Mad, I believe--for his conduct can hardly be attributed to anything but frenzy--he rushed on upon me without giving time for any explanation, and struck a violent blow at my head with his stick. I started back to avoid it; my foot struck against an angle of the rock; I stumbled; the gun went off; and Arnault, after reeling for a moment with an ineffectual effort to stand, pressed his hand upon his bosom, and fell lifeless at my feet.

CHAPTER XVII.

There is nothing like remorse:--it is the fiery gulf into which our passions and our follies lash us with whips of snakes. What language can tell the feelings of my bosom, while I stood and gazed upon the lifeless form of Helen's brother, as he lay before me slain by my hand? And oh! what words of horror and of agony did I not read in every line of that cold, still, mindless countenance, as it glared at me with an expression still mingled of the anger which had animated him, and the pang with which he had died.

It was terrible beyond all description. My whole heart, and mind, and brain, and soul, was one whirl of dreadful sensations. I had done that which it was impossible to recal--I had taken from my fellow-being that which I could never restore--I had extinguished the bright mysterious lamp of life; and where, oh, where, could I find the Promethean flame wherewith to light it again to action and to being?

In vain! The irrevocable deed had gone forth; and sorrow, and tears, and regret, and agony could have no more effect upon it than on the granite of the mountains that surrounded me. It was done! It was written on the book of fate! It was between me and my God,--a dreadful account, never to pass from my memory. I felt the finger, that had branded *murderer!* on the brow of Cain, tracing the same damning word in characters of fire upon my heart. And yet I gazed on, upon the thing that I made, with horror amounting to stupefaction. Like the head of the Gorgon, it seemed to have turned me into stone; and though I would have given worlds to have banished it for ever from my sight and my memory, I stood with my eyes fixed upon it as if I sought to impress every lifeless lineament on my remembrance with lines that time should never have power to efface.

A heavy hand, laid upon my shoulder, was the first thing that roused me; and turning round, I beheld Pedro Garcias, the Spanish smuggler, standing by my side. The discharged gun was still in my hand; the bleeding corpse lay before me; and had he had occasion to ask who had done the deed, whose consequences he beheld, I am sure that my countenance would have afforded a sufficient reply. No one but a murderer could have looked and felt as I did.

"How did this happen?" asked he bluntly, and without giving me either name or title; for no one could look upon the humbling object before us, and cast away one name of honour upon earthly rank. For a moment, I gazed upon the smuggler wildly and vacantly; for the strong impression of the thing itself had almost banished from my mind the circumstances that preceded it; but recollecting myself at length, I gave him a scarcely coherent account of what had happened.

"You should not have seduced his sister," replied the smuggler, fixing his large dark eye upon me. "You men of rank think that the plain *bourgeois* feels not such a stain upon his honour as the loss of his child's or of his sister's virtue. But they do--they do, as bitterly, as keenly, as madly, as the proudest count that ever spread his banner to the wind."

"Seduce his sister!--seduce Helen!" cried I, turning quickly upon him. "It is false! Who dares to say it? I would not wrong her for a world--not for a thousand worlds!"

"That changes the case," replied the smuggler. "He wronged you then, and deserved to die. But come away from this spot. Fie! do not look so ghastly. We shall all wear his likeness one day, and it matters little whether it be a day sooner or a day later. But come along to the mill. Harm may come of this; for his father will not want friends to pursue this deed to the utmost. Come, come! You shall not stay here, and risk your life too. One dead man is enough for one day at least. Come!"

So saying, he hurried me away to the mill, where we found the door apparently locked, the wheel at rest, and the miller out; but on tapping three times, thrice repeated, we were admitted by the miller, who seemed somewhat surprised to see me with Garcias. The event that had driven

me there was soon told; and after a consultation between the two, it was agreed that, beyond all doubt, I might compromise my own life, and the security of my family, by remaining in France. How far they were right would have been difficult to determine, even had my mind been in a state to have examined the question. The privileges of the nobility were great, but not such as to have secured my immunity, if it could have been proved that the homicide had been intentional. Nothing remained for me, according to their showing, but once more to try the air of Spain, till such time as my pardon could be obtained, which might, indeed, be long; for it had lately been the policy of the prime minister to strike every possible blow at the power of the nobility, and to show less lenity towards any member of their body, than to those of the common classes. Little did I heed their reasoning on the subject. The conclusion was all that reached my mind; and the idea of there being an absolute necessity for my quitting the country was in itself a relief. Even to think of remaining in those scenes was horror, and to have met Helen's eyes, after slaying her brother, would have been a thousand times worse than death.

"Come, cheer up, Count Louis!" cried Garcias; "I did not think to see so brave a heart as yours overset by a thing that happens to every one now and then. Give him a horn of La Mancha brandy, Señor Miller; 'twill comfort his heart, and get rid of such foolish qualms. In the meanwhile, I will go out and see after the body. If no one has come near it, and I can get it down to the river, I will cast it in below the fall. The waters are full, and it may go down for ten or fifteen miles, so that nobody will hear more of it, and the Count may stay in his own land. But if they have discovered the business, our young Seigneur must lie here till midnight, and then be off with me into Spain. I shall meet my good fellows in the mountains; and then the *douaniers* who would stop us must have iron hands and a brazen face."

I let them do with me whatsoever they liked. It seemed that those fine ties which connect the mind and the body were so far broken or relaxed, that the sensations of the one had no longer their effect upon the other. My heart was on fire, and my thoughts were as busy as hell could wish; but I scarcely saw, or heard, or knew what was passing around me; and I let Garcias and the miller manage me as if I had been an automaton, without exerting any volition of my own. I drank the raw spirit that the miller gave me; and indeed it might as well have been water. I suffered him, when Garcias was gone, to pour on his consolations, which fell cold and heavy upon my ear, but found not their way to my heart. Nor, indeed, did he seem to understand the cause of that despairing melancholy in which I was plunged, attributing my grief to fear of the consequences, or to dislike to quit my country. I had not the spirit even to repel such a supposition, though my feelings were very, very different. The absorbing consciousness of guilt prevented me at first from even remembering or thinking of the impassable barrier now placed between me and Helen. That was an after-thought, infinitely painful, it is true, but it came not at once. The only thought which occupied me--if, indeed, thought it can be called,--was the mental endeavour to qualify the bitterness of my feelings, by remembering that the act which had so suddenly plunged me into misery was not a voluntary one; and I had continually to reiterate, to press upon my own mind, that it was accidental, and to call up the memory of every painful circumstance, in order to assure myself that I was practising no self-deception. Then, too, came the consciousness that I had pointed the gun; and a thousand times I asked myself, what would have been my conduct had I not stumbled over the rock?--Would I have fired? Would I have refrained? I know not; and still my own heart condemned me, and branded me with the name of murderer.

It seemed long, long ere Garcias came back; for to those who despair, as well as to those who hope, each minute lingers out an age. When he came, he brought the news that the body had been removed before he had arrived at the spot; and that, by creeping on behind the trees, he had caught a glimpse of the persons that bore it, who were evidently proceeding towards the château.

As he spoke, I covered my eyes with my hands, as if to shut out the view of Helen's first sight of her brother's corpse. She had fled so fast at the first sound of footsteps, that she could not have known who it was had approached; but now she would see him, bleeding from a wound by my hand; and by the place where he was found, she would easily divine who was the murderer. It wanted but that thought to work up my agony to the highest pitch, and it burst forth in a torrent of passionate tears.

"Fie! fie!" cried Garcias. "Señor, are you a man? I would not, for very shame, have any one see you look so womanly. You have slain a man!--good! Had you not good cause? Were he alive again, and were to offer you a blow, would you not slay him again? If you would not, you are yourself unworthy to live; for the man that outlives his honour, is a disgrace to existence. A man once told me I lied," continued the smuggler, advancing and laying his gigantic hand upon my arm, to call my attention, while the dark fire flashed out of his eyes, as if his heart still flamed at the insult. "He told me, I lied! We were sitting in a peaceful circle upon the green top of the first step of the Maladetta, where it juts out over the plain, with a precipice two hundred feet high. He told me, I lied, in the presence of the girl I loved--he told me, I lied; and I pitched him as far into the open air as I have seen a hurler cast a disk. I can see him now, sprawling midway between heaven and earth, till he fell dashed to atoms on the rocks below. And think you that I give it one vain regret, one weak womanish thought? Did he and I stand there again, with the same provocation, I would send him again as far--ay, farther, were it possible. Come come," he added, "no more of this! Miller, give him another cup of consolation."

The smuggler took, perhaps, the best way of teaching me to bear the weight of what I had

done, by showing me that there were others who walked under it so lightly. Wondering at his coolness, yet envying it, I took another and another cup of the spirit, till I began to find some relief, and could look around me and gain some knowledge of the external objects. It was then I perceived the reason why the miller had been so slow in admitting us. The whole place was strewed with various contraband goods, which had not yet been deposited in their usual receptacle, which was apparently an under-chamber, reached by a trap-door in the floor of the mill, so artfully contrived that it had escaped even my eyes in my frequent visits to the place.

It now stood open; and no sooner did Garcias perceive that the brandy and his conversation had produced some effect upon me, than, pointing to a low bed in one corner, he advised me to lie down and go to sleep, while he helped the miller to conceal the salt and other prohibited articles, with which the floor was encumbered. I said I could not sleep; and he made me take a fourth cup of brandy, which soon plunged me at least into forgetfulness.

How long I lay I know not; but when I woke, the interior of the mill was quite dark, except where a moonbeam streamed in through a high window and fell upon the dark gigantic figure of Garcias standing with the miller near the door, apparently in the act of listening. At the same time a high pile of salt, moved to the edge of the trap-door, but not yet let down, proved that the smugglers had been interrupted in their employment. In an instant a tremendous knocking, which had most probably been the cause of my waking, was repeated against the mill-door, and a voice was heard crying, "If you do not open the door, take the consequences, for I give you notice that I shall break it open: I am François Derville, officer of his majesty's *douane*; and I charge you to yield me entrance."

"Ay, I know you well!" muttered Garcias to himself, "and a bold fellow you are too.--See, miller, by the loop hole," he continued in the same under-tone,--"see whether there is any one with him?"

The miller climbed up to a small aperture high in the wall, which apparently commanded a view of the door; and after looking through it for a moment, while the blows were reiterated on the outside, he descended, saying, "He is alone: I have looked all up the valley, and no one is near him; but I see he has got an iron crow to break open the door."

"He will not try that when he knows I am here," said Garcias; and elevating his voice to a tone that drowned the knocking without, he added, "Hold! Derville, hold! I am here,--Pedro Garcias:--you know me, and you know I am not one to be disturbed; so go away about your business, if you would not have worse come of it.

"Pedro Garcias, or Pedro Devil!" replied the man without, "what matters it to me? I will do my duty. Therefore, let me in, or I will break open the door;" and a heavy blow of his crow confirmed this expression of his intention.

"The man is mad!" said Garcias, with that calm, cold tone which very often in men of stormy passions announces a more deadly degree of wrath than when their anger exhausts itself in noisy fury;--"the man is mad!" and stooping down he took up one of the heavy wooden mallets with which he had been breaking the salt.

In the meanwhile, the blows without were redoubled, and the door evidently began to give way. "Take care what you are doing!" cried Garcias, in a voice of thunder; "you are rushing into the lion's den!" Another and another blow were instantly struck: the door staggered open, and the douanier stood full in the portal.

Garcias raised his arm--the mallet fell, and the unhappy officer rolled upon the floor with his scull dashed to atoms, like an ox before the blow of the butcher. He made no cry or sound, except a sort of inarticulate moan, but fell dead at once, without a struggle.

"Good God! what have you done?" cried I, starting from the bed where I had hitherto lain, and approaching Garcias.

"Punished a villain for breaking the law of every civilized land," replied the smuggler; "for no country authorizes one man to infringe the dwelling of another without authority; and he had no authority, or he would have shown it. At least," he added in a lighter tone,--though, perhaps, what he did add, proceeded from a more serious feeling--for that dark and wily thing, the human heart, thus often covers itself, even from ourselves, with a disguise the most opposite to its native character,--"at least, I hope he had none. At all events, he knew well what he was about: I warned him beforehand: and now--I think he will never break into any one's house again.--Shut the door, miller, and let us have a light."

The coolness with which he contemplated the body of his victim produced very strange and perhaps evil impressions in my breast. Certainly, in that small, silent court of justice which every man holds within his own breast, both upon his and upon other people's actions, I condemned the deed I had seen committed; and I found myself, too, guilty; but his crime seemed so much more enormous than mine, that the partial judge was willing, I am afraid, to pardon the minor offender. But it was the example of his calmness that had strongest effect upon me; and I began to value human life at less, since I saw it estimated so low by others.

Neither Garcias nor the miller seemed to give one thought of remorse to the deed; the miller speaking of it in his cool, placid manner, and Garcias treating it as one of those matters which

every man was called to perform at some time of his life. Both of them also justified it to themselves as an act of absolute necessity for their own security.

To what crime, to what folly has not that plea of necessity pandered at one time or another in this world? From the statesman to the pick-purse, from the warrior to the cut-throat, all, all shield themselves behind necessity from the arrows which conscience vainly aims at the rebellious heart of man.

The question now became how to dispose of the body; but the smuggler soon arranged his plan, with an art in concealing such deeds, which, though doubtless gained in the wild hazardous traffic he carried on, I own, made me shudder with associations I liked not to dwell upon. Without any apparent reluctance, he raised the corpse in his arms, and carried it out to a crag that overhung the stream, having an elevation of about a hundred yards perpendicular. Underneath this point were several masses of rock and stone, a fall on which would infallibly have produced death, with much the same appearances as those to be found on the body of the douanier. But without trusting to this, Garcias carried the body to the top of the rock, and cast it down headlong upon the stones below, which it spattered with its blood and brains, and then, rolling over into the river, was carried away with the stream. The next thing was to cast down the iron crow, which might have been supposed to drop from his hand in falling; and then the smuggler broke away a part of the mould and turf that covered the top of the rock, leaving such an appearance as the spot would have presented had the ground given way under the officer's feet.

All this being done, he returned to the mill; and telling me that it would soon be time for us to set out, he applied himself to concluding the work in which he had been disturbed by the arrival of the douanier, as calmly as if the fearful transactions of the last half-hour had left no impress upon his memory. The only thing that might perchance betray any regret or remorse was the dead silence with which he proceeded, as if his thoughts were deeply occupied with some engrossing subject.

At length, however, he turned to the miller: "Come, give me a horn of the *aguardente!*" cried he, with a sigh that commented on his demand; "and stow away those two lumps of salt yourself.--Have you put the door to rights? It will tell tales to-morrow if you do not take heed; and wipe up that blood upon the floor."

So saying, he cast his gigantic limbs upon a seat, mused a moment or two with a frowning brow; and I thought I could see that he strove to summon up again, in his bosom, the angry feelings under which he had slain his fellow-creature, to counterbalance the regret that was gaining mastery over his heart. His lip curled, and his eye flashed, and, tossing off the cup of spirits which the miller proffered, he cast his mantle across his shoulders and prepared to set out.

Had he shown no touch of remorse, there would have existed no link of association between his feelings and mine; but I saw that though his heart had been hardened in scenes of danger and guilt, it was still accessible to some better sensations. There was also a similarity in the events which had that day happened to us both, that created a degree of sympathy between us; and I rose willingly to accompany the smuggler, when he announced that he was ready to depart.

To my surprise, however, he turned not towards the door by which we had entered, but going into a small sort of closet, in which appeared a variety of sacks, and measures, and other accessories of a miller's trade, he bade me do precisely as he did. For my part, I saw no means of exit from that place; but I found that there were more secrets in the mill than I had dreamed of. Choosing out a large spare millstone, that lay upon the floor of the closet, Garcias mounted thereon, and dropped his arms by his sides, when instantly the stone began to sink under his weight, and he disappeared by degrees like some gigantic genius in a fairy tale. The miller handed him a lantern the moment he had descended sufficiently to be clear of the hole through which the stone had sunk. He then jumped off the millstone, which rose up rapidly in its place, counterbalanced by some other weight; and on my stepping upon it, it again descended with me, when I found myself in a sort of cave, whether artificial or natural I know not, but which ran some way into the rock under the mill. The miller followed with a key, and a gourd fashioned into a bottle, which he bestowed upon me, and which I afterwards found to be full of brandy. He then opened a small door which gave us egress close to the water-wheel; and bidding him farewell, we issued forth, and in a moment stood in the moonlight by the side of the river.

CHAPTER XVIII.

With a quick step Garcias led the way towards that side of the hill which from its position was

cast into shadow, and taking an upward path, that we both knew, he soon arrived in those high and lonely parts of the mountain, where solitude and silence reigned undisturbed. High above earth's habitations, nothing looked upon us but the clear blue sky and the bright calm moon, whose beams fell soft and silvery upon the tall mountain peaks around--poured into every valley--danced in every stream, and contrasted the broad, deep shadows thrown by each projecting rock, with the bright effulgence of those spots whereon she glowed with her full power.

It was a grand and solemn scene; and there was something inexpressibly awful in the calm, sublime aspect of the giant world in which we stood--in the silence--in the moonlight--in the deep, clear expanse of the profound blue sky, especially when each of those who contemplated it had heavy on his heart the weight of human blood. It felt as if we were more immediately in the presence of Heaven itself--as if the calm, bright eye of eternal Justice looked sternly into the deepest recesses of our bosoms.

Garcias seemed to feel nearly as much as I did; and bending his eyes upon the ground, he pursued his way silently and fast, till, descending for some hundred yards, and turning the angle of the hill, we came under a group of high trees, which formed a beautiful object on the mountain side when viewed from the windows of the Château de l'Orme, and from which I could now discern the dwelling of my ancestors.

Here the smuggler stopped as if to allow me a last view of the scenes of my infancy; and my eye instantly running down the valley, rested on the grey towers and pinnacles of my paternal mansion with a lingering regret impossible to describe.

There lay all that I loved on earth, the objects of every better affection of my nature--there lay the scenes amongst which every happier hour had passed--there lay the spot where every early dream had been formed--where hope had arisen--where every wish returned; and I was leaving it--leaving it, perhaps, for ever, with a stain upon my name, and the kindred blood of her most dear upon my hand. My heart swelled as if it would have burst, my brain burned as with fire, and my eyes would fain have wept.

I struggled long to prevent them, and I should have succeeded; but just while I was gazing--while a thousand overpowering remembrances and bitter regrets seemed tearing my heart to pieces, a nightingale broke out in the trees above my head, and poured forth so wild, so sweet, so melancholy a song, that my excited feelings would bear no more, and the tears rolled over my cheeks like the large drops of a thunder-storm.

"Poor boy!" said Garcias, "I am sorry for thee! I can feel now, more than I could this morning, what thou feelest, for, in truth, I would that I had not slain that Derville so rashly: and, I know not why, but I wish what I never wished before, that the moon was not so bright--it seems as if that poor wretch were looking at me. But come, 'tis no use to think of these things. When we are in Spain we will get us absolution, and that is all that we can do. Pardon me, monseigneur," he added, suddenly resuming that peculiar sort of haughtiness which leads many a proud man in an inferior station to give a full portion of ceremonious deference to his superior--"pardon me, if now, or in future, I treat you, too, like a companion of Pedro Garcias, the smuggler. During this day, my wish to check your grief has made me unceremonious, and till you can return, perhaps you had better waive that respect which your rank entitles you to require, for it may not please you hereafter, to have many of those with whom you now consort for a time, boast of having been your very good friends and fellow adventurers."

I told him to call me what he liked, and to use his own discretion in regard to what account he gave of me to those, whose companion I was about to become. Little, indeed, cared I for any part of the future: it had nothing for hope to fix upon; and once having withdrawn my eyes from that valley, and turned upon the path before me, I was reckless about all the rest.

It seemed, however, that Garcias had found a relief in breaking the dead silence which had hung upon us so long, for he continued speaking on various topics as we went, and gradually succeeded in drawing my mind from the actual objects of my regret. Not that I forgot my grief; far from it. It still lay a dead and heavy weight upon my heart; but my thoughts did not continue to trace every painful remembrance with the agonizing minuteness which they had lately done. Such is ever the first effect of that balm which Time pours into every wound. It scarcely seems to lessen the anguish, but it renders it less defined.

Gradually I listened and replied, and though each minute or two my mind reverted to myself, yet the intervals became longer, and I found it every time more easy than the last to abstract my thoughts from my own situation, and to apply them to the subjects on which he spoke.

For more than two hours we continued walking on till we arrived at the heights nearly opposite to Argelez, during which time we had climbed the hills and descended into the valleys more than once. We were now again upon the very crest of the mountain, and the moon was just sinking behind the hills to the west of the Balindrau, when Garcias paused and pointed down the course of a stream that burst precipitately over the side of the hill with so perpendicular a fall that it almost deserved the name of a cataract.

The body of water, though then but a rivulet, was at some part of the year undoubtedly considerable, for it had channelled for itself a deep ravine, which, for some space, wound away

from the valley, as if obstinately resolved to bear its tribute in any other direction than towards the principal river that flowed in the midst: but, after pursuing these capricious meanderings for a considerable way, it was obliged at length to follow the direction of the hills, and turn towards the valley in its own despite, as we often see, in some far province, a stubborn contemner of established authorities pursue for a while his own wilful way, fancying himself a man of great spirit and an independent soul, till comes some stiff official of the law, who turns him sneaking back into the common course of life.

The bottom of the ravine, left free by the shrinking of the stream, was lined on either hand with the most luxuriant verdure, and overhung by a thousand shrubs and trees, now in their ruffling dresses of summer green. Where we then stood, however, many hundred yards above, with the moon, as I have said, sinking behind the opposite mountains, all that I could see was a dark and fearful chasm below, at the bottom of which I caught every now and then the flash and sparkle of the stream, whose roar, as it broke from fall to fall, reached my ear even at that height.

Down this abyss it was that Garcias pointed, saying that our journey's end lay there, for the present.

"If you are a true mountaineer," added he, "you will be able to follow me; but attempt it not if you feel the least fear; for I have seldom seen a place more likely to break the neck of any but a good cragsman."

"Go on," replied I, "I have no fear;" and, indeed, I had become so reckless about life, that had it been the jaws of hell, I would have plunged in. And yet it appeared I was even then in the act of flying from death. Man is so made up of inconsistencies, that this would not have been extraordinary, granting it to have been the case--but it was not so. I was not flying from death, but from ignominy and shame, and the reproachful eyes of those I loved.

Garcias led the way; and certainly never did a more hazardous and precarious path receive the steps of two human beings. Its course lay down the very face of the precipice over which the stream fell, and the only tenable steps that it afforded were formed by the broken faces of the schistus rock, without one bough of shrub or tree to offer a hold for the hands. The river at the same time kept roaring in our ears, within a yard of our course; and every now and then, where it took a more furious bound than ordinary, it dashed its spray in our faces, and over our path, confusing the sight, whose range was already circumscribed by the darkness, and rendering the rock so slippy that nothing but the talons of an eagle would have fastened steadily upon it.

At length we came to a spot of smooth turf, with still the same degree of perpendicular declination; and to keep one's feet became now almost impossible; so that nothing seemed left but to lie down and slip from the top to the bottom. It was a dangerous experiment, for the descent might probably have terminated in a precipice which would have been difficult to avoid; but I little cared: and, with the usual success of boldness, I lighted on a small round plot of turf, crowning another turn of the ravine. A man anxious for life would, most probably, have avoided the course of the stream, slipped past the spot on which I found a safe resting place, and been dashed over the precipice which lay scarce two yards from me.

In a moment Garcias was by my side, and asked, with some concern lest his place of retreat had been discovered, whether I had ever visited that spot before, for I seemed to know it, he said, as well as he did himself. Having assured him I never had, and that my fortunate descent was entirely accidental, he laid his hand on my arm, as if to stay me from any farther trial of the kind. "You have escaped strangely," said he: "but never make the same experiment again, unless you are something more than merely careless about life. We are now close upon my men," he added, "and we must give them notice of our approach or we may risk a shot;" and he stooped over the edge of the cliff looking down into the ravine.

It was here that the trees and shrubs, which lined thickly the lower parts of the dell first began to sprout; and, forming a dark screen between our eyes and the course of the stream, they would have cut off all view of what was passing below, had it been day; but at that hour, when all was darkness around us, and no glare of sunshine outshone any other light, we could just catch through the foliage the sparkling of a fire, about forty yards below us; and as we gazed, a very musical voice broke out in a Spanish song. Being directly above the singer, the sounds rose distinctly to our ears, so that we could very well distinguish the words that he sang, which were to the following tenour, as near as I can recollect:--

SONG.

Tread thou the mountain, brother, brother!
  Tread thou the mountain wild!
In each other land men betray one another;
  Be thou then the mountain's child.

I.

Hark! how hidalgo to hidalgo vows,
  To serve him he'd hazard his life--
But woe to the foolish and confident spouse
  If he leave him alone with his wife.--

Tread then the mountain, brother, brother!
Tread then the mountain wild!
In each other land men betray one another;
Be thou then the mountain's child.

II.

Lo! how the merchant to merchant will say,
His credit and purse to command:
But let him fall bankrupt, I doubt, well-a-day!
No credit he'll have at his hand.
Tread then the mountain, brother, brother!
Tread then the mountain wild!
In each other land men betray one another;
Be thou then the mountain's child.

III.

Lo! how the statesman will promise his tool,
To raise him to honours some day:
But when he's done all he would wish, the poor fool
Will regret taking fine words for pay.
Tread then the mountain, brother, brother!
Tread then the mountain wild!
In each other land men betray one another;
Be thou then the mountain's child.

IV.

Hark! what the courtier vows to his king,
To serve him whatever befal;
But if evil luck dark misfortune should bring,
The courtier turns sooner than all.
Tread then the mountain, brother, brother!
Tread then the mountain wild!
In court, crowd, and city, men cheat one another;
Be thou then the mountain's child.

"He says true! By Saint Jago, he says true!" cried Garcias, who had been listening as well as myself. "Thank God, for being born a mountaineer!"

He ended his self-gratulation with a long whistle, so shrill that it reached the ears of the singer, to whom the noise of our voices had not arrived from the height we were above him, although his song by the natural tendency of sounds had come up to us. He answered the signal of his captain immediately, and we instantly began to descend, making steps of the boles and roots of the trees, till lighting once more on somewhat level ground, we stood beside his watch-fire. The singer was a tall, fine Arragonese, about my own age, or perhaps somewhat older, who had been thrown out as a sentinel to guard the little encampment of the smugglers, which lay a couple of hundred yards farther down the ravine. He bore a striking resemblance to Garcias, whom he called cousin, and also seemed to possess some portion of his gigantic strength, if one might judge by the swelling muscles of his legs and arms, which were easily discernible through the tight netted silk breeches and stockings he wore in common with most of his companions.

He gazed upon me for a moment or two with some surprise, and I returned his look with one of equal curiosity. In truth, I should not particularly have liked to encounter him as an adversary; for with his long gun, his knife, and his pistols, added to the vigour and activity indicated by his figure, he would have offered as formidable an opponent as I ever beheld. No questions, however, did he ask concerning me. Not a word, not an observation did he make; but resuming the characteristic gravity of the Spaniard, from which, perhaps, he thought his song might have somewhat derogated in the eyes of a stranger, he merely replied to a question of his cousin, that all had passed tranquilly during his absence, and cast himself down upon his checkered cloak, by the side of the watch-fire, with an air of the most perfect indifference.

At another time I might have smiled to see how true it is that nations have their affectations as well as individuals, but I was in no smiling mood, and were I to own the truth, I turned away with a feeling of contemptuous anger at his arrogation of gravity, fully as ridiculous in me as even his mock solemnity. What had I to do to be angry with him? I asked myself, after a moment's reflection: I was not born to be the whipper of all fools; and if I was, I thought my castigation had certainly better begin with myself.

Garcias led me on to the rest of his companions, who were stretched sleeping on the ground; some wrapped in their cloaks, some partly sheltered from the winds, which in those mountains lose not their wintry sharpness till summer is far advanced, by little stone walls, built up from the various masses of rock that from time to time had rolled down the mountain, and strewed the bottom of the ravine. The younger men, though engaged in a life of danger and risk, slept on with the fearless slumber of youth; but four or five of the elder smugglers, whom ancient habits of watchful anxiety rendered light of sleep, started up with musket and dagger in their hands, long before our steps had reached their halting-place.

The figure of Garcias, however, soon quieted their alarm; and I was astonished to see how little agitation the return of their absent leader, from what had been, and always must be, a dangerous part of their enterprise, caused amongst them; nor did my presence excite any particular attention. Garcias informed them simply, that I was a friend he had long known, who now came to join them; on which they welcomed me cordially, without farther inquiry, giving me merely the *Buenas noches tenga usted caballero*, and assigning me a spot to sleep in, near the horses, which was indeed the place of honour, being more sheltered than any other.

CHAPTER XIX.

Sleep--calm, natural sleep--was not, however, to be procured so soon; and though I laid down and remained quiet, in imitation of the smugglers, what, what would I not have given for the slumber they enjoyed! I need not go farther into my feelings--I need not tell all the bitter and agonising reflections that reiterated themselves upon my brain, till I thought reason would have abandoned me. What I had been--what I was--what I was to be--each one of them had some peculiar pang; so that on neither the past, the present, nor the future, could my mind rest without torture; and yet I could not sleep.

It may easily be conceived, then, that the two hours which elapsed, between our arrival at the rendezvous and the break of day, was a space too dreadful to be rested on without pain, even now, when the whole has been given over to the more calm dominion of remembrance:--remembrance, that has the power to rob every part of the past of its bitter, except remorse; and to mingle some sweet with even the memory of pain and misfortune, provided our own heart finds nothing therein for reproach.

As soon as the very first faint streaks of light began to interweave themselves with the grey clouds in the east, the smugglers were upon their feet, and, gathering round Garcias and myself, began to ask a great many more questions than they had ventured on the night before. My dress and my person became objects of some curiosity among them; and it so unfortunately happened that more than one of the smugglers, who had seen me at the mill in former days, instantly recognised me at present. However, as probably no one of them would have found it agreeable himself to assign his exact reasons for joining the lawless band with which he consorted, I escaped all questions as to the cause of my appearing amongst them. Each, probably, attributed it to some separate imagination of his own; but the high favour in which our house stood with this honourable fraternity, assured me the most enthusiastic reception; and they mutually rivalled one another in their endeavours to serve me, and render my situation comfortable.

It was in vain now to attempt concealing from any one of the band my rank in life; but in order that accident should not extend my real name beyond the mere circle of those who knew me, I followed a custom which I found they generally adopted themselves--that of distinguishing themselves, each by a different appellation, when actually engaged in any of their hazardous enterprises, from that by which they were ordinarily known in the world. I therefore took the name of De l'Orme, to which I was really entitled by birth; the Comté de l'Orme having been in our family from time immemorial.

These arrangements, the quick questions of the smugglers, their wild, strange manners, and picturesque appearance, all formed a relief to a mind anxious to escape from itself; and perhaps no society into which I could have fallen would have afforded me so much the means of abstracting my thoughts from all that was painful in my situation. After having satisfied their curiosity in regard to me, the Spaniards, to the number of twenty, gathered round Garcias to hear how he had disposed of the smuggled goods, which had been deposited at the mill; and certainly, never did a more picturesque group meet my view, than that which they presented, with their fine muscular limbs, rich coloured dresses, deep sun-burnt countenances, and flashing black eyes; while each cast himself into some of those wild and picturesque attitudes, which seem natural to mountaineers; and the form of Garcias towering above them all, looked like that of the Farnesian Hercules, fresh from the garden of the Hesperides.

Garcias' story was soon told. He informed them simply, that all was safe, produced the little bag which contained the profits of their last adventure, and told them how much the miller expected to gain for the goods at present in his hands. I remarked, however, he wisely said not a word of the death of Derville the douanier, although undoubtedly it would have met with the high approbation of his companions; and probably would have given him still greater sway, than even that which he already possessed, over the minds of a class of men, on whom anything striking and bold is never without its effect.

All this being concluded, instant preparation was made for our departure. A horse was

assigned to me from amongst those which had borne the smuggled wares across the mountains; and all the worthy fraternity being mounted, we had already begun to wind down the ravine, in an opposite direction from that on which Garcias and myself had arrived, when the sound of voices, heard at a little distance before us, made us halt in our march. In a moment after, one of the smugglers, who had been sent out as a sort of piquette in front, and whose voice we had heard, returned, dragging along a poor little man, in whom I instantly recognised the unfortunate player apothecary, who had given me so much relief by his chirurgical applications a day or two before. He had a small bundle strapped upon his back, as if equipped for travelling; and seemed to be in mortal fear, holding back with all his might, while the smuggler pulled him along by the arm, as we often see a boy drag on an unwilling puppy by the collar, while the obstinate beast hangs back with its haunches, and sets its four feet firmly forward, contending stoutly every step that it is forced to make in advance.

"Here is a spy," cried the smuggler, pulling his prisoner forward into the midst of the wild group, that our halt had occasioned; "I caught him dodging about in the bushes there, at the entrance of the ravine; and, depend on it, the *gabellateurs* are not far off."

The poor player, who understood not one word of this Spanish accusation, gazed about, with open mouth, and starting eyes, upon the dark countenances of the smugglers, who, I believe, were only meditating whether it would be better to throw him over the first precipice, or hang him up on the first tree; and whose looks, in consequence, did not offer anything re-assuring.

"*Messieurs! messieurs! respectable messieurs!*" cried he, gazing round and round in an agony of terror, without being able to say any more; when suddenly his eye fell upon me, and darting forward with a quick spring, that loosed him from the smuggler's hold, he cast himself upon his knees, embracing my stirrup; while half-a-dozen guns were instantly pointed at his head, from the idea that he was about to make his escape. The clicking of the gun-locks increased his terror almost to madness; and, creeping under my horse's belly, he made a sort of shield for his head, with my foot and the large clumsy stirrup-iron, crying out with the most doleful accents, "Don't fire! don't fire! pray don't fire!--Monseigneur!--Illustrious scion of a noble house!--pray don't fire--exert thine influence benign, for the preservation of a lowly supplicant."

By this time, one of the smugglers had again got the player by the collar; and, dragging him out with some detriment to his doublet, he placed him once more in the midst. "Garcias," cried I, seeing them rather inclined to maltreat their captive, "do not let them hurt him; your companion is under a mistake. This poor little wretch, depend on it, had no more idea of spying upon your proceedings, than he had of spying into the intrigues of the moon. He is a miserable player, who is unemployed, and half starving, I believe. I will answer for his being no spy."

At my intercession, Garcias interfered to prevent any further annoyance being inflicted upon the hero of the buskin, and questioned him, in French, in regard to what he did there. For a moment or two, his terror and agitation deprived him of the power of explaining himself; but soon beginning to perceive that the storm had in some degree subsided, he took courage, and summoning up his most elevated style, he proceeded to explain his appearance amongst them, mingling, as he went on, a slight degree of satire with his bombast, which I was afraid might do him but little service with his hearers.

"Gentlemen!" cried he, "if ye be--as, from your gay attire and splendid arms, your noble bearing and your bronzed cheeks, I judge ye are--lords of the forest and the mountain--knights, wanderers of the wild--magistrates, executors of your own laws, and abrogators of the laws of every other person--I beseech ye, show pity and fellow-feeling towards one who has the honour of being fully as penniless as yourselves; who, though he never yet had courage enough to cut a purse, or talent enough to steal one, has ever been a great admirer of those bold and witty men, who maintain the blessed doctrine of the community of this world's goods at the point of the sword, and put down the villanous monopoly of gold and silver with a strong hand and a loaded pistol."

"Make haste, good friend!" cried Garcias, smiling; "we are not what you take us for, but we have as much need of concealment as if we were. Therefore, if you would escape hanging on that bough, give a true account of yourself in as few words as possible. Such active tongues as yours sometimes slip into the mire of falsehood. See that it be not the case with you. Say, how came you in this unfrequented part of the country, at this early hour?"

"Admirable captain!" cried the player, again beginning to tremble for his life, "you shall hear the strange mysterious turns of fate that conducted me hither, to a part of which, that noble scion of an illustrious house--who seems either to be your prisoner or your friend, I know not which; but who, in either capacity, is equally honourable and to be honoured--can bear witness. Know, then, magnanimous chief, no later than yesterday morning, towards the hour of noon, according to that illustrious scion's express command, I proceeded to the principal gate of the mighty Château de l'Orme, where I had expected a certain further fee or reward, which he promised me for having solaced and assuaged the pains of those wounds still visible upon his brow and hands. But judge of my surprise when, on entering the court-yard, I found the whole place in confusion and dismay; men mounting in haste, women screaming at leisure, dogs barking, horses neighing, and asses braying; and on my addressing myself to an elderly gentleman with a long nose, for all the world like a sausage of Bigorre, asking him, with a sweet respectful smile, if he could show me to my lord the young count, he bestowed a buffet on my cheek, which had even a greater

effect than the buffet which Moses gave the rock, for it brought fire as well as water out of my eyes both at once."

"And what was the cause of all this tumult? Did you hear?" demanded Garcias, who had observed my eye, while the player told what he had seen at the Château de l'Orme, straining up his countenance with an anxiety that would bear no delay.

"To speak the truth, most mighty potentate of the mountains," replied the stroller, "I asked no farther questions where such answers seemed amongst the most common forms of speech. I thought the striking reply of my first respondent quite sufficient, though not very satisfactory; and, judging he might like my back better than my face, I got my heels over the threshold, and came away as fast as possible. I did not return to the cottage where I had spent the last six weeks, for I had happily my pack on my back, and my worthy host and hostess were so much obliged to me for boarding and lodging with them all that time, that I doubt they would have retained my goods and chattels as a keepsake, if I had ventured myself within reach of their affectionate embraces; though, God help me! they had already kept, as a remembrance, the gold piece which monseigneur gave me at first. I, last night, made my way to Argelez, and liberally offered the gross-minded *aubergiste* of the place, to treat himself and his company to the whole of 'The Cid,' to be enacted by myself alone, for the simple consideration of a night's lodging and a dinner; but he, most grovelling brute! fingered my doublet with his cursed paw, and said he was afraid the dresses and decorations would be too expensive, as they must evidently all be new. Indignantly I turned upon my heel, and walked on till I came to this valley, where I found a nice warm bush, and slept out my night after Father Adam's fashion. This morning, hearing voices, and knowing not whence they came, I began to look about with some degree of caution, when suddenly pounces upon me this dark-browed gentleman, and drags me hither, to the manifest injury of my poor doublet, which, God help it! has had so many a pull from old mischievous Time, that it can ill bear the rude touch of any other fingers. This is my tale, renowned sir; and if it be not true, may the buskin never fit my foot, may the dagger break in my grasp, and the bowl tumble out of my fingers!"

The latter part of the poor player's speech had been sufficiently long to give me the time necessary for recovering from the effect of that portion of it which had personally affected myself, and I pointed out to Garcias that his tale must undoubtedly be true, begging him at the same time, to free the poor little man and send him away.

"No, no!" replied the smuggler, "that must not be. He has found his way to a retreat which none but ourselves knew; such secrets are heavy things to carry, and he might drop his burden at some *douanier's* door who would pay for it in gold. No, no! willing or unwilling, he must come with us to Spain, and we will teach him a better trade than ranting other people's nonsense to amuse as great fools as himself."

The little player at first seemed somewhat astounded at such an unexpected alteration in his prospects; but learning that, in the very first place, board and lodging was to be provided for him, and a horse as soon as one could be procured, his countenance brightened up, and he trudged contentedly after the band of smugglers, eating a large lump of cheese and a biscuit, which Garcias had given him as occupation on the road. Strange, strange world, where the most abject poverty is the surest buckler against misfortune! When I stood and considered that wretched player's feelings and my own, and saw how little he was affected by things which would have pained me to the very soul--how little he heeded being torn from his native land, with nothing but blank uncertainty before him--and how he enjoyed the crust which fortune had given him--I could hardly help envying his very misery, which so armoured him against all the shafts of adversity to which I stood nakedly opposed.

My present journey through the Pyrenees, though tending very nearly in the same direction as the first, lay amongst scenes of a still wilder description, for the smugglers carefully avoid all the ordinary paths, and, though now unburdened with any seizable goods, as heedfully guarded against a meeting with the officers of the *douane* as if they were escorting a whole cargo. They seemed to take a delight in the mystery and secrecy of their ways; but, in truth they found it necessary to keep the whole world, except those concerned, in perfect ignorance of the great extent to which their contraband traffic was carried on, and for this purpose, glided along through the deepest shades of the pine forests, and over the highest and least frequented parts of the hills, by paths impracticable to any but themselves.

Towards the close of the first day, we halted by the side of a small mountain-lake, whose calm, still, shadowy waves, I almost hoped were the waters of oblivion. Round about, the mountains rose up on every side, seeming to shelter it from a world, and not a breath of wind rippled the surface of the water, so that the reflections of the high snowy peaks of the hills above, the dark rocks that dipped themselves in its waves, and the gloomy pines that skirted it to the east, were all seen looking up like ghosts from below, while ever and anon a light evening cloud skimming over the sky found there its reflection too, and was seen gliding over the bosom of the calm expanse. The turf that spread from the margin of the lake to the bases of the mighty rocks that towered up around, was covered with every kind of flower, though at so great an elevation; and the rhododendron in full blossom, vied with the beautiful pink saffron, as if striving which should most embellish that favoured spot of green that nature seemed to have fancifully placed there, as a contrast between the cold dark waters and the stern grey rock.

When, after alighting from my horse, I gazed round on the whole scene, and then thought of returning to the world, with its idle bustle, and its thronging pains, and its vain babble, and unbroken discontent, I was tempted to cast it all from me at once, and become a hermit even there, spending my time in the contemplation of eternity; but the thoughts that thronged upon me during one brief half hour of solitude, while the smugglers were occupied in making their arrangements for the night, showed me that the gayest scenes of the busy world would still leave me, perhaps, more time for memory than I could wish memory to fill.

At length my meditations were disturbed by the approach of the little player, who seemed quite contented with his fate. As he came near, he stretched forth his hand, threw back his head, and was beginning with his usual emphasis to address me as "*Illustrious scion of a noble house*," when I stopped him in the midst somewhat peevishly, bidding him drop his high-flown style if he would have me listen to him, and never to use it to me again if he wished not such a reply as had been bestowed upon him by my father's *maître d'hôtel*. This warning and threat had a very happy effect, for he seldom afterwards poured forth any of his rodomontade upon me; and when denuded of its frippery, his conversation was not without poignancy.

"Well, sir," said he, after my rebuff, "I will treat you to plain prose, as you love not the high and metaphorical. Be it known then unto your worship, that our friends with the dark faces have prepared something for dinner, and invite you to partake of some excellent Bayonne ham, and some unfortunate young trout, that an artful vagabond with an insinuating countenance has seduced out of the protecting bosom of their parent lake, and abandoned to the vile appetite of his companions. Added to this, you will find some excellent *botargis*, which you doubtless are aware is manufactured out of the roe of the mullet, and provokes drinking, a propensity that you may satisfy at discretion, out of certain skins of wine for that purpose made and provided--as my poor dear supposed father used to say, who turned me out of his house when I was nine years old."

I had too little love for my own thoughts to remain any longer alone than I could avoid, and rising, I followed the little player to a spot where the smugglers had spread out their supper upon Nature's table. This was the first meal I had seen amongst them, and I found that they ate but once a day: but to do them all manner of justice, when they did apply themselves to satisfy their hunger, they amply compensated for their abstinence; and as they intended to proceed no farther that night, they were not more sparing of their wine than of their other viands. Gradually, as the potent juice of the grape began to warm their veins, all Spanish reserve wore away, and mirth and jocularity succeeded. Jest, and tale, and song went round; and even Garcias seemed to banish every circumstance of the past, and to enjoy himself as fully, as forgetfully as the rest.

To what was this owing? I asked myself.--To the wine-cup!--It had taught them forgetfulness!--it was temporary oblivion!--it was happiness!--and I drained it, and redrained it, to obtain the same blessing for myself. Strange how one error ever brings on another! and thus it is that amendment is still so difficult to those who have done wrong--'tis not alone that they have to renounce the fault they have once committed, but that they have also to struggle against all those which that one brings in its train.

I drank deep for forgetfulness; and certainly, amongst the companions into whose society circumstances had thrown me, I was not without encouragement. The wine they had brought with them was excellent and abundant; and when any one began to flag in his potation, the rest seemed to cry him on, as soldiers encourage one another in a march. Sometimes it was a story, sometimes a jest, sometimes a song; and of the latter, they had more amongst them than I had supposed could be invented on one subject. The last that I remember, was sung by the same musical youth whom Garcias and myself had found acting as sentinel when we joined the smugglers near Argelez. His single voice gave out the separate verses of the song to a merry Spanish air, while all the rest joining in at the end, raised a deafening din with the very absurd chorus.

SONG.

"Woman first invented wine,
Ere man found out to drink it;[4]
If otherwise she wer'n't divine,
For this we're bound to think it.

CHORUS.

Malaga and Alicant,
Xeres and La Mancha!
Whatever cup she offers man,
We'll take it, and we'll thank her!
Cold water's but a sober thing,
That's only fit for asses--"
* * * * * *

But before he had concluded, or his companions began roaring again about Malaga and Alicant, my cup fell out of my hand, and I slept.

CHAPTER XX.

I believe my sleep would have lasted longer than the night, had Garcias not woke me towards daybreak, and told me that they were preparing to depart. Amongst the smugglers, every one took care of his own horse, and of course I could not expect to be exempt from the same charge in their wandering republic, where the only title to require service oneself was the having shown it to others. I started up, therefore, in order to repair, as much as I could, my negligence of the night before. To my surprise, however, I found that the horse had been already rubbed down and saddled by the little player; who, having drunk more cautiously than myself, had woke early in the morning; and, after having shown this piece of attention to me, was engaged in tricking out, for his own use, an ass, which one of the smugglers had procured from some acquaintance at the foot of the mountain. I thanked the little man for his civility; when, laying his hand upon his heart, he professed his pleasure in serving me, and begged, in humble terms, if I had any thought of engaging a servant in the expedition wherein we were both engaged, that he might be preferred to that high post.

"The post would certainly be more honourable than profitable, my good friend," replied I, with some very melancholy feelings concerning my own destitute condition, for my whole fortune consisted of about thirty Louis d'ors and a diamond ring, the value of which I did not know. "I must tell you thus much concerning my situation," I added; "I am now quitting my father's house and my native land, from circumstances which concern me alone, but which may render my absence long; and during that absence, I expect no supply or pecuniary aid from any one. You may now judge," I proceeded, with somewhat of a painful smile, "whether such a man's service be the one to suit you."

"Exactly!" replied the little player, to my surprise; "for during the time you have nothing to give me, you will judge whether I am like to suit you when you can pay me well. I ask no wages but meat and drink. That, I am sure, you will give me while you can get any for yourself; and if a time should come when you can get none, perhaps it may be my turn to put my hand in fortune's bag, and pull out a dinner. Alone, and with no one to help me, I have never wanted food, but that one day at Argelez; and, God knows, I never knew from day to day where I should fill my cup or load my platter, but in company with your lordship--never fear, we shall always find plenty. Two people can accomplish a thousand things that one cannot. You can do a thousand that I do not know how to do, and I can do a thousand that you would be ashamed to do. Thank God, for having been turned out upon the world at nine years old, without a sous in my pocket. 'Twas the best school in nature for finishing my education."

I was hurt, I own, at the sort of companionship which the miserable little player seemed to have established, in his own mind, so completely between himself and me; and the haughty noble was rising with some acrimony to my lips, when I suddenly bethought me, what a thing I was to be proud over my fellow-worm! It was a thought to take down the high stomach of my nobility, and after a moment's pause, I merely replied, "Your life must afford a curious history, and doubtless has been full both of turns of fate and turns of ingenuity."

"Oh, 'tis a very simple history," answered the player, "as brief as the courtship of a widow. When your lordship has got on horseback, and I have clambered on my ass, I will tell it to you as we go along. 'Twill at least spend a long five minutes."

His proposal was not disagreeable to me, for my mind was in that state when anything which could fill up a moment with some external feeling or interest was in itself a blessing. Had he told such a tale as those with which they amuse children in a nursery, I should have been contented; and accordingly, as soon, after having mounted, as we were once more on our journey, I begged he would proceed, which he complied with as follows:--

"My mother's husband, who had the credit--if any honour was thereunto attached--of being my father, was, when I can first remember him, intendant to the estates of M. le Comte de Bagnols. He had originally studied the law; but not having money enough to purchase any charge at the bar, he was very glad to take the management of a young nobleman's estates, who, though not indeed careless and extravagant, was still young--consequently inexperienced--consequently plunderable, and consequently a hopeful speculation for one in my father's situation. The Count was liberal, and therefore the appointments were in themselves good, consisting of a separate house half a mile from the château, a considerable glebe of land, and a salary of a thousand crowns. I must remark here, that the intendant was the ugliest man in Christendom, but he had the advantage of possessing in my poor dear mother a very handsome wife, whose beauties he considered as a certain means of performing the curious alchymical process of the transmutation of metals; that is to say, the changing his own brass into the Count's gold.

"Now I should be most happy could I claim any kindred with the noble family of Bagnols, but sorry I am to say, I was several years old when the young Count returned to the château from his campaigns with the army. Nor, indeed, should I have been much better off had fortune decreed

me to be born afterwards; for though the worthy intendant was as liberal as Cato in many respects, and the most decided foe to all sorts of jealousy, and though my mother also was a complete prodigal in the dispensation of her smiles, the Count was as cold as ice. Indeed, as his marriage with the beautiful Henriette de Vergne was soon after brought on the carpet, I can hardly blame him for thinking of no one else. All went on well for two years, during which time my mother had twice occasion to call upon Lucina, and the intendant was gratified by finding himself the father of two other sturdy children. At the end of that time, however, the marriage of the Count was broken off with Mademoiselle de Vergne, and the young lady was promised to the Marquis de St. Brie. You have heard all that sad story, I dare say! The Marquis not liking a rival at liberty--for they began to whisper that the Count still privately saw Mademoiselle de Vergne, and some even said was married to her--had him arrested and thrown into prison, on an accusation of aiding the rebels at Rochelle. The count, however, found means to write to the intendant a letter from the Bastille, containing two orders: one was to send him instantly a certain packet of papers containing the proofs of his innocence; the other, to sell as speedily as possible all the alienable part of his property, and to transmit the amount to a commercial house at Saragossa. The worthy intendant set himself to consider his own interests, and finding that it would be best to keep his lord in prison, he could never discover the papers. At the same time, the buying and selling of a large property is never without its advantage to the steward, and therefore he punctually obeyed the Count's command in this particular, selling all that he could sell, and transmitting the money to Spain, at the end of which transaction he found himself very comfortably off in the world. One night, while he sat counting his gains, however, he was somewhat surprised by a visit from the count, who had made his escape from the Bastille, and came to make his intendant a call, much more disagreeable than interesting.

"So much did the intendant wish his lord at the devil, that he was civil to him beyond all precedent; and having gone up in the dark to the château, they spent two hours in diligent search for the papers, which they unfortunately could not find, for this very good reason--the intendant had taken care to remove them three or four days before, and had given them in charge to his dear friend and co-labourer, the Count's apothecary, to keep them as a sacred deposit as much out of the Count's way as possible."

"After all this, sorry to have lost the papers, but glad to find he had a considerable fortune placed securely in Spain, the Count set out to seek his fair Henriette, resolving to carry her to another land; and thinking all the while that his intendant was the honestest man in the world. Under this impression, he made him his chief agent in all his plans, told him of his private marriage, and, in short, did what very wise men often do, let the greatest rogue of his acquaintance into all his most important secrets.

"The Marquis de St. Brie very soon found out the proceedings of his friend the Count. The Count was of course assassinated, and thrown into the river; the Countess was put into a convent, where she died in childbirth, and God knows what became of the money in Spain. Matters being thus settled to the satisfaction of every one, the intendant found he had quite enough money to set up procureur, and went to live in the same town with his dear friend the apothecary."

"But what became of the papers?" demanded I; "and why do you always call him the intendant? Were you a son by some former marriage of your mother?"

"Be patient! be patient! Monsieur le Comte, and you shall hear," replied the little player. "I was just about to return to my mother, with regard to whom a man may feel himself tolerably certain. There is a proverb against human presumption in speaking of one's father, '*Sage enfant qui connoit son père!*' However, my mother was, as I have said, a very handsome woman, and she made use of her advantages; but, at the same time, she was a very superstitious one, and though she governed her husband in all domestic matters with a rod of iron, she suffered herself to be governed by her confessor in a manner still more despotic. Never used she to fail in her attendance at the confessional, and yet I never heard the good priest complain she troubled him unnecessarily.

"At length it so happened that she fell ill, and the only thing that could have saved her, namely, the physicians giving her up, having been tried in vain, and she being both in the jaws of death and in a great fright, her priest would not give her absolution except upon a very hard condition, which she executed as follows--She sent for her husband, and having bade him adieu in very touching terms, upon which he wept--he could always weep when he liked--she sent for his dear friend the apothecary, for a worthy goldsmith of the city, and for a couple of young gentlemen our neighbours, and having brought them all into her bedroom, she acknowledged to her husband all her faults and failings, comprising many which I, in my filial piety, will pass over; after which she begged his forgiveness, and obtained it--requested and received in so touching a manner, that every one wept. She then made her excellent spouse embrace his injurers, which he did like a charitable soul and a sensible man, with a most solemn and edifying countenance. After this she called all her children, of which there were by this time four, round her, and having given us her blessing and her last advice in a very striking and instructive manner, she allotted us severally to the care of her friends. My next brother she bequeathed to the fatherly tenderness of the intendant himself; though there was an unfortunately small degree of likeness between them. I fell to the portion of the apothecary; the youngest son was assigned to the protection of the goldsmith, and so on. When this distribution was concluded, she found herself very much exhausted, and, sending us all away, fell into a profound sleep, from which she woke the next

morning in a fair way for recovery. The confessor declared that it was the special interposition of Heaven, as a reward for her punctual obedience to his commands; but her husband thought it the handiwork of the devil; on which difference of conclusion I shall not offer an opinion. Suffice it, my mother recovered, and finding that the story had got abroad, and that every one she met laughed at or avoided her, she insisted on her husband changing his abode and carrying her and her family to another town. At length, however, her malady returned upon her after a year's absence, and she died for good and all, leaving her husband inconsolable for her loss. The moment the breath was out of her body, the excellent procureur took me to the door of his house, and told me tenderly to get along for a graceless little vagabond, and none of his. 'Go to Auch! go to Auch!' cried he, 'and tell that villain of an apothecary I have sent him his own.' To Auch I accordingly went, and delivered the procureur's message to the apothecary, who held up his hands and eyes at the hard-heartedness of his former friend, and giving me a silver piece of a livre tournois, he bade me go along, and not trouble him any more.

"The next morning, when my livre was spent, and I began to grow hungry, I naturally turned my steps towards the apothecary's, and hung about near his door without daring to enter, when suddenly I saw him driving out in fury the boy that carried his medicines, who had been guilty, I found afterwards, of drinking the wine set apart for making antimonial wine; and so great was the rage of my worthy parent, that he threw both the pestle and the mortar into the street after the culprit.

"Having had all my life a sort of instinctive dislike to the society of an angry man, I was in the act of gliding away as fast as I could, when his eye fell upon me, and beckoning me to him, he called me to come near, in a tone that made me obey instantly. 'Come hither,' cried he, 'come hither! Now I wager an ounce of kermes to a grain of jalap that thou hast been well taught to thieve and to lie! Hey? Is it not so?'--'No, your worship,' answered I, trembling every limb, 'but I dare say I shall soon learn under your teaching.'--'Holla! thou art malapert,' cried he; 'but come in; out of pure charity I will give thee the place of that thief I have just kicked out. But remember, it is out of pure charity--thou hast no claim on me whatever! mark that! But if thou servest me truly, and appliest thyself to my lessons, I will make thee a rival to Galen and Hippocrates.' Thus was I established as medicine-boy at my father the apothecary's, after having been turned out of my father the procureur's, and soon learned his mood and his practice. The first was somewhat arbitrary but despotic, and, by taking care never to contradict him, except where he wished to be contradicted, I soon ingratiated myself with him to a very high degree.

"His practice also was very simple. Whenever he was called in to any patient, he began by giving them an emetic, to clear away all obstructions, as he said. He next inquired if the complaint was local, and where? If it was in the head he put a blister on the soles of the feet; if it was in the lower extremities he placed one on the crown of the head; if it was between the two he took care to blister both. When the malady was general, he began by bleeding, and went on by bleeding, till the patient died or recovered; declaring all the while, that let the disease be as bad as it would, he would have it out of him one way or other. He had a good deal of practice when I came, and it rapidly increased, for he was always called in by poor dependents, who expected legacies, to their rich relatives; by young heirs of estates to old annuitants; by the expectants of abbeys, and persons possessing survivorships to their dear friends the long-lived incumbents: and he was also applied to frequently by young wives for their old husbands, and other cases of the kind, wherein he was supposed to practise very successfully. As I grew up, he initiated me into all the secrets of his profession, took me to the bedside of his patients; and, in fact gave me many a paternal mark of his regard! Nor did he confine his confidence in me entirely to professional subjects. It was from him that I learned the earlier part of my own history, and that of the Count de Bagnols, whose papers I had many an opportunity of seeing, for they lay wrapped in a piece of old sheepskin in the drawer with the syringes. Thus passed the time till a company of players visited Auch; and as every night of their performance I went to see them, I speedily acquired a taste--I may say a passion, for the stage, which evidently showed that nature had destined me to wear the buskin. From that moment I was seized with horror at the indiscriminate slaughter which I daily aided in committing, and I resolved to quit Auch the very first opportunity. This, however, did not occur immediately, for before I could prepare my plans the players had left the place, and I was obliged to remain in my sanguinary profession for another year, during which I learned by heart every play that had ever been written in the French language. One day, while I was sitting alone reading Rotrou, a man came in and addressed me with an air of cajolery which instantly put me on my guard; but when he gave me to understand, after a thousand doublings, that he wished to know if ever I had heard my father, or, as he called him, 'master,' talk of certain papers belonging to the late Count de Bagnols, which might be of the greatest service in clearing the honour of his family; and when, at the same time he offered me ten Louis d'ors if I could find the papers, I became as pliant as wax, slipped one hand into the drawer, took the money with the other, delivered the papers, and recommenced my book. My father never missed the papers; and when the players returned I lost no time, but addressed myself to their manager, who made me recite some verses, applauded me highly, declared he wanted a new star, and that if I would steal away from my gallipots and join the company a mile from Auch, I should meet with my desert. I took him at his word, and easily executed my plan during the apothecary's absence. My name was soon changed to Achilles Lefranc, and the provincial spectators found out that I was a genius of a superior class. Ambition, the fault of gods, misled our little troop; and thinking to carry all before us, we went to Paris, obtained permission to perform, and chose a deep tragedy, at which the malicious Parisians roared with laughter from beginning to end. We slunk out of Paris in the middle of the night, but the bond of union was gone amongst us, and we dispersed. Since then I

have hawked my talents from village to village, and from company to company; sometimes I have risen to the highest flights of tragedy, and have trod the stage as a king or a hero, and at others I have descended to the lowest walk of comedy, and, for the sake of a mere dinner, performed the part of jester at a marriage entertainment or a *fête de village*; I have been applauded and hissed, wept at and laughed at, but I have always contrived to make my way through the world, till here I am at last your lordship's--humble servant."

CHAPTER XXI.

The player's account of himself had interested me more than he knew, especially that part of it which referred to the unfortunate Count de Bagnols. There seemed something extraordinary in the chance, which threw circumstance after circumstance of his history upon my knowledge; and I felt a superstitious sort of feeling about it, which was weak, I own, but which was pardonable perhaps in a mind labouring like mine under a high degree of morbid excitement.

I fancied that I was destined to be the Count's avenger; and I felt, at the same time, that I should be doing human nature good service in ridding the world of such a man as the Marquis de St. Brie; nor did I believe that the eye of Heaven could look frowningly upon so signal an act of justice. I reasoned, finely too, upon the right of an individual to execute that retributive punishment which either the laws of his country were inadequate to perform, or its judges unwilling to enforce. But where was there ever yet a deed unsusceptible of fine reasoning to justify it to the doer? Acts well nigh as black as the revolt of Satan have met able defenders in their day; and in the prejudiced tribunal of my own bosom I easily found a voice to sanction what I had already determined.

In regard to the papers of the Count de Bagnols, which had fallen into my possession by so curious a train of circumstances, I had them still about me; but I did not think fit to mention the circumstance to Monsieur Achilles Lefranc, upon whose judgment I had no great reason to rely. I determined, however, if fortune should ever permit me to revisit my own country, to seek out the nearest relations of the count, and to deliver the papers into their hands as an act of justice to the memory of that unhappy nobleman; and I also felt a sort of stern pleasure in the hope of once more measuring my sword with the daring villain whose many detestable actions seemed to call loudly for chastisement. There might be a touch of over-excited enthusiasm--of that sort of exaltation of mind which men call fanaticism in religion, and which borders upon frenzy, when it relates to the common affairs of life, but I hope--I believe--nay, I am sure that there was no thirst of personal revenge in that wish. I felt indignant that such a man should have been allowed to live so long, and that neither private vengeance nor public justice should yet have overtaken him with the fate he so well merited; and my sensations, which were at all times irritable enough, had been worked up, by the scenes and circumstances I had lately gone through, to a pitch of excitement which not every man could feel, and none perhaps can describe.

While little Achilles had been engaged in recounting his history, he had kept close by my side, jogging on upon his ass, looking like a less corpulent and more youthful Sancho Panza, accompanying a less gaunt and grimly Quixote. Not that I believe my appearance had been much improved by two such nights as I had passed, nor indeed was the bandage round my head very ornamental; and in this respect was I but the better qualified to represent the doughty hero of La Mancha. No adventures, however, of any kind attended our journey; and we passed the mountains and descended into Spain undisturbed. Towards three o'clock, after having proceeded near ten miles in an eastern direction, we reached a little village, which seemed a great resort of the smugglers; for here every one of them was known, and several of them had their habitations--if indeed such a name could be applied to the spot where they only rested a few brief days in the intervals of their long and frequent absences. The moment our cavalcade was seen upon the hill above the village, a bustle made itself manifest amongst the inhabitants; and we could perceive a boy running from house to house spreading the glad news. A crowd of women and children assembled in an instant, and coming out to meet us, expressed their joy with a thousand gratulatory exclamations. The rich golden air of a spring afternoon in Spain; the picturesque cottages covered with their young vines, and scattered amongst the broken masses of the mountain; the gay dresses of the Spanish mountaineers, the graceful forms of the women and children, and the beautiful groups into which they fell as they advanced to greet us,--all offered a lovely and interesting sight to the eyes of a stranger. It was one of the pictures of Claude Gelée wakened into life.

Every one sprang to the ground, and a thousand welcomes and embraces were exchanged; the sight of which made my heart swell with feelings I cannot describe. There were none to embrace or welcome me!

Amongst the foremost of those who came to meet us on our arrival, was a beautiful young woman of the most delicate form and feature I ever beheld; exquisitely lovely in every line; but so slight, so fragile, it seemed as if the very breath of the mountain wind would have torn her like a butterfly. She ran on, however, with a quicker step than all the rest, and casting herself into the gigantic arms of Garcias, gazed up in his face with a look of that tender affection not to be mistaken, while a glistening moisture in her eye told how very, very glad she was to see him returned in safety. She was the last person on earth one would have imagined the wife of the fierce and daring man to whom her fate was united. But Garcias with her was not fierce; it seemed as if to him her tenderness was contagious; and the moment his eye met hers, its fire sunk and softened, and it only seemed to reflect the tender glance of her own.

After giving a delicious moment or two to the first sweet feelings of his return, the smuggler appeared suddenly to remember me, and taking me by the hand, he presented me to his wife as a French gentleman, to whom he and his were indebted for much; adding, that all the hospitality she could show me would not repay the kindness and patronage he had received from my house. She received me with a modesty, and a grace, and a simple elegance, I had hardly expected to meet in an insignificant mountain village; and led the way to their dwelling, which was by far the best in the place, not even excepting that of the principal officer of the Spanish customs, who, somewhat to my surprise, came out of his house to welcome back Garcias, with more friendship than I could have supposed to exist between a smuggler and a *douanier*.

Our arrival was the signal for feasting and merriment. Some of the youths of the village had been very successful in the chase; and the delicate flesh of the izzard, with fine white bread and excellent wine, were in such abundance, that my poor little follower, Achilles Lefranc, ate, and drank, and sang, and gesticulated, seeming to think himself quite in the land of promise. He busied himself about everything; and though he neither understood nor spoke one word of the language, he was so gay, and so lively, and so well pleased himself, that he won the goodwill of the whole village.

After affording us shelter till we had supped, as soon as the sun began to sink behind the mountains every house in the place poured forth its inhabitants upon a little green. In the centre stood a group of high ash trees, under which the great majority seated themselves, notwithstanding the disagreeable odour of the cantharides which were buzzing about thickly amongst the branches; the rest took it in turns to dance to the music of a guitar, which was played by the young smuggler whose vocal powers I had already been made acquainted with.

Never in court or drawing-room did I see more grace or more beauty than on that village green; while the awful masses of the mountains, stretching blue and vast behind, offered a strange grand contrast to the light figures of the gay ephemeral beings that were sporting like butterflies before me. The mingling of the two scenes, and the calm placidity which both tended to inspire, did not fail to find its way to my heart, and to soothe and quiet the anguish which had not yet left it. In the meanwhile, the musician joined his voice to the notes of his guitar, and sang one of their village songs.

SONG.

I.

"Dance! dance! dance! Life so quick is past,
Seize ye its minutes for joy as they fly:
Existence' flowers so brief a space may last,
'Twere pity to see them but blossom and die.

II.

"Dance! dance! dance! On the roses tread,
That swift-fleeting Time shall let fall ere he go;
He's now in his spring, but full soon shall he shed
On every dark ringlet his wintry snow.

III.

"Dance! dance! dance! Cheat the heavy hours,
They're tyrants would bind us to Time's chariot fast;
Weave then a chain of gay summer flowers,
And make them our slaves while youth's reign shall last."

He had scarcely ended, and was still continuing the air upon his guitar, when a horse's feet were heard clattering up over the stones of the village, and in a minute or two after, a young man rode up, dressed in a costume somewhat different from that of the villagers, but still decidedly Spanish. On his appearance, the dance instantly stopped, several voices crying, "It is Francisco from Lerida. He brings news of Fernandez! What news of Fernandez?" together with a variety of other exclamations and interrogatories, making a quantum of noise and confusion sufficient to prevent his answering any one distinctly for at least five minutes after his arrival. The horseman, however, seemed but little disposed to reply to any one, slowly dismounting from his horse with what appeared to me an air of assumed importance.

"Ah! he is playing his old tricks," cried one of the merry boys of the village; "he wants to frighten us about Fernandez."

"No, indeed!" cried Francisco, with a sigh; "I have, as the old story-book goes, so often cried out *wolf!* that perhaps you will not believe me now when it is true: but I bring you all sad news, and with a heavy heart I bring it. To you, my cousin, especially," he continued, speaking to Garcias' wife, who sat beside her husband, with her elbow leaning on his knee--"I know not well how to tell you what I have got to relate; but I came off in speed this morning, to see what we could all do to mend a bad business. Your brother Fernandez is now in prison at Lerida, and I am afraid that worse may come of it."

"In prison! Why? How? What for?" exclaimed Garcias, starting up; "he shall not be in prison long!"

"I fear me he will," replied the other, shaking his head,--"I fear me he will, if ever he come out of it. You all know the dreadful state of our province of Catalonia since that tyrant villain the count-duke has filled it with the most lawless and undisciplined soldiers in Spain. For the last three months our minds have been worked up to a pitch of desperation which every day threatened to plunge us into anarchy and revolt; wrong upon wrong, exaction after exaction, oppression outdoing oppression----"

"But Fernandez--what of him?" cried Garcias. "Speak of him, Francisco. We well know what you have endured."

"Well, then, all I can tell you of him is this," proceeded the Catalonian, apparently not well pleased at having been interrupted in the fine oration he was making: "as far as I could hear, for I was not present, he interfered to prevent one of the base soldados from maltreating a woman in the street. The soldier struck him. Fernandez is not a man to bear a blow, and he plunged his knife some six inches into his body. He was immediately arrested, disarmed, and carried to the castle. If the soldier dies, he will, they say, be shot off from one of the cannons' mouths; if he recovers, the galleys are to be Fernandez's doom for life."

The wife of the smuggler had listened to this account of her brother's situation without proffering a word either of inquiry or remark; but I saw her cheek, like a withering rose, growing paler and paler as the incautious narrator proceeded, till at length, as he mentioned the horrible fate likely to befall the hero of his tale, she fell back upon the turf totally insensible.

The effect of the history had been different upon Garcias; his brow became bent as the speaker went on, it is true; but the passionate agitation, which at first seemed to affect him, wore away, and he assumed a cold sort of calmness, which remained uninterrupted even upon the fainting of his wife. He raised her in his arms, however, and bidding Francisco wait a moment till he could return, he carried her away towards their own dwelling, accompanied by all the women of the place, in whose care he left her. On coming back, he questioned the Catalonian keenly to ascertain whether his brother-in-law had been in any degree to blame; but from all the replies he could obtain, it appeared that the conduct of the soldier had been gross and outrageous in the extreme; that Fernandez, as they called him, had merely interfered, when no man but a coward or a pander could have refrained, and that he actually stabbed the soldier in defence of his own life.

Garcias made no observation, but he held his hand upon the pommel of his sword; and every now and then his fingers clasped upon it, with a sort of convulsive motion, which seemed to indicate that all was not so quiet within as the tranquillity of his countenance bespoke.

"Well," said he, at length looking up to the sky, which by this time began to show more than one twinkling star, shining like a diamond through the blue expanse;--"well, it is too late tonight to think of what can be done. Come, Francisco, you want both food and rest--come, you must lodge with us. Monsieur de l'Orme," he added, turning to me, and speaking in French, "you will find our lodging but hard, and our fare but poor, but if you will take the best of welcomes for seasoning to the one, and for down to the other, you could not have more of it in a palace."

I returned home with him to his cottage; but not wishing to intrude more than I could help upon his privacy, when I knew his wife was both ill in body and in mind, and fearful also of interrupting any conversation he might wish to have with his companion, I retired to a room which had been prepared for me, and undressing myself with the assistance of my little follower Achilles, who made a most excellent extempore valet-de-chambre, I cast myself on the bed, hardly hoping to sleep. A long day of fatigue had been friendly to me, however, in this respect; and I scarcely saw my little attendant nestle himself into a high pile of dried rosemary, with which the mountains abound, and which, with the addition of a cloak, forms the bed of many a mountaineer, before I was myself asleep. My slumbers remained unbroken till I was awakened by Garcias shaking me by the arm. It was still deep night, and starting up, I saw by the light of a lamp which he carried, that he was completely dressed, and armed with more precaution than even during his excursions into France.

"I have to ask your pardon, monseigneur," said he, in a low deep tone, as soon as I was completely awake, "for thus disturbing you, and, indeed, it was my intention not to have done so; but I am about to set out for Lerida, and before I go, I wish to lay before you such plans as are

most feasible for your comfort and safety in Spain. In the first place, you can remain here, if a poor village, and poor fare, and mountain sports, may suit you; but if you do, your time may hang heavy on your hands, and beware of lightening it with the smiles of our women--remember, the Spaniard is jealous by nature, and revengeful, too; and there is not a black-eyed girl in this village that has not some one to watch and to protect her."

The blood rose in my cheek, and I replied somewhat hastily, "Were she as unprotected as a wild flower, do you think I would take advantage of her friendlessness? You do me wrong, Garcias; and by Heaven, were I so willed, it would be no fear of a revengeful Spaniard would stand in the way of my pursuit! But, as I said, you do me wrong,--great wrong!"

"Be not angry, my noble Count," replied the smuggler, with a calm smile; "I know what youth and idleness may do with many a one, even with the best dispositions? I warned you for your own good, and I am not a man who values any of this earth's empty bubbles so highly as not to say my mind when I am sure that it is right. But hear me still:--humble as I am in station, I have one or two friends of a higher class, and I can give you a letter to the new corregidor of Saragossa, who will easily obtain you rank in the Spanish armies, if you choose to employ yourself in war, which I know is the only occupation that you nobles of France can hold."

"Not to Saragossa," replied I; "no, not to Saragossa; I cannot go there. But you say the new corregidor; what has become of the former one?"

"He died this last month," replied Garcias; "and a good man he was--God rest his soul! He was much beloved by all classes of the people. He died, they say, of grief for the loss of his only child. But if you love not Saragossa, hark to another plan. I go to Lerida. You can accompany me as far as the town gates, but you must not go with me farther. You have heard of the fate of my wife's brother--he must, he shall be saved, or I will light such a flame in Catalonia as shall burn up these mercenary sworders by whom it is consumed, as by a flight of devastating locusts--ay, shall burn them up like stubble! What may come of my journey, I know not--death, perhaps, to many; and therefore, though you may go with me to Lerida, turn off before you enter the town, and make all speed to Barcelona, where you will find many a vessel ready to sail for France. You will easily find your way to Paris, where you may conceal yourself as well as if you were in Spain; and as you will land in a different part of the country from that where your appearance might prove dangerous to yourself, you will run no risk of interruption in your journey; at the same time, you will be able more easily to communicate with your family and friends, and negotiate at the court for your pardon."

I did not hesitate in regard to which I should choose of the three plans that Garcias propounded. At once, and without difficulty, I fixed upon that course which, by carrying me directly to Paris, would give me a thousand facilities that I could not possess in Spain. Though so far from the capital, of course, a frequent communication existed between my native province and Paris, and I thus hoped soon to satisfy myself in regard to all the circumstances which had followed my flight from the Château de l'Orme; I should also be in the immediate neighbourhood of the Count de Soissons; and I doubted not, that, by putting myself under his protection, I could easily obtain those letters of grace which would insure me from all the painful circumstances of a trial for murder: for although the severities which the Cardinal de Richelieu had exercised upon the nobles, in every case where they laid themselves open to the blow of the law, showed evidently that my nobility would be no protection, yet, knowing little of the politics of the court, I fancied that he would not reject the intercession of a prince of the blood royal. There is no reason why I should not acknowledge that, in these respects, I was most anxious about that life which I would have cast into the most hazardous circumstances--ay, even thrown away in any honourable manner; but to die the death of a common felon, or even to be arraigned as one, was what I could not bear to dream of. There is something naturally more valuable to man than life itself--something more fearful than death; for though my whole mind was bent on saving myself from the fate that menaced me, at the same time with every thought came the remembrance that it was Helen's brother I had slain--that she could never, never be mine; and I cursed the life I struggled for.

As soon as my determination was expressed, Garcias pressed me to hasten my movements; and as the little player had awoke, and, seeing me about to depart, insisted on accompanying me, the next consideration became, how to mount him, so as to enable him to keep up with the quick pace at which we proposed to proceed. Horses, however, were plentiful in the village; and the smuggler, although it was now midnight, took upon himself to appropriate the beast of one of his companions, for which I left three gold pieces as payment. I was soon dressed; and Garcias having supplied me with some articles of apparel, of which I stood in some need, we proceeded to the green, where we found Francisco, who had brought the news of his kinsman's arrest, together with the horses, and four or five of Garcias' associates, armed like himself, and prepared to mount.

We were instantly in our saddles, and set off at all speed, greatly to the annoyance of poor little Achilles; who, not much accustomed to equestrian exercise, and perched upon the ridge of a tall strong horse, looked as if he was riding the Pyrenees, and riding them ill. I kept him close to myself, however, and contrived to maintain him in his seat, till such time as he had in some degree got shaken into the saddle; after which he began to feel himself more at his ease, and to play the good horseman.

Little conversation took place on the road, the mind of Garcias labouring evidently under a high degree of excitement, which he was afraid might break forth if he spoke, and I myself being far too much swallowed up in the selfishness of painful thoughts to care much about the schemes or wishes of others. I gathered, however, from the occasional questions which Garcias addressed to Francisco, and the replies he received, that the whole of Catalonia was ripe for revolt; that the sufferings of the people, and the outrages of the Castilian soldiery, had arrived at a point no longer to be endured; and that the murmurs and inflammatory placards which had lately been much spoken of, were but the roarings of the volcano before an eruption. Several private meetings of the citizens and the peasantry had been held, Francisco observed; and at more than one of these, aid, arms, ammunition, money, and co-operation, had been promised on the part of France. All was ready for revolt; the pile was already laid whereon to sacrifice to the god of liberty, and it wanted but some hand to apply the torch.

"That hand shall be mine," muttered Garcias;--"that hand shall be mine, if they change not their doings mightily;" and here the conversation again dropped.

For three hours we rode on in darkness, by rough and narrow paths, which probably we might not have passed so safely had it been day; for we went on with that sort of fearlessness which is almost always sure to conduct one securely through the midst of danger. Although I felt my horse make many a slip and many a flounder as we went along, I knew not the real state of the roads over which we passed, till I found him plunge up to his shoulders in a pit of water that lay in the midst. By spurring him on, however, I forced him up the other side; and shortly after the day broke, showing what might, indeed, be called by courtesy a road, but which seemed in truth but an old watercourse, obstructed with large stones and deep holes, and, in short, a thousand degrees worse in every respect than any path we had followed through the gorges of the Pyrenees.

No feeling, I believe, is more consistently inconsistent than cowardice. Children shut their eyes in the dark to avoid seeing ghosts; and as long as my little companion Achilles could not exactly discover the dangers of the path, he proceeded very boldly; but no sooner did he perceive, by the light of the dawn, the holes, the rocks, and the channels, which obstructed the road at every step, than he fell into the most ludicrous trepidation, and called down upon his head many an objurgation from Garcias for hanging behind in the worst parts, floundering like a fish left in the shallows.

During the whole of our journey hitherto we had passed neither house nor village, as far as I could discover; and we still went on for about an hour before we came even to a solitary cottage, where Garcias drew in his rein to allow our horses a little refreshment.

Here he paced up and down before the door, seemingly anxious and impatient to proceed, knitting his brows and gnawing his lip with an air of deep and bitter meditation. I interrupted his musings, nevertheless, to inquire whether he could convey a few lines to their destination, which I had written to inform my father that I was, at least, in safety.

"To be sure," replied he hastily, taking the letter out of my hand. "Did I not deliver the packet safely to Mademoiselle Arnault, at the château? and doubt not I will deliver yours too, if I be alive; and if I be dead," he added with a smile, "I will send it."

"What packet did you deliver to Mademoiselle Arnault?" demanded I, somewhat surprised; "I never heard of any packet."

"Nay, I know not what it contained," answered the smuggler; "it was brought to me by a friend at Jaca, and I know nothing farther than that I delivered it truly. That is all I have to do with it, and fully as much as any one else has."

I turned upon my heel, again feeling the proud blood of the ancient noble rising angrily at the careless tone with which a peasant presumed to treat my inquiries; but the overpowering passions which, under the calm exterior of the Spaniard, were working silently but tremendously, like an earthquake preceded by a heavy calm, levelled in his eyes all the unsubstantial distinctions of rank. Nor did I, though struck by a breach of habitual respect, give above a thought to the manner of his speech; the matter of it soon occupied my whole mind, and for the rest of the journey I was as full of musing as the smuggler himself. A packet from Spain!--for Helen Arnault! What could it mean? She, who had no friends, no acquaintances beyond the circle of our own hall! A new flame was added to the fires already kindled in my bosom; I suppose that my mind was weakened by all that I had lately suffered, for I cannot otherwise account for the wild, vague, jealous suspicions that took possession of me. But so it was--I was jealous! At other times my character was anything but suspicious; but now I pondered over the circumstance which had just reached my knowledge, viewed it in a thousand different lights, regarded it in every aspect, and still the jaundiced medium of my own mind communicated to Helen's conduct a hue that, however extraordinary, it did not deserve.

With thoughts thus occupied, I scarcely perceived the length of the way, till, as we climbed a slight eminence, Garcias pulled in his rein, and looking forward, I perceived at no great distance a group of towers and steeples, announcing Lerida.

CHAPTER XXII.

The irritable suspicions which, without his own knowledge, he had excited in my bosom, made me still regard the careless manner in which Garcias had treated my inquiries concerning the packet he had conveyed to Helen, as matter of some offence. I forgot that he knew not my feelings on this subject, and I am afraid I made no allowance for his, excited and overwrought as they were. Notwithstanding the degree of irritation that I felt, however, I could not resist the frankness of manner with which he addressed me, when we came within sight of Lerida.

"Here, Monsieur le Comte," said he, "you had better leave us. That path will take you into the high road to Barcelona, whither, if I might advise, you would make all possible speed. My way is towards those towers, where my poor Catelina's brother lies in bonds. What may come of it, I do not know; but either this night shall see him once more a freeman, or my head shall lie lower than it ever yet has done. Farewell, Monsieur le Comte! I doubt not we shall meet again. Do not forget me till then: and ever believe that a warm and grateful heart, however rude, may dwell in the bosom even of a Spanish smuggler; and that if this arm, or this sword, ever can serve you, you may command it. Are you too proud to accept that horse you ride, as a present from one who is under many a debt of gratitude to your house?"

I hardly know what it was, for there was certainly very little in his words to change the angry feelings with which I had regarded him a moment before; but the manner wherewith a thing is said, more than the thing itself, has often the power to let us into the dark council-chamber of man's bosom, and show us the motives which govern his actions. Gleaming through the very coldness of Garcias' demeanour, I saw the wish to act towards me in the kindest and most grateful manner, only overpowered by the excitement of his own circumstances; and I instantly made those allowances which I should have done at first.

"I will accept it, Garcias, with pleasure," replied I, "because I hope hereafter to repay it, with other debts to you, in a way that I have not now the means of doing." A word or two more passed, and then, bidding him adieu, I rode along the path he pointed out, followed by Achilles Lefranc, and soon reached the highroad of which he had spoken. Here my poor little companion, who had hitherto smothered the torments of St. Bartholomew rather than risk being left behind, found it impossible to contain his expostulations any longer.

"Monseigneur," said he, in a tone which mingled the doleful and the theatrical in a very ludicrous degree, "God knows that I am willing to follow on your steps to the last grain of my sand, to serve you with my best service to my last breath--but indeed! indeed! it must be on foot. Horseback becomes me not--I am already worn to the bone! So help me Heaven! as I would rather ride a grindstone by the hour together, than the stiff ridge of this hard-backed charger! Consider, my lord, consider, that my business has ever been on foot; and that never but once before did I venture to cast my legs across that iron-spined beast called a horse. At least, in pity, give me half an hour's repose at the first cottage we pass, for I can get no farther!"

The request of the poor little man was but reasonable; and after proceeding about half a league farther on our way, we stopped at a small sort of inn, where I suppose the carriers from Lerida ordinarily paused to water their horses. Here, with rest, and food, and wine, I strove to put Achilles into a fit state for proceeding on his journey; but none of these applications seemed to touch the part affected, and the ludicrous stiffness that supervened when he had sat still for a few minutes, almost made me abandon the hope of going forward that day. After about an hour, however, a very powerful incentive to motion came in aid of my wishes, and soon induced Monsieur Achilles to start from his settle, and though every joint seemed made of wood, and creaked in the moving, he nevertheless got to his horse even more quickly than myself. The cause of this revolution in his feelings was very simple, and consisted in nothing more than a sound, somewhat disagreeable to one of his peculiar temperament.

The morning was clear and the wind high, coming in quick gusts from the side of Lerida, which, as near as I could judge, lay at the distance of two miles. It was not far enough, however, to prevent our hearing, after having rested, as I said, near an hour, the beating of a drum, mingled with the retreat-call upon the trumpet. At this Achilles pricked up his ears, and the good dame of the house shrugged up her shoulders, saying, "The soldiers again! They will never stop till they have taken our all!"

A pause then ensued; but the moment after, an irregular fire of musketry made itself heard, and close again upon that, burst after burst, came the roaring of some heavy pieces of cannon. The good hostess, who was alone in the house, threw herself upon her knees before a picture of St. Jago, and beseeched him so heartily for protection, that I could hardly divert her attention to receive payment for what ourselves and our horses had consumed.

In the meanwhile, Achilles, who seemed heartily to sympathise with the hostess, though his feelings urged him in another direction, had moved to his horse with a very white face; and before I could mount, was already on the road. "Let us make haste," cried he, "in God's name! To my ears, the noise of cannon is no way harmonious. Let us make haste, monseigneur--I am sure I hear them coming! I do not even love the sound of a firelock. The only drum that should be tolerated is that of a charlatan; for though he may kill as many people or more than a soldier, he does it quietly, promising to cure them all the while. Don't you hear a noise behind us, monseigneur?--I am sure I hear a drum, of which sound the drum of my ear has all the jealousy of a rival:--*Morbleu!* what a roar of cannon! That must have killed a great many people!"

Such broken exclamations did he continue to pour forth from time to time, as fast as the jolts of his horse admitted, till we had placed a good many miles between us and Lerida. We were then obliged to slacken our pace, though we still heard occasionally the distant roaring of the cannon, proving incontestably that the struggle between the populace and the soldiery continued unabated.

Though from very different motives, I was as glad to avoid taking any part in the transactions which, I had reason to believe, were going on at Lerida, as little Achilles himself. I had gathered from the conversation of Francisco and Garcias, that the Catalonian peasantry had been instigated to revolt, in no slight degree, by secret agents of the French government; and I had but little inclination to be identified with schemes which I could not look upon as highly honourable. To have been mistaken for one of these agents by the populace, would have placed me in a very embarrassing situation, unacquainted, as I was with the designs and measures of my own government; and I well knew, that to disclaim a character with which the multitude chose to invest one, was the surest way to provoke, without convincing them. I was therefore anxious on every account to reach Barcelona as speedily as possible, and to quit a country where no pleasing part was left me to play, before the first news of the insurrection caused an embargo to be laid upon the ports. But, unfortunately, our horses had by this time become so jaded, that I was obliged to slacken my pace and proceed more slowly, lest they should fail us altogether.

About an hour more elapsed before we reached any place that could give shelter and rest for our horses; for I remarked here, as in the country near Saragossa, though Catalonia is better peopled than many parts of Spain, that the towns and villages are sadly distant from one another, when compared with the overflowing population of France.

At length, however, the road wound up the side of a gentle hill, upon whose green and velvet top a group of old rough cork-trees, scarcely yet bearing a blush of tardy verdure upon their branches, were mingled with a number of earlier trees, all clothed in the thousand bright hues of spring. Amongst these, as we rode up, we could every now and then discern the straight lines of a cottage, diversifying the wild and irregular masses of the foliage, and offering here and there a hard outline, cutting upon the clear back-ground of the sky. Yet the whole was the more picturesque and beautiful for those very stiff lines of the buildings--whether from the contrast of the forms alone--or from the mingled associations called up in the mind by the sight of man's habitations combined with the more graceful productions of simple nature--or from both, I know not. However, there was an air of calm tranquillity in that little village and its group of trees, raised up upon the soft green hill, and standing clear and defined in the pure sunshiny sky, which formed a strange mild contrast with the distant roar that the wind bore in sullen gusts from Lerida. There is a latent moral in every look of nature's face, which--did man but study it--would prove a great corrector of the heart; and when I thought of the carnage and the crime which that far-off roar announced, the peaceful aspect of the scene before me made me shudder at the effect of excited human passions, and I hurried on upon my way to escape as fast as possible from the tumults which I doubted not were then in action at Lerida.

Knowing, as I did, that horses are cheap in this part of the country, I resolved to venture some portion of my remaining money, rather than delay my progress to Barcelona. Accordingly, as soon as I perceived the least appearance of hospitable walls, I asked poor little Achilles if he thought he could muster strength to continue his journey, representing to him that any delay might probably prevent us from quitting Spain, if it did not induce still more disagreeable consequences. A tear of pain and fatigue actually rose in the weary player's eye, as he abandoned the hope of repose with which the sight of the village had inspired him; but the sound of the cannon, and the beating of the drum, still rung in his ears, and he professed his willingness to go on, as long as he was able--to do anything, in short, to get out of hearing of such sounds as the wind had borne from Lerida.

The village, however, was but a poor one, and on inquiring at the posada whether we could exchange our horses for two fresh ones, offering at the same time a suitable repayment for the accommodation, I was informed that no horse could be obtained in the place for love or money, except those employed in agriculture, which were not precisely suited to my purpose. Nothing remained then but to stay where we were, to give our horses food, and four hours' rest, and to take what repose we could ourselves obtain.

So nearly balanced had been the wishes of poor little Achilles, between fear in the one scale, and fatigue in the other, that I do not believe he was at all sorry to hear that a halt was inevitable; and while I acted as the groom, and took care that every means was employed to renovate the vigour of our beasts, he cast himself upon a truckle-bed, and within two minutes was sound asleep. I followed his example as soon as I had provided for the renewal of our

journey; for, though well calculated to bear no ordinary portion of exercise, I was now considerably exhausted, having ridden more than thirty leagues that day, in addition to all that I had undergone before. My sleep, however, was feverish and interrupted, and before the four hours were concluded I was again upon my feet. It was about the hour that the Spaniards generally devote to sleeping, during the great heat of the middle of the day, but on going to seek for my horse, I found the villagers collected in various groups at the different doors, all eagerly talking upon some subject that seemed to excite their feelings to the uttermost. I easily conceived that some news had reached them from Lerida; but judging it best to remain as innocent of all knowledge concerning any tumults that might have occurred as possible, I asked no questions, but proceeded towards the stable for the purpose of preparing for our departure, leaving my weary follower to enjoy his slumbers till the last moment.

Before I reached the door, however, a clattering of horses' hoofs made me turn my head, and I saw a Castilian trooper galloping as fast as his horse would bear him into the village. He was armed with a steel headpiece, cuirass, and gauntlets, and mounted on a horse which, though wounded and bloody, still bore him on stoutly. His offensive arms consisted of his long heavy sword, a case of large pistols, a dagger, and two musketoons, so that considering him as an opponent, his aspect would have been somewhat formidable. As he came up, he glanced his eye ferociously over the various groups of peasantry, amongst whom two or three muskets were visible, but without taking farther notice of any one, he cut in between me and the stable-door, and springing to the ground, in a moment led out the horse which had borne my little follower thither, evidently with the purpose of transferring his heavy *demipique* saddle from his own wounded charger to its back.

This, however, did not at all suit my purposes, and laying my hand upon the halter, I told him the horse was mine, and that he must stand off. This information brought upon my head a torrent of Castilian abuse, and thrusting himself in between me and the horse, he struggled to make me quit my hold, raising his gauntleted hand as if to strike me in the face. He was a smaller man than myself in every respect, and also embarrassed with the weight of his arms, so that it was with ease I caught his wrist with one hand to prevent his striking me, while with the other I grasped the lower rim of his cuirass, and threw him back clanking upon the pavement. In an instant, half a dozen young villagers sprang out of the houses, surrounded the prostrated trooper before he could make an attempt to rise, and would, I believe, have despatched him with their long knives, had not I interfered to save his life.

"*Viva la Francia! Viva la Francia!*" cried half a dozen voices at once. "Let him rise! let him rise! The French caballero commands it. Let him rise! let him rise!"

Some of the Catalonians, however, were for opposing this piece of clemency, and, evidently animated by the same spirit of hatred to the soldiery as their countrymen of Lerida, cried aloud to kill the tiger. "How many of ours has he killed!" exclaimed they. "How often has he plundered our houses, assaulted ourselves, insulted our women!--Let him die! let him die!"

But the discussion had for a moment diverted their attention from their prisoner, and though one of the strongest villagers had his foot upon the soldier's corslet, he contrived suddenly to throw him off, and, springing up, to catch his wounded horse, which still stood nigh. Half a dozen blows with musket-stocks and knives were now aimed at him in an instant; but leaping into the saddle, he spurred his horse through the crowd, and, saved by his corslet and morion from many a random stroke, galloped down the road like lightning.

At the distance of about a hundred yards, however, he turned in the saddle, and while his horse went on, aimed one of his musketoons calmly at the group assembled round me, and fired.

The ball whizzed close by me, and grazed the cheek of a villager near, leaving a long black wound along that side of his face. Fortunately for the fugitive, none of the muskets were loaded which graced the hands of those he left behind, otherwise his flight would have been but short. As it was, he departed undisturbed, and the whole of the group around turned to me, inquiring, as of one who had some title to command them, what was to be done next? "Were they," they asked, "to collect and join the patriots at Lerida, or to march forward upon Barcelona, collecting what troops they could on the road, and at once attack the tyrants in their head-quarters?"

I of course disclaimed not only all right to direct them, but all knowledge of the subject, telling them that I had merely cast the soldier from me in defence of my own property, and that I was not aware what patriots they spoke of at Lerida, or what tyrants at Barcelona.

"What!" cried one of the young men, with a look divided between surprise and incredulity; "do you not know that the inhabitants of Lerida have risen, and cast off the yoke of the Castilian tyrants? Do you not know the glorious news, that they have beat the mercenary soldados of Castile through every street of the city wherever they dared to make a stand, till the few that escaped have shut themselves up in the citadel? Do you pretend not to know that they have well avenged the death of the poor youth that the bloody-minded slaughterers fired off last night from a cannon's mouth? Pshaw! you know it well enough; and we know too, that it is with arms and ammunition from France, that all this has been done: so, '*Viva la Francia! Viva el Francés!*'"

It was in vain I protested my ignorance of the whole; they were determined to believe me an agent of the French government, and nothing I could say had any effect in persuading them to

the contrary. The only means I could devise for extricating myself from the unpleasant situation in which I was placed, without violating the truth, was to tell them, that I was going on myself to Barcelona, but that I thought the best thing they could do, would be to remain quiet till they heard more particularly from Lerida, taking care to be prepared for whatever event might occur.

They received this advice as if it had come from the Delphic Oracle. "Yes, yes, he is right," cried one; "we will wait for orders from Lerida."--"He will get to Barcelona before the Castilian now!" cried a second: "Quick! saddle the cavalier's horse!"--"Send us off a despatch as soon as all is safe at Barcelona," cried a third; but to this last I did not think fit to make any reply, as I had not the least intention of complying with the request. All was soon ready to set out, but a sudden difficulty delayed me some time, which was, that when about to depart, I could nowhere discover Monsieur Achilles Lefranc, whom I had left up stairs sound asleep. To leave the poor little man alone, in a country, the language of which was as unknown to him as Hebrew, was a piece of cruelty I could not think of committing. I was nevertheless nearly obliged to do so, for after looking for him in vain in the room where he had slept, and in every other place I could think of, with the assistance of half a dozen Spaniards, men, women, and children, he was drawn out from below the bed, where he had ensconced himself on hearing the sound of a musket, with the various shouts of the Spaniards in the street.

He seemed, however, in no degree ashamed of his cowardice. "I own it! I own it!" cried he; "I have nothing of Achilles about me but the name. I am vulnerable from top to toe; and so great a coward into the bargain, that I think the only wise thing my great namesake ever did, was in staying away so long from the fields of Troy; and the most foolish thing in going back again at all."

CHAPTER XXIII.

The horses of the smugglers were accustomed to hard service, and therefore soon refreshed, so that when we again mounted, they wanted but little of the vigour with which they had at first set out. Still, however, twenty leagues lay between us and Barcelona, and since my unfortunate encounter with the trooper, the necessity became more urgent of arriving there with all speed. Nevertheless, it was in vain that we spurred on as rapidly as we could, even little Achilles exerting himself in proportion to his ideas of the danger; night fell upon our journey ere it was more than two thirds finished, and as we could not arrive before the gates were shut, we were obliged to pause and await the return of day at a small town about ten miles from Barcelona. Here, however, all was quiet, and I judged from the tranquillity that no news had yet reached this place from Lerida; concluding, also, that the soldado, whose wounded horse must have been soon exhausted, had not yet passed through. In this case there was still hope of arriving at the city before the insurrection was known, so that we might embark on board any vessel about to quit the port immediately, or even hire one of the light boats that are continually running across the Gulf of Lyons, between Barcelona and Marseilles. The next morning, an hour before day-break, we were again upon our journey, and arrived at the gates of the city not long after they were opened. A crowd of country people were going in, carrying fruit and milk, and other articles of consumption to the town, and mingling amongst the horses and mules that bore these supplies, we endeavoured to pass in unnoticed. All proceeded very well for some way, till we passed the guard-house near the inner gate: in fact, we had proceeded a few paces beyond, when suddenly a couple of soldiers rushed out, half a dozen more followed, and I was knocked off my horse by a violent blow on my head, which they chose to bestow upon me with a prospective view to prevent my resisting.

As soon as I was on my feet again, the cause of this brutal conduct became evident, without question, as my good friend, the trooper, from Lerida, was the first person that met my eyes. "Ha! ha!" cried he, coming before me, while the others pinioned my arms behind, and shaking his clenched hand in my face, with a grin of unutterable rage--"Ha! ha! we have thee now; and, by the soul of a Castilian, I would pluck thy heart out with my own hands, did not the viceroy wish to examine thee himself. But never fear! before two hours be over, thou, too, shalt have a flight from a cannon's mouth!"

My situation was not a very agreeable one, but yet it was not one that impressed me with much fear. Indeed, it was never any circumstances of mere personal danger that much agitated me. Anything that touched me through my affections, or through my imagination, ever had a great and visible effect upon my mind; but to all which came in the simple form of bodily danger, I was, I believe, constitutionally callous.

While the soldiers were engaged in pinioning my arms with cords, which they drew so tight as almost to tear my flesh, some of their companions dismounted my trembling little companion, and

as his excessive fear and non-resistant qualities were very evident, they did not think it necessary to decorate his wrists with the same sort of strict bracelets which they had adapted to mine, but simply led him along after me in a kind of procession towards the arsenal; whither, it seems, the viceroy had removed from his own palace the night before, on the news of the insurrection at Lerida. The way was long, and I believe the brutal Castilians found a sort of pleasure in parading us through the various streets, and showing to the populace a new instance of the height to which the daring authority they assumed might be carried. Their insolence, however, seemed to me, even from the glances of the people as we passed, to be likely to receive a check sooner than they imagined. Not a Catalonian did we approach, but I recognised that flash in his eye, which told of a burning and indignant heart within; and though they suffered themselves to be shouldered by the licentious and ill-disciplined soldiers as we went along, it was with a bent brow and clenched teeth, which seemed to say, "The day of retribution is at hand!"

As we approached the arsenal, I caught a glimpse of the wide, grand ocean; and there was something in the sight of its vast free waves, which seemed to reproach me with the bonds I suffered to rest upon my hands. I believe, involuntarily, I made an effort to burst them asunder, for one of the guard, seeing some movement of my hands, struck me a violent blow with the pommel of his sword, exclaiming, "What! trying to escape! Do so again, and I will send a ball through your brains!"

I was silent, giving him a glance of contempt, which only excited his laughter, and calling to his companions, he bade them look at the proud Frenchman. Patience was the only remedy; and still maintaining my silence, though I own it cost me no small effort, I suffered them to lead me on, with many a taunt and insult, till we arrived at the port and arsenal. Here I was dragged through two large courts, and conducted into a stone hall, where I was subjected, for near an hour, to the insolent jeering of the soldiery, while the Count de Saint Colomma, then Viceroy, finished his breakfast.

To all they could say, however, I answered nothing, which enraged them more than anything I could have replied.

"Have you cut out his tongue, Hernan?" asked one of the soldiers.

"No," replied the other, "though he well deserves it; I spared it to speak to the Viceroy."

"Slit it then, as they do the magpies to make them speak," said a third.

"Ob, the viceroy will find him a tongue," replied the first. "Mind you that sullen boor, that would not betray the conspiracy at Taragona; and how the Count of Molino, who then commanded our *tercia*, found a way to make him speak?"

"How was that?" demanded one of the others; "I served in the tenth *legero* then, and was not present."

"Why, he made us tie him on a table," answered the first, "and then fix a nice wet napkin over his face, pricking some holes in it, however, or it would have smothered him altogether, they say. As it was, every breath was like the gasp of a dying man, it was so hard to draw it through the cloth! and one might see his fists clenching with the agony, and his feet drawn up every time we poured a fresh ladleful of water over his face. Every now and then, Don Antonio told him to stretch out his hand when he would confess; but he bore it stoutly, till the blood began to ooze out of his eyes and ears, and then he could not hold to it any longer, but stretched out his hand, and betrayed the whole story; after which, the conde was merciful, and had him hanged without more ado."

It was fortunate for poor little Achilles, who sat beside me, that his knowledge of Spanish did not extend to the comprehension of a single word that passed, or this story would probably have bereft him of the little life he had left. Terror had already made him as silent as the grave--for which quality of silence he had never been very conspicuous before--and he sat with his eyes staring and meaningless, his mouth half open, his feet drawn up under the bench, and his hands laid flat upon his knees--the very image of folly struck dumb with fright. There was something so naturally small and unmeaning in his whole appearance, that the soldiers seemed to look upon him altogether as a cipher; and, in this respect, his insignificance for some time stood him in as good stead as the armour of his namesake; but at length, finding that they could draw nothing from me, my companion's look of terror caught the Castilians' attention, and they were proceeding to exercise their guard-room wit at the expense of poor little Achilles, when suddenly the noise of drums and trumpets was heard, announcing, as I found by their observations, that the viceroy was retiring from the great hall to his own cabinet.

In a few minutes, a messenger arrived with orders for the officer of the guard to conduct the prisoners to his presence; but in the lax state of discipline which seemed to reign amongst the Castilian troops in Catalonia, it was not surprising that no officer could be found. I was placed, however, between two soldiers, and, with some attention to military form, led up the grand staircase towards the cabinet of the viceroy, at the door of which I was detained till the messenger had announced my attendance.

The pause was not long; for shortly the door again opened, and I was told in a harsh tone to go

in, which I instantly complied with, followed by little Achilles, while the soldiers and the Viceroy's officer remained without.

The scene which presented itself was very different from that which I had anticipated. The room was large and lofty, lighted by two high windows, commanding a view of the sea, and altogether possessing an air of cheerfulness rarely found in the interior of Spanish houses. The furniture was luxurious, even amidst a luxurious nation. Fine arras and tapestry, carpets of the richest figures, cushions covered with cloth of gold, tables and chairs inlaid with silver, and a thousand other rare and curious objects that I now forget, met the eye in every direction; while on the walls appeared some of the most exquisite paintings that the master-hand of Velasquez ever produced. It put me strongly in mind of the saloon in the Marquis de St. Brie's *pavilion de chasse*; but the lords of these two splendid chambers were as opposite, at least in appearance, as any two men could be.

Seated in an ivory chair,[5] somewhat resembling in form the curule chair of the ancient Romans, appeared a short fat man, not unlike the renowned governor of Barataria, as described by Cervantes; I mean in his figure; the excessive rotundity of which was such, that the paunch of Sancho himself would have ill borne the comparison. His face, though full in proportion, had no coarseness in it. The skin was of a clear pale brown, and the features small, but rather handsome. The eyebrows were high, and strongly marked, the eyes large and calm, and the expression of the countenance, on the whole, noble and dignified, but not powerful. It offered lines of talent, it is true, but few of thought; and there was a degree of sleepy listlessness in the whole air of the head, which to my mind spoke a luxurious and idle disposition. The dress of the Viceroy--for such was the person before me--smacked somewhat of the habits which I mentally attributed to him. Instead of the stiff *fraise*, or raised ruff, round the neck, still almost universally worn in Spain, he had adopted the falling collar of lace, which left his neck and throat at full liberty. His *justaucorps* of yellow silk had doubtless caused the tailor some trouble to fashion it dexterously to the protuberance of his stomach; but still many of the points of this were left open, showing a shirt of the finest lawn. His hat and plume, buttoned with a sapphire of immense value, lay upon a table before him; and as I entered, he put it on for an instant, as representative of the sovereign, but immediately after, again laid it down, and left his head uncovered, for the sake of the free air, which breathed sweetly in at one of the open windows, and fanned him as he leaned back on the cushions of his chair.

Behind the viceroy stood his favourite negro slave, splendidly dressed in the Oriental costume, with a turban of gold muslin on his head, and bracelets of gold upon his naked arms. He was a tall, powerful man; and there was something noble and fine in the figure of the black, with his upright carriage, and the free bearing of every limb, that one looked for in vain in the idle listlessness of his lord. His distance from the viceroy was but a step, so that he could lean over the chair and catch any remark which his lord might choose to address to him, in however low a tone it was made, and at the same time, he kept his hand resting upon the rich hilt of a long dagger; which seemed to show that he was there as a sort of guard, as well as a servant, there being no one else in the room when we entered.

I advanced a few steps into the room, followed, as I have said, by Achilles alone, and paused at a small distance from the Viceroy, on a sign he made me with his hand, intimating that I had approached near enough. After considering me for a moment or two in silence, he addressed me in a sweet musical voice. "I perceive, sir," said he, "notwithstanding the disarray of your dress, and the dust and dirt with which you are covered, that you are originally a gentleman--I am seldom mistaken in such things. Is it not so?"

"In the present instance your excellence is perfectly right," replied I; "and the only reason for my appearing before the Viceroy of Catalonia in such a deranged state of dress, is the brutal conduct of a party of soldiery, who seized upon me while travelling peacefully on the high road, and brought me here without allowing me even a moment's repose."

"I thought I was right," rejoined the viceroy, somewhat raising his voice: "but do you know, young sir, that your being a gentleman greatly aggravates the crime of which you are guilty. The vulgar herd, brought up without that high sense of honour which a gentleman receives in his very birth, commit not half so great a crime when they lend themselves to base and mean actions, as a gentleman does, who sullies himself and his class with anything dishonourable and wrong. From the mean, what can be expected but meanness, and consequently the crime remains without aggravation? but when the well born, and the well educated, derogate from their station, and mingle in base schemes, their punishment should be, not only that inflicted by society on those that trouble its repose, but a separate punishment should be added, for the breach of all the honourable ties imposed upon a gentleman--for the stigma they cast upon high birth--and from the certainty, in their case, that they fall into error with their eyes open--what say you, sir?"

"I think your excellence is perfectly right," replied I, the Viceroy's observations having given me time to lay down a line of conduct for myself; "I have always thought so, from the time I could reason for myself; and such have been always the principles instilled into my mind."

"Then what excuse, sir, have you," demanded the viceroy, rather surprised at the calmness with which I agreed to all his corollaries--"what excuse have you for meanly insinuating yourself into another country, and, by the basest arts, stirring up the people to sedition and revolt?"

"If I had done so, my lord," replied I, "I should be without excuse, and the severest punishment you could inflict would not be more than I merited. But I deny that I ever did so; and more! I can prove it impossible that I should have done so, from the short space of time which I have been in Spain, not allowing opportunity for such a crime as has been imputed to me. This is the third day I have been in this country."

The viceroy looked over his shoulder to his slave, who, stooping forward, listened, while his lord said, in a low tone, "You were right, Scipio--I am glad I looked to this myself--I am afraid I must exert myself, or these rude soldados will stir up the people to worse than even that of Lerida:" then turning to me, he added, in a louder voice, "I looked upon your guilt, sir, as so evident a matter, that I did not think you would have had the boldness even to deny it; but as you do, it is but just that you hear the charge against you. It is this, that you, a subject of Louis the French king, have, together with many others, found your way into this province of Catalonia, and, as spies and traitors, have instigated the people to revolt against their liege lord and sovereign Philip the Fourth; in evidence of which, a Castilian trooper of the eleventh *tercia* deposes to having seen you with the rebels now in arms at Lerida, and that, moreover, you overtook him on the road hither, and with other rebels at the village of Meila, would have slain him, had it not been for the goodness and speed of his horse. What can you reply to this?"

"Merely that it is false," replied I; "and if your Excellence will permit, I will tell my tale against his, and leave it to your wisdom to find means of judging which is false and which is true."

"Proceed! proceed!" said the viceroy, throwing himself back in his chair, seemingly tired with an exertion that was probably not usual with him, and had only been called up by the pressing circumstances of the times--circumstances which his own inactivity had suffered to become much more dangerous than he thought them even now. "Proceed, sir; but do not make your tale a long one, for I have many important things to attend to."

"It shall be a very short one, my Lord," I replied: "my reason for quitting my own country, Bearn, was that I had slain a man who attempted to strike me----"

"A gentleman, or a serf?" demanded the Viceroy.

"He was in the *classe bourgeoise*," replied I.

"You did very right," said the Viceroy; "go on."

"To escape the immediate consequences," I continued, "I fled across the Pyrenees, guided by some Spanish smugglers, who conducted me to a village not far from Jacca, whence I intended to proceed to Barcelona, and thence embark for Marseilles. From Marseilles, I intended to proceed to Paris, and there negotiate my pardon, so that I might eventually return to my own country in security."

"But," said the Viceroy, "what did you at Lerida? That town lies not in your road from Jacca to Barcelona."

"My Lord, I never was at Lerida," replied I; "though I have been in Spain before, I never was within the gates of Lerida in my life." The viceroy looked over his shoulder to his African confidant, saying, in the same low tone with which he had formerly addressed him, "Mark his words, Scipio!" then, turning to me, he asked, with rather a heedless air, "Then I am to believe, young sir, that the whole tale of the soldier who accuses you is false, and that you and he never met till, for the purpose of plundering you, or something of the same nature, he seized you this morning at the city gates?"

"Not so, my Lord," I answered; "far be it from me to say so, for I have a heavy charge myself to lay against that soldier. He overtook me yesterday on the high road, seized upon my attendant's horse, and raised his hand to strike me for opposing him."

"Good!" exclaimed the Viceroy. "Had you denied meeting him you were undone, for he gave last night a full description of your person. I now hear you with more confidence. Explain to me how, then, you happened to be on the road between Barcelona and Lerida, which is quite as much out of your way from Jacca as Lerida itself."

"Your Excellence will remember, that I said I was guided by smugglers," I replied; "these smugglers were bound to Lerida; but they assured me that they would put me in the high road to Barcelona, after which I could not miss my way. They kept their word; and I proceeded safely and quietly on my journey, till, arriving at a village which your Excellence calls, I think, Meila, I stopped for a few hours to rest my horses. Here I was overtaken by this soldier, who, without asking permission, or making an excuse, seized upon my servant's horse, and on my opposing him, raised his hand to strike me. I threw him back on the pavement, and the villagers, rushing out of their houses, would, I believe, have murdered him, had I not interfered; for which good office, no sooner was he on horseback, than he fired his carbine at my head, the ball of which missed me, but wounded one of the peasants in the face."

The viceroy paused for a moment, while the African whispered to him over his shoulder, in so low a tone that the words did not reach me.

"Did you, then, not hear any report of a revolt at Lerida?" demanded the viceroy, at length.

"I did," replied I, "at Meila; and before that I heard the sound of cannon and musketry from the side of Lerida."

"Can your attendant speak Spanish?"

"Not a word."

"Does he understand it?"

"No."

The Viceroy, while he spoke, looked steadfastly at Achilles, whose face happily betrayed nothing but the most confirmative stupidity of aspect; he then called him forward in French, and bade him detail what had occurred during the course of the foregoing day. The little player had by this time, in some degree, recovered his intellects, and hearing the mild tone in which the viceroy had hitherto questioned me, as well as the calmness with which he addressed him himself, his *penchant* for bombast was excited by the solemnity of the occasion, and the presence of a representative of royalty, and he poured forth a stupendous piece of eloquence, such as he thought the ears of a Viceroy required.

"May it please your sublime Highness," said he, "the following is a true account of what occurred to my noble and estimable lord, and to myself, during our woful peregrinations of yesterday; and if it is not the exact and simple verity, may all the stars of the golden firmament fall upon my head and crush me into atoms!"

The viceroy looked back to the African and laughed; but the slave, whose Oriental imagination was perhaps more in harmony with the tumidity of little Achilles's style, than the more refined taste of his lord, opened his large eyes, and seemed to think it very fine indeed. Neither of them interrupted him, however, and the player proceeded.

"Shortly after Aurora had drawn back the curtains of the Sun, and Phœbus himself jumped out of bed and began running up the arch of heaven, the illicit dealers, who had been hitherto our guides, our guards, and our suttlers, all in one, left us, to proceed themselves I know not where. We were now upon the broad and substantial causeway which leads from the far-famed city of Lerida--as I am given to understand, for I never was there--to this renowned metropolis of Catalonia, when, I being much fatigued with the unwonted extension of my legs across the back of my equine quadruped, my noble and considerate lord permitted me to stop and repose my weary limbs at a small pot-house by the road-side. Suddenly, after we had been there about an hour, loud roared the cannon, and quick beat the drum; and my lord not loving tumults amongst the people, as he said, and I not loving tumults amongst the cannon, we got upon horseback, and rode on till our horses could go no farther. Truly, I was thankful that their weariness came to back my own, or verily, I believe, that my lord, whose thighs must be made of cast iron, would not have left a bit of skin upon me, by riding on till night. However, we stopped; and, by the blessing of God, I lay down to take what the people of this land call a *siesta*, but what I call a nap; when, after having lain in the arms of Somnus for about half an hour, (four hours, he should have said,) I was startled by the tremendous sound of a musket, and incontinent, crept under the bed, from whence I was dragged out shortly after by my master, mounted on the awful pinnacle of my horse's back, and compelled to ride on to another village, where we slept in quiet until day this morning. After that, we proceeded to these hospitable walls, where a generous soldier rushed forth upon us, and invited us in with a pressing courtesy which was not to be resisted. He bestowed upon my lord a long piece of cord, which your sublime majesty may observe upon his wrists. Me he decorated not in the same manner, but they took care of both our horses and----"

"Hold!" said the Viceroy, "I have heard enough.--You said," continued he, turning to me, "that you had been in Spain before. Where did you then reside, and to whom were you known?"

"I resided at Saragossa," replied I, "and was known to the corregidor, and to the Chevalier de Montenero."

"The Conde de Montenero!" said the Viceroy. "Good! I expect him here this very day, or to-morrow at the farthest. If he witness in your favour, your history needs no other confirmation; for though a foreigner, all Spain knows his honour."

"A foreigner!" exclaimed I: "is he not a Spaniard?"

"Certainly not," answered the Viceroy; "knew you not that? But to speak of yourself; mark me, young sir, you are safe for the present, for your story bears the air of truth; but woe to you if you have deceived me, for you shall die under tortures such as you never dreamed of; and to show you that in such things I will no longer be trifled with between these cut-throat soldiers and the factious peasantry, I will instantly order your accuser to have the strappado till his back be flayed. By the Mother of Heaven! I will no longer have my repose troubled at every hour with the rapacity of these base soldados, and the turbulence of the still baser serfs." And the full countenance of the Count took on an air of stern determination, which I had not before imagined that it could assume. "Scipio," continued he to the negro, "see that these two be placed in security, where they may be well treated, but cannot escape; bid my secretary, when he arrives

from the palace, take both their names in writing, and note down their separate stories from their own mouths. Henceforth, I will investigate each case to the most minute particular; and, be it peasant or be it soldier that commits a crime, he shall find that I can be a Draco, and write my laws in blood."

His resolution unfortunately came somewhat too late, for his indolence and inactivity had permitted the growth of a spirit that no measures could now quell. The hatred between the soldiery and the people had been nourished by the incessant outrages which the former had been suffered to commit under the lax government of the Count de St. Colomma; and now that the populace had drawn the sword to avenge themselves, they were not likely to sheath it till they had done so effectually.

When he had finished speaking, the viceroy threw himself back in his chair, fatigued with the unwonted exertion he had made, and waving his hand, signed to us to withdraw, with which, as may be supposed, we were not long in complying. The African followed us; and being again placed between two soldiers, we were conducted to a small low-roofed room, which filled up the vacancy between the two principal floors in that body of the building. The soldier who had been my accuser did not fail to follow, addressing many a triumphant jest upon our situation to the negro. The slave affected to laugh at them all heartily, but was, I believe, amusing himself with very different thoughts; for the moment we were safely lodged in the room he had chosen, he beckoned our good friend the soldier forward, and made him untie my hands. As he did so, an impulse I could scarcely resist almost made me seize him and dash his head against the floor; but the negro avenged me more fully, for he instantly commanded the other soldiers, with a tone of authority they dared not disobey, to bind the delinquent with the same cord, and taking him down into the court, to give him fifty blows of the strappado, and farther, to keep him in strict confinement till the Viceroy's farther pleasure was known. "Ha, ha, ha!" cried he to the soldier, with a grin, that showed every milk-white tooth in his head; "Ha, ha, ha! why do you not laugh now?" And having placed a guard at our door, he left us.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The chamber in which we were now placed was not an unpleasant one, nor was it ill furnished, It had probably been heretofore occupied by some of the inferior officers on duty at the arsenal; and there were still to be seen hanging up above the bed, a head-piece and pair of gauntlets of steel, and an unloaded musketoon. The walls, which were entirely destitute of hangings, were, however, ornamented with sundry curious carvings, the occupation, possibly, of many an idle hour, representing battles, and tournaments, and bull-fights, wherein neither perspective nor anatomy had been very much consulted; and mingled with these rare designs, appeared various ciphers and initials, together with Christian names, both male and female, in great profusion.

The windows of the apartment were little better than loopholes, with a strong iron bar down the centre. They possessed, however, a view over the whole of the lower part of the city; and being situated in the south-western side of the principal *corps de logis* of the arsenal, faced the inner gate communicating with the town, and commanded both the inner and outer walls, with a part of the counterscarp and glacis.

On approaching one of these scanty apertures, to reconnoitre the objects which surrounded the place of our detention, I heard a party of soldiers conversing under the windows, and stopping the babbling of little Achilles by a motion of my hand, I listened to gain any information that I could, considering my present situation as one of the very few in which eaves-dropping was not only justifiable but necessary.

They were merely speaking, however, of some military movements which had just taken place, by order of the Viceroy, for quelling the insurrection at Lerida; and they did not at all scruple to censure their commander in their discourse, for detaching so great a force from Barcelona, at a moment it might be required to overawe the city.

This conversation soon ceased, and after some coarse vituperation of the Catalonians, they separated, and I heard no more. Notwithstanding their departure, I continued to stand at the window, as if I were still listening, in order to collect and arrange my own thoughts, uninterrupted by the merciless tongue of my attendant, who now having recovered his speech, of which fright had deprived him for a time, seemed resolved to make up by redoubled loquacity for the time he had been obliged to waste in silence. I had, in truth, much to think of. The whole circumstances which had lately happened to me, as well as my present situation, would have afforded sufficient matter for reflection; but, nevertheless, the news which I had heard from the viceroy concerning the Chevalier de Montenero engaged my thoughts perhaps more than all the

rest, and made me look upon the chance which brought me to Barcelona, rather than to any other Spanish town, and even my detention there, as rather fortunate than otherwise, notwithstanding all the unpleasant circumstances by which it had been accompanied.

I doubted not for an instant, that, however the Chevalier might be prepossessed against me in some respects, he would instantly do me justice in the matter of the present charge, and show the viceroy that it was impossible I could be guilty; which none could know better than himself. At the same time, the knowledge that I had now obtained of his not being Spanish by birth, freed me at once from the difficulty under which I had before laboured, and left me at liberty to exculpate myself from every circumstance which had before appeared suspicious in his eyes, without violating my promise to the unfortunate corregidor of Saragossa. After considering these points for a minute or two, I applied myself to calculate how long it would take him to arrive at Barcelona, supposing that he travelled with all speed from the place where I last saw him; and I judged that, passing by Bagneres and Venasque, he might have already arrived, as I doubted not that when he left Lourdes he had directed his course immediately towards Spain.

Nothing did I long for more ardently than his coming; not alone from the desire of obtaining my liberation, but because I longed to re-establish myself in his good opinion--I longed to be near one that I esteemed and loved--to confide in him all my thoughts, my feelings, my sorrows, my regrets--to tell him my own tale--to ask for consolation, and to seek for advice; and, certainly, never, never did I feel so much as at that moment the desolate solitariness of man, when, with none to aid him, he stands in the midst of sorrow and misfortune by himself.

With all his follies and his weaknesses, I will own, I had even clung to the society of the little player, merely because it was something human that seemed to attach itself to me; and while he was near, I did not appear so totally abandoned to myself and my evil fate; but when I thought of the coming of the Chevalier, of clearing myself from all suspicions, regaining his regard, and walking by his counsel, my heart was lightened of half its load, and I felt as if I had again entered within the magic circle of hope, that had long been shut against me.

While I was thus reflecting, the door of the chamber opened, and the Viceroy's favourite negro slave entered, followed by a servant, loaded with various kinds of viands, and a flask of wine. The servant put his burden down on the table, and withdrew; but the negro remained, and shutting the door, invited me in a civil tone to partake of the provisions which his Excellence had ordered to be brought me. "My lord the Viceroy," said he, "has given me in charge to see that you be hospitably treated, and I have pleasure in the task, young sir; for I hope, through your means, to rouse my master to a just sense of the oppression which these poor Catalonians suffer from the unruly and insolent soldiers."

There was something in this speech so different from what might be expected in a negro slave and a favourite, that I did him the wrong of suspecting that he wished to entrap me into some avowal of opinions contrary to the Viceroy's government; and I therefore replied, "You must know more of the subject than I do; I have been but three days in Catalonia, and therefore have had but little opportunity of judging whether the people be oppressed or not, even if I had any interest in the matter."

"Interest! Spoke like a white man!" muttered the black to himself. "Ah, young sir, young sir! If you had known oppression as I have, you would find an *interest* in every one you saw oppressed."

"I should have imagined," replied I, still doubting him, though I own most unworthily, "that your situation was as happy a one as well might be; and that your service on his Excellence the Viceroy was not very oppressive?"

He laid his jet black finger upon the rich golden bracelet that surrounded his arm. "Think you," asked he, "that that chain, because it happens to be gold, does not weigh as heavily as if it were of iron? It does--I tell you, Frenchman, it does. True, I am slave to the best of masters, the noblest of lords--true, if I were free this moment, I would dedicate my life to serve him. But still I am a slave--still I have been torn from my home and my native land--still I have been injured--wronged--oppressed; and every one I see injured, every one I see wronged, becomes my fellow and my brother. But you understand not that!"

"I do, my good friend, more than you think," replied I, convinced by the earnestness of his manner that what he said was genuine.

"Whether you do or not," said he, "there is one principle on which you *will* understand me. You can fancy that I love my benefactor. I love him; but I also know his faults. He is of a soft and idle humour, so that his virtues, like jewels cast upon a quicksand, are lost, unknown, and swallowed up. His idleness is a disease of the body, not a defect of the mind--though the mind suffers for the fault of the body--and so much does he value repose, that nothing seems to him of sufficient importance to embitter its sweetness. Fearless as a lion of death or of danger, he is a very coward when opposed to trouble and fatigue; he is just, honourable, and wise, but this invincible apathy of nature has brought him to the brink of a precipice, over which he would sooner fall than make one strong effort to save himself. For two years he has governed Catalonia, and during those two all the reports of the brute soldiery have been believed--few of the complaints of the injured peasants have reached him. Those few have been through me, for his guards and his officers, who all join in the pillage of the people, take care to cut off from him every other source

of information. Thus the soldiers have heaped wrong upon wrong, till the people will bear no more; till at Lerida, at Taragona--over half the country, in short, they are already in revolt. Barcelona still remains quiet; and, by the exertion of proper authority--by showing the Catalonians that the viceroy will do equal justice between them and the soldiery, that in future he will be the defender of their rights and liberties--the province--his government--perhaps even his life, may be saved. For this object, when the news reached him last night of the insurrection at Lerida, and, at the same time, the charge against you, I persuaded him to examine you himself, without the presence of his officers or his council. You answered wisely, and saved yourself. When next he shall examine you, do more--answer nobly, and save him, and perhaps a whole people! Tell him the oppression you have seen, tell him the murmurs you have heard; aid me to stir him up to exertion, and you may, if it be not too late, avert the evils that are gathering round so thickly!"

"I will willingly do what you wish," replied I; "but I fear, unless he can send one obnoxious regiment after another out of Catalonia, and supply their place with troops whose discipline is more strict, and who have not yet made themselves abhorred by the populace, that your viceroy will do but little to allay this fermentation among the people."

The negro shook his head. "They will never be changed," said he, "while Olivarez, the Count-duke, governs both Spain and the king. Why did he send them here at first? He knew them to be the worst disciplined, the most cruel, turbulent, rapacious troops that all Spain contained; but he wished to punish the Catalonians for holding a junta on one of his demands, and he sent them these locusts as a scourge. However, I have your promise. Before night the Count will send for you again; he will ask you what rumours you heard--how the Castilian troops were looked upon by the people--and other questions to the same effect. Conceal nothing! Let him hear the truth from *your* lips at least. Will you do so?"

"I will!" replied I, decidedly.

"Then fare you well!" said the negro, "and fall to your meat with the consciousness of doing what is noble and right." And thus saying he left the chamber.

"Good faith! monseigneur," said little Achilles, who had already settled upon the basket of provisions, and was making considerable progress through the contents, "I could not resist this charming sight had you been the king, and my master into the bargain. I must have fallen to. Hunger, like love, levels all conditions."

"You did right, my good Achilles," replied I; "but hold a moment, I must join the party;" and sitting down with my little attendant, I aided him to conclude what he had so happily begun. The wine-flask succeeded, and we neither of us spared it, proceeding to the bottom with very equal steps, for though, as his lord, Achilles always conceded to me two draughts for his one, he found means to compensate for this forbearance, by making his draught twice as long as mine. Indeed, when the bottle reached his mouth (for the negro had supplied us with no cup), the matter became hopeless, so long did he point it at the sky.

During one of these deep draughts, which occupied him so entirely, that he neither heard nor saw anything else, a distant shout reached my ear, and then all was silent. There was something ominous in the sound, for it contained a very different tone from that which bursts from a crowd on any occasion of mirth or rejoicing. It was a cry somewhat mingled of horror and hate; at least my fancy lent it such a character. At the same time, I heard the soldiers in the court below running out to the gates, as if they had been disturbed by the same sound, and went to inquire into its cause. Little Achilles had not heard it, so deeply was he engaged in the worship of the purple god, and the moment he dismissed the bottle, he recommenced his attack upon a fine piece of mountain mutton which still remained in the basket; but in a moment or two his attention was called by a renewal of the shouts, and by the various exclamations of the soldiers in the court, from which we gathered that, most unhappily, some new outrage had been offered to the people, who, encouraged probably by the news of a revolt at Lerida, had resisted, and were even then engaged with the soldiery.

"Let them fight it out," cried my companion, encouraged by the good viands, and still better wine of the Viceroy--"Let them fight it out! By my great namesake's immortal deeds, methinks I could push a pike against one of those base soldados myself. Pray Heaven the peasants cut them up into mincemeat! But while you look out of the window, monseigneur, I will lie down, and, in imitation of that most wise animal, an ox, will ruminate for some short while after my dinner."

As he said, I had placed myself at the window, and while he cast himself on the bed, and I believe fell asleep, I continued to watch the various streets within the range of my sight, to discover, if I could, the event of the tumult, the shouts and cries of which were still to be heard, varying in distance and direction, as if the crowds from which they proceeded were rapidly changing their place. After a moment or two, some musket-shots were heard mingling with the outcry, and then a whole platoon. A louder shout than ever succeeded, and then again a deep silence. In the meanwhile, several officers came running at all speed to the arsenal; and in a few minutes, two or three small bodies of troops marched out, proceeding up a long street, of which I had a view almost in its whole length. About half way up, the soldiers defiled down another street to the right, and I lost sight of them. The shouts, however, still continued, rising and falling, with occasional discharges of musketry; but in general, the noise seemed to me farther off than it had

been at first. Shortly it began to come rapidly near, growing louder and louder; and straining my eyes in the direction in which the tumult seemed to lie, I beheld a party of the populace driven across the long street I have mentioned by a body of pikemen.

The Catalonians were evidently fighting desperately; but the superior skill of the troops prevailed, and the undisciplined mob was borne back at the point of the pike, notwithstanding an effort to make a stand at the crossing of the streets.

This first success of the military, however, did not absolutely infer that their ascendency would be permanent. The tumult was but begun; and far from being a momentary effervescence of popular feeling, which, commencing with a few, is only increased by the accession of idlers and vagabonds, this was the pouring forth of long-suppressed indignation--the uprising of a whole people to work retribution on the heads of their oppressors, and every moment might be expected to bring fresh combatants, excited by the thirst of vengeance, and animated by the hope of liberty.

All was now bustle and activity in the arsenal. The gates were shut, the soldiers underarms, the officers called together, the walls manned; and, from the court below, the stirring sounds of military preparation rose up to the windows at which I stood, telling that the pressing danger of the circumstances had at length roused the viceroy from his idle mood, and that he was now taking all the means which a good officer might, to put down the insurrection that his negligence had suffered to break out. From time to time, I caught the calm full tones of his voice, giving a number of orders and directions--now ordering parties of soldiers to issue forth and support their comrades--commanding at the same time that they should advance up the several streets, which bore upon the arsenal, taking especial care that their retreat was not cut off, and that a continual communication should be kept up--pointing out to the inferior officers where to establish posts, so as to best guard their flanks and avoid the dangers of advancing through the streets of the city, where every house might be considered as an enemy's fort; and finally directing that in such and such conjunctures, certain flags should be raised on the steeples of the various churches, thus establishing a particular code of signals for the occasion.

In the meanwhile the tumult in the city increased, the firing became more continuous, the bells of the churches mingled their clang with the rest, and the struggle was evidently growing more and more fierce, as fresh combatants poured in on either party. At length I saw an officer riding down the opposite street at full speed, and dashing into the arsenal, the gates of which opened to give him admission, he seemed to approach the viceroy, whose voice I instantly heard, demanding, "Well, Don Ferdinand, where are the cavalry? Why have you not brought up the men-at-arms?"

"Because it was impossible," replied the officer: "the rebels, your Excellence, have set fire to the stables--not a horse would move, even after Don Antonio Molina had dispersed the traitors that did it. Not ten horses have been saved. What is to be done, my lord?"

"Return instantly," answered the Viceroy, promptly, "collect your men-at-arms,--bid them fight on foot for the honour of Castile--for the safety of the province--for their own lives. Marshal them in two bodies. Let one march, by the Plaza Nueva down to the port, and the other by the Calle de la Cruz to the Lerida gate."

"I am sorry to say, the Lerida gate is in the possession of the rebels," replied the officer. "A large body of peasants,[6] well armed and mounted, attacked it and drove in the soldiers half an hour ago. They come from Lerida itself, as we learn by the shouts of the others."

"The more need to march on it instantly," replied the Viceroy. "See! The flag is up on the church of the Assumption! Don Francisco is there, with part of the second *tercia*. Divide as I have said--send your brother down with one body to the port--with the other, join Don Francisco, at the church of the Assumption; take the two brass cannon from the Barrio Nuevo, and march upon the gate of Lerida. Drive back the rebels, or die!"

The Viceroy's orders were given like lightning, and turning his horse, the officer rode away with equal speed to execute them. I marked him as he dashed through the gates of the arsenal, and a more soldier-like man I never saw. He galloped fast over the drawbridge, and through the second gate, crossed the open space between the arsenal and the houses of the town, and darted up the street by which he had come, when suddenly a flash and some smoke broke from the window of a house as he passed; I saw him reel in the saddle, catch at his horse's mane, and fall headlong to the ground; while the charger, freed from his load, ran wildly up the street, till he was out of sight.

The sentinel on the counterscarp had seen the officer's fall, and instantly passed the news to the Viceroy. "Pedro Marona!" cried the Count, promptly:--"Quick! mount, and bear the same orders to Don Antonio Molina. Take the Calle de la Paz. Quick! One way or another, we lose our most precious moments. Don Ferdinando should have seen his corslet was better tempered. However, let half a dozen men be sent out to bring him in, perhaps he may not yet be dead."

The gates of the arsenal were thrown open accordingly, and a small party carrying a board to bring home the body issued out; but they had scarcely proceeded half way to the spot where the officer had fallen, when the sound of the tumult, the firing, the cheers, the cries, the screams,

mingled in one terrific roar, rolled nearer and nearer. A single soldier then appeared in full flight in the long street on which my eyes were fixed; another followed, and another. A shout louder than all the rest rang up to the sky; and rolling, and rushing, like the billows of a troubled ocean, came pouring down the street a large body of the Castilian soldiery, urged on by an immense mass of armed peasantry, with whom the first rank of the Castilians was mingled.

Though some of the soldiers were still fighting man to man with the Catalonians, the mass were evidently flying as fast as the nature of the circumstances would permit, crushing and pressing over each other; and many more must have been trampled to death by the feet of their comrades than fell by the swords of their enemies. In the meanwhile, the pursuers, the greater part of whom were on horseback, continued spurring their horses into the disorderly mass of the fugitives, hewing them down on every side with the most remorseless vengeance; while from the houses on each hand a still more dreadful and less noble sort of warfare was carried on against the flying soldiery. Scarce a house, but one or two of its windows began to flash with musketry, raining a tremendous shower of balls upon the heads of the unfortunate Castilians, who, jammed up in the small space of a narrow street, had no room either to avoid their own fate or avenge their fellows.

Just then, however, the pursuers received a momentary check from the cannon of the arsenal, some of which being placed sufficiently high for the balls to fall amidst the mass of peasantry, without taking effect upon the nearer body of the flying soldiers, began to operate as a diversion in favour of the fugitives. The very sound caused several of the horsemen to halt. At that moment, my eye fell upon the figure of Garcias the smuggler, at the head of the peasantry, cheering them on; and by his gestures, appearing to tell them that those who would escape the cannon-balls must close upon those for whose safety they were fired; that now was the moment to make themselves masters of the arsenal; and that if they would but follow close, they would force their way in with the flying soldiers.

So animated, so vehement was his gesticulation, that there hardly needed words to render his wishes comprehensible. The panic, however, though but momentary, allowed sufficient time for greater part of the soldiers to throw themselves into the arsenal. Some, indeed, being again mingled with the peasantry, were shut out, and slaughtered to a man; the rest prepared to make good the very defensible post they now possessed, knowing well that *mercy* was a word they had themselves blotted out from the language of their enemies.

In the meanwhile, my little companion Achilles had evinced much more courage than I had anticipated; whether it was that he found, or rather fancied, greater security in the walls of the arsenal; or whether it was that necessity produced the same change in his nature, that being in a corner is said to effect upon a cat; or whether the quantity of wine which he had drunk had conveyed with itself an equal portion of valour, I do not know; but certain it is, that he lay quite quiet for the greater part of the time, without attempting to creep under the bed, and only took the precaution of wrapping the bolster round his head to deaden the sound of the cannon. Once he even rose, and approaching the other window, stood upon tiptoes to take a momentary glance at what was proceeding without. The scene he beheld, however, was no way encouraging, and he instantly retreated to the bed, and settled himself once more comfortably amongst the clothes, after having drained the few last drops of wine that remained in the flask.

It may easily be supposed, that the viceroy was not particularly anxious to spare the houses of a town which had shown itself so generally inimical, and, consequently, every cannon which could be brought to bear upon the point where the insurgents were principally collected, was kept in constant activity, and the dreadful havoc which they made began to be evident both amongst the insurgents and upon the houses round about.

Garcias, however, who was now evidently acting as commander-in-chief of the populace, was prompt to remedy all the difficulties of his situation; and animating and encouraging the peasantry by his voice, his gestures, and his example, he kept alive the spirit which had hitherto carried them on to such great deeds.

It is not to be imagined that any regular fascines should have been prepared by the peasantry for the assault of the arsenal, but they had with them six small pieces of cannon which they had taken, and which they hastily brought against the gate.

The murderous fire, however, both of cannon and musketry, kept up upon the only point where they could have any effect, would have prevented the possibility of working them, had not the fire of the arsenal itself, by demolishing the wall of one of the houses opposite, discovered the inside of a wool warehouse. Fascines were no longer wanting; the immense woolpacks were instantly brought forward and arranged, by the orders of Garcias, into as complete a traverse as could have been desired, supported from behind by the stones of the streets, which the insurgents threw up with pickaxes and spades. Their position being now much more secure, a movement took place amongst the people; and, while Garcias with a considerable body continued to ply the principal gate with his battery, two large masses of the insurgents moved off on either hand, and presently after, re-appeared at the entrance of the various streets which surrounded the arsenal, rolling before them their woolpacks, which put them in comparative security.

It was evident that a general attack was soon to be expected; and, exerting himself with an activity of which I had not thought him capable, the viceroy put himself forward in every situation

of danger. From time to time I caught a glimpse of his figure, toiling, commanding, assisting, and slackening not in his activity, though the marks of excessive fatigue were sufficiently evident in his countenance.

Of course, the gate could not long resist the continued fire of the insurgents' battery; and as soon as it gave way, upon some signal which I did not perceive, the whole mass of the peasantry poured forth from every street, and advancing steadily under a most tremendous fire from the guns of the arsenal, ran up the glacis, and easily effected a lodgment on the counterscarp with the woolpacks.

The moment was one of excessive interest, and I was gazing from the window, marking with anxiety every turn of a scene that possessed all the sublime of horror, and danger, and excited passion, when I heard a step behind me, and a cry from my little friend Achilles, which instantly made me turn my head.

I had but time to see the Spanish soldier who had accused me to the viceroy, with his broadsword raised over my head, and to spring aside, when the blow fell with such force, as to dash a piece out of the solid masonry of the window-frame.

"By the eyes of St. Jeronimo!" cried the man, "thou shalt not escape me--though I die this day, thou shalt go half an hour before me!"--and darting forward he raised his weapon to aim another blow at my head.

Unarmed as I was, my only chance was to rush in upon him, and getting within his guard, render the struggle one of mere personal strength; and making a feint, as if I would leap aside again, I took advantage of a movement of his hand, and cast myself into his chest with my full force.

He gave way sooner than I had expected, and we both went down; but somehow, though in general a good wrestler, certainly infinitely stronger than my adversary, and though at first also I was uppermost, I soon lost my advantage. I believe it was that in attempting to place my knee on his breast, it slipped from off his corslet, flinging me forward, so that my balance being lost, he easily cast me off and set his own knee upon me. His sword he had let fall, but he drew his long poniard, and threw back his arm to plunge it into my bosom: when suddenly he received a tremendous blow on the side of the head, which dashed him prostrate on the floor; and to my surprise and astonishment, I saw little Achilles in the person of my deliverer.

My pressing danger had communicated to his bosom a spark of generous courage which he had never before felt, and, seizing the unloaded musketoon, he had come behind my adversary and dealt him the blow which had proved my salvation. Nor did he stop here; for what with joy and excitement at his success, and fear that our enemy should recover from the stupefaction which the blow had caused, he continued to belabour his head and face with strokes of the musketoon, with a silent vehemence and rapidity which not all my remonstrances could stop. Even after the man was evidently dead, he continued to reiterate blow upon blow; sometimes pausing and looking at him with eyes in which horror, and fear, and excitement, were all visible; and then adding another and another stroke, as I have often seen a dog after he has killed a rat, or any other noisome animal, every now and then start back and look at him, and then give it another bite, and another, till he has left it scarce a vestige of its original form.

Seizing his arm, however, during one of these pauses, I begged him to cease; and would have fain called his attention by thanking him for his timely aid; but the little man could not yet overcome the idea that his enemy might still get up and take vengeance on him for the unheard of daring which he had exercised.

"Let me kill him! monseigneur! Let me kill him!" cried he. "Don't you see he moves? look, look!"

And, with straining eyes, he struggled forward to make quite sure that his victory wanted nothing of completion, by adding another blow to those he had already given.

"He will never move again, Achilles," replied I; "spare your blows, for you bestow them on a dead man, and well has he merited his fate----"

"Had we not better tie his hands, at least?" cried the little player. "He lies still enough too. Only think of my having killed a man--I shall be a brave man for all the rest of my life. But if I had not killed him, you would have been lying there as still as he is."

I expressed my gratitude as fully as I could, but objected to the proposal of tying a dead man's hands. No doubt, indeed, could remain of his being no longer in a state to endanger any one; for having no helmet on at the time he entered, the very first blow of the musketoon must have nearly stunned him, and several of the after ones had driven in his skull in various places. It is probable, that, having been kept in confinement by the order of the viceroy, he had been liberated at the moment the danger became pressing, and that, instead of presenting himself where he might do his duty, his first care had been to seek the means of gratifying his revenge, no doubt attributing to me the punishment he had received. Such an event as my death, in the confusion and danger of the circumstances, he most probably imagined, would pass unnoticed; and no one, at all events, could prove that it had been committed by his hands. Whether his

comrade, who had been placed as sentinel at the door where we were confined, had been removed for the more active defence of the place, or whether he had connived at the entrance of the assassin, I know not; but at all events, if he was there, he must have been an accomplice, and consequently would not have betrayed his fellow.

Such, however, was a strange fate for a daring and ferocious man--to fall by the hands of one of the meekest cowards that ever crept quietly through existence! and yet I have often remarked that bad actions, the most boldly undertaken, and the best designed, often--nay, most frequently--fall back upon the head of their projectors, repelled from their intended course by something petty, unexpected, or despised.

CHAPTER XXV.

While this was taking place within, the tumult without had increased a thousand-fold; and the din of cries, and screams, and blows, and groans, mingled in one wild shriek of human passion, hellish, as if they rose from Phlegethon. But to my surprise, the roar of the cannon no longer drowned the rest, and looking again from the window, I saw all the outward defences in the hands of the populace. The fortifications of the arsenal had only been completed, so far as regarded the mere external works; but even had they been as perfect as human ingenuity could have devised, the small number of soldiers which were now within the gates would never have sufficed to defend so great a space from a multitude like that of the insurgents. At the moment that I returned to my loophole, the peasantry were pouring on every side into the inner court; and the Viceroy, with not more than a hundred Castilians, was endeavouring in vain to repel them. If ever what are commonly called prodigies of valour were really wrought, that unhappy nobleman certainly did perform them, fighting in the very front, and making good even the open court of the arsenal against the immense body of populace which attacked it, for nearly a quarter of an hour.

At length, mere fatigue from such unwonted exertions seemed to overcome him, and, in making a blow at one of the peasants, he fell upon his knees. A dozen hands were raised to despatch him; but at the sight of his danger the Castilians rallied, and closing in, saved him from the fury of the people; while his faithful negro, catching him in his arms, bore him into the body of the building.

Though certainly but ill-disposed towards the soldiery, there was something in the chivalrous valour which the viceroy had displayed in these last scenes, combined with the lenity he had shown to myself when brought before him, which created an interest in my bosom that I will own greatly divided my wishes for the success of the oppressed Catalonians. The idea, too, entered my mind, that by exerting my influence with Garcias, whom I still saw in the front of the insurgents, I might obtain for the viceroy some terms of capitulation.

Calling to little Achilles to follow me, then, I snatched up the sword of the dead Castilian; and proceeding to the door, which, as I had expected, was now open, I ran out into the long corridor, and thence began to search for the staircase that led down to the gate by which the viceroy must have entered. On every side, however, I heard the cries of the soldiery, who had now retreated into the building, and were proceeding to take every measure for its defence to the utmost. Several times these cries misled me; and it was not till I had followed many a turning and winding, that I arrived at the head of a staircase, half way down which I beheld the Viceroy, sitting on one of the steps, evidently totally exhausted; while Scipio, the negro, kneeling on a lower step, offered him a cup of wine, and seemed pressing him to drink.

At the sound of my steps the slave started up and laid his hand upon his dagger; but seeing me, he gave a melancholy glance towards his lord, and again begged him to take some refreshment. Unused to all exertion, and enormously weighty, the excessive toil to which the Viceroy had subjected himself had left him no powers of any kind, and he sat as I have described, with his eyes shut, his hand leaning on the step, and his head fallen heavily forward on his chest, without seeming to notice anything that was passing around him. It was in vain that I made the proposal to parley with Garcias: he replied nothing; and I was again repeating it, hoping by reiteration to make him attend to what I said, when one of his officers came running down from above.

"My lord," cried he, "the galleys answer the signal, and from the observatory I see the boats putting off. If your Excellence makes haste, you will get to the shore at the same moment they do, and will be safe."

The viceroy raised his head. "At all events I will try," said he: "they cannot say that I have

abandoned my post while it was tenable. Let the soldiers take torches."

The officer flew to give the necessary directions, and taking the cup from the negro, the viceroy drank a small quantity of the wine, after which he turned to me:--"I am glad you are here," said he: "they talk of my escape--I do not think I can effect it; but whether I live or die, Sir Frenchman, report me aright to the world. Now, if you would come with us, follow me--but you might stay with safety--they would not injure *you*."

I determined, however, to accompany him, at least as far as the boats they talked of, though I knew not how they intended to attempt their escape, surrounded as the arsenal was by the hostile populace. I felt convinced, however, that I should be in greater personal safety in the open streets than shut up in the arsenal, where the first troop of the enraged peasantry who broke their way in might very possibly murder me, without at all inquiring whether I was there as a prisoner or not. At the same time I fancied, that in case of the viceroy being overtaken, if Garcias was at the head of the pursuers, I should have some influence in checking the bloodshed that was likely to follow.

While these thoughts passed through my brain, half a dozen voices from below were heard exclaiming, "The torches are lighted, my lord! the torches are lighted!" and the Viceroy, rising, began to descend, leaning on the negro. I followed with Achilles, and as we passed through the great hall, sufficient signs of the enemies' progress were visible to make us hasten our flight. The immense iron door was trembling and shivering under the continual and incessant blows of axes and crows, with which it was plied by the people, in spite of a fire of musketry that a party of the most determined of the soldiery was keeping up through the loopholes of the ground story, and from the windows above. A great number of the soldiers, whose valour was secondary to their discretion, had already fled down a winding staircase, the mouth of which stood open at the farther end of the hall, with an immense stone trap-door thrown back, which, when down, doubtless concealed all traces of the passage below. When we approached it, only two or three troopers remained at the mouth holding torches to light the viceroy as he descended.

"Don Jose," said the viceroy, in a faint voice, addressing the officer who commanded the company which still kept up the firing from the windows, "call your men together--let them follow me to the galleys-- but take care, when you descend, to shut down the stone door over the mouth of the stairs--lock it and bar it as you know how;--and make haste."

"I will but roll these barrels of powder to the door, my lord," replied the officer, "lay a train between them, and place a minute match by way of a spigot, and then will join your Excellence with my trusty iron hearts, who are picking out the fattest rebels from the windows. Should need be, we will cover your retreat, and as we have often tasted your bounty, will die in your defence."

In dangerous circumstances there is much magic in a fearless tone; and Don Jose spoke of death in so careless a manner, that I could not help thinking some of the soldiers who had been most eager to light the Viceroy were somewhat ashamed of their cowardly civility. About forty of the bravest soldiers in the garrison, who remained with the officer who had spoken, would indeed have rendered the Viceroy's escape to the boats secure, but Don Jose was prevented from fulfilling his design. We descended the stairs as fast as the Viceroy could go; and, at the end of about a hundred steps, entered a long excavated passage leading from the arsenal to the sea-shore, cut through the earth and rock for nearly half a mile, and lined throughout with masonry. At the farther extremity of this were just disappearing, as we descended, the torches of the other soldiers who had taken the first mention of flight as an order to put themselves in security, and had consequently led the way with great expedition. In a moment or two after--by what accident it happened I know not--an explosion took place that shook the earth on which we stood, and roared through the cavern as if the world were riven with the shock.

"God of heaven! they have blown themselves up!" cried the Viceroy, pausing; but the negro hurried him on, and we soon reached the sands under the cliffs to the left of the city. To the cold chilliness of the vault through which we had hitherto proceeded, now succeeded the burning heat of a cloudless sun in Spain. It was but spring, but no one knows what some spring-days are at Barcelona, except those who have experienced them; and by the pale cheek, haggard eye, and staggering pace of the Viceroy, I evidently saw that if the boats were far off, he would never be able to reach them. We saw them, however, pulling towards the shore about three quarters of a mile farther up, and the very sight was gladdening. Four or five soldiers remained, as I have said, with their commander, and lighted us along the gallery; but the moment they were in the open air, the view of the boats, towards which their companions who had gone on before were now crowding, was too much for the constancy of most of them, and without leave or orders, all but two ran forward to join the rest.

The tide was out; and stretching along the margin of the sea, a smooth dry sand offered a firm and pleasant footing; but a multitude of large black rocks, strewed irregularly about upon the shore, obliged us to make a variety of turns and circuits, doubling the actual distance we were from the boats. The cries and shouts from the place of the late combat burst upon our ears the moment we had issued from the passage, and sped us on with greater rapidity. Seeing that he could hardly proceed, I took the left arm of the viceroy, while his faithful negro supported him on the right, and hurried him towards the boats; but the moment after, another shout burst upon our ear. It was nearer--far nearer than the rest; and turning my head, I beheld a body of the peasantry pursuing us, and arrived at about the same distance from us that we were from the

boats.

The Viceroy heard it also, and easily interpreted its meaning. "I can go no farther," said he; "but I can die here as well as a few paces or a few years beyond;" and he made a faint effort to draw his sword.

"Yet a little farther, my lord, yet a little farther," cried the African; "they are a long way off still--we are nearing the boats.--See, the head boat is steering towards us! Yet a little farther, for the love of Heaven!"

The unfortunate Viceroy staggered on for a few paces more, when his weariness again overcame him; his lips turned livid, his eyes closed, and he fell fainting upon the sand. Running down as fast as I could to the sea, I filled two of the large shells that I found with water; and carrying them back, dashed the contents on his face, but it was in vain; and I went back again for more, when, on turning round, I saw a fresh party of the insurgents coming down a sloping piece of ground that broke the height close by. It would have been base to have abandoned him at such a moment, and I returned to his side with all speed. The first of the peasantry were already within a few paces, and their brows were still knit, and their eyes still flashing with the ferocious excitement of all the deeds they had done during the course of that terrible morning. As they rushed on, I saw Garcias a step or two behind, and called to him loudly in French to come forward and protect the viceroy, assuring him that he had wished the people well, and even had been the means of saving my life.

The smuggler made no reply, but starting forward, knocked aside the point of a gun that one of the peasants had levelled at my head, and catching me firmly by the arm, held me with his gigantic strength, while the people rushed on upon their victim.

The negro strode across his master and drew his dagger--one of the insurgents instantly rushed upon him, and fell dead at his feet. Another succeeded, when the dagger broke upon his ribs--the noble slave cast it from him, and throwing himself prostrate on the body of his master, died with him, under a hundred wounds.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Beware how you stand between a lion and his prey," said Garcias, releasing my arm; "and let me tell you, Sir Count, it were a thousand times easier to tear his food from the hungry jaws of the wild beast, than to save from the fury of this oppressed people the patron and chief of all their oppressors."

"You are wrong, Garcias! you are wrong!" replied I: "since I have been a prisoner here at the arsenal, I have had full opportunity to see and judge whether he wished to be your oppressor or not; and, on my honour, no man would more willingly have done you justice, and punished those who injured you, had he been allowed to hear the evils that were committed under the name of his authority."

"That, then, was his crime!" replied Garcias. "He *should* have heard--he *should* have known the wrongs and miseries of the people he governed. All in life depends on situation, and in his, indolence was a crime--a crime which has been deeply, but not too deeply expiated. Believe me, Count Louis, that kings and governors, who suffer injustice to be committed, deserve and will ever meet a more tragic fall than those even who commit it themselves."

"But see," cried I, "they are going to mutilate the bodies; for Heaven's sake, stop them, and let them not show themselves utterly savages."

"What matters it?" asked he; "the heads they are about to strike off will never feel the indignity; but speak to them if you will, and try whether you can persuade them from their wrath.--Ho! stand back, my friends," he continued, addressing the people, who even glared upon him with somewhat of fierceness in their look, as he interrupted their bloody occupation;--"hear what this noble Frenchman has to say to you, and respect him, for he is my friend."

"*Viva Garcias!*" shouted the people. "*Viva el Librador!*" and, standing forward, I endeavoured, as well as I could, to calm their excited feelings.

"My good friends," said I, "you all know me to be sincerely the well-wisher of Catalonia and the cause of freedom. Many who are here present, saw me dragged through the streets of Barcelona, no later than this morning; tied like a slave, and insulted, as I went, by the brutal soldiery, your enemies and mine, for no other cause but that I was a Frenchman, and that the

French are friendly to the Catalonians. I therefore have good cause to triumph in your success, and to participate in your resentment; but there is a bound, my friends, within which resentment should always be confined, to mark it as grand, as noble, as worthy of a great and generous people. It is just, it is right, to punish the offender, to smite the oppressor, and to crush him with is own wrong."

A loud shout announced that this was the point where the angry flame still burned most furiously.

"But," continued I, "is it right, is it just, is it noble, to insult the inanimate clay after the spirit has departed? Is it dignified? Is it grand? Is it worthy of a great and free people like the Catalonians?"

"No, no," cried one or two voices amongst the better class of the insurgents; "do not insult the body."

"No, indeed!" proceeded I; "it is beneath a people who have done such great and noble deeds. The moment you attempt to degrade that corpse by any unbecoming act, what was an act of justice becomes an act of barbarity; and instead of looking on that unhappy man as a sacrifice to justice, all civilized people must regard him as the victim of revenge. You, my friend--you," I continued, addressing the man who had been kneeling on the body for the purpose of cutting off the head with a long girdle knife, and who still glared at it like a wolf disappointed of its prey--"you, I am sure, would be the last to sully the justice of the Catalonians with a stain of cruelty. A few hours ago this unhappy man possessed riches, and power, and friends, and kindred--all the warm blessings of human existence--you have taken them from him--all! Is not that punishment enough? You have sent him to the presence of God to answer for his sins--let God then judge him; and reverencing the sanctity of that tribunal to which you yourselves have referred him, take up the frail remains of earth, and laying them side by side with the faithful, the noble, the generous-hearted slave, whose self-devotion we all admire, and whose death we all regret, bear them silently to the high church, and deliver them into the hands of some holy priest, to pray that God may pardon him in heaven the faults which you have punished upon earth. Thus shall you show, my friend, that it is justice you seek, not cruelty. Thus shall your friends esteem you, your enemies fear you, and your deeds of this day descend as an example to nations yet unborn."

In a multitude there is always a latent degree of good feeling amongst the majority, which, in moments of tumult and action, is overborne by the more violent and excitable passions of human nature; but once get the people to pause and listen, and mingle with your speech a few of those talismanic words which compel the evil spirit, vanity, to the side of good, and every better sentiment, thus encouraged, will come forth, and often lead them to the greatest and noblest actions. When I began to address the Catalonians, all I could obtain was bare attention; but, as they heard their own deeds spoken of and commended, they gathered round me, pressing one another for the purpose of hearing. I gained more boldness as I found myself listened to; and, seeming to take it for granted that they possessed the feelings I sought to instil into them, I gradually brought them to the sentiments I wished.

The great majority received with shouts the proposal of carrying the bodies to the cathedral, and the rest dared not oppose the opinion of the many.

I had fancied Garcias cold--nay, savage, from the check he had laid upon me at first; but the energy with which he pressed the execution of my proposal, before the fickle multitude had time again to change, cleared him in my opinion, and we prepared to return to the city as friends. At this moment, however, I perceived the loss of my little companion, Achilles, and mentioned the circumstance to Garcias, who gave orders to search for him; but the poor player was to be found nowhere, and I began to entertain serious apprehensions, that, in case of his having fled, he might be massacred by the first body of the insurgents he encountered.

Garcias instantly took advantage of this possibility, making it an excuse for positively prohibiting all promiscuous slaughter; and so great seemed his influence with the people, from the very extraordinary services he had rendered to their cause, that I doubted not his orders would be received as a law. The news of the Viceroy having been taken, had by this time collected the great body of the insurgents round us; and on a proposal from Garcias, they proceeded, in somewhat a tumultuous manner, to elect a council of twelve, who were to have a supreme command of the army, as they called themselves, and to possess the power of life and death over all prisoners who might hereafter be taken.

Garcias, as might naturally be expected, was appointed president of this council, and commander-in-chief of the army; and as a representative of the town of Lerida, the alcayde of that city was chosen, he having joined the insurgents from the first breaking out of the insurrection. Added to these were several popular and respectable citizens of Barcelona, with a wealthy merchant of Taragona; and much to my surprise, I was myself eventually proposed to the people, and my name received with a shout, which, from having opposed the fury of the populace in its course, I had not at all expected. Though whoever has once guided a popular assembly even against their inclination, becomes in some degree a favourite with them, this was not, I believe, the sole cause of the confidence they reposed in me. The idea of assistance from France was their great support in their present enterprise; and without staying to inquire whether he possessed any official character, the very knowledge that they had a Frenchman in their councils gave them

a sort of confidence in themselves, which their ill-cemented union required not a little. Involved as I now was in the insurrection, I did not refuse the office they put upon me, and my reason was very simple: I hoped to do good, and to act as a check upon men whose passions were still excited.

When all this was concluded, a sort of bier was formed of pikes bound together, and the bodies of the viceroy and his slave placed thereon. Six stout Barcelonese porters raised it from the ground and marched on: the insurrectionary council followed next; and then the populace, armed with a thousand varied sort of weapons; and thus, in half-triumphant, half-funereal procession, we returned towards the city.

As we went, Garcias, with a rapidity of thought and clearness of arrangement which eminently fitted him for a leader in such great, but irregular, enterprises as that in which he was now engaged, sketched out to me his plans for organizing the people, maintaining the civil government of the province, repelling any attempt to reimpose the yoke which the nation had cast off, raising funds for the use of the common weal, and gradually restoring that order and tranquillity which had of course been lost in the tumultuous scenes of the last two days.

He took care, also, to despatch messengers in every direction through the town, bearing strict commands to all the various posts of the insurgents, that no more blood should be spilt without form of trial; and two of the members of the council also were detached on a mission to the corregidor and other civil officers of the city, requiring their union with the great body of the Catalonian people, for the purpose of maintaining and cementing the liberties which they had that day reconquered. His wise conduct, in both respects, produced the most beneficial effects. The news of the cessation of bloodshed spread like lightning through the city, and induced many of the Catalonian nobility, who previously had not known whether the insurrection was a mere democratical outrage, or a really patriotic effort for the good of all, to come forth from their houses and give their hearty concurrence to an enterprise, whose leaders showed so much moderation. At the gate of the cathedral, also, we were met by the corregidor and all the chief officers of the city, accompanied by a large *posse* of alguacils and halberdiers attached to their official station. These officers, as a body, declared their willingness to co-operate with the liberators of their country; for though they had received their offices from the King of Spain, they were Catalonians before they were Spaniards. This annunciation produced a shout from the people, which gave notice to the Chapter of the Cathedral of our approach, and coming forth in their rich robes, they received with the solemn chant of the church the bodies of the unhappy Viceroy and his slave. When the corpses had been laid before the high altar, the Bishop himself came forward to the portal, and addressed the people, who heard him with reverential attention; while the leaders of the revolution which had just been effected, clothed indeed in wild and various vestments, but dignified in air and look, by the consciousness of great deeds, spread on one side of the gate, and the nobility and high municipal officers ranged themselves on the other, leaving room for the populace to catch the words of the prelate.

"My children," said the old man, "you have this day done great and fearful deeds; and sure I am, that the motives which impelled ye thereunto were such as ye could in conscience acknowledge and maintain. I myself can witness how long ye endured oppressions and injuries, almost beyond the patience of mortal men--your children and brothers slaughtered, your wives and sisters insulted, and God's altars overturned and profaned. May Heaven forgive ye for the blood ye have spilt; but as some of the innocent *must* have perished with the guilty, I enjoin you all to keep to-morrow as a strict and rigorous fast, to confess you of your sins, and to receive absolution; after which, may God bless and prosper you, and strengthen you in the right."

The good Bishop's speech was received with shouts by the populace, who took it for granted that it proceeded entirely from love and affection towards them, though, individually, I could not help thinking that there was a slight touch of fear in the business, as the prelate was well aware that in pulling down one house the neighbouring ones are very often injured; and perhaps he might think, that in overthrowing the edifice of Castilian dominion in Catalonia, the populace might shake the power of the church also. I know not whether I did him wrong, but of course I did not give the benefit of my thoughts to any of the rest; and when he had done, we took our departure from the Cathedral, and proceeded towards the Viceroy's palace, which Garcias named for his head-quarters.

As we went, we were encountered by a large body of the insurgents who had just concluded the pillage of a house in the same street, belonging to the Marquis de Villafranca, general of the galleys. They were of the lowest order of the populace; and we heard that a good deal of blood had been shed, and various enormities committed by them, which, as yet, it would have been dangerous to punish. Advancing with loud shouts, they hailed us as their brother patriots, from which appellation the better part of the insurgents were somewhat inclined to shrink, receiving their fraternal salutations with much the shy air of a *parvenu* when visited by his poor relations.

I must say, however, that never did a more brutal rabble meet my sight. Amongst other instances of their savage ignorance was one, which at the same time strongly displayed the spirit of the vulgar Catalonians. In rifling the Marquis de Villafranca's house, they had found, amongst other rare and curious articles which that officer took great delight in collecting, a small bronze figure, representing a negro, the body of which contained a clock. At the same time, the works were so contrived, as to make the eyes of the figure move; and when the mob surrounded the table on which it was placed, the little negro continued to roll his eyes round and round upon

them, in so bold and menacing a manner, that the whole multitude were frightened, and dared not approach! From his love of study, and search for everything that was curious and antique, it had long been rumoured, amongst the lower orders, that the marquis had addicted himself to magic, and they instantly fixed upon this ingenious piece of clockwork as his familiar demon. Under this impression, it was long before any one dared to touch it, as, after having signed it with the cross, and even held up a crucifix before it, it still continued to roll its eyes upon them with most sacrilegious obstinacy. At length, one more courageous than the rest dashed to pieces the glass which covered it, and seizing hold of the unfortunate clock, tied it to the end of a pike, and carried it out into the street. When we encountered them, the first thing we beheld was this bronze figure, borne above the heads of the people. They instantly exhibited it to us with great triumph, assuring us that they had caught the Marquis de Villafranca's familiar, and were about to carry it to the chief inquisitor, that it might be consigned to its proper place, with all convenient despatch. For my own part, I could scarcely refrain from laughing; and as Garcias seemed to take the matter quite seriously, I explained to him in French that the supposed familiar was nothing but a piece of mechanism, ingenious enough, but not at all uncommon. He cut me short, however, praised the crowd for their zeal, and bade them by all means carry the demon to the inquisitor, and then disperse for the night.

"Reasoning with such a mob as that," said he, as he went on, "is as vain as talking to the winds or the seas. The only way of managing them, is to leave them in possession of all their prejudices and follies, but to turn those prejudices and follies to the best purposes one can. You see that cart, Monsieur de l'Orme, with its great clumsy wheels, which are not half so good as the light wheels that we have in Navarre and Arragon, but if I wanted to send a load quickly to the port, I would not think of sitting down to take off those wheels--to make lighter, and to put them on--but would, of course, make use of the cart as I found it. Thus, when you want to guide a multitude, never attempt to give them new ideas, but take advantage of those which they have already got."

We had now arrived at the viceregal palace; and, leaving Garcias to make what arrangements he thought proper for the accommodation of the five hundred men which he had brought with him from Lerida, and for organizing the people of Barcelona into a sort of irregular militia, the insurrectionary council repaired to the great hall, and, with the corregidor and alcayde, sat till midnight, deciding on the fate of all those persons that the various parties of the armed multitude thought fit to bring before it. The task was somewhat a severe one; for every person that did not know another brought him before the council, if he could, and if he could not he was himself brought. Their zeal, however, in this respect, began to slacken as night fell; and it was only the more resolute and exasperated part of the insurgents that continued their perquisitions for Castilians, and other suspected persons, patrolling the streets of the city in bodies of tens and twelves, and making every one they met give an account of himself and his occupations.

As it was the sincere wish of every member of the council to allay the popular fury, and stop the effusion of blood, various extraordinary shifts were we obliged to make for the purpose of saving many of the poor wretches that were brought before us, from the more inveterate and bloodthirsty of the insurgents. The part we had to play was certainly a very difficult one; for we were surrounded by men over whom we had not the check of long established control, and whose inflamed passions and long-smothered revenge was not half quenched with all the gore that had already drenched the streets of Barcelona. Blood was still their cry, and they contrived to find out almost every individual who had been in any way connected with the Castilian government of the province, and drag him before us. Our very principal object was to check their indiscriminate cruelty, and yet, if we refused in every instance to gratify them in their revenge, it was likely we should annul our own authority, and that the populace would betake themselves again to the massacres which we sought to prevent.

Under these circumstances, upon the plea of weariness and want of time to examine thoroughly, we committed greater part of the unfortunate wretches, whom we were called to notice, to the government prison, sending off the most violent of the insurgents to renew their patrol in the streets, upon the pretence of fearing that during their absence some of the more obnoxious persons should escape. The prison we took care to surround with a strong guard of the men from Lerida, the major part of whom had served in the old Catalonian militia, and were consequently in a very good state of subordination, looking up also to Garcias almost as a god, from his having led them on to two such signal victories as that which they had achieved that day, and the morning of the day before.

At midnight the corregidor rose, and addressing me by the name which Garcias had given me, the Count de l'Orme, requested me to lodge at his house, as most probably I had not apartments prepared in the city. I willingly accepted his hospitality, and, escorted by a strong body of alguacils, we proceeded to his dwelling, where a very handsome chamber was assigned to me, and I was preparing to go to rest after a day of such excessive excitement and fatigue, when I was interrupted by some one knocking at the door. I bade him come in, and to my great surprise I beheld my little attendant, Achilles, completely dressed in Spanish costume; though, to own the truth, his *haut de chausse* came a good way below his knees, and his *just-au-corps* hung with rather a slovenly air about his haunches. His hat, too, which was ornamented with a high plume, fell so far over his forehead as to cover his eyebrows, which were themselves none of the highest; and, in short, his whole suit seemed as if it intended to eat him up.

"Ah, my dearly beloved lord and master!" cried the little player, "thank God, that when I celebrate my *februa* in memory of my deceased friends, I shall not have to call upon your name

among the number; though I little thought that you would get out of the hands of that dreadful multitude so safely as you have done."

I welcomed my little attendant as his merits deserved; and congratulating him on his fine new feathers, asked him how he had contrived to escape the fury of the people, without even having been brought before the council.

"Why, to speak sooth, I escaped but narrowly," answered little Achilles; "and but that my lord loves not the high and tragic style, I could tell my tale like Corneille and Rotrou--ay, and make it full, full of horrors. But to keep to the lowly walk in which it is your will to chain my soaring spirit; when I saw that poor unhappy Viceroy faint, and a great many folks coming along the shore with lances, and muskets, and knives, and a great many other things, which are occasionally used for worse purposes than to eat one's dinner, I looked out for a place where my meditations were not likely to be interrupted by the clash of cold iron, and seeing none such upon the shore, I betook me to a small piece of green turf that came slanting down from the hill to the beach, and there I began to run faster than I ever plied my legs on an upland before. The exercise I found very pleasant, and God knows how long I should have continued it, especially as some of the folks on the beach, seeing me run, pointed me out with their muskets, that their friends might admire my agility, and I began to hear something whistle by my head every now and then in a very encouraging manner; but just when I got to the top of the hill--plump--I came upon a mob twice as big as the other. Instantly they seized me, and asked me a thousand questions, which I could not answer, for I did not understand one of them; when suddenly one fellow got hold of me, threw me down, and--blessed be the sound from henceforth for ever, Amen!--though he held a knife to my throat, and stretched out his arm in a very unbecoming manner, he at the same time muttered to himself,--'*Diantre!*' between his teeth, in a way that none but a true-born Frenchman could have done it.--'*Diantre!*' cried he, grasping my throat.--'*Diantre!*' replied I, in the same tone.--'*Diantre!*' exclaimed he, letting go his hold, and opening his mouth wider than before.--'*Diantre!*' repeated I, devilish glad to get rid of him.--'*Foutre!* the fellow mocks me!' cried he, drawing back his knife to run it into my gizzard.--'Ah!' exclaimed I, 'if your poor dear father could see you now about to murder me, what would he say?'--'*Diable!*' cried he, 'are you a Frenchman?'--'Certainly,' answered I, 'nothing less, though a little one.'--'And do you know my father?' exclaimed he, catching me in his arms, and hugging me very fraternally.--'Not a whit,' answered I: 'I wish I did, for then possibly you would for his sake show me how I can save my throat from these rude ruffians.'--'That I will, for our country's sake,' answered he, and helping me up, he told some half dozen dogged-looking fellows, who had remained to help him to stick me, a long story, full of Spanish *oses* and *anoses*, which seemed to satisfy them very well, for instead of running me through, they hugged me till I was nearly strangled, crying out, *Viva la Francia!* all the while.

"After this, my companion, who is the corregidor's French cook, gave me a green feather, which has ever since proved the best feather in my cap; for this green, it seems, is the colour of the Catalonians, and since I put it in my hat, every one I have met has made me a low bow. The cook and myself swore eternal amity on the field of battle, and instead of going on to murder the Viceroy, by which nothing was to be got, we went back, and joined the good folks who had just broken into the palace of the general of the galleys. There had been a little assassination done before we came up; but the general himself had got off on board his ships, and the multitude were taking care of his goods and chattels for him. I entered into their sentiments with a fellow feeling, which is quite surprising; and while great part of them were standing staring at a foolish little black figure that rolled its eyes, and were swearing that it was first cousin to Beelzebub, I got hold of a drawer, in which were these pretty things," and he produced a string of clear-set diamonds of inestimable value: "these I brought away for your lordship," he added; "they are too good for me, and I had just heard you were safe and sound, and a great man amongst the rebels. For my part, I satisfied myself with a handful or two of commoner trash in the shape of gold pieces, and this suit of clothes, with a few lace shirts and other articles of apparel, which I thought you might want."

I had by this time got into bed, but I could not refrain from examining the diamonds, which were certainly most splendid. After I had done, I returned them to Achilles, telling him, of course, that I could not accept of anything so acquired; upon which he took them back again very coolly, saying, "Very well, my lord, then I will keep them myself. Times may change, and your opinion too. If I had not taken them, some Catalonian rebel would, and therefore I will guard them safely as lawful plunder," and so saying, he left me to repose.

CHAPTER XXVII.

So fatigued was I, that the night passed like an instant; and when Achilles came to wake me the next morning, I could scarcely believe I had slept half an hour. The good little player returned

instantly, as he began to dress me, to the subject of the diamonds, with the value of which he seemed well acquainted; and as he found me positive in my determination to appropriate no one article of his plunder, except a rich laced shirt or two, which had belonged to the Marquis de Villafranca, and was a very convenient accession to my wardrobe, he requested that, at all events, I would mention his possession of the diamonds to no one.

With this I willingly complied, as I felt that I had no right to use the generous offer he had made me against himself.

Before I was dressed, a message was conveyed to me from the corregidor, stating that, as we should probably be occupied at the council till late, he had ordered some refreshment to be prepared for us before we went; and farther, that he waited my leisure for a few minutes' conversation with me. I bade the servant stay for a moment, and then followed him to the corregidor's eating room, where I was not at all displeased to find a very substantial breakfast; for not having eaten anything since the meal which the Viceroy's negro had conveyed to me in prison, I was not lightly tormented with the demon of hunger. The corregidor received me with a great deal more profound respect than I found myself entitled to; and, seating me at the table, helped me to various dishes, which did great honour to the skill and taste of Achilles' friend, the cook. After a little, the servants were sent away, and the officer addressed me with an important and mysterious tone, upon the views and determinations of France.

"I am well aware, Monsieur le Comte de l'Orme," said he, "that the utmost secrecy and discretion are required in an agent of your character; and that, of course, you are bound to communicate with no one who cannot show you some authority for so doing; but if you will look at that letter from Monsieur de Noyers, one of your ministers, and written also, as you will see, by the express command of his eminence of Richelieu, you will have no longer, I am sure, any hesitation of informing me clearly, what aid and assistance your government intends to give us in our present enterprise."

I took the letter which he offered, but replied without opening it, "I am afraid, sir, that you greatly mistake the character in which I am here. You must look upon me simply as a French gentleman whom accident has conducted to your city, unauthorized, and, indeed, incompetent to communicate with any body upon affairs of state, and probably more in the dark than yourself, in regard to what aid, assistance, or countenance the French government intends to give to the people of Catalonia."

The corregidor shook his head, and opened his eyes, and seemed very much astonished. After falling into a reverie, however, for a moment or two, he began to look wiser, and replied, "Well, sir, I admire your prudence and discretion, and doubtless you act according to the orders of your government; but at the same time I must beg that, when you write to France, you will inform his eminence of Richelieu, that the Catalonian people are not to be trifled with, and that having, under promises of assistance from the French government, thrown off the Castilian yoke, we expect that France will immediately realize her promises, or we must apply to some other power for more substantial aid."

"Although I once more inform you, my dear sir," answered I, "that you entirely mistake my situation, yet at the same time, I shall be very happy to bear any communication you may think fit to the Cardinal de Richelieu, and in the meantime set your mind quite at ease about the assistance you require. The French government, depend upon it, will keep to the full every promise which has been made you. It is too much the interest of France to alienate Catalonia from the dominions of King Philip, to leave a doubt of her even surpassing your expectations in regard to the aid you hope for."

"Nay, this is consoling me most kindly!" cried the corregidor, persisting in attributing to me the character of a diplomatist, in spite of all my abnegation thereof; "may I communicate what you say to the members of the council, and the chief nobility of the province?"

"As my private opinion, decidedly," replied I; "but not in the least as coming from one in a public capacity, which would be grossly deceiving them."

"My dear young friend," said the corregidor, rising and embracing me with the most provoking self-satisfaction in all his looks, "doubt not my discretion. I understand you perfectly, and will neither commit you nor myself, depend upon it. As to your return to France, there is not a merchant in the town who will not willingly put the best vessel in the harbour at your command when you like; but if you wish to set out instantly, there is a brigantine appointed to sail for Marseilles this very day, at high water, which takes place at noon. Our despatches for the cardinal shall be prepared directly. I will superintend the embarkation of your sea-store, and though sorry to lose the assistance of your wise counsel, I am satisfied that your journey will produce the most beneficial effects to the general cause."

As I now saw that the corregidor had perfectly determined in his own mind that I should bear the character of an agent of the French government, whether I liked it or not, I was fain to submit, and take advantage of the opportunity of returning to my own country with all speed. It was therefore arranged that I should depart by the brigantine for Marseilles; and having seen Achilles, and ascertained that he would rather accompany me to France than stay beside the flesh-pots of Egypt, I gave him twenty louis from my little stock, and bade him embark with all

speed, after having bought me some clothes, through the intervention of his friend the cook. I then proceeded with the corregidor to the viceregal palace.

On each side of the grand entrance were tied a number of horses, apparently lately arrived, heated and dusty, and, it appeared to me, stained with blood. There was a good deal of bustle and confusion, too, in the halls and passages--persons pushing in and out, parties of six and seven gathered together in corners, and various other signs of some new event having happened. We passed on, however, to the hall in which the council had assembled the night before, and here we found that it was again beginning to resume its sitting.

"Have you heard the news?" cried the alcayde of Lerida; "our horsemen have defeated a party of a hundred Arragonese cavalry, who were coming to the city, not knowing the revolution which had taken place. The whole troop has been slain or dispersed, and its leader brought in a prisoner."

At this moment Garcias beckoned me across the room, and leading me to one of the windows, he spoke to me with a rambling kind of manner, very different from the general clearness of his discourse, asking me a great many questions concerning the corregidor, his treatment of me, and all that had passed, of which I gave him a clear account, telling him my determination to depart for France immediately.

"You do right," said he, somewhat abruptly; "you might become involved more deeply than you could wish with the politics of our province. Did you look into the strong-room, to the right, at the bottom of the stairs, as you came up?"

"No," replied I, somewhat surprised at his strange manner. "Why do you ask?"

"Because if you had done so you would have seen an old friend," replied Garcias, biting his lip; "the Chevalier de Montenero, who lives near you at the white house below----"

"I know, I know whom you mean," cried I. "What of him?"

"Why he has been taken prisoner this morning," replied Garcias, "by one of the most deeply injured and most cruelly revengeful of our cavaliers. He is known to have been a dear friend of the late Viceroy, with whom he served in New Spain, and they demand that he be brought out into the square, and shot without mercy."

"They shall shoot me first!" replied I.

"Indeed!" said Garcias, composedly, and then added, a moment after, "and me too. I owe the Chevalier thanks for having sheltered me when I was pursued by the douaniers; and though he spake harshly of my trade, he shall not find me ungrateful. But see, the council are seating themselves! Go to them, make them as long a speech as you can about your going to France; avoid, if possible, denying any more that you are an agent of that government. You have done so once, which is enough. Let the corregidor persuade them and himself of what he likes--but, at all events, keep them employed till I come back, upon any other subject than the prisoners. I go to collect together some of my most resolute and trusty fellows, to back us in case of necessity. Quick! to the table! The alcayde is rising to speak."

I advanced; and while Garcias left the hall, I addressed the council without seating myself, apologizing to the alcayde, who was already on his feet, for pre-engaging his audience, and stating the short time I had to remain amongst them as an excuse for my doing so. I then, with as lengthy words and as protracted emphasis as I could command, went on, offering to be the bearer of any message, letter, or communication, to the government of France; at the same time promising to carry to my own country the most favourable account of all their proceedings. I dilated upon their splendid deeds, and their generous sentiments, but I fixed the whole weight of my eulogy upon their moderation in victory, and then darted off to a commendation of mercy and humanity in general; showing that it was always the quality of great and generous minds, and that men who had performed the most splendid achievements in the field, and evinced the greatest sagacity in the cabinet, had always shown the greatest moderation to their enemies when they were in their power. Still Garcias did not come; and I proceeded to say, that by evincing this magnanimous spirit, the Catalonians bound all good men to their cause, and that it would become not only a pleasure, but an honour and a glory to the nation who should assist them in their quarrel, and maintain them in their freedom. At the end of this tirade my eyes turned anxiously towards the door, for both topics and words began to fail me; but Garcias did not appear, and I was obliged to return to my journey to France. I begged them, therefore, to consider well the despatches they were about to send, and at the same time to have them made up with all convenient despatch; requesting that they would themselves give a full detail of what had already been done, of what they sought to do, and what they required from France; and after having exhausted my whole stock of sentences, I was at last obliged to end, by calling them "the brave, the moderate, the magnanimous Catalonians!"

What between the acclamation that was to follow this--for men never fail to applaud their own praises--and any discussion which might arise concerning the despatches, I hoped that Garcias would have time to return; but, at all events, I could not have manufactured a sentence more, if my own life had been at stake.

I was, however, disappointed in my expectations. The magnanimous Catalonians did not, indeed, neglect to shout; but the alcayde of Lerida, who was one of those men whose own business is always more important than that of any one else, rose, immediately after the noise had subsided, and represented to the council that they were keeping one of their most active and meritorious partisans, Gil Moreno, waiting with his prisoner; and that from the nature of the case, as he conceived it, five minutes would be sufficient to decide upon their course of action. He then ended with proposing, that before any other business whatever was entered upon, the prisoner should be brought before the council.

This was received with such a quick and cordial assent from all the members of the council, that it would have been worse than useless to resist it, and I was compelled to hear, unopposed, the order given for Gil Moreno to bring his prisoner to the council-chamber.

The Catalonian had probably been waiting with some impatience for this summons; and the moment after it was given, he presented himself before the council. If ever relentless cruelty was expressed in a human countenance, it was in his. He was a short man, very quadrate in form, with large, disproportioned feet and hands, and a wide, open chest, over which now appeared a steel corslet. His complexion was as dingy as a Moor's, and his features in general large, but not ill-formed. His eyes, however, were small, black as jet, and sparkling like diamonds; and his forehead, though broad and high, was extremely protuberant and heavy, while a deep wrinkle running between his eyebrows, together with a curve downwards in the corners of his mouth, and a slight degree of prominence of the under jaw, gave his face a bitter sternness of expression, which was not at all softened by a sinister inward cast of his right eye. Behind him was brought in, between two armed Catalonians, and followed by a multitude of others, the Chevalier--or, as the Spaniards designated him, the Conde de Montenero. His arms were tied tightly with ropes, but the tranquillity of his looks, the calmness of his step, and the dignity of his whole demeanour were unaltered; and he cast his eyes round the council slowly and deliberately, scanning every countenance, till his look encountered mine. The expression of surprise which his countenance then assumed is not easily to be described. I thought even that the sudden sight of one he knew, amongst so many hostile faces, called up, before he could recollect other feelings, even a momentary glance of pleasure, but it was like a sunbeam struggling through wintry clouds, lost before it was distinctly seen; and his brow knit into somewhat of a frown, as he ran his eye over the other members of the council.

"Speak, Gil Moreno," said the alcayde of Lerida, who being the first person that had received the news of the Chevalier's capture, had appropriated it to himself, as an affair which he was especially called upon to manage:--"what report have you to make to the supreme council of Catalonia?"

"A short one," answered Moreno, roughly. "On my patrol this morning, two miles from the city gate, I met with a body of Arragonese horse. I bade them stand, and give the word, when they gave the king; and I instantly attacked them--killed some--dispersed the rest, and took their captain. According to the orders given out last night, I brought him to the council, and now, because he is a known friend of the tyrant who died yesterday, was taken in arms against Catalonian freedom, and is in every way an enemy to the province, I demand that he be turned out into the Plaza, and shot, as he deserves."

"And what reason can the prisoner give, why this should not be the case?" demanded the alcayde, turning to the Chevalier.

"Very few," answered he, with somewhat of a scornful smile, "and those of such a nature that, from the constitution of this self-named council, they are not very likely to be received. The laws of arms--the common principles of right and justice--the usages of all civilized nations, and the feelings and notions of all men of honour."

It may easily be supposed, that such a speech was not calculated, particularly, to prejudice the council in favour of the speaker, and I would have given much to have stopped it in its course; but just as the Chevalier ended, my mind was greatly relieved by the reappearance of Garcias, who now took his seat by the side of the corregidor, while the alcayde replied: "Such reasons, sir," answered he, "must remain vague and insignificant, without you can show that they apply to your case, which as yet you have not attempted to prove."

"The application is so self-evident," said I, interposing, "that it hardly requires to be pointed out. If the Catalonians are a separate people, as they declare themselves, and at war with Philip, King of Castile, they are bound to observe the rights of nations, and to treat well those prisoners they take from their enemy. The common principles of right and justice require that every man should be proved guilty of some specific crime before he be condemned. The usages of all civilized nations sufficiently establish that no man is criminal for bearing arms, except it be against the land of his birth, or the government under which he lives; and the feelings of men of honour must induce you to respect, rather than to blame, the man who does his utmost endeavour in favour of the monarch whom he serves."

"Ho! ho! Sir Frenchman!" cried Moreno, glaring upon me with eyes, the cast in which was changed to a frightful squint by the vehemence of his anger--"come you here to prate to us about the laws of nations, and the feelings of honour? Know, that the Catalonians feel what is due to themselves, and their own honour, better than you or any other of your country can instruct

them. Know, that they will have justice done upon their oppressors; and if you, Frenchman, do not like it, we care not for you, and can defend our own rights with our own hands. Once, and again, I demand the death of this prisoner, and if the council, as they choose to call themselves, do not grant it----"

"What then?" thundered Garcias. "The council, as they choose to call themselves! I say, the council as the Catalonian people have called them--and if they do not grant the death of the prisoner, what then?"

"Why then his life is mine, and I will take it," answered Moreno, drawing a pistol from his belt, and aiming at the head of the Chevalier, who stood as firm and unblenching as a rock. I was at the bottom of the table--opposite to me stood Moreno and the Chevalier: and without the thought of a moment, I vaulted across and seized the arm of the Catalonian. It was done like lightning--almost before I knew it myself, and feeling that he could no longer hit the Chevalier, the bloodthirsty villain struggled to turn the muzzle of the pistol upon me. A good many people pressed round us, embarrassing me by striving to aid me; and getting the pistol near my head, Moreno fired. The ball, however, did not injure me, but just grazing my neck, went on, and struck the alcayde of Lerida on the temple. He started up from his chair--fell back in it, and expired without uttering a word.

"By Heaven, he has killed one of the council!" cried Garcias. "Seize him! He shall die, by St. James!"

But Moreno turned to the crowd who filled that end of the hall. "Down with this self-elected council!" cried he; "down with them! They would make worse slaves of us than the Castilians had done. Who will stand by Moreno?"

"I will! I will!" cried each of the two who had entered with him to guard the Chevalier. "I will," uttered another voice behind him; but at the same instant the whole crowd, upon whom he had mistakingly relied, but who were, in fact, the most certain followers of Garcias, threw themselves upon Moreno, and those that had expressed themselves of his party, and in a moment the whole four were tied hand and foot, as surely as they had tied the Chevalier.

"I say, down with those who would introduce dissension and insubordination into the new government of Catalonia!" cried Garcias. "Members of the council," he added, "whatever services I may have rendered, and which I trust somewhat surpass those of this rebel to your authority, I seek no more than that share of influence which the people have bestowed upon me, in common with yourselves; and when I propose that the Conde de Montenero shall be well treated and his life spared, I do so merely as one of your own body, possessing but a single voice out of twelve. Let us, however, determine upon this directly, that we may proceed to the more important business of the despatches to be sent to France. Give me your votes."

Whatever might be the tone of moderation which Garcias assumed, his influence with the people was evidently so powerful, that of course it extended in some degree to the council; and their votes were instantly given in favour of what he proposed. The next consideration became how to dispose of the Chevalier. Every one present knew the unstable basis on which their authority rested; and in case of any change in the popular feeling, it was evident that the lives of all the prisoners would be the first sacrifice offered at the shrine of anarchy.

A good deal of vague conversation passed upon the subject, and finding that every one hesitated to make the proposition, which probably every one wished, I took it upon myself, and proposed, that, as an act of magnanimity, which a whole world must admire and respect, they should liberate the Chevalier de Montenero, and every other person attached to the Castilian government; merely taking the precaution of conveying them to the frontier of Catalonia. "At the same time," I said, "those Catalonians who were last night committed to prison upon frivolous accusations can be again examined. If not guilty of serious crimes, let them also be freed. Thus, the last thing I shall see, before returning to my own country, will be the greatest act of moderation which a victorious nation ever performed in the first excitement of its success."

While I spoke, the eyes of Gil Moreno, who had not been removed from the hall, glared upon me as if he could have eaten my heart; and when the council gave a general assent to the proposal, he turned away with a groan of disappointed rage, biting his upper lip with the teeth of the under jaw, till the contortion of his face was actually frightful.

On hearing the decision of the council, the Chevalier advanced a step, and addressed a few words to them. "Catalonians," said he, "you have acted in a different manner from that which I expected, and I therefore tell you, what I never would have done while the sword was suspended over my head--that I came not here with intentions hostile to your liberties. I knew not of any revolt having taken place in this province, although I had heard rumours that many galling oppressions had been inflicted on the people. My object in coming was to see an ancient companion in arms, who was the viceroy of this province; and I came by his own invitation, to assist him with my poor advice in controlling the irregularities and enormities of the undisciplined soldiery with which a bad minister had encumbered his government. By his request, also, I brought with me from Arragon a troop of guards, on whose good conduct he could rely, they having served under my command in Peru. Were my hands free, I could show you a letter from the viceroy, in which he commiserates your sufferings, and bitterly complains of the

insubordination of the troops. I hear that you have slain him. If so, God forgive you, for he wished you well! In regard to your revolt from the crown of Spain, depend upon it you will be compelled, sooner or later, to return to the dominion of King Philip. It is not that I would speak in favour of the Count Duke Olivarez," he continued, seeing an irritable movement in the council; "that bad minister has injured me as well as you, and has been the cause of my having for years quitted Spain, wherein I had once hoped to have made my country: but still, by language, by manners, by geographical situation, Catalonia is an integral part of Spain, and----"

"We will spare you the trouble, sir," interrupted the corregidor, "of saying any more. We have cast off the yoke of Spain, and, by the aid of God, we will maintain our independence as a separate people; but should not that be granted us, we would have King Philip know, that sooner than return to the dominion under which we have suffered so much, we will give ourselves to any other nation capable of supporting by force of arms our division from Spain. Let the alguacils untie the prisoner's hands."

Shortly after the Chevalier had begun to speak, Garcias had quitted the hall, and he now returned, announcing that he had (with that prompt energy which peculiarly characterized him) already prepared a horse and escort for the Conde de Montenero, which would carry him safely to the limits of Catalonia. The Chevalier bowed to the council, glanced his eyes towards me, of whom, since his first entrance, he had taken no more notice than he bestowed on the person least known to him at the table, and then followed Garcias from the hall. I could not resist my desire to speak to him, and making a sudden pretence to leave the council, I pursued the steps of the Chevalier and his conductor to the small room in which he had been formerly confined. Garcias was turning away from him as I approached, saying, "The horse shall be up in an instant, but do not show yourself to the people till the last moment."

As he went I entered, and the Chevalier turned immediately to me, with that sort of frigid politeness, that froze every warmer feeling of my heart.

"I have to thank you, sir," said he, "for my life, which is valuable to me, not merely as life, but from causes which you may one day know; a few years, just now, are of more consequence to me than I once thought they ever could be. I therefore, sir, return you my thanks, for interposing both your voice and your person, this day, to save me from death."

"Monsieur de Montenero," replied I, "there has been a time, when your manner to me would have been very different; but I must rest satisfied with the consciousness of not meriting your regard less than I did then."

"I am sorry, sir," replied he, "that you compel me to look upon you in any other light than as a stranger who has interposed to save my life; but as it is so, allow me to say, that something else than mere assertion is necessary to convince me, on a subject which we had better not speak upon. Could you give anything better than assertion, I declare to Heaven, that your own father would not have the same joy in your exculpation from guilt--nay, not half so much, as I should!" and there shone in his eye a momentary beam of that kindness with which he once regarded me, that convinced me what he said was true.

"Monsieur de Montenero," replied I, "the reasons for my silence are removed, and I can give you something better than assertion."

"Then do, in God's name!" cried he, "and relieve my mind from a load that has burdened it for months. How you came here, or what you do here, I know not; but there is certainly some mystery in your conduct, which I cannot comprehend. Explain it all then, Louis, if ever the affection with which you once seemed to regard me was real."

I grasped his hand, for that one word Louis re-awakened, by the magic chain of association, all that regard in my bosom which his coldness and suspicion had benumbed; and in a moment more I should have told him enough to satisfy him that his doubts had been unfounded. But it seemed as if Heaven willed that that story was never to be told, for just as I was about to speak, Garcias returned in haste. "The horse is at the gate," said he, "and the guard prepared; mount, Señor, with all speed, and out by the Roses' gate, for Moreno's people have heard of his arrest, and are gathering at the other end of the town."

"Louis," said the Chevalier, turning to me, "if you will proceed with the explanation you were about to give, and can really satisfy my mind on that subject, I will stay and take my chance, for I shall no longer fear death for a moment."

This declaration, as may easily be supposed, surprised me not a little, after the value which he had before allowed that life possessed in his eyes; for whatever might be the interest which he took in me personally, and whatever might be the enthusiasm that characterized his mind, I could not conceive that, without some strong motive superadded, he would offer to risk so much for the sake of one, in regard to whose innocence he had shown himself almost unwilling to be convinced.

Garcias, however, permitted no hesitation on the subject. "Stay!" cried he, in an accent of almost indignant astonishment.--"When we have perilled both our lives to gain you the means of going, do you talk of staying? Señor de Montenero, you are not mad; and if you are, I am not;

therefore I say, you must go directly, without a moment's pause;" and not allowing another word, he hurried him away, saw him mount, commanded the escort of twenty men, who accompanied him, to defend him with their lives; and then returning to me, led the way back to the council-hall.

"Members of the Supreme Council of Catalonia," said he abruptly as we entered, "our first duty is to show to the nation, that though we have cast off the yoke of Castile, we have not cast off the restraint of law. A member of this honourable body has been shot at the very council table, by a man acting in open rebellion to the authority committed to us by the people--we require no evidence of the fact, which was committed before our eyes. If we let the punishment slumber, justice and order are at an end; anarchy, slaughter, and confusion, must inevitably follow. Give me your voices, noble Catalonians. I pronounce Gil Moreno guilty of murder, aggravated by treason towards the nation, and therefore worthy of death! My vote is given!" He spoke rapidly and sternly; and after a momentary hesitation, and whispering consultation, the rest of the council unanimously agreed in his award.

"Take away the prisoner," said Garcias, and Moreno was removed. "Now let some noble Señor write the sentence," continued he: "I am no clerk, but I will attend to the execution of it."

The sentence was accordingly written; and having been signed by all the members of the council, Garcias took it, as he said, to have it fixed upon the front of the palace, and left us. His absence, however, had, beyond doubt, another object, for while the corregidor was, according to the direction of the council, writing a despatch from the provisional government of Catalonia, to the prime minister of France, the stern voice of the insurrectionary leader was heard in the square, giving the word of command, "Fire!" The report of a platoon was instantly heard; and it was not difficult to guess that Moreno had tasted of that fate which he had been so willing to inflict on others.

The despatches were soon prepared; and the council, willing to assume all the pomp of established authority, ordered me to be conducted to the port, as one of its members, with all sort of ceremony. Garcias remained at the palace, to take measures against any movement on the part of Moreno's partizans; but the corregidor accompanied me to the water side: and having formally resigned the seat, to which I had been called in the council, I embarked on board the brigantine, and took leave, for ever of Barcelona.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The most humiliating of all the various kinds of human suffering is undoubtedly sea-sickness, and therefore I will willingly pass over all my sensations in crossing the Gulf of Lyons. I believe, however, that the excessive importunity of my corporeal feelings did me good, inasmuch as it served, for a time, to obliterate from my memory the various strange and exciting scenes which I had lately gone through. If we could suppose the soul itself to be in a state of ebriety, I should say that my mind had been for several days drunk with excess of stimulus; and the relaxation consequent upon it, during the vacant hours of the voyage, would have been actually painful, had not the horrors of sea-sickness so employed the body, that the mind could not act.

We landed, then, at Marseilles, after a safe and rapid passage, and I prepared to set out with all speed for Lyons, hoping, by being the first to bear the Cardinal de Richelieu news, which I well divined would be most joyful to him, that I might at all events remove some of the dangers and difficulties of my situation--a situation which I hardly dared to contemplate.

My father, though richly endowed with personal courage, wanted, as I have said, that moral courage, which leads a man to look everything that is painful or disagreeable boldly in the face. With him, indeed, this disposition was carried to the excess of flying from the contemplation, even of inconvenient trifles; but enough of it had descended to me to make me willingly turn my eyes from circumstances like those in which I was now placed.

Money, I had hardly more than would bear me to Paris; resources, I had none before me, and I shrank from the idea of either writing to, or hearing from, the once loved home that I had left, with a degree of horror it is difficult to describe. What could I write, without forcing my mind to dwell upon details that were agony to think of? What could I hear, but reproaches, which I knew not well whether I deserved or not; or tenderness, which would have been more painful still? My only resource was, like the ostrich in the fable, to shut my eyes against the evils that pursued me, and to hurry forward as fast as I could, filling up the vacuity of each moment with any circumstances less painful than my own thoughts, and leaving to time and chance--the two great patrons of the unfortunate--to remove my difficulties, and provide for my wants.

At the inn at Marseilles, as soon as my little attendant, Achilles, had recovered what he called his powers of ambulation, the rolling of the sea having left him, even on land, certain sensations of unsteadiness which made him walk in various zigzag meanders during the whole day, he unfolded to my astonished eyes the clothes which he had bought for me at Barcelona. First, appeared a splendid Spanish riding dress of philomot cloth, laced with silver, and perfectly new; with a black beaver and white plumes, which, together with the untanned riding-boots, sword, and dagger, all handsomely mounted, might cost, upon a very moderate calculation, at least one hundred and fifty louis-d'ors. I concluded myself ruined, of course; but what was my surprise and horror when he dragged forth a long leathern case, containing a rich dress suit of white silk, laced with gold; a white sword and gold hilt, a bonnet and plume, that might have served a prince, with collars of Flemish lace, gold-embroidered gloves of Brussels, and shoes of Cordova.

If it had been a box of serpents I could not have gazed into it with more horror, my purse feeling lighter by a pistole for every fold he unplied in the rich white silk. "There! there! there!" cried he, contemplating them with as much delight as I experienced consternation. "What an exquisite Alexander the Great I should make in that white silk! Never was such an opportunity lost, for fitting up the wardrobe of a theatre--never! never! but I could not bear to part with the little shining yellow things, that kept my pocket so warm, and therefore I only bought what was necessary for you, *signeurie*."

"And where do you think that my *seigneurie* is to get money to pay for them?" demanded I, somewhat sharply. "Pray how much have you spent more than I gave you?"

The poor little man looked up with an air of consternation that increased my own. "Spent!" cried he; "spent more than you gave me!--Why, none at all. I got them all for seven louis."

"Then they must have been stolen," cried I.

"To be sure!" answered he, in a tone of the most *naïve* simplicity in the world; "to be sure they were stolen. How did you think I should come by them else?"

Though in no very merry mood, the tone, the air, and simplicity of the little player overcame my gravity, and I could not help laughing while I asked who they had really belonged to, before they came so honestly into his possession.

"Lord! how should I know?" replied he. "If you want to hear how I got them, that is easily told. When you went away to the council, after bidding me buy you a riding-suit, I went out with Jaccomo, as they call him, the cook; and as we were marching along in search of a fripier, we passed by the ruins of the arsenal, where you and I were confined, and where I killed the savage soldado," he continued, drawing himself up till he fancied himself full six feet high. "But that has nothing to do with the matter. The arsenal is now in a terrible state; partly battered to pieces with the cannon, partly blown up, as it seemed to me; but we just went in to take a look about us, when suddenly out from amongst a whole heap of ruins creeps a peasant fellow, with these two large mails on his back, and a heap of other things in a bag round his neck. At first he looked frightened, but after a little took heart, and told us a long story, which Jaccomo translated for me, showing forth, that having come to town too late for the famous plunder of the day before, he had hunted about amongst the rooms that were yet standing in the arsenal, till he had found all the things we saw; and added, that if we would go on we should find a deal more. This, however, did not suit Jaccomo, who talked to him very loudly about taking him before the council, and frightened him a good deal, after which he made him show us what was in the mails; when, finding they would suit your lordship, I made the cook offer the man seven louis for them, though he said I was a great fool for offering so much; and that if I would let him, he would frighten him so he would give them up for nothing. But as I knew you would not wear them without you paid for them, I gave the man the money, who was very glad to get it, and walked away quite contented with that, and several other suits that he had besides."

This information satisfied my conscience; and certainly if there never were seven louis better laid out, never was apparel more needed; for what between my journeys in the Pyrenees and my adventures in Spain, my *pourpoint* would have qualified me for a high rank amongst those poor chevaliers whom we see frequenting the corners of low taverns, and waiting patiently till some solitary traveller without acquaintance, or indefatigable tippler abandoned by his mates, invites them to share his tankard for the mere sake of company.

The next thing was to try them on, when, to my mortification, I found that, though in point of length they suited me exactly, both the *pourpoint* and the *haut de chausse* much required the intervention of a pair of shears to reduce the waist to the same circumference as my own. A small lean-shanked Marseillois, exercising the honourable office of tailor to the inn, was soon procured; and setting him down in the corner of the chamber, I suffered him not to depart till both the suits were reduced to a just proportion, and I no longer looked as if I had got into an empty balloon when I again tried them on.

One night I suffered to roll past tranquilly, though a thousand phantoms of the last two days hovered about my pillow and disturbed my rest. The next morning, however, a new embarrassment presented itself; for, on inquiring for the boat to Lyons, I was informed that it did not depart till the next day; and even then I found it would be so long on its passage that I must abandon all hope of being the first bearer of news from Catalonia, if I pursued so dilatory a mode

of travelling. At the same time I well knew that it was quite out of the question to take poor little Achilles so many hundred miles on horseback. The only way, therefore, which we could determine upon, was for him to remain behind till the boat sailed, and then to make the best of his way to Paris to rejoin me, while I went on as fast as possible, and accomplished my errand in the meanwhile.

Being now in France, and having his pockets well garnished, little Achilles did not, of course, feel himself near so much at a loss as he would have done in Spain; but still he clung about me, and whimpered like a baby to see me depart. I believe that he had seldom known kindness before, and he estimated it as a jewel from its rarity. He made one request, however, before I departed, with which, though unwillingly, I could not refuse to comply. My scruple of conscience about the diamonds of which he had plundered the house of Monsieur de Villafranca had in some degree touched his own, and he had heroically resolved to return them if ever he found the opportunity--always, however, reserving the right to make use of any part of them in case either his own or my occasions should require it. But in the meantime he remained under the most dreadful anxiety lest he should be robbed on the way to Paris; and made it his most humble request, both as I was the most valiant of the two, and as I should be a less space of time on the road, that I would take charge of the packet in which they were enveloped.

I did as he wished, though I would willingly have been excused; and having left him to shed his tender tears over our separation, I mounted the post-horse that had been brought me, and set out on my journey for Paris.

The night's rest which I had taken at Marseilles served me till I arrived at Lyons; and the one which I indulged in there carried me on to Paris. No time was lost on my journey; a single word concerning despatches for the minister making doors fly open and horses gallop better than the magic rings of the Fairy Tales.

At length I began to see the villages growing nearer and nearer together; separate houses highly ornamented and decorated, yet not large enough to dignify themselves with the name of châteaux; troops of people seemingly returning from some great city to their homes in the country; strings of carts and horses; and, in short, everything announcing the proximity of a metropolis; while at the same time the sound of a multitude of bells came borne upon the wind towards me, telling me that I arrived at some moment of great public rejoicing. I will not stop to inquire why that sound fell so heavily upon my heart; but so it did, and all the increasing gaiety I met as I began to enter into the suburbs but rendered me the more melancholy.

It was by this time beginning to grow dusk, and directing my horse towards the *Quartier St. Eustache*, I alighted at a small auberge which our landlord at Marseilles had recommended as the best in Paris. Having taken off my baggage with my own hands, and paid my postilion, I looked about in the little courtyard for some one to show me an apartment. It was long, however, before I could find any one; and even at last, the only person I could meet with was an old woman, the great-grandmother of mine host, I believe, who told me that all the world were out at the fête, and that I might sit down in the *salle-à-manger* if I liked, till they came back.

This seemed but poor entertainment for the best auberge in Paris; but I was forced to content myself with what I found, for it was too late to seek another lodging, even had I not appointed Achilles to meet me there. Nor, indeed, was my companion, the old woman, very entertaining; for she was so deaf that she heard not one word I said, and merely replied to all my inquiries, on whatever subject they were made, by informing me that every one was at the fête, repeating the precise words she made use of before.

Thus passed the time for an hour; but then the face of affairs altered. The host--a jolly aubergiste as ever roasted a capon--rushed in, in his best attire, followed by his wife and his sister, and his sister's husband, all half inebriated with good spirits; and I was soon at my desire shown to an apartment, which, though small, was sufficiently clean; and having been told that supper would be ready at the table d'hôte in an hour, I waited, while the various odours rising up from the kitchen to my window seemed sent on purpose to inform me, step by step, of the progress of the meal.

Alone--in Paris--unknown to a soul--with a vacant hour lying open before me--it was impossible any longer to avoid that unkind friend, thought. For a moment or two, I walked up and down the little chamber, whose antique furniture--the precise allotted portion which a traveller could not do without--called to my mind the old but splendid garnishing of my apartments at the Château de l'Orme.

Where--I asked myself--where were all the familiar objects that habit had rendered dear to my eye?--where all the little trifles, round which memory lingers, even after time has torn her away from things of greater import?--where were the grand mountains whose vast masses would even now have been stretching dark and sublime across the twilight sky before my windows?--where the free breeze that wafted health with every blast?--where were the eyes whose glance was sunshine, and the voices whose tones were music, and the hearts whose happiness had centred in me alone? What had I instead? A petty chamber, in a petty inn--the rank close atmosphere of a swarming city, and the eternal clang of scolding, lying, blaspheming tongues, rising up with a din that would have deafened a Cyclop--while misery, and vice, and want, and sorrow, cabal, and treason, and treachery, and crime, were working around me, in the thousand narrow, jammed-up

cells of that great infernal hive. Such was the picture that imagination contrasted with the sweet calm scene which memory portrayed; and casting myself down on the bed, I hid my face on the clothes, giving way to a burst of passionate sorrow, that relieved me with unmanly but still with soothing tears.

While I yet lay there, I heard some one move in the chamber; and starting suddenly up, I saw a man carefully examining my baggage, with a very suspicious and nonchalant air. "Who the devil are you?" cried I, laying my hand on my sword.

"*Garçon de l'auberge, ne vous deplaise, Monsieur*," replied the man.

"Then Monsieur Garçon de l'auberge," said I, "beware how you touch my baggage; for though there be nothing in it but my clothes and a packet for his eminence the cardinal, I shall take care to slit your nose if you finger it without orders."

The man started back at the name of the cardinal as if he had touched a viper, gave me the *monseigneur* immediately, and replied, that he came to tell me supper was served, and the guests about to place themselves at table.

Following him down, I found the *salle-à-manger* tenanted by about ten persons, while upon the table smoked a savoury and plentiful supper, on which they but waited the presence of the host to fall with somewhat wolfish appetites.

Silence reigned omnipotent at the first course; but at the second, two or three of the guests, more loquacious than the rest, began to entertain themselves and their neighbours with their own importance.

One, whose beard was as black and shaggy as a hawthorn tree in winter, spoke of his exploits in war, and showed himself a very Cæsar, at least in words.

Another was all-powerful in love, and told of many a cunning *passe* which he had put upon jealous husbands and careful relations. No female heart had ever resisted him, according to his account, which was the more extraordinary, as he was the ugliest of human beings. This he acknowledged, however, in some degree, swearing he knew not what the poor fools found to love in him.

A third was a mighty man of state, talked in a low voice, and told all the news. He had seen, he said, a certain great man that day, whom it was dangerous to name; and he could tell, if he liked, a mighty secret--but no, he would not--he was afraid of their indiscretion;--then again, however, he changed his mind, and would--they were all discreet men, he was sure. The news was this,--it was undoubted, he could assure them. Portugal had again fallen under the dominion of Spain--he had it from the best authority. The means of the counter-revolution was this: the Viceroy of Catalonia had sent twenty thousand men by Gibraltar, straight to Portugal, where they had uncrowned the Duke of Braganza, and restored King Philip, for which great service the king had appointed the Viceroy of Catalonia his prime minister.

As I knew how much of this news was truth, I of course gave the politician his due share of credit; and judging the rest of the company from the specimen he afforded, I was rather inclined to imagine that the lover's face made a truer report of his achievements than his tongue, and that, perhaps, the beard of the soldado constituted the most efficient part of his valour. I did not, however, seek to inquire into particulars; but remained as silent as several plain-looking respectable shopkeepers, who sat near me, and only opened my mouth to ask if I could procure some one to guide me that evening to a place I wished to visit in the town. This was addressed to my next neighbour, who had himself shown no symptoms of loquacity; but, it caught the ears of the man of the sword, who had been admiring the lace upon my riding-suit, with somewhat the expression of a cat looking into a vase of gold fish; and he instantly proposed, in a very patronizing manner, to be my conductor himself. "I have half an hour to spare, young sir," said he; "your countenance pleases me, and I am willing to bestow that leisure upon you. You do not know Paris, and the strange folks you may meet; my presence will be a protection to you."

I replied that I wanted no protection; that I had always been able, hitherto, to protect myself; but that I was obliged by his offer of guiding me, and would accept it.

Having taken care to lock the door of my chamber before I came down, and having the despatch from Barcelona about me, the moment we had done dinner I accompanied the complaisant soldier into the street, and then begged him to show me to the Palais Cardinal. The name seemed to startle him a little; but he bade me follow him, which I accordingly did. For about a quarter of an hour, he went up one street and down another, turning and returning, like a hare pursued by the dogs, till at length I began to perceive that the very last intention in my worthy guide's mind was to conduct me to the Palais Cardinal, which I well knew was not half a mile from the Quartier St. Eustache. As he went, my honest companion amused me with the detail of a great many adventures, in which he had proved himself a Hercules, and carried on the conversation with such spirit that he had it all to himself.

What he intended to do with me, God knows; but getting rather tired of walking about the streets, I fixed upon a respectable-looking grocer's shop, which was not yet closed, and telling my companion that I wanted to buy some pepper, I walked in.

"Pepper!" cried he, following me; "what can you want with pepper?"

"I will tell you presently," I answered, "when I have asked this good gentleman (the grocer) a question.--Pray, sir," I continued, turning to the master of the house, "will you inform me if I am near the Palais Cardinal? This worthy person agreed to guide me thither from the Rue des Prouvaires, quartier St. Eustache, and we have walked near half an hour without finding it."

"He has taken you quite to the other end of the town," replied the grocer. "You are now, sir, in the Rue des Prêtres St. Paul."

"On my life!" cried the soldier, "I thought I was leading you right. By my honour, 'tis a strange mistake!"

"So strange, sir," said I, "that if you do not instantly go to the right about, and march off, I may be tempted to cudgel you."

"*Ventre St. Gris!*" cried the bully, laying his hand on his sword. But the grocer whispered a word or two to his shop-boy about fetching the Capitaine du Guêt; and the great soldier, finding that his honour was likely to suffer less by retreating than by maintaining his ground, took to his heels, and ran off with all speed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"That, sir, is one of the most assured rogues in Paris," said the grocer; "he has once been at the galleys for seven years, and will very soon be there again. How you happened to fall in with such a fellow, I do not at all understand."

I explained to the shopkeeper the circumstances, and he shook his head gravely at the name of the inn. "It has not a good reputation," said he; "and as to its being the best in Paris," he added, with a laugh, "we Parisians would be very much ashamed of it if it was. However, sir, as you want to go to the Palais Cardinal, my boy shall conduct you there; and though I wish to take away no one's character, be upon your guard at your inn. There are many ways of plundering a stranger in this good city; and if you need any assistance, send to me--though I am very bold to say so, for a gentleman of your figure must have many friends here, doubtless; only I know something of the good people where you lodge, and, possibly, might manage them better than another."

I thanked him for his kindness most sincerely; for though, perhaps, ever too much accustomed to rely upon myself, yet I will own there was a solitary desolateness of feeling crept about my heart in that great city, which made it a relief to feel that there was somebody who took even a transient interest in me, and to whom I could apply for advice or aid, in case I needed it.

After taking down my new friend's address, I followed his shop-boy out into the street, and we pursued our way towards the Palais Cardinal, exactly retreading the steps which my former valiant guide had made me take. All the way we went the lad chattered with true Parisian activity of tongue; telling a thousand curious and horrible tales of the great, but cruel man, that I was about to see, and relating all the anecdotes of the day concerning his dark and mysterious policy.

"No one knows," said the boy, "why he does anything, or how he does anything. It was only last week that the strangest thing happened in the world. You have heard of the great wood of Marly, monsieur? Well, one of the Cardinal's servants was ordered on Thursday, last week, to take an ass loaded with pure gold, into that wood, and go on upon the road till he met a man who asked him, 'If the sun shone at midnight?' and then give him the ass's bridle and come away. So the servant went in, and after going a mile or more, he met a tall, fine man--somewhat dark, however--who asked him, 'Does the sun shine at midnight?' So the servant said nothing, but gave him the bridle. The stranger was not satisfied with that, but counted all the bags of gold upon the ass's back, and then told the servant to take it to the person who had sent it, and say that he had counted and watched, but the sun did not shine at midnight yet. So then the servant did as he bade him, and took it back to the Cardinal, who put two more sacks upon the ass, and sent the lackey back again; when he met the same man, and every thing passed as before, except that when he had counted the gold the stranger shouted, 'Ha! ha! the sun shines at midnight!' and jumping upon the donkey's back, he gave him a kick with his foot, which made him gallop as quick as any horse, and the servant never saw them any more! Lord! Lord! is not that very strange, monsieur?" continued the boy; and creeping close to me, he added, "They say that the tall stranger was the devil, and that the Cardinal had made a bargain with him, that if he would give him all the wit he desired, hell should have his soul at the end of twenty years. But when the

twenty years were out, he wanted very much a few years more, so that he was obliged to make a new bargain, and pay a good round sum as interest upon his bond."

The conclusion of the boy's story brought us to the end of the Rue St. Honoré; and, shortly after, he pointed out to me the façade of the Palais Cardinal. Having rewarded him with a crown, and sent him away well contented, I gazed up at the splendid building before me, whose grand features, massed together in the darkness, seemed almost as frowning and gloomy as a prison. The news which I brought, however, I was sure would be acceptable; and therefore walking on, I was about to approach the house, when I was challenged by a sentinel. I told him my business, and requested he would show me my way to any of the offices, for I perceived no ready means of gaining admission. The soldier passed me on to another, who again passed me to the corps de garde, from whence I was taken to a small door and delivered, as a bale of goods, into the hands of a grim-looking man, who told me at once that I could not see the minister, who was abroad at the moment.

"Pray what is your business with his Eminence?" demanded the porter.

"It is business," replied I, "with which you, my friend, can have no concern; and business of such import, that I must stay till I see him."

"Come with me," said the porter, after thinking a moment; and he then led me across a court wherein a carriage was standing, with horses harnessed, and torches burning at the doors.

"Monsieur de Noyers, one of the secretaries of state, is here," he added, seeing me remark the carriage, "and you can speak with him."

"My business is with his eminence the Cardinal," replied I, "and with him alone."

"Well, come with me, come with me!" said the porter. "If your business be really important, you must see some one who is competent to speak on it; and if it be not important, you had better not have come here."

Thus saying, he led me into a small hall, and thence into a cabinet beyond, hung with fine tapestry, and lighted by a single silver lamp. Here he bade me sit down, and left me. In a few minutes a door on the other side of the room opened, and a cavalier entered, dressed in a rich suit of black velvet, with a hat and plume. He was tall, thin, and pale, with a clear bright eye, and fine decided features. His beard was small and pointed, and his face oval, and somewhat sharp; and though there was a slight stoop of his neck and shoulders, as if time or disease had somewhat enfeebled his frame, yet it took nothing from the dignity of his demeanour. He started, and seemed surprised at seeing anyone there; but then immediately advanced, and looking at me for a moment, with a glance which read deeply whatever lines it fell upon, "Who are you?" demanded he. "What do you want? What paper is that in your hand?"

"My name," replied I, "is Louis Count de l'Orme; my business is with the Cardinal de Richelieu, and this paper is one which I am charged to deliver into his hand."

"Give it to me," said the stranger, holding out his hand. My eye glanced over his unclerical habiliments, and I replied, "You must excuse me. This paper, and the farther news I bring, can only be given to the cardinal himself."

"It shall go safe," he answered in a stern tone. "Give it to me, young sir."

There was an authority in his tone that almost induced me to comply; but reflecting that I might be called to a severe account by the unrelenting minister, even for a mere error in judgment, I persisted in my original determination. "I must repeat," answered I, "that I can give this to no one but his eminence himself, without an express order from his own hand to do so."

"Pshaw!" cried he, with something of a smile; and taking up a pen, which lay with some sheets of paper on the table, he dipped it in the ink, and scrawled in a large, bold hand,--

"Deliver your packet to the bearer.

"Richelieu."

I made him a low bow, and placed the letter in his hands. He read it, with the quick and intelligent glance of one enabled by long habit to collect and arrange the ideas conveyed to him with that clear rapidity possessed alone by men of genius. In the meantime I watched his countenance, seeking to detect, amongst all the lines with which years and thought had channelled it, any expression of the stern, vindictive, despotic passions, which the world charged him withal, and which his own actions sufficiently evinced; it was not there, however,--all was calm.

Suddenly raising his eyes, his look fell full upon me as I was thus busily scanning his countenance; and I know not why, but my glance sunk in the collision.

"Ha!" said he, rather mildly than otherwise, "you were gazing at me very strictly, sir. Are *you* a reader of countenances?"

"Not in the least, monseigneur," replied I; "I was but learning a lesson:--to know a great man when I see one another time."

"That answer, sir, would make many a courtier's fortune," said the minister; "nor shall it mar yours, though I understand it. Remember, flattery is never lost at a court! 'Tis the same there as with a woman. If it be too thick, she may wipe some of it away, as she does her rouge; but she will take care not to brush off all!"

To be detected in flattery has something in it so degrading, that the blood rushed up into my cheek with the burning glow of shame. A slight smile curled the minister's lip. "Come, sir," he continued, "I am going forth for half an hour, but I may have some questions to ask you; therefore I will beg you to wait my return. Do not stir from this spot. There, you will find food for the mind," he proceeded, pointing out a small case of books; "in other respects, you shall be taken care of. I need not warn you to discretion. You have proved that you possess that quality, and I do not forget it."

Thus speaking, he left me, and for a few minutes I remained struggling with the flood of turbulent thoughts which such an interview pours upon the mind. This, then, was the great and extraordinary minister, who at that moment held in his hands the fate of half Europe; the powers of whose mind, like Niorder, the tempest-god of the ancient Gauls, raised, guided, and enjoyed the winds and the storms, triumphing in the thunders of continual war, and the whirlwinds of political intrigue.

In a short time two servants brought in a small table of lapis lazuli, on which they proceeded to spread various sorts of rare fruits and wines; putting on also a china cup and a vase, which I supposed to contain coffee--a beverage that I had often heard mentioned by my good preceptor, Father Francis, who had tasted it in the East, but which I had never before met with. All this was done with the most profound silence, and with a gliding ghost-like step, which must certainly have been learned in the prisons of the Inquisition.

At length one of these stealthy attendants desired me, in the name of his lord, to take some refreshment; and then, with a low reverence, quitted the cabinet, as if afraid that I should make him any answer.

I could not help thinking, as they left me, what a system of terror must that be which could drill any two Frenchmen into silence like this!

However, I approached the table, and indulged myself with a cup of most exquisite coffee; after which I examined the bookcase, and glancing my eye over histories and tragedies, and essays and treatises, I fixed at length upon Ovid, from a sort of instinctive feeling that the mind, when it wishes to fly from itself and the too sad realities of human existence, assimilates much more easily with anything imaginative than with anything true.

I was still reading; and, though sometimes falling into long lapses of thought, I was nevertheless highly enjoying the beautiful fictions of the poet, when the door was again opened, and the minister re-appeared. I instantly laid down the book and rose; but, pointing to a chair, he bade me be seated, and taking up my book, turned over the pages for a few moments, while a servant brought him a cup of fresh coffee and a biscuit.

"Are you fond of Ovid?" demanded he, at length; and then, without allowing me time to reply, he added, "He is my favourite author; I read him more than any other book."

The tone which he took was that of easy, common conversation, which two persons, perfectly equal in every respect, might be supposed to hold upon any indifferent subject; and I, of course, answered in the same.

"Ovid," I said, "is certainly one of my favourite poets, but I am afraid of reading him so often as I should wish; for there is an enervating tendency in all his writings, which I should fear would greatly relax the mind."

"It is for that very reason that I read him," replied the minister. "It is alone when I wish for relaxation that I read, and then--after every thought having been in activity for a whole long day--Ovid is like a bed of roses to the mind, where it can repose itself, and recruit its powers of action for the business of another."

This was certainly not the conversation which I expected, and I paused without making any reply, thinking that the minister would soon enter upon those important subjects on which I could give the best and latest information; but, on the contrary, he proceeded with Ovid.

"There is a constant struggle," continued he, "between feeling and reason in the human breast. In youth, it is wisely ordained that feeling should have the ascendancy; and she rules like a monarch, with imagination for her minister;--though, by the way," he added, with a passing smile, so slight that it scarcely curled his lip,--"though, by the way, the minister is often much more active than the monarch. In after years, when feeling has done for man all that feeling was intended to do, and carried him into a thousand follies, eventually very beneficial to himself, and to the human race, reason succeeds to the throne, to finish what feeling left undone, and to remedy what she did wrong. Now, you are in the age of feeling, and I am in the age of reason;

and the consequence is, that even in reading such a book as Ovid, what we cull is as different as the wax and the honey which a bee gathers from the same flower. What touches you is the wit and brilliancy of the thought, the sweetness of the poetry, the bright and luxurious pictures which are presented to your imagination: while all that affects me little; and, shadowed through a thousand splendid allegories, I see great and sublime truths, robed, as it were, by the verse and the poetry in a radiant garment of light. What can be a truer picture of an ambitious and a daring minister, than Ixion embracing a cloud?" and he looked me full in the face, with a smile of melancholy meaning, to which I did not well know how to reply.

"I have certainly never considered Ovid in that light," replied I; "and I have to thank your eminence for the pleasure I shall doubtless enjoy in tracing the allegories throughout."

"The thanks are not my due," replied the minister; "an English statesman, near a century ago, wrote a book upon the subject; and showed his own wisdom, while he pointed out that of the ancients. In England, the reign of reason is much stronger than it is with us in France, though they may be considered as a younger people."

"Then does your Eminence consider," demanded I, "that the change from feeling to reason proceeds apace with the age of nations, as well as with men?"

"In general, I think it does," replied he: "nations set out bold, generous, hasty, carried away by impulse rather than by thought; easily led, but not easily governed. Gradually, however, they grow politic, careful, anxious to increase their wealth, somewhat indolent, till at length they creep into their dotage, even like men. But," he added, after a pause, "the world is too young for us to talk about the history of nations. All we know is, that they have their different characters like different men, and of course some will preserve their vigour longer than others; some will die violent deaths; some end by sudden diseases; some by slow decay. A hundred thousand years hence, men may know what nations are, and judge what they will be. It suffices, at present, to know our contemporaries, and to rule them by that knowledge. And now, Monsieur le Comte de l'Orme, I thank you for a pleasant hour, and I wish you good night. Of course, you are still at an inn; when you have fixed your lodging, leave your address here, and you shall hear from me. In the meanwhile, farewell!"

Of course I rose, and, taking leave, quitted the Palais Cardinal. What!--it may be asked,--without one word on the important business which had brought you there?--Without a word! The name of Catalonia was never mentioned; and yet, the very next day, large bodies of men marched upon Rousillon. More were instantly directed thither from every part of the country. The fleet in the Mediterranean sailed for Barcelona; and, in a space of time inconceivably brief, Catalonia was furnished with every supply necessary to carry on a long and an active war.

CHAPTER XXX.

The strange interview which I have described of course yielded my thoughts sufficient employment. Was it--could it really be, I asked myself, that I had spent the last hour in conversation with the greatest statesman in modern Europe? And in conversation about what? about Ovid--the task of a school-boy in an inferior class--when I could have afforded him minute information upon events on which the fate of nations depended.

Could he have received prior information? Impossible! Our vessel had sailed with the fairest wind, and the speed of our passage had been made a marvel of by the sailors; I had lost no time upon the road, and it was impossible--surely quite impossible--that he could have received tidings from Catalonia in a shorter space, without, indeed, the devil, as the vulgar did not scruple to say, sent him tidings from all parts of the world by especial couriers of his own.

One thing, however, is certain; I went to the Palais Cardinal a very important person in my own opinion, and I came away from it with my self-consequence very terribly diminished.

My next reflections turned to the minister's very unclerical dress, and I puzzled myself for some time in fancying the various errands which might have required such a disguise--for disguise it evidently was. Of course, I could conclude upon nothing, and was only obliged to end in supposing, with the boy who had guided me thither, that no one knew how, or why, he did anything.

My way home was easily found; and retiring to bed, I dreamed all night, between sleeping and waking, of courts and prime ministers, and woke the next morning not at all refreshed for having passed the night in such company. I had more disagreeable society, however, before long; for

when I had been up about an hour, and was preparing to go out and view the great and stirring bee-hive, whose hum reached me even in my own cell, the worthy host of the *auberge* bustled into the room with an appearance of great terror, begging a thousand pardons for his intrusion; but he hoped, he said, that if I had anything in my bags which I wished to conceal, I would put it away quickly, for that the officers of justice were in the house, and he had heard them inquire for a person very much resembling me.

Of course, I laughed at the idea; but the landlord had hardly concluded his tale, when in rushed two sergeants and a greffier, dressed in their black robes of office. One stationed himself at the door, one threw himself between me and the window, and then commanded me in the king's name to surrender myself.

I replied that I was very willing to surrender, but that there must be assuredly some mistake, for that I had not been in Paris sufficient time to commit any great crime.

"No mistake, sir! no mistake!" replied one of the sergeants. "People who have the knack, commit crimes as fast as I can eat oysters. You are accused, sir, of filching. They say, sir, you are guilty of appropriation. A good man, an excellent good man, Jonas Echimillia, of the persecuted race of Abraham, avers against you, sir, that last night, towards ten of the clock, you entered his dwelling, sir, wherein he gives shelter to old servants cast off by ungrateful masters--in other words, sir, his frippery--and notoriously and abominably seduced a white silk suit, laced with gold, to elope with you, to the identity of which suit he will willingly swear. So open your swallow-all, or trunk mail, and let us see what it contains."

Whilst the worthy sergeant thus proceeded, the warning of my good friend the grocer came across my mind, and I thought that there was an affectation about the voice of the respectable officer, which made me suspect that the whole business might be contrived to extort money; though how they could know that I had a white silk dress, laced with gold, in the valise before me, I could not divine. However, I affected to be very much alarmed; and while I examined well the countenances of my honest guests, I feigned a wish to bribe them into a connivance.

"Not for a hundred pistoles!" cried the principal sergeant.

"Nay, nay," said the landlord, who had remained in the room, "worthy sergeant, you must not be too severe upon my young lodger. Consider his youth and inexperience. Echimillia is a tender-hearted man, and would not wish you to be hard upon him. Take a hundred pistoles and let him off."

The sergeant began to show symptoms of a relenting disposition, and expressed his pity of my youth and ignorance of the ways of Paris with so much tender-heartedness, that it overcame my gravity, and sitting down upon a chair I laughed till I cried. The two sergeants looked rather confounded; but the greffier, a little man, whose risible organs were apparently somewhat irritable, could not resist the infectious nature of my laugh, but began a low sort of cachinnation, which he unsuccessfully tried either to drown in a cough or stifle in the sleeve of his robe. The sympathy next affected the landlord, who, after looking wistfully first to one and then to another, with one eyebrow raised, and one corner of his mouth in a grin while the other struggled for gravity for near a minute, was at length overpowered by the greffier's efforts to smother his laughter, and burst forth, shaking his fat sides till the room rang. The sergeant at the door tittered; but the principal officer affected a fury that soon brought me to myself, though in a very different manner from that which he expected.

Starting upon my feet, I caught him by the collar, and knocking his bonnet off his head, exposed to view the very identical person of my hectoring guide of the night before, though he had ingeniously contrived to change completely the shape of his face, by cutting his immense beard into a small peak, shaving each of his cheeks, and leaving nothing but a light moustache upon his upper lip. "Scoundrel!" cried I, giving him a shake that almost tore his borrowed plumes to pieces, "what, in the name of the devil, tempted you to think you could impose on me with a stale trick like this?"

"Because you dined at a *table d'hote* in Flemish lace," replied the other sergeant, continuing to chuckle at his companion's misfortune. "But come, young sir, you must let him go, though you have found him out." And thereupon he threw back his robe, and grasped the sword which it concealed.

As I had imagined, my man of war was as arrant a coward as ever swore a big oath, and he trembled violently under my hands, till he saw his more valiant comrade begin to espouse his cause so manfully. He then, however, thought it was his cue to bully, and exclaimed, in his natural voice, "Unhand me, or, by the heart of my father, I'll dash you to atoms!"

"The devil you will!" said I, seizing the foot he had raised in an attitude calculated to menace me with a severe kick. The window was near and open; underneath it was a savoury dunghill from the stables at the side; the height about twelve feet from the ground; so, without farther ceremony, I pitched the valiant soldado out head foremost, and drew my sword upon his companion, who ventured one or two passes, in the course of which he got a scratch in his arm, and then ran downstairs as fast as he could after the landlord and the greffier, who had already led the way. Running to the window, however, from which I could see over the gate of the court

into the street, I shouted aloud to the passengers to stop the sham sergeants.

The first, who, with my assistance, had gone out the shortest way--whether he was used to being thrown out of window and did not mind it, or whether the dunghill was as soft as a bed of down, I know not; but--by this time had gained his feet, and was half way down the street. Where the greffier had slunk to I cannot say; but the more pugnacious personage, who had drawn his sword upon me, was caught by the people attracted by my cries, as he was in the act of making the best use of his legs, after his arms had failed him. It would have given me pleasure, I own, to bring even one of such a set of impostors to justice, but I was disappointed; for, just as a porter and a vinegar seller were bringing him back to the inn, he suddenly shook them off, slipped the sergeant's gown over his head, and scampered away through a dozen turnings and windings, with a rapidity and address which smacked singularly of much practice in running off in a hurry.

After a hot chase, the porter returned to tell me that he could not catch the nimble-limbed cheat; and calling him up to my chamber, I bade him take up my packages, and prepared to leave the house, after examining the contents of each valise, from which I found nothing missing, though sufficiently disarranged to show that they had afforded amusement to others during my absence the night before. Had they met with the diamonds, it is probable that they would have spared themselves and me the trouble of the somewhat operose contrivance to which they had recourse; but these, fortunately placed in the very bottom of the valise, with several things of less consequence, had escaped their search.

As we were passing into the court, the respectable landlord presented himself cap in hand, delivered his account, and hoped I had been satisfied with my entertainment, and would recommend his house to my friends; while all the time he spoke there was a meaning sort of grin upon his countenance, as if he could hardly help laughing at his own impudence.

I answered him somewhat in his own strain, that the entertainment was what the reputation of his house might lead one to expect; and in regard to recommending it to my friends, that it was very possible I should have occasion to visit shortly the criminal lieutenant, when I would take care to commend it to his notice in the most particular manner, and point out its deserts to him with care.

"I' faith," answered the host, calmly, "I am afraid that the worshipful gentleman of whom you speak will find but poor accommodation at my house; and therefore, feeling myself incompetent to entertain him as he deserves, I would fain decline the honour of his company."

After having paid my reckoning, I betook myself to the shop of the honest grocer, who heard my story without surprise; and in answer to my inquiry for a lodging, he replied that he knew of one nearly opposite to his own house, but that he doubted whether it would suit a person of my condition, for it was small, and kept by an old widow, who, though very respectable, was anything but rich.

I need not say this was the very sort of situation I desired; for after having paid mine host of the Rue des Prouvaires, my purse offered nothing but a long and lamentable vacuity, with three louis d'ors at the bottom, looking as lank and empty, when I drew it out of my pocket, as an eel-skin just stripped off one of those luckless aquatic St. Bartholomews. I was soon, then, installed in my new apartment; and being left to myself, gazed upon my scanty stock of riches, as many an unfortunate wretch has doubtless often gazed before me, calculating how long each several piece would keep life and soul together. And when they were expended, what then? I asked myself. Must I then write to my parents--confess my attachment to Helen--own that I murdered her brother--take from her mind any blessed doubt that might still remain upon it--snap each lingering affection that might still bind her to me in twain at once, and at the same time encounter the angry expostulation of my father for loving below my degree; as well as the calm reproaches of my mother, for having blinded her to that love--expostulations and reproaches which for Helen's sake I could have encountered, while there remained a chance of her being mine, but which now I felt no strength to bear, no motive to call upon my head? Oh! no, no! I could not write--poverty, beggary, wretchedness, anything sooner than that; and starting up, I proceeded into the street, hoping to drive away thought amongst all the gay sights I had heard of in Paris.

As I passed along the Rue St. Jacques, a beggar asked me for charity; and instinctively I put my hand in my pocket, when suddenly the thought of my own beggary came upon my mind, and with a sickness of heart impossible to describe, I drew my hand back, saying I had nothing for him. "Do! my good lord, do!" cried the mendicant; "may you never suffer such poverty as mine; and if you should--for who can tell in this uncertain life--and if you should, may you never be refused by those you beg of!"

I could refuse no longer. It came so painfully home to my own bosom, that I gave him a small piece which I had received in change, and then walked on, feeling as if I had just cast away a fortune, instead of giving a piece of a few sols to a beggar. Oh, circumstance! circumstance! thou art like a juggler at a fair, making us see the same object with a thousand different hues as thou offerest thy many-coloured glasses to our eyes.

Passing on, I found my way to the Palais Cardinal, where, after having gazed for a moment or two at the enormous pile of building before me, the thousand minute beauties of which the

darkness had hidden from me the night before, I mounted the steps to leave my address, as I had been commanded. The doors of the palace, far from being guarded as I had previously found them, now seemed open to every one. Crowds of people of all classes were going in and coming out; and every sort of dress was there, from the princely *justaucorps*, whose arabesqued embroidery left scarcely an inch of the original stuff visible, to the threadbare pourpoint, whose long experience in the ways of the world had rendered it as polished and as smooth as the tongue of an old courtier. All was whisper, and smiles, and hurry, and bustle; and though every here and there an anxious face might be seen, giving shade to the picture, no one would have imagined that through those gates issued forth each day a thousand orders of death, of misery, and of despair.

I entered with the rest; and as the way seemed open to every one, was walking on, when I soon found that all who passed were known; for hardly had I taken two steps across the vestibule, when an attendant placed himself in my way, asking my business. It was easily explained; and leading me into a small cabinet adjoining the hall, he took down a ponderous folio, and desired me to write my address. When I opened it I found it quite full; and the page took down another, wherein, at the end of many thousands of names, I wrote my own, with ink that I doubted not would prove true Lethe, and turned away even more hopeless than I came.

Spare time now became my curse, and, joining with a restless and excited spirit, drove me through everything that was to be seen in Paris with an eagerness which soon exhausted its object. Day passed by after day, and the minister took no notice of me. I spun out my meagre funds, like the thread of a spider; but still every hour I saw them diminish. Twice each day I sent to the auberge where I had lodged, to inquire whether little Achilles had yet arrived; and still my disappointment was renewed. Nor was this disappointment one of the least painful of my feelings, for in the solitariness of my being in that great city I would have given worlds for his company, even although I could neither respect nor esteem him. And yet let me not do him injustice; mean qualities were so mingled in him with great ones--his folly was so strangely mixed with shrewdness, and his love of himself so singularly contrasted with the generous attachment which he had conceived towards me, that I hardly knew whether to look upon him with regard or contempt. Yet certainly I longed for his coming; and as the days went by and he came not, even while I smiled at remembering his poltroonery, I could not help hoping that the little coward had met with no obstruction in the road.

In the meanwhile, my frugality served to prolong the sojourn of my three louis in my purse far longer than I could have expected, and perhaps my pain with it, at seeing them daily decrease. It was like the handfuls of couscousou that they give in Morocco to persons dying of impalement, the means only of extending moments of misery. One day, however, in passing along the Rue St. Jacques, I saw lying on a book-stall two treatises upon very different subjects; one relating to military tactics, and the other entitled "*The Sure Way of Winning; or, Hazard not Chance*." The price of each was but a trifle, and in a fit of extravagance I bought them both. I had now wherewithal to employ my time, and I studied each of these two books with an ardour which, had it been employed continuously on any great or important subject, might have changed the face of my fortune for ever. The treatise on strategy, though perhaps not the best that ever was written, was, at all events, no detrimental employment; and on it I bestowed one half of my time. The other half was given to "*The Sure Way of Winning*," which was neither more nor less than an elaborate treatise upon gaming; with all the profound calculations of chances necessary to qualify a complete gambler. Thank God, I was not by nature a lover of play, or by such a study I should have been irretrievably lost. As it was, I soon began to look upon the gaming-table as the only resource which fortune held out to me; and with indescribable assiduity and application, I went through every calculation in the book, working them out in my mind hundreds and hundreds of times, till their results became no longer matters of arithmetic, but of memory.

Three weeks elapsed before I deemed myself qualified to encounter the well-experienced Parisians; and by this time I had but one louis remaining. This I changed into crowns, and with an anxious heart proceeded as soon as it was dark to a house, where I was informed that the minor sort of gambling, in which alone I could indulge, was carried on every night.

A narrow dirty passage conducted to a small staircase, at the bottom of which I began to hear the voices of the throng above. At the top were two men wrangling in no very measured terms; and passing on, I entered a large room, where about twenty tables were set out, and most of them occupied. A crown was demanded for admission, which I paid; and then proceeded to examine the various groups that were scattered through the room. Squalid misery, devouring passion, and debasing vice, were written in every countenance I beheld.

Of course, the whole assembly were divided between losers and winners. Of the first, some were talking high and angrily; some were blaspheming with the insanity of disappointment; some were gazing with the silent stupefaction of despair, and some were laughing with that wringing, soulless mockery of mirth, with which vanity sometimes strives to hide the bitterest pangs of the human heart. Of the winners, some were amassing their gains with greedy satisfaction; some were smiling with a sneering triumph at the poor fools they plundered; and some, with the eager falcon eye of avarice, were gazing keenly at the rolling dice or turning cards, as if they feared that chance might yet snatch their prey from out their talons.

The whole scene came upon my heart with a sickening faintness that had nearly made me turn and fly it all; but at that moment a very polite personage, seeing a stranger, approached, and

invited me in courteous terms to sit at one of the vacant tables, and try a throw of the dice; or, if I loved better the more scientific games, we would open a pack of cards, he said. I agreed to the latter proposal, and we sat down to piquet. He played a bold and more hazardous game, I the quiet and more certain one; and though some fortunate runs of the cards made him eventually the winner, my loss was but two crowns.

"One throw with these for what you have lost," said my adversary, before we rose, offering me the dice at the same time. We threw, and I lost two crowns more. We threw again, and I was penniless.

I bore it more calmly than I had expected; but I believe it was more the calmness of despair, than anything else, which supported me. However wishing my adversary good night as politely as I could, I walked away, hearing him say in a whisper to one who stood near, "He plays very well at piquet, that young gentleman. It was as much as I could do to beat him."

Beyond a doubt this was meant for my hearing, and if so, it had its effect; for my first thought was what article of my scanty stock I could part with, to yield the means of recovering that night's loss. The diamonds which Achilles had entrusted to me instantly suggested themselves to my mind; and the tempter, who still lies hid in the bottom of man's heart till passion calls him forth, did not fail to suggest a thousand excellent and plausible motives for using them. "Achilles," said the devil, "had himself voluntarily given them to me; and even if he had not done so, I had just as much a right to them as he had--but if my conscience forbade me to take them ultimately, it would be very easy to repay the value, either when I should have recovered my losses at the gaming-table, or when I was restored to the bosom of my family."

Thank Heaven, however, I had honour enough left not to violate a trust reposed in me. I had still a diamond ring of my own. My mother had given it to me, it is true; but necessity more strong than feeling required me to part with it, and I determined to do so the next morning. In looking for it, for I had ceased to wear it since I set out for Marseilles, I met with the packet of papers regarding the Count de Bagnols, which I had almost always kept about me; and looking over them, I was tempted again to read some of the letters. I went on from one to another, through the whole correspondence between the Count, then a very young man, and the rebellious Rochellois, and I found throughout that fine discrimination between right and wrong which is the chivalry of the mind. It was a lesson and a reproach; but as I had passed to the brink of vice, not by the short and flowery path of pleasure, but by a road where every step was upon thorns--as I had been driven by errors and by accidents, rather than led by indulgence, the road back seemed not so long as to those who have followed every maze of enjoyment in their course from virtue to vice. With me it wanted but one effort of the mind--but the moral courage to communicate my true situation to those I loved, and I should at once free myself of the enthralment of circumstances. Such reflections passed rapidly through my mind, and I resolved to do what I should have done. But what are resolutions?--Air.

The next morning I carried my diamond ring to a most respectable jeweller, who bought it of me for one-fifth of its worth, and vowed all the while that he should lose by his bargain. Six louis, however, now swelled my purse; and as night came, my good resolutions faded like the waning sunshine. The cursed book of games found its way into my hands, and at seven o'clock I stood before the same house where I had left my money the night before.

Like the gates of Dis, the doors stood ever open, and those feet which had once trod that magic path could hardly cross it without again turning in the same direction.

On entering the room, the society which it contained struck me as even more ruffianly than the night before, and I fancied that many eyes turned upon me, as on one whose appearance there on the former evening had been remarked. My polite adversary was looking on at one of the tables, where the parties were playing for louis; but the moment his eye fell upon me, he came forward and offered me my revenge. "They are playing too high at that table," said he, as we sat down. "To my mind, it takes away all the pleasure of the game to have such a stake upon it as would pain one to lose. No *gentleman* ever plays for the sake of winning a great deal of other people's money, and therefore he ought to take care that he does not part with too much of his own. I play for *amusement* alone, and therefore let us begin with crowns, as we did last night."

His moderation pleased me, and, opening the cards, we again commenced our evening with piquet. He again played boldly, and I even more cautiously than before; but the cards were no longer favourable to my adversary,--he lost everything, and in an hour I had fifty crowns lying beside me. Half-a-dozen persons had now crowded round us, and all joined in praises of my skilful play.

"Too skilful for me, I am afraid," said my adversary, maintaining his good temper admirably, though I thought I discovered a little vexation in his tone. "I own, fair sir, that you are my master with the cards; but you will not refuse me an opportunity of mending my luck with these;" and he took up the dice-boxes.

The spirit had now seized me; I had gained enough to wish to gain more. Bright hopes of turning Fortune's frowns to smiles, of freeing myself of all difficulties, of rising superior to my oppressive fate, began to swim before my eyes; and I willingly agreed to his proposal, never doubting that my ascendancy would still continue.

We played on rapidly, and soon the pile of coin by my side diminished--vanished--grew higher and higher on his; and with agony of mind beyond all that I had ever felt, my golden hopes passed away, and despair began to come fast upon me, as louis after louis of my last and only resource melted from my touch. With the cards all had been fair--that was evident enough; but now my suspicions began to be awakened in regard to the dice. I remembered those which I had split open at Luz, and as I threw I watched narrowly to see whether there was anything in those I played with which might show them to be loaded. But no! they rolled over and over, turning each side alternately as fairly as possible. I next fixed my eyes on my adversary, when suddenly I saw him, with the dexterity of a juggler, hold the dice he took up in the palm of his hand, and slip two others in from the frill round his hand. When about to throw again, I saw him prepare to perform the same trick, and springing up, I pinned his hand to the table.

A loud outcry instantly took place; "The man's mad!" "What is he about?" "Turn him out!" "Throw him out of the window!" cried a dozen voices.

"You shall do it, if you like, gentlemen," cried I, "provided this man has not two false dice under his hand."

As I spoke, I lifted his hand from the table, when, to my horror and surprise, there were no dice there.

I was dumb as if thunderstruck, and my adversary, with every feature convulsed with rage, lifted the hand I had liberated, and struck me a violent blow in the face. Instinctively I laid my hand upon my sword, when every one round threw themselves upon me, and in the midst of a thousand blows, I was hurried to the window, and though struggling violently to save myself, pitched over into the street.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Luckily, the window from which I was thrown was on the first floor, and not above sixteen feet raised from the ground. My fall, therefore, was so instantaneous, that I had no time to indulge in any of the pleasing anticipations of which a journey head-foremost from a high window to the ground is susceptible. The fall, however, was sufficient to stun and bewilder me; and before I had well recovered my recollection, I found myself surrounded by a good number of lackeys with torches, who had seen my sudden ejaculation from the gaming-house while they were accompanying some carriage through the streets, and had come to my assistance, with many inquiries as to whether I was hurt.

I had fallen upon my left shoulder and hip, and my head had fortunately escaped without the same sudden contact with the stones; so that, though somewhat confused, I could reply that I believed I was not much injured, but that I could not rise without assistance.

"Help him to rise," cried a voice, which very much resembled that of the Chevalier de Montenero, "and give him what assistance you can."

The person who spoke I could not see; but the servants, who had been hitherto gazing at me without lending me any very substantial aid, now hurried to raise me, one taking me by each arm. This proceeding, however, gave me such exquisite pain in my left shoulder, that after a groan or two, and an ineffectual effort to make them comprehend that they were inflicting on me the tortures of the damned, I lost all recollection with the excess of agony.

When I recovered my perception of what was passing around me, I found that the servants had procured a kind of *brancard*, or litter, and having laid me upon it, were carrying me on, I conjectured, to the house of some surgeon.

They stopped, however, a moment after, at the entrance of what was evidently a very handsome private hotel, and passing through the *porte cochère* and the court, they bore me into an immense *salle-à-manger*, and thence into a small chamber beyond, where I was carefully laid on a bed, and bade to compose myself, as a surgeon had been sent for, and would arrive, they expected, immediately.

He was not indeed long; and on examining my side, he found that my shoulder was dislocated, but that I had sustained no other injury of consequence. After a painful operation, the process of which I need not detail, I was put to bed, and the surgeon having given me a draught to procure sleep and allay the pain I suffered, recommended me to be kept as quiet as possible, and left me. I did not, however, suffer all the servants to quit the room without inquiring whether I had not heard the voice of the Chevalier de Montenero.

The valet replied, that he thought I must have been mistaken, for he never heard of such a name in all his life; but as there had been a good many persons round about when I was taken up, it was possible one of these might have spoken in the manner I mentioned.

I was now left alone, and I endeavoured to forget as fast as possible, in the arms of sleep, all the unpleasant circumstances round which memory would fain have lingered. It was in vain, however, that I did so; the feverish aching of my bones kept slumber far away. Every noise that stirred in the house I heard; every step that moved along its various halls and passages seemed beating upon the drum of my ear: I could hear my own blood rush along my veins and throb in my head, as if Vulcan and all the Cyclops of Etna had transferred their anvils to my brain.

While in this state, a light suddenly shone through the keyhole and under the door, and I heard several persons enter the dining-hall through which I had been borne thither. Everything that was said reached my ears as distinctly as if I had been present, and I soon found that the principal person who entered was the nephew of the proprietor of the house. He had just returned, it seemed, from some spectacle, and bringing a friend with him, demanded supper with the tone of a spoiled boy, who knew that his lightest word was law to all who surrounded him. The supper was brought, with apparently all the delicacies he demanded, for he made no complaint; and having sent for all the most excellent wines in his uncle's cellar, he dismissed the servants, and remained alone with his friend.

Tossing about, restless and irritable, I was nearly frantic with their mirth and their gaiety, and could have willingly murdered them both to make them silent; but soon their conversation began to take a turn which interested even me. The youth, who was evidently the entertainer, and whom his companion named Charles, had for several minutes been expatiating with all the hyperbolical enthusiasm of youthful passion on some beautiful girl whom he had determined, he said, to marry, let who would oppose it. Her name was mentioned by neither of the speakers, their conversation referring to something that had passed before. With the very natural pleasure which most people experience in finding all sorts of obstacles to whatever another person proposes, the friend seemed bent upon suggesting difficulties in opposition to his companion's passion. "Consider, my dear Charles," said he, "this girl may be as beautiful as the day, but, from her father's situation, her education must have been very much neglected."

"Not at all! not at all!" replied the lover. "Her education, as far as learning and accomplishments go, will shame the whole court, and her manners are those of a princess of Eldorado. Why, I told you, she has been brought up all her life by the Countess de Bigorre."

It may easily be supposed that such words did not tend to calm the beating of my heart; and in the agitation caused by thus suddenly discovering that Helen was the subject of their conversation, I lost what passed next. In a moment after, however, the lover replied to some question of his companion. "I do not very well know why her father took her away from the Countess and brought her to Paris; I should have supposed that it would have been much more convenient to him in every respect to have left her where she was. However, I am his most humble and very obedient servant, for I should never have seen her otherwise; and marry her I will, if I should carry her off for it."

"But her birth, Charles, her birth!" said his companion. "What will your uncle think of that?--he who is so proud of his own."

"Oh!" replied the hot-brained youth, "you know I can do anything with my uncle; and besides, this father of hers has been quietly accumulating a large fortune, it seems, one way or another; and so that must cover the sin of her birth in my uncle's eyes. But say what you will, or what he will, or what any one will, I will marry her if I live to be a year older."

"What! and discharge the little Epingliere, Jeannette?" asked his companion, with a laugh.

"Oh, that does not follow," answered the other; "'tis always well to have two strings to one's bow; and Jeannette is too charming to be parted with for these three years at least: but *madame ma femme* will know nothing of *mademoiselle ma bonne amie*, and I shall find her proud beauty the more delightful by contrasting it with the more modest charms of Jeannette."

"The more simple charms, you mean, not the more modest," replied his companion; "I never heard that Jeannette was famous for her modesty!"

The opium draught which I had taken, counteracted in its effects by the pain of my body, and the irritation of my mind, began to make me somewhat delirious. Strange shapes seemed flitting about my bed--I saw faces looking at me out of the darkness, and insulting me with fiendish grins. At the same time, the light way in which the weak young man in the next chamber spoke of Helen--of my sweet, my beautiful Helen--worked me up to a pitch of frantic rage, which, mingling with the delirium of opium, made me resolve to get up and avenge her upon the spot. I accordingly raised myself in bed, and after sitting upright for a moment or two, with my brain seeming to whirl like the eddy of a stream, I got out with infinite difficulty, when the cold air, and the chill of the stones to my feet, in some degree recalled me to my senses, and instead of groping for my sword, as I intended, I returned towards my bed; but coming upon it sooner than I had expected, I struck it with my knee, fell over upon it, and, with the sort of despairing heedlessness of fever and wretchedness, lay still where I had fallen, till the opium overpowering

me, I lost all recollection of my misery in a deep and deathlike slumber.

It was late ere I woke, and when I did so, it was with one of those dreadful headachs, which seem to benumb every faculty of the mind and body; while at the same time, the bruises all over my left side were even more sensitively painful than the night before.

The first thing I heard was a woman's voice, inquiring how I found myself; and looking round, I perceived a good-looking, fattish nun, of one of the charitable sisterhoods, sitting in a chair by my bedside. She seemed one of those good dames who attach themselves to great families, and act as an inferior sort of almoner, performing the part of charitable go-betweens; attending the sick servants with somewhat more skill than an apothecary, and more attention than a physician; serving as head nurse to the lady of the mansion, and acquiring much consequence with the poor, by dispensing the bounty of the rich.

In answer to her question, I replied that I was in very great pain, both from a violent headach, and the bruises I had received; whereupon she immediately produced the phial, from which the surgeon had the night before administered his sleeping draught, intimating that I must take another portion to relieve me from what I suffered; and informing me, at the same time, in a very oracular tone, that it was not at all wonderful that my bones ached, after sleeping all night naked on the outside of the bed.

As I attributed the excessive aching of my head entirely to the contents of the bottle she held in her hand, I resisted magnanimously all her persuasions to take more of its contents for some time; but at length her offended authority instigated her to such an outcry, that I would have drunk Phlegethon red-hot to have quieted her. I took, accordingly, what she gave, and was about to have asked some questions in regard to my situation, when she stopped me, with a profoundly patronising air, and told me, that if I would promise to keep myself quite quiet, and not agitate myself, I should be favoured with a visit from a young lady who took an interest in me.

"Who, who? in the name of Heaven!" cried I, the idea of Helen instantly flashing across my mind. "Tell me, tell me who!"

"Use not Heaven's name for such vanities, young gentleman," said the nun. "Who the young lady is, you will see directly; and I have only to tell you, that her father has granted her five minutes to converse with you, for old friendship's sake, and she has promised that it shall be no more; therefore you must not seek to stay her." So saying, she left me, and in a moment after the door again opened, and Helen herself, my own beautiful Helen, came forward towards me, with a look of eager gladness, that, while it surprised me, took a heavy load from off my heart.

She glided forward to my bedside, laid her dear soft hand in mine: after gazing for a moment on my worn and haggard features, burst into a flood of tears.

"Dear, dear Helen!" said I, "then yon love me still?"

"And ever will, Louis!" answered she, speaking through her tears. "Whatever they may say, whatever they may think, I will love you still, Louis, and none but you.--Only tell me that you love me also, and not another, as they would have me believe, and nothing shall shake the affection that I have ever borne towards you."

"Love another!" cried I. "Helen, you have never believed them for a moment. For Heaven's sake tell me, that such a base suspicion never for an instant made any impression on your heart."

"I never believed it, Louis," answered she; "for I never believed that anything base could for a moment harbour in your bosom; and yet it gave me pain, I knew not why.--But let me tell you what has happened to me personally during your absence. I cannot tell you my father's motives, for I do not know them, but I can tell you----"

"Oh no, no, Ellen!" cried I, shrinking from the detail of what must have followed the discovery of her brother's death, and beginning to doubt that she attributed it to me. "Oh no, no, dear Helen! spare me all that unhappy detail. I chanced to overhear last night, from some persons speaking in that chamber, that your father had come and taken you from the protection of my mother. I easily conceived his reasons--I heard all--I heard everything, by that conversation last night; and all that now needs explanation is, how any one could dare to tell you that I loved another."

"Indeed, Louis, many believed it--everyone, I may say, but myself," Helen replied; "but the time I am allowed to remain grows short. Before anything else, let me communicate to you what my father bade me say for him. If you wish to see him, he says, he will see you; but you must be prepared, if he does so, to explain to him every part of your conduct; and to show him that the blood which he cannot help attributing to you rests not on your head. Forgive me, Louis! oh, forgive!" she continued, seeing me turn deadly pale: "I pain you, I see I pain you; but it was only on condition that I would deliver this cruel message, that they would permit me to see you. It is not I that ask you, Louis, to do anything that is painful to you. I am sure--I am certain, you are not guilty. I cannot--I will not believe it. But my father will not see you without you can explain it all. Can you then, dear Louis--will you see him?"

"Helen, I cannot," replied I.

She gazed at me for a moment in silence.

"Hark! they call me," said she at length. "Oh, Louis, before I go, say something to comfort me; say something to sustain in my breast that confidence of your innocence which has been my consolation and my hope."

"All I can say, dear Helen," replied I, "is, that in wish, and intention, I was as innocent as you are; but that accident has made me appear culpable, and that I have nothing but my own word to prove that I was not purposely guilty."

"But your own word is enough for me," answered Helen, catching, I believe gladly, at any assurance that could maintain her belief in my innocence; "I will believe it myself, and I will try and make others believe it. But I must leave you, Louis; they are calling me again. Adieu, adieu!"

"But, Helen, dear Helen, you will see me again?" cried I, struggling to raise myself. "Promise me that."

"Most assuredly," answered Helen, "if they will allow me;" and obedient to a sign from the nun, who had returned to the room while I was speaking, she glided away and left me. A thousand questions did I now ask the good sister, but with a curious felicity of evasion she parried them all; now with an affectation of mistaking me, now with an ambiguous reply; now with a refusal to answer, like a skilful fencer, who, whether his adversary lunges straightforward or feints, still finds some parade to guard his own breast, and repel the attack in all its forms. Not a word could I extract from her on any subject whereupon I wished information, and gradually the drowsiness of the opium began to take away the power of questioning her any farther.

From what I have learned since, I am led to believe that the good lady, in administering the sleeping potion, which she had deafened me into taking, had poured out at least double what was ordered by the surgeon. At all events, its effect was much more rapid and powerful than the night before; for, with all the busy thoughts which my interview with Helen might well suggest, with all the bitter remembrances it called up, with all the painful anticipations to which it gave rise, slumber came rapidly upon me; and before half an hour had passed after her departure, I fell into a deep sleep, which a little more of the same sedative would probably have converted into the sleep of death.

CHAPTER XXXII.

When I again awoke it was night, but the darkness was not disagreeable to me. I was easier in bodily sensation than I had been in the morning; and I pleased myself with calling to mind every gentle word which my beloved Helen had spoken, with conjuring up again every sweet look, and dreaming over that fond devoted affection which, in the midst of the sorrows and uncomforts that surrounded me, was like some guiding star to a voyager on the inhospitable ocean. But then came the idea of seeing her father; and I thought, even if she could convince him of my innocence, how could I clasp his hand with that which had slain his child. I remembered my feelings towards him when, entirely abandoning his sweet child to the care of my mother, he seemed to have resigned all his paternal rights, and it had been only my respect for Helen which had saved him from my unconcealed contempt.--I remembered, too, his long nourished dislike towards me, and I asked myself whether he would feel it less now, that he could not but suspect me of the death of his son.

Yet still his pride might be gratified to ally his child to the house of Bigorre, and to see his descendants attached to that noble class to which he could not himself aspire. But then again, if he had really accumulated so much wealth, as the conversation I had overheard had intimated, he could easily match his daughter, with so rich a dower of beauty as well as gold, amongst families as noble as my own, where no such fearful objections existed as that which interposed between Helen and myself. What needed I more? The weak youth, of whose passion for her I had been made an unwitting confidant, with evidently high-birth and proud connections, stood ready to unite himself to the daughter of the low procureur of Lourdes, and give her that rank and station which I doubted not that Arnault coveted. Helen, I was sure, would never consent; and yet I teased myself with the dread, fancying all that perseverance and the persuasions and commands of a parent might do against an almost hopeless love.

While I thus alternately solaced myself with dwelling upon all the sweetness, the beauty, the affection of her I loved, and tormenting myself with imagining all that might separate us; epitomising in one short hour the many fluctuating hopes and fears of a long human life; to my surprise the darkness became less opaque, and by the grey which gradually mingled with the

black, I found that morning was imperceptibly stealing upon night, so that my slumber must have lasted more than twenty hours.

But a still greater surprise awaited me. Gradually as the day dawned, one object after another struck me as resembling the furniture of the little room which I had tenanted ever since I quitted the inn after my arrival in Paris. Was I dreaming still? or had I dreamed? I asked myself. Had all I had seen during the last two days been but a delusion, or was I still labouring under some deception of my imagination? But no! with the clear daylight it became evident that I was there--in the little chamber I had hired in the Rue des Prêtres St. Paul. There was the carved scrutoire, with its thousand grotesque heads; there the old table which had acknowledged more than one dynasty; there lay my clothes, my hat, my sword, as if I had left them there on going to bed the night before; and nothing served to show that the whole I have lately described was not a dream, except the bruises on my shoulder and side, which smacked somewhat painfully of reality. In about an hour afterwards, my good landlady came in, to ask if I wanted anything; and from her I learned that I had been brought home on a litter still sound asleep, by some persons she did not know, who told her I had met with an accident, and bade her take great care of me, enforcing their injunction with a piece of gold.

This was an effort of liberality on the part of Arnault which I had not expected, either from his own character, which was notedly avaricious, or from the general rule of nature, that the long habit of accumulating small sums narrows the heart and leaves no room for any generous feeling. I began to believe that I had been mistaken in his character, and I tried, fondly, to persuade myself with a theory as fallacious as any other of those fallacious things, theories, that the father of so noble-spirited a girl as Helen, whose whole soul was liberality, and her every thought a feeling, must, in some degree, partake of the same nature, and possess hidden qualities which, when called into action, would shine out and assert their kindred.

My good landlady, in common with all old women, had a strange prejudice in favour of keeping those she looked upon as sick in bed; but in spite of all her persuasions, I got up and dressed myself. My first care was to examine what money I had left after the sad dilapidation which the gaming-table had effected on my purse, though, indeed, I expected to find that the tender-hearted gentleman who had thrown me out of the window had charitably taken care that the few crowns which had remained in my pocket should not weigh me down in my descent.

My own purse, indeed, was gone; but in its place, to my no small surprise, I found one containing a hundred louis d'ors. This, of course, had come from Arnault, though how he came to know that I stood in need of such supply I could not divine. For some time I remained undetermined whether I should make use of the sum or not. Pride whispered that Arnault had removed me from the neighbourhood of his daughter, possibly to marry her to some one else; and should I then, accept the vile roturier's bounty--his charity! At the same time necessity urged that I had nothing but that for the daily wants of life; that if I hoped ever to discover Helen's dwelling in that great city, and having done so, never again to lose sight of her, I must have the aid of that talismanic metal, whose touch discovers, and secures, and perfects everything.

But a moment's reflection made me regard the question with better feelings; Arnault had removed me from his daughter--true! but it was because he believed me to be the murderer of his son; and he was therefore justified in doing so. He had placed the money where I found it, probably not out of charity, for he knew that I could easily repay it ultimately, but to relieve me from a temporary necessity. There was yet another supposition--perhaps Helen had placed it there herself. Pride between me and Helen was out of the question; and there was something so sweet in the very idea of following her wishes, even though she knew it not, that I should have looked upon hesitation after that supposition crossed my mind as the meanest of vanities. I determined then to make use of the money thus placed at my disposal, and to reimburse the donor, if Arnault, at a future period--if Helen had been the giver, to repay her whenever I could discover her abode by telling her I had used it well.

The effort of dressing had caused me a great deal of pain; and while I sat down to rest myself afterwards, I sent a boy to inquire at my inn in the *Rue du Prouvaires*, whether my little friend Achilles had appeared there during my absence. In about an hour I heard the rush of feet galloping up the stairs, with the rapidity of joy; the door flew open, and in rushed Achilles--but no longer the Achilles I had left him. The smart Spanish dress of which he had possessed himself at Barcelona was gone. The hat, the plume, the sword, had given way to all the external signs of poverty and want. His head was as bare as when he came into the world; and his shoulders were covered with a grey gown which had once belonged to a monk. The fashion of it, indeed, had been somewhat altered, for the cowl had been made serviceable in patching several momentous rents, which might otherwise have exposed the little man's person somewhat more than decency permitted.

"Well, Achilles," said I, when, the first transport of his joy at finding me having passed away, I could find an opportunity of speaking, "you seem to have been engaged in traffic since I saw you, and not to have gained upon the exchange."

"Oh, you will pardon me, monseigneur!" replied he, grinning as merrily as ever, "I have gained a vast fund of experience. I know that is a sort of commodity the returns upon which are slow, but they are very sure; and I will try to make the most of it."

"But from what I see," rejoined I, with somewhat, I am afraid, of a cynical sneer at the light-heartedness which I could not myself acquire, "I am afraid you paid very dear for your bargain."

"Not cheap, I confess," replied he: "somewhere about three hundred pistoles, a good suit, a dozen of shirts, and a whipping through the streets of Lyons--that is all."

"A whipping!" cried I; "that is a part of the account I did not reckon upon, and not one of the most pleasant, I should conceive. But come, Achilles, let us hear your story. It must be somewhat curious."

"Not very," answered Achilles; "but it is short, which is something in favour of a story. After your lordship's departure, I embarked in the boat for Lyons, as soon as it thought fit to sail, and we began our long slow voyage up the river, which at first was very tedious. Soon, however, I hit upon a way of amusing myself; for, seeing a respectable old merchant of Lyons with a young lady, whom I took to be his daughter, I went up and introduced myself to them as Monsieur le Comte de Grilmagnac; told them that, preferring the easy gliding motion of the river to the rumbling of a carriage, or the jolting of a horse, I had sent my equipage and servants by land, and instantly began to make love to the daughter.

"The old gentleman seemed so uneasy at the advances that I made in her favour, that I began to fear he suspected me; and to do away all doubt, when we stopped to dine, I took a handful of gold out of my pocket, and asked what was to pay, with the air of a prince. The young lady seemed ravished with the sight of the gold pieces; but my old merchant grew more uneasy than ever, and always got between me and the young lady when I wanted to speak with her, so that I began to grow suspicious in my turn, and to doubt whether the tie between them was not somewhat more tender than the relationship. This doubt induced me to watch the pair more diligently than ever; for she was as beautiful a girl as ever your worship set your worshipful eyes upon, and the old gentleman as venerable an old piece of withered bamboo as ever fell into sin in his dotage; so you may easily conceive I could not bear to see such a rosebud withering upon such a desert.

"Well, this went on with various success till we arrived at Lyons, and I cannot say my fair Phillis was at all inclined to second her guardian's efforts to repulse me; so that we had time to arrange that I should go to the *auberge* of the *Lion d'or*, on our disembarkation, and there wait a note from my fair enslaver. To the *Lion d'or* I went, and soon received a summons to fly to my charmer, whom I found, as her *billet-doux* intimated, waiting for me in a very respectable lodging in the Rue St. Pierre.

"Here--her face half in tears, half in smiles, like the opening of an April morning--she told me that she had now no friend but me; for that her cruel tyrant, the instant of their arrival, had commanded her to abandon me for ever. This the passion I had inspired her with would not permit; and being too frank, she said, to deceive any one, she had at once refused. A quarrel ensued--he had cast her off penniless; and though she could instantly fly to the Baron d'Ecumoir, or the Marquis de la Soupierre, she had preferred putting herself under my protection; for she owned that she never loved any one but me.

"Though this was as sweet as honey, yet, as I well perceived that with such a charmer's assistance my dearly beloved pistoles would soon fly half over Lyons, I bethought myself seriously of the best means of transferring her, with all speed, to the Marquis de la Soupierre. However, to lull all suspicion of the waning state of my affection, I prepared to entertain her handsomely, till good luck should furnish me with the means of beating a quiet retreat; and accordingly sent to the traiteur's for a good dinner, as the very best means of consoling a distressed damsel.

"Over rich ragouts and heady burgundy the hours slipped lightly by, and I could see in my little Phillis's sparkling eye her satisfaction with the conquest she had made. Alas! that mortal joy should be so transitive! In the midst of our happiness, care, and melancholy, and gloom, and despite rushed suddenly upon us, in the form of four ferocious archers, who pitilessly arrested Phillis on the charge of having robbed her former venerable protector, and hurried me to prison along with her as an accomplice.

"Phillis had taken care to hide the place of her retreat, but she knew not the cunning of archers; and though, when they came, she protested her innocence in terms that would have convinced the hard heart of Minos, and won the unwilling ears of Rhadamanthus, yet, as the whole of the stolen goods were found in her valise, the unfeeling archers would not believe a word; and, as I have said before, we were both hurried to prison, without any farther ceremony than taking from us every farthing that we had in the world.

"The next morning we were brought before a magistrate, who reserved Phillis's case for his private consideration. As to mine, as nothing could be proved against me, except that I had called myself the Count de Grilmagnac without being able clearly to prove all my quarters of nobility, I was ordered to be whipped through the town for my ignorance of heraldry, and then discharged. My whipping I bore with Christian fortitude; but the loss of my doublet, which the executioner kept for his fee, and the loss of my money, which the archers kept because they liked it, tore my heartstrings; and setting out from that accursed town of Lyons, where injustice and cruelty walk hand-in-hand, I begged my way to Paris, and reached the famous hotel where you had appointed me to meet you. There the landlord told me no such person as your lordship resided, and bade

me get out for a lazy beggar. A black dog, that stood in the yard, instantly took up the matter where the landlord left off, and I was in the act of making my escape from them both when the boy you sent arrived, inquiring for me.

"The joy which took possession of my heart, I need not tell; suffice it that I made the boy run all the way here, and that, having now found you, I have determined never to leave you, or let you leave me again; for while we were together nothing but good fortune attended us, and since we have been separated nothing but ill-luck has been my share; so that the only consolation I can have, will be to hear, that while my scale was down, yours has been up, and that Dame Fortune has at least befriended one of us."

I could not refuse to tell my history also to my little attendant, though it occasioned less amusement to him than his had done to me; and his face grew longer and longer at every incident I detailed, till at last, passing over all that regarded Helen, I informed him that, on being conveyed home I found my pocket encumbered with a hundred louis.

This news instantly cleared his countenance. "Who would not be thrown out of window for a hundred louis?" cried he; "but Vive Dieu! your excellency has suffered yourself to be desperately cheated in regard to your ring. Six louis! If I know anything of diamonds, it was well worth thirty. However, first let me exercise my chirurgical skill upon your eminence's shoulder, and after that I will see whether the ring cannot be recovered."

"Nay, nay," cried I, "my good Achilles, give me what titles of honour you like, except your eminence; that is a rank which it might be dangerous to usurp. Call me your majesty, if you like, but not your eminence. As to the ring, I believe you are right, and I will willingly give double what I received to recover it again."

"Less than that will do," replied Achilles; "a louis for me to buy myself a suit at a fripier's, a louis for an *archer de la cour*, and the sum you had originally received, and I think I can manage it."

I warned him, if I may use the homely proverb, not to go forth to shear and come home shorn; and having suffered him to examine my shoulder, gave him the address of the jeweller, and let him depart.

From my lodging, as he told me afterwards, he went to the shop of a fripier, where he furnished himself with a decent suit of livery, and thence proceeded to find out an archer of one of the courts of justice, to whom he explained the affair, and gave half a louis as earnest, promising the other half if the ring should be recovered. The eloquence of the little player touched the tender heart of the archer, at the same moment that the money touched his palm; and, shouldering his partisan, without more ado he followed to the shop of the jeweller. Achilles entered alone, and desiring to see some diamond rings, made up a slight allegory to suit the occasion, informing the jeweller that his master, the Count de l'Orme, had commissioned him to buy him a handsome jewel, as a present for his mistress. The jeweller instantly produced a case of rings, which he spread out before the eyes of Achilles, commenting on their beauty. Achilles instantly pitched upon the one I had sold, and asked the price. "Forty louis!" replied the jeweller, "and I only sell it so cheap because I bought it second-hand. I require no more than a fair profit. If I gain five per cent., may I be branded for a rogue!"

"I will tell you a secret, jeweller," replied Achilles. "You are very likely to be branded for a rogue. You bought this ring, knowing it to be stolen." The jeweller stared. "It was taken from the person of my noble lord the Count de l'Orme," proceeded Achilles, "when he was knocked down and robbed in the Rue St. Jacques. One of the thieves is taken--the very one who sold it to you--a tall, dark young man, with curling hair, black moustache, and a beard not six months old. He says you gave him six louis for it; and as you know it to be worth forty, you must have been very well aware, when you bought it, that it was stolen."

"Ho, ho!" cried the jeweller; "so you wish to cheat me out of my ring. But come, my little man," he continued, catching Achilles by the collar, "I will send for an archer, and see you safe lodged in prison, without farther to do."

Achilles, according to his own account, took the matter very calmly. "As to the archer," said he to the jeweller, "I thought to myself before I came here, that a man who gave but six louis for a diamond worth thirty might be somewhat refractory, and, therefore, I brought one with me. Ho! archer! Without there?"

The jeweller, not a little confounded, instantly let go Achilles's collar; and, as the archer marched in with his partisan, began to shake in every limb, doubtless well aware that all his dealings would not bear that strict examination which they were likely to undergo, if chance should call the prying eyes of the law upon them.

"I take you to witness, archer," said Achilles, addressing his ally, "that I have offered this jeweller the same price which the young man swears he got for this ring, namely, six louis; and that he, the jeweller, will not sell it for less than forty, which proves that he knew it to be stolen."

"Certainly," said the archer, in a solemn tone.

"You never offered me the six louis," said the jeweller. "I never said I would not part with it under forty. Give me the six, and take it, and the devil give you good for it; for it is not worth more."

"Then you are a great rogue for having asked forty," replied Achilles, with imperturbable composure: and, thereupon, he entered into solemn consultation with the archer, as to whether he could safely and legally give the money and take back the ring; as it was evident the jeweller was an accomplice of thieves, and ought to be brought to justice.

"Gentlemen," cried the terrified jeweller at length, alarmed at all the awful catalogue of pros and cons which Achilles and the archer banded about between them, "I declare, on my salvation, I knew nothing of the ring being stolen. I thought the person who brought it here was some poor gentleman, pressed for money, who would sell it for anything; and, therefore, I offered six louis for it. All I ask back is what I gave, and I am content to present this worthy archer with a gold piece to compensate the trouble he has had."

"Give him the money," said the archer, "give him the money, and take the ring, we must not be too hard upon the poor devil."

The money was accordingly given, the archer received his fee, and Achilles carried off the ring to me in triumph; not only having had the satisfaction of biting the biter, but also having won the warm friendship of an archer of the Court of Aides, which, to a man of his principles and practice, was a most invaluable acquisition.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Achilles, on his return, amused me with the account I have just given, while he rubbed my shoulder with some unguent, bought for the purpose; and, though I was not over well pleased at having been played off as a robber, with so particular a description also as he had given of my person, yet I was not at all sorry that the jeweller had been pinched for his roguery, and not a little rejoiced with the recovery of my ring.

As I have before said, the little player, though as cunning as a sharper in some matters, was in others as simple as a child; and, like a boy with his first crown-piece, fortune never gave him any sum, however small, but he seemed to think it inexhaustible. Thus, from time to time, he found so many delightful ways of employing my hundred louis, that, had I followed his advice, one single day would have seen me at the end of all my riches: but I soon put a stop to the building of his castles in the air, by informing him that I intended to live with the most rigid economy, till such time as I had an opportunity of writing to my father; at the same time begging him to make up his mind to follow my example, if he still held his intention of remaining with me.

"Oh, very well, monseigneur, very well," cried he, gaily, "anything contents me. I *can* live upon ortolans and stewed eels, but I do not object to onion soup and a crust of bread. Nay, when the soup cannot be had, the crust must serve."

Having arranged in my own mind all my plans for pursuing my economical system as strictly as possible, I sat down to the long-deferred task of writing to my father: for now that I had seen Helen, half the difficulty was removed. No matter what were the contents of the letter which I wrote; it never went. Posts, in those days, were not the regular mechanical contrivances which our present glorious monarch has instituted for the purpose of facilitating the communication of every part of his dominions with the others. Couriers, indeed, passed to and fro from one part of the empire to another, carrying the letters of individuals, as well as the despatches of the state; but all the arrangements concerning them were much in the same state as Louis XI. had left them. Their departure from Paris was at uncertain and irregular times; and their journeys were generally directed towards the principal cities, having either commercial or political relations with the capital. The difficulty, therefore, of conveying anything to a remote and little frequented part of the empire delayed my letter for some time; and before an opportunity presented itself, circumstances had changed.

In the meanwhile, I employed my mornings in searching for the mansion wherein I had seen Helen; but, although aided by all the wit of little Achilles, to whom I communicated enough information to guide him on the search, I wandered through the streets of Paris in vain, watching the opening gates of every large hotel I saw, in the hope of beholding the livery in which the servants I had seen were dressed, and forcing my recollection to recall the appearance of the archway under which I had been carried, till a thousand times I deceived myself into hope, and as often encountered disappointment.

Once only I thought myself sure of the discovery. The porte-cochère of a house near the Place Royale struck me as the very same I had passed, while borne upon the *brancard* by the servants. Every ornament, every pillar was there, as far as I could remember. There were the curious Gothic mouldings upon which the torch-light had flashed as we passed through--there were the two immense couchant bears carved in stone on each side of the arch, on the back of one of which the bearers had rested the litter, while their companions opened the gates. Everything seemed the same; and, taking my stand under the porch of the monastery of the Minims, I kept watch for two hours, till a servant coming out, showed me, to my surprise, a livery totally different from that which I had both hoped and expected to see.

It may be asked what was my object in thus seeking for Helen, when I knew, when I felt that my union with her was impossible--when at the very thought her brother's spirit seemed to rise up before me, and, with the same ghastly look which he had worn in death, bid me forget such hopes for ever. Why did I seek her? No one that has loved will ever ask. I sought her for the bright brief happiness which the presence of the loved still gives, after every expectation is crushed and withered. I sought her with that dreamy sort of lingering with which a mother hangs over the frail clay of her dead child. My hopes were blighted, my happiness was gone; and yet the very object that most nourished my regret was that on which I could look most fondly, and which I sought with the most anxious, most unremitting care.

Thus passed my mornings, in fruitless search and continual disappointment. My evenings flew in a different manner, not in studying "*The Sure Way of Winning*," or in practising its precepts, for such a horror had seized me of that hell-invented vice, gaming, and of all that appertains to it, that my first care had been to throw the book I had bought into the fire. The temporary passion which had seized me, I looked upon, and can almost look upon now, as a fit of insanity; for taught as I had been from my infancy to abhor its very name, nothing but absolute madness could have hurried me to a vice at once so degrading and so dangerous--which, as far as regards the mind, is in fact, at best, a combination of avarice and frenzy. I had now bought myself a variety of books on military tactics, and, without any defined purpose in the study, I spent my whole evenings in poring over these treatises of attack and defence--a greater and a nobler species of gambling than that which I had quitted, it is true, but only less mad, inasmuch as it is a game which any one nation can compel another to play, and where those must lose who have not studied to win.

I also went occasionally to a hall that an Italian fencer had fitted up in the Rue Pavée for the purpose of turning a high reputation he had acquired in Europe into ready money. Here the room, which was furnished with all sorts of arms offensive and defensive, was well lighted every night, and the assembled company either formed practising parties amongst themselves, or took lessons from the Italian himself, who was one of the most athletic men I ever beheld, and certainly a most complete master of his weapons.

My father, I have said, was perhaps the most skilful swordsman of his day; and he had taken care that his son should not be wanting in an accomplishment in which he was such a proficient. I was, therefore, certainly more than equal in point of skill to any one who frequented the Italian's hall, and very nearly a match for himself. This, however, seemed rather to give him pleasure than otherwise; and whenever I entered he saluted me with the respect which he enthusiastically imagined due to every one skilful in the noble science of arms, frequently inviting me to stretch my limbs with him in an assault, and taking a delight in showing me all the minute refinements of his art.

This was the sole diversion I allowed myself, though while I mingled with the crowds where I knew no one, and wandered through the streets where I was a stranger, a sad feeling of loneliness--of miserable desolation--crept over my heart, and I returned to my lodging in the evening, grave, melancholy, and discontented.

Although there were now several companies of actors continually at Paris, to the play I never went, that being a sort of amusement too costly for the narrow bounds to which I had restrained my expenses; and, indeed, so strictly economical was I in all my habits, that my good landlady began to fancy me in want, and to show her commiseration for my condition by all those little delicate pieces of charity which a person who has felt both pride and suffering knows how to evince towards those whose spirit has not yet wholly bowed to its fate. Any little delicacy which fell in her way, she would add it to the breakfast that Achilles brought me from the traiteur's. Nor did she ever ask for her rent, but rather avoided me on those days when it became due; though I believe, in truth, she needed it not a little.

I understood her motives; and though I did not choose to undeceive her, I took care that she should not be a loser by the kindness which she showed me. Finding in her also a delicacy of feeling and refinement of conversation which were above her station, I would sometimes, when any chance led me to speak with her, endeavour to ascertain whether her situation had ever been more elevated than that which she at present filled; and on one of these occasions, she told me gratuitously that she had been in former years governante to the beautiful Henriette de Vergne, whose private marriage with the Count de Bagnols I have already mentioned more than once.

She was surprised to find that I was acquainted with so much of the history, of which she knew very little more herself. "As I was found to have been privy to the marriage," said she, "I was sent away directly, and denied all communication with my young lady, after it was discovered; but I saw the bloody spot where the poor count was slain, and the dents of the feet

where the struggle had passed; and a fearful struggle it must have been, for two of the Marquis of St. Brie's men remained ill at the village for weeks afterwards, and no one was allowed to see them but his own surgeon. One of them died also; and his confession was said to be so strange, that the priest sent to Rome to know how far he was justified in keeping it secret. After that I came to Paris; and I heard no more of the family, which all went to ruin, except, indeed, some one told me that my young lady died shortly afterwards in a convent at Auch."

As I was, of course, anxious to transmit the papers which chance had placed in my hands, to any of the surviving members of the Count de Bagnols' family, I inquired particularly what information she could give me concerning them; but she was more ignorant of everything relating to them than even myself.

One morning, on my return from my vain searching after Helen, I was surprised on being informed that a stranger had inquired for me during my absence, and had begged the landlady to inform me that he would call again in the evening.

Where reason has no possible clue to guide her through the labyrinth of any doubt she pauses at the gate, while imagination seems to step the more boldly in; and, as if in mockery of her timid companion, sports through every turning till she either finds the track by accident, or, tired of wandering through the inexplicable maze, she spreads her Dædalian wings and soars above the walls that would confine her. I had no cause to believe that one person sought me more than another, and yet my fancy set to work as busily as if she had the most certain data to reason from. My first thoughts immediately turned to Arnault, and my next to the Chevalier de Montenero; and so strange was the ascendency which the last had gained over my mind, that the very idea of meeting with him inspired me with as much joy as if all my difficulties had been removed; but the description given in answer to my inquiries at once put to flight such a supposition. The stranger, my landlady informed me, was evidently a clergyman by his dress, and by his manner and appearance she guessed him to be one of a distinguished rank. It was, therefore, evidently neither the Chevalier nor Arnault, and the only supposition I could form upon the subject was that the Cardinal de Richelieu had at length deigned to take some notice of me.

My disposition was naturally impatient of all expectation, and the dull heaviness of the last week, which I had passed day after day in the same fruitless pursuit, had worked me up to a pitch of irritable anxiety, which people of a different temperament can hardly imagine. I wearied imagination, I exhausted conjecture; I hoped, I feared, I doubted, till day waned and night came; and, giving up all expectation of seeing the stranger that evening, I cursed him heartily for having said he would come, and not keeping his word, and sat down once more to my theory of tactics. I had scarcely, however, got through one quarter of a campaign, when the rapid motion of Achilles' feet on the stairs announced news of some kind, and in a moment after he threw open the door, giving admission to a stranger.

The person who entered was not much older than myself; he was tall and apparently well-made, but his clerical dress served him a good deal in this respect, concealing a pair of legs which were somewhat clumsy, and not the straightest in the world. His head was one of the finest I have ever seen; and his face, without, perhaps, possessing, one feature that was regularly handsome, except the full rounded chin and the broad expanse of forehead, instantly struck and pleased, giving the idea of great powers of mind joined with a light and brilliant wit that sparkled playfully in his clear dark eye. He bowed low as he entered, and advanced towards a seat, which I begged of him to take, with that quietness of motion which, without being stealthy, is silent and calm, and is ever a sign of high breeding and good society. I made Achilles a sign to withdraw; and expressing myself honoured by the stranger's visit, begged to know whether I was to attribute it to any particular object, or merely to his kind politeness towards a stranger.

"If there were any kindness in doing a pleasure to oneself," replied the stranger, "I would willingly take the credit of it; but in the present instance, as the gratification is my own, I cannot pretend to any merit."

This answer was somewhat too vague to satisfy me; and I replied, that "I was fully sensible of the honour done me; and would have much pleasure in returning his visit, when I knew where I might have the opportunity."

My method of receiving him, as equal with equal, seemed, I thought, somewhat to surprise him; for, half closing his eyes, in a manner which seemed common to him, he glanced round my small apartment with a scrutinizing look, too brief to be impertinent, and yet too remarking to escape my notice. "I shall esteem myself honoured by your visit," replied he, at length; "I am but a poor abbé,--my name Jean de Gondi, and you will find me for the present at the house of my uncle, the Duke de Retz."

It was, indeed, the famous abbé, afterwards Cardinal de Retz, with whom I was then in conversation. Not yet three and twenty years of age, he had already acquired one of the most singular reputations that ever man possessed. Daring, intriguing, and ambitious, nothing daunted him in his enterprises, nothing repelled him in their course. Storms and tumults were his element; and when, before he was seventeen, he wrote his famous "*Conjuration de Fiesque*," he seemed to point out the scene in which he was himself destined to act, to which nature prompted him from the first, and circumstances called him in the end. In his manner, there was a strange mixture of calm suavity, thoughtless vivacity, policy, frankness, and pride, which, combined

together, served perhaps better to cover his immediate motives, and hide his real character, than the appearance of any uniform habit of mind which he could have assumed.

All men contain within themselves strange contradictions; but he was the only one I ever knew, who, upon the most mature reflection, acted in continual contradiction to himself. He would often put in practice the most consummate strokes of policy to gain a trifle, or to satisfy an appetite; and he would commit the most egregious follies and affect the most extravagant passions, to hide the shrewdest political schemes and conceal the best calculated and most subtle enterprises. He was a man on whom one could never calculate with certainty. It seemed his pleasure to disappoint whatever expectations had been formed of him; and yet, to hear him reason, one would have judged that the slightest action of his life was regulated by strong conclusions from fixed unvarying principles.

I had heard his character from many others, as well as from the Marquis de St. Brie; but as this last gentleman had calculated, when he sketched it to me, that my life would be limited to three days at the utmost, he could have had no possible motive in deceiving me.

With this knowledge of his character, then, it required no great discernment to see that the visit of De Retz was not without an object; and resolving, if it were possible, to ascertain precisely what that object was, I bowed on his announcing himself, and said, "Of course, Monsieur de Retz, it is needless for me to give you my name. You were certainly aware of that before you did me the honour of this visit."

"No, indeed!" replied he; "I am perfectly ignorant both of your name and rank, though, by your appearance, and by all I have heard of you, I can have no doubt in regard to the latter. The truth is, I was informed by persons on whom I could depend, that a young gentleman of singularly prepossessing appearance and manners had taken this apartment, and was supposed to be under some temporary difficulty."

I turned very red, I believe; but he proceeded. "People will talk of their neighbours' affairs, you know; and 'tis useless to be angry with them--but hearing this, as I have said, I felt an irresistible impulse to visit you, and to render you any assistance in my power. Nor will I regret it, even if I have been misinformed, inasmuch as it has gained me the pleasure of your acquaintance."

With such a speech there was no possible means of being offended, though I felt not a little angry at my affairs having been made matters of commiseration throughout the town. I was rather inclined to believe also, that the trouble which M. de Retz had given himself did not originate entirely in benevolence. I did not doubt that charity might have some part therein, for he had acquired a reputation, which I believe he deserved, for generous feeling towards the sufferings of his fellow-creatures; but the motives of men are so mixed that it is in vain tracing their original source. Like a great stream, the course of human action arises very often in five or six different fountains, each of which has nearly the same right as the others to be considered the head: and besides this, in flowing on from its commencement to its end, it receives the accession of a thousand other different currents, so that at the last not one drop in a million is the pure water which welled from any individual source.

I was very sure, therefore, of doing Monsieur de Retz no great injustice in supposing that his benevolence might be tinged with other feelings; and I replied, "I should be sorry, sir, that a mistake had given you the trouble of coming here, did I not derive so much benefit from that false rumour. My name is the Count de l'Orme, and I am happy that the bounty you proposed to exercise upon me may be turned towards some other person more needing and deserving it than I do."

"Be not offended, Monsieur de l'Orme," replied De Retz, "at a mistake which has nothing in it dishonouring. Poverty is much oftener a virtue than wealth. But your name strikes me--De l'Orme!--Surely that was not the name of the young gentleman that his highness the Count de Soissons expected to join him from Bearn--oh, no, I remember! it was Count Louis de Bigorre."

"But no less the same person," replied I, with an unspeakable joy at seeing the clouds break away that had hung over my fate--at finding myself known and expected where I had fancied myself solitary amongst millions. I felt as if at those few words I leapt over the barrier which had confined me to my own loneliness, and mingled once more in the society of my fellows. "I have always," continued I, "been called Count Louis de Bigorre; but circumstances induced me, when I left my father's house, to assume the title which really belongs to the eldest son of the Counts of Bigorre."

Monsieur de Retz saw that there was some mystery in my conduct, and he applied himself to discover my secret with an art and industry which would have accomplished much greater things. Nor did I take any great pains to conceal it from him. It is astonishing how weakly the human heart opens to any one who brings it glad news. The citadel of the mind throws wide all its gates to receive the messenger of joy, and takes little heed to secure the prisoners that are within. In the course of half an hour my new acquaintance had made himself acquainted with the greater part of my history; and when I began to think of putting a stop to my communication, I found that the precaution was of no use.

The moment, however, that he saw me begin to retire into myself, he turned the conversation again to the Count de Soissons, whom he advised me to seek without loss of time. "You will find in him," said he, "all that is charming in human nature. In his communion with society, he had but one fault originally; which was great haughtiness. He knew that it was a fault, and has had the strength of mind to vanquish it completely; so that you will see in him one of the most affable men that France can boast. In regard to his private character, you must make your own discoveries. The great mass of a man's mind, like the greater part of his body, he takes care to cover, so that no one shall judge of its defects except they be very prominent; and there are, thank God, as few that have hump-backed minds, as hump-backed persons! Indeed, it has become a point of decency to conceal every thing but the face even of the mind, and none but tatterdemalions and sans culottes ever suffer it to appear in its nakedness. To follow my figure, then, Monsieur le Comte is always well-dressed, so that you will find it difficult to know him; but, however, it is not for me to undress him for you. Take my advice, set out for Sedan to-morrow, where, of course, you know he is--driven from his country by the tyrannizing spirit of our detested and detestable cardinal. I rather think the Count intends to initiate you somewhat deeply into politics, but that must be his own doing also. Break your fast with me to-morrow, and I will give you letters and more information. Is it an engagement?"

I accepted the invitation with pleasure; and having answered one or two questions which I put to him, M. de Retz left me for the night.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Before I proceed farther with my own narrative, it may be as well to take a slight review of the history of the Count de Soissons, whose fate had a great effect upon the course of my whole future life. Nor is it here unworthy of remark, how strangely events are brought about by Providence, while we walk blind and darkling through this misty existence, groping our way onward on a path from which we cannot deviate. An accidental word, a casual action, will change the whole current of life, make a hermit of a monarch, and a monarch of a shepherd: as we sometimes see near the head of a stream a small hillock that a dwarf could stride turn the course of a mighty river far from the lands it flowed towards at first, and send its waters wandering over other countries to kingdoms, and oceans, and hemispheres afar.

The ancient county of Vendome was in the year 1515 erected into a duchy by Francis I., in favour of Charles de Bourbon, a direct lineal descendant from Robert Count de Clermont, fifth son of Saint Louis. Charles de Bourbon, thus Duke of Vendome, left five sons, only two of whom had children, Antoine the elder, and Louis the younger. The first, by his marriage with Jeanne d'Albret, became King of Navarre, and left one only son, who, by default of the line of Valois, succeeded to the crown of France, under the title of Henri Quatre. Louis, the younger brother, became Prince of Condé; and having been twice married, left a family by each wife. By his first marriage descended the branch of Condé, and by the second, he left one son, Charles Count de Soissons, whose son Louis is the Prince referred to in the foregoing pages.

Setting out in life with great personal activity and address, immense revenues, considerable talents, and high rank, it is little to be wondered at that the young Count de Soissons, under the management of a weak, an indulgent, and a proud mother, should grow up with the most revolting haughtiness of character. From morning till night he heard of nothing but his own praises or his own rank; and by the time he was eighteen, his pride of demeanour was so repulsive and insupportable, that it was a common saying, that "No one saw the Count de Soissons twice; for if he did not dislike them and forbid them to return, they were disgusted with him and would not go back."

But as the fault was more in his education than in his disposition, its very excess corrected itself.

He gradually found himself avoided by those whom Heaven had designed for his companions, and sometimes even deserted by his very servants; so that he was often left alone to enjoy his rank and dignity by himself. Under these circumstances he evinced qualities of mind far superior to the petty vice which shrouded it. He had equally the wisdom to see that the fault lay in himself, the judgment to discover in what that fault consisted, and the energy to conquer it entirely. Not a trace of it remained in his manners; nor did any of his actions, but upon one occasion, ever give cause to suppose that a touch of his former haughtiness rested even in the inner recesses of his heart. With a rare discrimination, also, of which few are master, in the examination to which he subjected his own character, he separated completely the good from the bad, and took the utmost care to preserve that dignity of mind which is the best preservation against base and petty vices, even while he cast from him the pride which is in itself a meanness.

Many men, in correcting themselves of the vices of a bad education, would have felt some degree of bitterness towards the person to whose weakness that education and its vices were owing; but towards his mother the Count de Soissons ever remained a pattern of filial affection, consulting her wishes and inclination on every occasion where his own honour and character were not interested in opposing her.

The consequences of the change which he had effected in himself were not long in rewarding him for the effort he had made, and in a very few years he found that affection followed him every where instead of hate. The bright qualities of his mind, and the graces of his person, shone out with a new light, like the glorious sun bursting through a cloud. He was adored by the army, loved by the people; and princes were proud to be his friends.

At this time, however, the councils of France became embarrassed and disordered; and it was difficult even to run one's course quietly through life, so many were the dangers and evils that lurked about on all sides. Every step was upon an earthquake, and few could keep their footing steadily to the end. The Cardinal de Richelieu had already snatched the reins of government from the feeble hands that should have held them, and saw before him a wide field of power and aggrandisement, with few to oppose his putting in the sickle and reaping to his heart's content. The power, the wealth, the popularity of the Count de Soissons, gave him the opportunity of so opposing, had he been so minded; and Richelieu was not a man to live in fear. He resolved, therefore, to win him, or to crush him. To win him offered most advantages, if it could be accomplished; and deeming also that it would be more easy than the other alternative, Richelieu resolved to attempt it. For this purpose he united, in one Circean cup, everything that he fancied could tempt the ambition or passions of him he sought to gain. By a confidential messenger he proposed to the Count the hand of his favourite niece, the Duchess d'Aquillon, offering as her dower an immense sum of ready money, the reversion of all his own enormous possessions, the sword of Constable of France, and what provincial government the Count might choose; and doubtless he deemed such an offer irresistible.

Not so the Count de Soissons, who conceived himself insulted by the proposal; and the only spark of his ancient haughtiness that remained breaking forth into a flame, he struck the messenger for daring to propose the hand of Marie de Vignerot, widow of a mean provincial gentleman, to a prince of the blood-royal of France.

Contemned and rejected, personal resentment became added to the other motives which urged Richelieu to the destruction of the Count de Soissons. Personal resentments never slept with him; they lived while he lived, nor were they even weakened by sickness and approaching death. No means but one existed of gratifying his animosity towards the Count de Soissons; which was, to implicate him with some of the conspiracies which were every day breaking forth against the tyranny of the government. But even this was difficult; for, though living with princely splendour, the Count continued to reside in the midst of the court, where all his actions were open, and nothing could be attributed to him on which to found an accusation. Hatred, however, is ingenious; a thousand petty vexations were heaped upon him, and, in the end, even personal insult was added, but without effect.

The Count firmly resisted all the temptations which were held out to him to sully himself with any of the intrigues of the day. The solicitations of his friends, or the persecutions of his enemies, were equally in vain; and, when human patience could no longer endure the grievances to which he was subjected at the court of France, he left it for Italy, bearing with him the love and regret of the noblest of his countrymen.

A retreat, however, which left him free, unstained, and happy, neither quieted the fears, nor appeased the hatred of Richelieu; but, forced to dissemble, he gradually appeared to abandon his evil intentions, invited the Count to return, and one by one made him such proposals as were likely to efface his former conduct, without exciting suspicion by a sudden change. The Prince was not competent to cope with so deep an adept in the art of deceit; and, though still remembering with indignation the insults that had been offered him, he suffered himself to be persuaded that they would not be repeated, and returned to the court of France.

The minister lost no time, and at length effected his object. On his return, the Count found the best laws of the state defeated, individual liberty lost, and the public good sacrificed to the particular interests of one ambitious man. Richelieu took care that a thousand new affronts should mix a full portion of personal enmity with the Count's more patriotic feelings, and in the end the prince suffered himself to be led into the conspiracy of Amiens.

The weak and fickle Duke of Orleans had been placed in command over the Count de Soissons, at the siege of Corbie; and, brought in closer union from this circumstance than they had ever been before, the two princes had various opportunities of communicating their grievances, and concerting some means of crushing the tyranny which at once affected themselves personally, and the whole kingdom. There were not wanting many to urge that the assassination of the cardinal was the only sure way of terminating his dominion; but as the consent of the Count de Soissons could never be obtained to such a measure, it was determined to arrest the minister at the council at Amiens, and submit his conduct to the judgment of a legal tribunal. The irresolution of the Duke of Orleans suspended the execution of their purpose at the moment most favourable for effecting it, and before another opportunity presented itself the conspiracy was discovered; and the Duke of Orleans fled to Blois, while Monsieur le Comte (as the Count de

Soissons was usually called) retired across the country to the strong town of Sedan, the gates of which were willingly thrown open to him by the Duke of Bouillon, who, though a vassal of France, still held that important territory between Luxembourg and Champagne, in full and unlimited sovereignty.

Here the prince paused in security, well aware that Richelieu would never dare to attempt the siege of so strong a place as Sedan, while pressed on every side by the wars he himself had kindled; and here also he was, at the time of my arrival in Paris, though in a very different situation from that in which he at first stood in Sedan.[7]

CHAPTER XXXV.

The memory of what we have done, without the aid of vanity, would be little better, I believe, than a congregation of regrets. Even in the immediate review of a conversation just passed, how many things do we find which we have forgotten to say, or which might have been said better, or ought not to have been said at all! After Monsieur de Retz was gone, I looked back over the half hour he had spent with me, and instantly remembered a thousand questions which I ought to have asked him, and a thousand things on which I had better have been silent. I felt very foolish, too, on remembering that I had proposed to draw from him all his purposes; and yet that he had made himself master of the greater part of my history, while I remained as ignorant of the real object of his visit as if he had never come at all.

My resolution, however, was taken to follow his advice in the matter of going to Sedan. My reasons for so doing--or rather my motives, for reasons, nine times in ten, are out of the question in man's actions--were manifold. I despaired of finding Helen. I was a-weary of that great heap of stones called Paris, where I knew no one; and I had upon me one of those fits of impatience, which would have made me run into the very jaws of destruction to cast off the listlessness of existence.

My eyes had been fixed upon the table while making these reflections; and, on raising them, I found Achilles standing opposite to me, looking in my face with much the air of a dog who sees his master eating his dinner, and standing upon its hind-legs begs for its share too. I could as plainly read in the twinkling little grey eyes of the ci-devant player, and the lack-a-daisical expression of his mouth, "Pray let me hear the news," as if it had been written in large letters on his forehead.

"Achilles!" said I--willing to gratify him in the most unpleasant way possible--a thing one often feels inclined to do to another, after having somewhat severely schooled oneself--"Achilles, I am going to leave you."

"I beg your pardon, monseigneur," replied he, calmly, "but that is quite impossible. You can hardly go anywhere, where I will not follow you."

"But listen," rejoined I--"I am about to set off for Sedan. I ride post; and you can as much ride post as you can----"

"Ride to the devil," said Achilles, interrupting me. "I should not find that very difficult, monseigneur; but I will ride the devil himself, sooner than part with you again; so, make your noble mind up to be hunted like a stag from Paris to Sedan, unless you let me ride quietly by your side."

Though it required no augur's skill to foresee that little Achilles would prove a great incumbrance on the road, yet, as I found him so determined on going, I did not object; and bidding him prepare everything the next morning to set out as soon as I returned from the Hôtel de Retz, I went to bed and slept soundly till the dawn.

At the hour appointed, I proceeded to keep my engagement; and on entering the court of the Hôtel de Retz, I found myself suddenly immersed in all the noise and bustle of a great family's household. It put me in mind of the tales which our old *maître d'hôtel* used to tell of the Château de l'Orme, in the days which he remembered; when, as he expressed it, there were always a hundred horses in the stable, and fifty gentlemen in the hall ready to mount at a word of my grandfather's mouth, and there was nothing but jingling of spurs except when there was jingling of glasses; and the glittering of arms in the courtyard was only succeeded by glittering of knives at the table.

I was immediately shown to the apartments of the Abbé de Retz, where I found him

surrounded by the servants and gentlemen of his own suite, which was numerous and splendid, in exactly the same proportion as his personal appearance was simple and unostentatious.

On my arrival, he rose and embraced me; and dismissing his attendants, presented me with two letters addressed to the Count de Soissons, which he requested me to deliver--the one from himself, the other from the Duke of Orleans. "I need not bid you be careful of them," said he, as he gave the two packets into my hands: "each of them contains as much treason as would make the executioner's axe swing merrily."

This was rather a startling piece of information; and I believe that my face, that unfaithful betrayer of secrets, showed in some degree how much heavier the letters appeared to me after I had heard such news of their contents. "You seem surprised," said De Retz; "but you have lived so far from the court that you know not what is going on there. I do not suppose that there is one man of rank besides yourself in this great city, who has not qualified himself for the Bastile, or the Place de Grève. Do you not know that everything with Frenchmen depends upon fashion? and, let me tell you, that treason is now the fashion; and that a man that could walk across the court of the Palais Cardinal, with his head steady upon his shoulders, would be looked upon by our *belles dames* as either mean-spirited or under-bred, and scouted from society accordingly."

"I am afraid that I am within the category," replied I, "for I do not know anything which should make my head tremble there, or in any other place."

"Oh, fear not! fear not!" answered Monsieur de Retz. "You will find Monsieur le Comte de Soissons surrounded by persons who will speedily put you in the way of as much treason as is necessary to good-breeding. But let them not lead you too far. Our breakfast is by this time served in my private dining-hall," he added: "I will send away the servants; and while we satisfy our hunger, I will give you so much insight into the characters of the party assembled at Sedan, as may be necessary to your safety." Thus saying, he led me to a room on the same floor, where we found a small table spread with various delicacies, and covers laid for three.

"Remove that cover," said Monsieur de Retz to one of the servants; "Monsieur de Lizieux is so much past his time that I am afraid he will not come--and now leave us!" he added; and then, as soon as the room was clear, "The truth is," said he, "I never expected the good Bishop of Lizieux, but I told the servants to place a cover for him, because he is a great friend of the Cardinal de Richelieu; and it could not get abroad that I was plotting with a stranger, when it is known that I expected the great enemy of all plots in the person of the worthy prelate." And he smiled while he told me this piece of art, piquing himself more upon such petty cunning than upon all the splendid qualities which his mind really possessed. Yet such perhaps is man's nature, valuing himself upon things that are contemptible, and very often affecting, himself, the same follies he condemns in others.

"I give you nothing but fish, you will perceive," said Monsieur de Retz, as we sat down, "this being a meagre day of our church. Though, indeed, neither the fasting nor mortification are very great, yet I always keep these fish days. It is a very reputable method of devotion, and gains friends amongst the *poissardes*,--no insignificant class."

As we proceeded with our meal, he gave me the sketches he had promised. "Of Monseigneur le Duc de Bouillon," he said, "I shall say nothing, except that, being a great man and sovereign in his town of Sedan, I would advise you to show him all respect and attention; without, however, attaching yourself too strongly to what I may call his party. Near the person of the count himself, you will find Monsieur de Varicarville, a man of talent and of sense, moderate in his passions, firm in his principles, and devotedly attached to the interest of his lord. A very few days' communication with him will show you that this statement is correct; and in the meanwhile I will give you a note to him, which will lead him to open himself to you more than he would do to a stranger. Another person you will meet is Monsieur de Bardouville, a man of very good intentions, but with so muddy a brain, that whatever is placed there, good or bad, sticks so tenaciously that there is no getting it out. He has been converted to a wrong party, and does all in his power to hurry Monsieur le Comte into schemes that would prove his ruin."

"But if his intentions are so good," said I, "were it not worth while to attempt, at least, to bring him over to better opinions by reason?"

"No, no!" answered De Retz. "One makes a very foolish use of reason when one employs it on those who have none. Let him alone, Monsieur de l'Orme. The only man who ever made anything of his head, was the man that cut it in marble; and then, as Voiture said, he had better have left it alone, as the bust was not a bit softer than the original. But to proceed: take notice of Campion, one of the chief domestics of Monsieur le Comte. He is a man of great probity and sound judgment--one that you may confide in. You have now *my opinion* of the principal persons with whom you will be brought in contact, but of course you will form your own;" and drawing in his eyes, he considered me for a moment through the half-closed lids, as if he would have read in my face what impression all he had said had made upon me.

I could not help smiling, for I saw that the facility with which he had drawn my history from me the night before had given him no very high idea of my intellectual powers, and I replied, still smiling, "Of course, Monsieur de Retz, I *shall* form my own opinion. I always do, of every one I meet with."

He did not well understand the smile; and, never contented unless he read all that was passing in the mind of those with whom he spoke, he opened his eyes full, and with a frank laugh asked me what I thought, then, of himself.

I have often remarked that perfect candour sometimes puts the most wily politician to fault, more than any imitation of his own doublings; and I replied at once--though I believe there was some degree of pique in my doing so too--"If you would know frankly what I think of you, Monsieur de Retz, you must hear what I think of your conduct since we first met, for that is all that I can personally judge of."

"Well, well!" replied he, "speak of that, and I will confess if you are right."

"In respect to your coming to me last night, then," replied I, "I think you had some motive of which I am not aware." A slight flush passed over his face, and then a smile, and he nodded to me to go on. "In regard to the valuable information you have given me to-day, and for which you have my thanks, I think that the cause of your giving it is something like the following:--you have some interest in the proceedings of his highness the Count de Soissons."

"None but his own, upon my honour," interrupted De Retz.

"Granted!" replied I. "Of that I do not pretend to judge; but there are evidently two parties about the prince, one urging him one way, and one another. You, Monsieur de Retz, are attached to one of these parties; and you are very glad of the opportunity of our accidental meeting, to bias me in favour of that side to which you yourself adhere, and to throw me--though a person of very little consequence--into the hands of those with whom you yourself co-operate. I doubt not," I added, with a smile and a bow, "that your opinion is perfectly correct, and that to your party I shall finally adhere, if his highness thinks fit to retain me near his person; but of course it will be the more gratifying to you to find that I embrace your opinions more from conviction than persuasion."

I am afraid my politeness had taken somewhat of a triumphant tone, upon the strength of my supposed discernment; and, even before I had done speaking, I was aware of my error, and felt that I might be making an enemy instead of securing a friend; but, as I have said, he always contrived to disappoint expectation. For a moment he looked mortified, but his face gradually resumed its good humour; and he replied with, I believe, real frankness, "Monsieur de l'Orme, you are right. I own that I have undervalued you, and you make me feel it, for that is what your conversation points at. But you must give me back that letter to Monsieur le Comte--I must not mislead him in regard to your character."

I gave him back the letter, saying, jestingly, that I should much like to see the reputation which I had acquired on a first interview, and which was doubtless there written down at full.

"Nay, nay!" replied he, tearing it, "that were useless, and perhaps worse; but you shall see what I now write, if you will, and I will write it frankly."

He accordingly led the way again to his library, where he wrote a short note to the count, which he handed to me. After a few lines of the ambiguous language in which the politicians of that day were wont to envelope their meaning, but which evidently did not at all refer to me, I found the following:--

"This letter will be delivered to your Highness by Count Louis de Bigorre, whom you have expected so long. I met with him by accident, and for a time undervalued him; but I find, upon farther knowledge, that he can see into other people's secrets better than he can conceal his own. Whether he is capable of discretion on the affairs of his friends, your highness will judge; for it does not always follow that a man who gossips of himself will gossip of his neighbours: the same vanity which prompts the one, will often prevent the other."

I do not believe that I should have been able to maintain the same appearance of good humour under Monsieur de Retz's castigation, that he had evinced under mine, had I not observed his eye fix on me as he gave me the paper, and felt certain that while I read, it was scrutinizing every change of my countenance, with the microscopic exactness of a naturalist dissecting a worm. I was upon my guard, therefore, and took care that my brow should not exhibit a cloud even as light as the shadow that skims across a summer landscape. "A fair return in kind," replied I, giving him back the letter, with as calm a smile as if I had been looking at the portrait of his mistress. "And as I shall be obliged of necessity to let Monsieur le Comte into *all* my secrets, he will be able to judge, when he comes to compare notes with you, how much your ingenuity drew from me last night, and how much my poor discretion managed to conceal."

"Excellent good!" cried De Retz, rising and taking me by the hand. "So, you would have me think that you had not told me all, my dear count; and would thus leave the devil of curiosity and the fiend of mortified vanity to tease me between them during your absence; but you are mistaken. The only use of knowing men's histories is to know their characters, and I have learned more of yours to-day than I did even last night. However, it is time for you to depart. There are the letters," he continued, after having added a few words to that addressed to the Count. "Travel as privately as you can; and fare you well. Before we meet again, we shall know enough of each other from other sources, to spare us the necessity of studying that hard book--the human mind,

without a key."

I accordingly took leave of Monsieur de Retz; and in my way home, found out the dwelling of a horse-dealer, for the purpose of buying two nags for Achilles and myself; the necessity of travelling as privately as possible having induced me to change my intention of taking the post.

Though in his whole nature and character there is not, I believe, an honester animal in the world than a horse, yet there must be something assuredly in a habitual intercourse with him which is very detrimental to honesty in others, for certainly--and I believe in all ages it has been so--there cannot be conceived a race of more arrant cheats and swindlers than the whole set of jockeys, grooms, and horse-dealers. The very first attempt of the man to whom I at present applied, was to sell me an old broken-down hack, with a Roman nose which at once indicated its antiquity, for a fine, vigorous, young horse, as he called it, well capable of the road. The various ingenious tricks had been put in practice of boring his teeth, blistering his pasterns, &c., and his coat shone, as much as fine oil could make it; but still he stood forth with his original sin of old age rank about him, and I begged leave to decline the bargain, though the dealer and the *palfrenier* both shrugged their shoulders at my obstinacy, and declared upon their conscience there was not such another horse in the stable.

After several endeavours to cheat me in the same manner, which they would not abandon, or by habit could not abandon, although they saw I was somewhat knowing in the trade, I fixed upon a strong roan horse for myself, and a light easy going pad for Achilles. The question now became the price I was to pay, and after the haggling of half an hour, the dealer agreed to take forty louis for the two, which was about five more than their value. He declared, however, so help him God, that he lost by it, and only let me have them in hope of my future custom.

"I never intend to buy a horse of you again as long as I live," replied I, sharply; "so do not suffer that hope to bias you."

"Well, well, take them," said he. "They would soon eat out the money in corn, and so I should lose it any way."

This matter being settled, I directed them to be brought immediately to my lodging; making a bargain beforehand for the necessary saddles and bridles, of which the good dealer kept a store at hand; and then sped on to see that all was prepared for our departure.

It was already past mid-day; but everything having been made ready during my absence by the activity of my little attendant, as soon as the horses were brought, we loaded them with our bags and our persons, and set out for Sedan. Be it remarked, however, that I still maintained my little lodging in the Rue des Prêtres Saint Paul, as from some words dropped by the Abbé de Retz, I fancied that I might have occasion to return to Paris on the affairs of Monsieur le Comte.

The ambling jennet which I had bought for Achilles was so much easier than any horse whose back he had ever yet honoured, that the poor little man, after having anticipated the pains of hell, found himself in elysium; and declared that he could ride to Jerusalem and back without considering it a pilgrimage. I was resolved, however, to put his horsemanship to the proof; for though I did not seek to call attention to myself, by galloping like an express, in that age when even one's horse's pace was matter of suspicion, yet, as the way was long, I calculated that we might at least reach Jouarre that night.

This we accomplished easily. Stopping but half an hour at Meaux to feed our horses, and then proceeding with all speed, we saw La Ferté not far off, at about an hour before sunset, with its beautiful abbey standing out clear and rich against the evening sky; and the sweet valley of the Morin winding away in the soft obscurity of the declining light.

Turning out of one of the byroads, a horseman overtook us, and saluting us civilly, joined himself to our party. From the hint Monsieur de Retz had given me concerning the letter of the Duke of Orleans, I thought it best to avoid all communication with strangers, and therefore gave but very cold encouragement to our new companion's advances. He was a small, keen, resolute-looking little man, and not to be repulsed easily, as I very soon found; for, perceiving that I was not inclined to continue the conversation which he had commenced, he took the whole burden of it upon himself; and with a peculiar talent for hypotheses, he raised as many conjectures concerning the point to which our journey tended, and our particular object in journeying, as would have found employment for at least a hundred, if they had all been true.

I remembered that Cæsar, in some part of his Commentaries, attributes particularly to the Gauls a bad habit of stopping strangers and asking them impertinent questions; and I could not help thinking that the valiant Roman, in some of his adventures, must have met with the ancestors of our new companion. We jogged on, however, I maintaining my silence, and Achilles *playing* the stranger, as I have seen a skilful fisherman play a large trout.

When the horseman discovered that our nature was not of a very communicative quality, he seemed to think that perhaps we required him to open the way, and therefore he told us that he was going to La Ferté to buy grind-stones, and that he always lodged at the auberge of the *Ecu*, which he begged to recommend to us as the best in the town. It was the very best, he said, beyond dispute: we should find good beds, good victuals, and good wine, all at a reasonable rate;

and he farther hinted, that, if we desired such a thing, we might have the advantage of his company, to give us an account of the town, and point out to us its beauties and curiosities. Only if we desired it--he said--he was not a man to force his society upon any one!

I replied by a bow, which I intended to be very conclusive; but our new friend was not a man to be satisfied with bows, and therefore he asked straightforward whether I intended to go to the *Ecu*. I replied that it would depend on circumstances. And as we were by this time in the town of La Ferté, no sooner did I see him draw his rein, as if about to proceed to his favourite auberge, than I drew mine the contrary way, and was galloping off, when, to my horror and astonishment, he turned after me, declaring, with a smile of patronising kindness, that I was so sweet a youth, he could not think of parting with me, and therefore, as I would not come to his auberge, he would come to mine.

The matter was now beyond endurance. "Sir!" said I, pulling in my rein, and eying him with that cold sort of contemptuous frown which I had generally found a sufficient shield against impertinence, "be so good as to pursue your own way, and allow me to pursue mine; I neither require your society, nor is it agreeable to me; and therefore I wish you good morning."

"Ho, sir--ho!" replied the stranger, "I am not a man to force my society upon any one. But you cannot prevent my going to the same inn with yourself. I read something fortunate in your countenance, and therefore I am sure that no accident will happen to me while I am under the same roof with you. The inn where you sleep will not be burnt down, thieves will not break into it, the rafters will not give way, and the walls fall in. Sir, I am a physiognomist, a chiromancer, and astrologer. I am no necromancer, however--I neither evoke spirits, nor use magic, white or black."

"No, no," replied Achilles, grinning till an improper connection seemed likely to take place between his mouth and his ears--"no, no, you may be chiromancer and astrologer, but you are no conjurer; that is clear enough."

"Silence, Achilles," cried I; "let him pursue his own follies, and follow me on." Thus saying, I rode forward, resolved rather to climb the hill to Jouarre than expose myself to encounter any more of the babbling old fool's impertinence: but this effort was as vain as the former; for, determined not to be shaken off, he kept close behind me, till we had reached the beautiful little town of Jouarre, and were safely lodged in the only auberge which it contained.

The moment after I had entered, in he marched into the kitchen; and, though the landlord treated him as a stranger, yet there was a something--I know not what--which impressed upon my mind that there was some sort of understanding between them. Odd suspicions crossed my imagination, and I resolved to be upon my guard. At the same time, I knew that too great an appearance of reserve might excite suspicion, and consequently I spoke a few quiet words to the landlord, such as a somewhat taciturn traveller might be supposed to exchange with his host on his arrival, and then went with Achilles to see that the horses were properly provided for. In regard to the stranger, he talked with every one who would talk with him, always taking care, however, to keep me and my fortunate face in sight; and, indeed, he seemed gifted with ubiquity, for no sooner did I leave him in the kitchen than I met him in the stable; and the next moment I found him again bustling about in the kitchen, ordering his supper with a tone of great authority.

For his part, the landlord, who acted also as cook, and who seemed himself stewed down to nothing from his continual commerce with stew-pans, showed the stranger a thousand times more submissive respect than to any one else, bending his elastic knees with an infinitely lower cringe when the stranger addressed him than when I did.

As soon as I had supped, we retired to our sleeping-chamber, Achilles having his allotted place in a small truckle-bed, which must have been made for him, it fitted so nicely. Before retiring to rest, however, I took care to secure the letters to the Count de Soissons under my bolster, fastening the door, which had no lock, with what was perhaps better, a large heavy bolt.

I slept soundly till the next morning, but on waking I found my poor little attendant almost speechless with fear. As soon as he could speak, however, he declared that, in the grey of the morning, he had seen a ghost glide in he knew not how, proceed to the leathern bags which contained our effects, and fumble them for a moment or two in a very mysterious manner. It then glided out, he added, just as I woke, but with so little noise, that it could not have been the cause of dissipating my slumber.

"By Heaven! it was a dangerous undertaking!" cried I in a loud voice, for the benefit of any one within hearing. "Had I chanced to wake I would have shot it, had it been the best ghost that ever was born. Examine the bags, Achilles, and see if anything has been stolen."

At the same time, I proceeded to ascertain whether the bolt had been drawn back by any contrivance from without, but all appeared as I had left it, and nothing seemed gone from the bags, so that I was obliged to conclude that either Achilles' imagination had deceived him, or that some one had gained admission into the chamber (by means I could not discover) for some other purpose than simple robbery. After the utmost scrutiny, however, I could not perceive any possible way of entering the room; and dressing myself as quickly as possible, I descended, in order to pay my reckoning, and set out immediately.

The landlord stated the sum, and I laid down the money on the table, piece by piece, which he took up in the same manner, bending his head over it till it was close to mine, when suddenly he said, in a low whisper, seeming to count the silver all the time, "You are accompanied by a spy. If you want to conceal whither you go, mount and begone with all speed, and take care of your road."

I replied nothing, but hurried the preparation of the horses as much as possible, and was in hopes of escaping before my persecutor of the night made his appearance; but just as I had my foot in the stirrup, his visage presented itself at the door, crying with the most indomptible impudence, "Wait for me! wait for me! I will not be a moment." As may be well supposed, I did not even wait to reply; but putting spurs to my horse, I set off down the hill, begging Achilles to seduce his beast into a gallop, if possible. The little man did his best; and so successful were we in our endeavours, that we soon left Jouarre far behind us: and on turning to look back on the road after half-an-hour's hard riding, I could see nothing but a blessed void, which gave me more pleasure than anything I could have beheld.

I slackened not my pace, however, but rode on towards Montmirail as fast as possible, thinking over the circumstances which had given rise to my galloping. The minister, I knew, with the jealous suspicion of usurped power, maintained a complete regiment of spies, scattered all over the kingdom, and invested with every different character and appearance which could disguise their real occupation; and I doubted not that, according to the landlord's hint at Jouarre, our talkative companion was one of this respectable troop. The character which he assumed was certainly a singular one, but it must be confessed he played it to admiration; and I congratulated myself not a little on having escaped the pursuit of such a vampire.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

As I wished much to arrive at Chalons that night, we remained no longer at Montmirail than was absolutely necessary to refresh the horses; but before we arrived at Chaintrix, the ambling nag which had borne Achilles began to appear jaded; and, for fear of knocking him up altogether, I determined to halt at that little village for the night, never doubting that we had left our persecutor far behind. What was my surprise, then, on descending to the courtyard the next morning, to see the same identical little man, with his brown pourpoint, and his immense funnel-shaped riding boots, standing in the court ready to mount his horse.

I drew back instantly, hoping he had not seen me, but to see everything was a part of his profession; and quitting his horse's bridle, he ran into the house after me, pulled off his beaver with the lowest possible bow, giving me the compliments of the morning, and declaring himself the happiest man in the world to have met with me and my fortunate countenance again. "I saw your horse standing in the stable," added he, "and was resolved not to be too late to-day."

His persevering impudence was so ridiculous, that I could not help laughing; and as I saw no way of getting rid of him at the time, I resolved to tolerate him for a while, till I could find some means either of putting him on a wrong scent, or of casting him off more effectually.

"Well, then," replied I, "if you are resolved to follow my fortunate face all over the world, you will have to ride fast and far, for I am going to Metz, and am pressed for time."

"Sir," replied the stranger, "I am delighted at the opportunity of riding with you so far. If you had ever been in the East, sir, you would have no difficulty in divining my motive in accompanying you."

"Without having been in the East," I muttered to myself, "I have no difficulty in divining your motive;" but taking care not to allow him to suppose I entertained any suspicions of him, I begged he would explain how a journey to the East could have enlightened me upon such a subject.

"Why you must know, sir," replied he, "that all Oriental nations hold--and I profess myself of their opinion--that good and bad fortune are infectious; and that by keeping company with a fortunate man, we very often may mend our own luck. Now, sir, I read in your countenance that you were born under a fortunate star, and, therefore, I resolved not to leave you till I was certain I had caught something of the same."

"But I hope you are not an unfortunate man," rejoined I, "for if you are, on your own principle, you shall ride no farther with me."

"Oh no," replied the other, "my fortune is neither good nor bad; I am just in that indifferent state, wherein a man is most liable to be affected by the fortune of the company he falls into."

"Then, Lord deliver you!" said I, "for you have fallen in with one whose whole existence hitherto has been nothing but a tissue of mischances; and if I find, as I am afraid I shall, my aunt at Metz has died without making a will, my misfortunes will be complete; for I shall have hardly bread to eat, without his Eminence of Richelieu gives me a place, in recompence of a little service I once rendered him."

I tried hard to make this annunciation in as natural a tone as art could furnish me with; and I succeeded in evidently bewildering all the preconceived ideas of the spy, who, while I discharged my reckoning and mounted my horse, which was now ready, stood with his foot in the stirrup, and his face full of incertitude, not knowing whether to believe me or not.

It luckily so happened that Achilles, who stood by, was totally ignorant of what motive induced me to quit Paris; and I might, for aught he knew, have had as many *aunts* at Metz as Danaüs had daughters; so that his countenance was not likely to contradict me.

The spy, however, knowing that suspicion is the best rule of action for gentlemen of his cloth under all circumstances, thought he could not do wrong in throwing his other leg over his horse's back, and following me, even at the risk of my having an aunt really dying at Metz. Accordingly, he was instantly by our side, keeping up with admirable perseverance the chattering, inquisitive character he had assumed; and never ceasing to ask one question or another, till we arrived at St. Ménéhould, where I again stopped for the night.

Wherever we had occasion to pause, even to water our horses, I observed that my new companion was evidently known, though every one affected to treat him as a stranger. Determined to get rid of him some way, from this confirmation of the suspicions I entertained respecting the honourable capacity he filled, as I was about to retire for the night, I whispered to the host of St. Ménéhould, sufficiently low to pass for a secret, yet sufficiently loud to be heard, to wake me at half-past four the next morning. After this I proceeded to my room, undressed myself, went to bed, and made Achilles extinguish the light, as if I were about to sleep soundly through the night; but I took care to abstain from closing an eye, though the temptation was very great to do so; especially as I was entertained from the bed of my little companion with a sort of music, which, however unmelodious, was very soporific.

I had previously ascertained, that at one o'clock in the morning the king's ordinary courier was expected to pass from Verdun; and, consequently, that somebody would sit up in the inn to provide for his accommodation. At midnight, therefore, I rose; and, waking Achilles, bade him dress himself, and carry down the bags, all of which we executed with the most marvellous silence, paid the landlord, who was sleeping by the fire, saddled our own horses, and very soon were far upon the road to Verdun, laughing over the surprise which our talkative companion would feel the next morning, when he woke and found us irretrievably gone. Achilles thought it a very good joke, and I a very happy deliverance; and the dawn broke and found us congratulating ourselves still: but what was my horror and surprise, when, turning my head in the grey light of the morning, I saw the brown pourpoint and the funnel-shaped riding boots, and the strong little horse, and the detestable little man, not a hundred yards behind me, cantering on as composedly as if nothing had occurred to separate him for a moment from my fortunate face, as he called it.

"Ho, ho!" cried he, as he rode up, "I am not a man to force my society upon any one; but I must say, it was a very ungentlemanlike thing to get up in the night, and leave me behind, without so much as giving me warning, or wishing me good evening; and I have ridden all this way, sir, to tell you so."

We had already passed Clermont en Argonne, and were in the heart of the wood that stretches round the village of Domballe, and which is generally called the long wood of Domballe. I knew not what might be the consequence of suffering this old man to follow me to Verdun, where it was more than probable he would meet with many persons armed with sufficient authority either to detain us, or to search our persons, should he think fit to instigate such a proceeding; but I was well aware that the life or death, the safety or destruction, of many of the first persons in the realm depended on my passing free, and, therefore, I took my determination at once. Glancing up and down the road, to see that all was clear, I suddenly turned my horse upon him, caught his bridle-rein with one hand, and his collar with the other, and attempted to pull him off his horse. But I soon found that I had to do with one who, though weak in comparison with myself, was nevertheless skilful in the management of his horse and the use of his arms.

In spite of my efforts, he contrived to bring his horse's head round, to shake off my grasp, and drawing his sword, to stand upon the defensive in so masterly a manner, that the farther attack became a matter of no small difficulty.

I was now, however, too far committed to recede; but while I considered the best means of mastering without injuring him, he seemed to think I was daunted, and cried out, in a jeering tone, "Ho, ho! your fortunate face is likely to get scratched, if you come near me. Better ride on to see your aunt at Metz; or back to Paris, and persuade the Cardinal to give you a place. See that it be not in the Bastile, though."

"Ride in, Achilles, on your side," cried I, "while I ride in on mine. Quick, we have no time to lose."

No sooner, however, did the old spy hear this order, and see it likely to be executed, than turning his horse back towards Clermont, he gave him full rein, and spurred off at all speed. This did not very well answer my purpose, and dashing my spurs into my beast's sides, I made him spring on like a deer, overtook the fugitive before he had gone twenty yards, and once more catching his collar, brought him fairly to the ground. It was no longer difficult to master his sword, and this being done, he begged most pitifully for mercy.

"Mercy you shall have," replied I; "but, by Heaven! I will no longer be teased with such detestable persecution. 'Tis insupportable, that a peaceable man cannot ride along the high road on his own affairs, without having a chattering old dotard sticking to him like a horse-leech!"

Achilles had by this time ridden up, and taking some strong cord which he happened to have with him, I pinioned the arms of my indefatigable pursuer; and, leading him a little way into the wood, I tied him tight to a tree, near a pile of faggots, which showed that the spot was so far frequented, that he would not be left many hours in such an unpleasant situation. My only object was to get rid of him; and this being effected, I again mounted my horse, and pursued my journey to Verdun, though, as I went, I could not help every now and then turning my head and looking down the road, not a little apprehensive of seeing the brown pourpoint and funnel-shaped boots pursuing me once more.

I arrived, however, unannoyed; and notwithstanding the prayers and entreaties of Achilles, that I would but stay a quarter of an hour to satisfy the cravings of an empty stomach, I instantly haled one of the flat boats that lie below the bridge. The little man judging of my intentions, spurred his horse as quick as light up to a *traiteur's* on the opposite side of the way; and, before I had concluded a bargain with the boatman to take us and our two horses to Sedan, he had returned with an immense roasted capon and half a yard of bread.

Once in the boat, and drifting down the Meuse, I felt myself in safety; and a full current and favourable wind bore us rapidly to Sedan.

It was night, however, before we arrived, and we found the gates closed and drawbridge raised; and all the most rigorous precautions taken to prevent the entrance of any unknown person into the town during the night.

"If you will disembark, sir," said the boatman, "and go round to the land-gate, they will soon let you in; for there are parties of fifty and sixty arriving every day; and Sedan will be too small to hold them before long. However, they refuse no one admittance, for they say the Count will soon take the field."

"Take the field!" said I, "and what for, pray?"

"Ah, that I don't know," answered the boatman; "folks say it is to dethrone the Cardinal, and make the King prime-minister."

Whether this was a jest or a blunder, I did not well know; but bidding the man put me on shore, I led out my roan, and mounting on the bank, rode round to a little hamlet which had gathered on each side of the road, at about a hundred yards from the Luxembourg gate. As I was going to inquire at one of the houses, I saw a sentinel thrown out as far as the foot of the glacis, and riding up to him, I asked if admission was to be procured that night. He replied in the affirmative, and proceeding to the gate, I was soon permitted to enter, but immediately my bridle was seized on each side by a pikeman; and the same being performed upon Achilles, we were led on to a small guard-house, where we found a sleepy officer of the watch, who asked, with a true official drawl, "Whom seek you in the good town of Sedan, and what is your business here?"

"I seek his Highness the Count de Soissons," replied I; "and my business with him is to speak on subjects that concern himself alone."

"Your name and rank?" demanded the officer.

"Louis de Bigorre, Count de l'Orme," replied I; "and this is my servant, Achilles Lefranc."

"We shall soon have need of Achilles," said the officer, grinning. "I wish, Monsieur le Comte, that you had brought a score or two such, though he seems but a little one.--Mouchard, guide these two gentlemen up to the castle. There is a pass."

There is almost always something sad and gloomy in the aspect of a strange town at night. We seem in a dark, melancholy world, where every step is amongst unknown objects, all wrapped up in a cold repulsive obscurity; and I felt like one of the spirits of the unburied, on the hopeless borders of Styx, as I walked on amidst the tall, dark houses of Sedan, which, as far as any interest that I had in them, were but so many ant-hills. Lighted by a torch that the soldier who guided us carried, and followed, as I soon perceived, by two other guards, we were conducted to the higher part of the town, where the citadel is situated; and there, after innumerable signs and countersigns, I was at last admitted within the walls, but not suffered to proceed a step in advance, till such time as my name had been sent in to the principal officer on guard.

I was thus detained half an hour, at the end of which time a page, splendidly dressed, appeared, and conducted me to the interior of the building, with a display of reverence and

politeness which augured well as to my farther reception. Achilles followed along the turnings and windings of the citadel, till we came to a chamber, through the open door of which a broad light streamed out upon the night, while a hundred gay voices chattered within, mingled with the ringing, careless laugh of men who, cutting off from themselves the regrets of the past, and the fears of the future, live wise and happy in the existence of the day.

"If you will do me the honour, sir," said the page, turning to my little attendant, "to walk into that room, you will find plenty of persons who will make you welcome to Sedan, while I conduct your master to another chamber."

Achilles bowed to the ground, and answered the page in a speech compounded suddenly from twenty or thirty tragedies and comedies; and though, to confess the truth, it hung together with much the same sort of uniformity as a beggar's coat, yet the attendant seemed not only satisfied, but astonished, and made me, as master of such a learned Theban, a lower reverence than ever, while he begged me to follow him.

Meet it as one will, there is always a degree of anxiety attached to the first encounter with a person on whom our fate in any degree depends, and I caught my heart beating even as I walked forward towards the apartments of the Count de Soissons. We mounted a flight of steps, and at the top entered an antechamber, where several inferior attendants were sitting, amusing themselves at various games. In the room beyond, too, the same sort of occupation seemed fully as much in vogue; for, of twenty gentlemen that it contained, only two were engaged in conversation, with some written papers between them; while all the rest were rolling the dice, or dealing the cards, with most industrious application. Several, however, suffered their attention to be called off from the mighty interests of their game, and raising their heads, gazed at me for a moment as I passed through the room; and then addressed themselves to their cards again, with a laugh or an observation on the new-comer, which, with the irritable susceptibility of youth, I felt very well inclined to resent, if I could have found any specious plea for offence.

The page still advanced; and, throwing open a door on the other side of the room, led me through another small antechamber, only tenanted by a youth who was nodding over a book, to a door beyond, which he opened for me to pass, and left me to go in alone.

The room which I entered was a large, lofty saloon, hung with rich tapestry, and furnished with antique chairs and tables, the dark hues of which, together with the sombre aspect of the carved oak plafond, gave a gloomy air of other days to the whole scene, so that I could have fancied myself carried back to the reign of Francis I. A large lamp, containing several lights, hung by a chain from the ceiling, and immediately under this, leaning back in a capacious easy chair, sat a gentleman with a book in his hand, which he was reading, and evidently enjoying, for at the moment we entered he was laughing till the tears rolled over his cheeks. As soon as he heard a step, however, he laid down his book, and turned towards the door, struggling to compose his countenance into some degree of gravity. As I advanced, he rose and addressed me with that frank and pleasing affability which is the best and surest key to the human heart.

"Count Louis de Bigorre, I believe?" he said; "you catch me in an occupation which the proverb attributes to fools--laughing by myself; but with such a companion as Sancho Panza, one may be excused, though the same jest has made my eyes water a hundred times. However, be you most welcome, for you have been a long-expected guest at Sedan. Yet now you are arrived," he added, "however great the pleasure may be to me, perhaps it would have been better for yourself had you remained absent."

I replied, as a matter of course, that I could not conceive anything better for myself, than the honour of being attached to the Count de Soissons.

"Heaven only knows," said he, "what may be the event to you or me. But sit down, and tell me when you left Paris--whom you saw there--and what news was stirring in that great capital?"

"I have been four days on the road," replied I, bringing forward one of the smaller chairs, so as to be sufficiently near the prince to permit the conversation to flow easily, without approaching to any degree of familiar proximity. "Perhaps," I continued, "as I rode my own horses, I might not have had the honour of seeing your highness till to-morrow, had I not found it necessary to hurry forward to avoid a disagreeable companion."

"How so?" demanded the Count. "I hope no attempt was made to impede your progress hither; for if that has been the case, it is time that I should look to my communications with my other friends in France."

I gave the Count a somewhat detailed account of my adventures on the road, that he might judge what measures were necessary to insure the secrecy of his correspondence with Paris.

"So," cried he, laughing, "you have met with an old friend of ours here, Jean le Hableur, as he is called. He is one of the Cardinal's most daring and indefatigable spies; and few are there who have had address and courage enough to baffle him as you have done. He traced my poor friend Armand de Paul to the very gates of Sedan, found out that he was carrying despatches to me, filched a letter from his person containing much that should have remained secret, and having made himself acquainted with his name, laid such information against him, that Armand, at his

return to Paris, was instantly arrested and thrown into the Bastile. Why, the whole country between Verdun and Paris is so famous, or rather infamous, from his continual presence, that no one here dare pass by that road for fear of meeting with *Jean le Hableur*. You should have gone by Mezières: but where are these letters you speak of?"

I instantly produced them, and gave them into the hands of the count, who read the letter from the Duke of Orleans with a sort of smile that implied more scorn than pleasure. He then laid it down, saying aloud, with rather a bitter emphasis, "My good cousin of Orleans!" He then perused the epistle of Monsieur de Retz, and from time to time as he did so turned his eyes upon me, as if comparing the character which he therein found written down, with those ideas which he had already begun to form of me himself, from that outward semblance that almost always finds means to prejudice even the wisest and most cautious. When he had concluded, he rose and walked once or twice across the saloon, thoughtfully running his hand up and down the broad rich sword-belt which hung across his breast, which I afterwards found was habitual with him, when any consideration occupied him deeply.

I had risen when he rose, but still stood near the table, without, however, turning my eyes towards it; for the letter of the Duke of Orleans lying open upon it, I did not choose to be suspected of even wishing to know its contents.

"Sit, sit, Count Louis!" said the prince, resuming his seat, and then adding in a serious tone, but one of great kindness, "Monsieur de Retz, I find, has not made you aware of all the circumstances of my present situation; and perhaps has done wisely to leave that communication to myself. From the great friendship and esteem--I may say affection--with which my mother regards yours, I had not a moment's hesitation in saying, that if you would join me here, you should have the very first vacant post in my household, suitable to your own high rank and the antiquity of your family. Since then, the place of first gentleman of my bedchamber is void, and I have reserved it for you; but as that is a situation which brings you so near my own person, an unlimited degree of confidence is necessary between us. Your rank, your family, the high name of your father and grandfather, the admirable character which my mother attributes to yours, all seem to vouch that you are--that you must be--everything noble and estimable; but still there are two or three circumstances which you must explain to me, before I can feel justified in trusting you with that entire confidence I speak of. Monsieur de Retz says, you have given him your history, which is a strange one--though how that can be, I do not know, for you are but a young man, and can have, I should imagine, but little to tell. He says, farther, that he met with you by accident, and seems to hint that, when he did so, you had not intended to join me here, as my mother informed me you would. He insinuates, also, that you were somewhat indiscreet towards him, in speaking of your own affairs. Explain all this to me, for there is something evidently to be told. Make me your confidant without reserve, and, in return, I will confide to you secrets perhaps of greater importance. If you have nothing to tell but youthful errors, or imprudence, speak without fear, as you would to a friend and brother; but," he added more gravely, "if there is anything which affects your honour--which, I may say, I am sure there is not--I ask no confidence of the kind."

"Had your highness not required it," replied I, "I should not have presumed to intrude my private affairs upon your attention; but now that I find you, most justly, think it right to assure yourself of the character of one to whom you design the honour of being near your person, I may be permitted to express what happiness and consolation I feel, in being allowed to repose all my griefs and misfortunes in the bosom of a prince universally beloved and esteemed." When I spoke thus I did not flatter; and I concluded by giving as brief a sketch, but as accurate a one as possible, of all the events which fill the foregoing pages of these memoirs. "I will own, my lord," I added, "that I told a part of this story to Monsieur de Retz, but only a small part; and that was in a moment of joy, when, after having lived lonely and miserable in a large city, for upwards of a month, I suddenly found that I was expected and would be welcomed by a prince possessed of a treasure which few princes, I am afraid, can boast--a generous and a feeling heart. I was perhaps indiscreet in communicating even a part to any one but your Highness; but you will not find that in your service, I will be either indiscreet or unfaithful."

"I believe you," said the Count, "on my honour, I believe you; and De Retz was too hasty in even calling you indiscreet; for your conduct towards our friend Jean le Hableur proves sufficiently that you can keep counsel. Your history has interested me more than I will tell you at present. I feel for all you have suffered, and I would not for the world barter that power of feeling for others, against the most tranquil stoicism. Sympathy, however, though always agreeable to him that excites it, is little pleasing to him who feels it, without he can follow it up by some service to the person by whom it has been awakened. I will try whether that cannot be the case with you;--but you are tired with your long journey, and the night wears. Ho, without there! send Monsieur de Varicarville hither. We will talk more to-morrow, Monsieur de l'Orme, since such is the name you choose."

I rose to depart, but at the same time one of the gentlemen whom I had seen in the outer chamber, conversing while the rest were gaming, entered, and the Count introduced me to him, begging him to show me all kindness and attention, as a person whom he himself esteemed and loved.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The manners of Monsieur de Varicarville were at once simple and elegant--there was none of the superfluous hyperbole of courts; there was little even of the common exaggeration of society, in anything he said. He neither expressed himself *ravished* to make my acquaintance, nor *delighted* to see me; all he said was, that he would do everything that depended upon him, to make me comfortable during my stay at Sedan. And thus I always found him afterwards--neither what is in general called blunt, which is more frequently rude, nor what is usually called polite, which is in general hollow. He had too much kindness of heart ever to offend, and too much sincerity ever to flatter. But the goodness of his disposition, and the native grace of his demeanour, gave, conjoined, that real *bienséance*, of which courtly politeness is but an unsubstantial shadow. Poor Varicarville! I owe thee such a tribute, best and most excellent of friends! And though no epitaph hangs upon the tomb where thou sleepest, in the hearts of all who knew thee thy memory is treasured and beloved.

After a few words of kindness, and having received the note addressed to him from the Abbé de Retz, he gave me into the hands of the Count's *maître d'hôtel*, telling him that I was the gentleman who had been so long expected; and desiring him to see that I wanted nothing, till such time as I was sufficiently familiarized with the place and its customs to take care of myself. He then left me, and I was conducted to a neat chamber with an anteroom, containing three truckle beds for lackeys, a small writing or dressing cabinet, and several other conveniences, which I had hardly expected in a castle so completely full as the citadel of Sedan appeared to be. Before the *maître d'hôtel* left me, I requested that my horses might be taken care of, and that my servant might be sent to me, hinting at the same time, that if he brought me a cup of wine and something to eat, I should not at all object, as I had tasted nothing all day except a wing of the capon which Achilles had carried off from Verdun. My little attendant soon appeared, loaded with a great many more provisions than I needed, and congratulating both himself and me upon our sudden transposition from Paris, and the meagre diet we had there observed, to such a land of corn, wine, and oil.

While I was undressing, some thoughts would fain have intruded, which I was very sure would have broken up my rest for the night. The agitation of being in new, strange scenes, acting with people of whom I yet knew hardly anything, and involved in schemes which at best were hazardous, was quite enough to make sleep difficult, and I felt very certain, that if I let my mind rest one moment on the thought of Helen, and of the circumstances in which she might at that moment be placed, all hope of repose--mental repose, at least--was gone--and where is any exercise so exhausting to the body, as that anxious occupation of the mind? The next morning I was hardly awake, when Monsieur de Varicarville entered my chamber, and informed me that Monsieur le Comte wished to see me; and dressing myself as fast as possible, I hurried to the Prince's apartments, where I found him still in bed. Varicarville left us, and the Count made me sit down by his bedside.

"I have been thinking, De l'Orme," said he, "over the history you gave me last night, and I again assure you that I sympathize not a little with you. I am much older than you, and the first hasty torrent of passion has passed away at my time of life; but I can still feel, and know, that love such as you profess towards this young lady, whom your mother has educated, is not a passion easily to be rooted out. Nor is the death of her brother by your hand an insurmountable obstacle. She evidently does not know it herself; and it would be a cruel piece of delicacy in you either to let her know it, or to sacrifice both her happiness and your own for such a scruple."

The picture of Helen in the arms of her brother's murderer, and the horror she would feel at his every caress, if she did but know that he was so, rose up frightfully before my imagination, as the Count spoke; and, without replying, I covered my eyes with my hands, as if to shut the image out.

"This is an age, Monsieur de l'Orme," said the Count, "in which few people would suffer, as you seem to do, for having shed their fellow-creature's blood; and yet, I would not have you feel less. Feel, if you will, but still govern your feelings. Every one in this world has much to suffer; the point of wisdom is to suffer well. But think over what I have said. Time may soon bring about a change in the face of affairs. If fortune smiles upon me, I shall soon have the power of doing greater things than obtaining letters of nobility for your fair lady's father. Thus the only substantial objection to your marriage will be removed. From what you said of the house where you last saw her, and the liveries of the servants, it must have been the hotel of the Maréchal de Chatillon; and the youth whose conversation you overheard was probably his nephew; but fear not for that. He is a hair-brained youth, little capable of winning the heart of a person such as you describe. The only thing that surprises me is, that Arnault, her father, should have acquired any degree of intimacy with so proud a man as Chatillon; but that very circumstance will be some excuse for asking nobility for him; and the favour will come with the more grace, as Chatillon is

somewhat a personal enemy of my own."

I thanked the Prince for his kind intentions, though I saw no great likelihood of their fulfilment, and fancied that, like the cottager in the fairy tale, Monsieur le Comte imagined himself a great conqueror, and gave away crowns and sceptres, though he had not two roods of land himself. But I was mistaken: the Count's expectations were much more likely to be accomplished than I had supposed, as I soon perceived, when he began to explain to me his views and situation.

When a man's mind is in doubt upon any subject, and he has heard reiterated a thousand times the various reasonings of his friends, without being able to choose his part determinately, it is wonderful with what eagerness he seeks for any new opinion to put him out of suspense--the most painful situation in which the human mind can remain. Thus the Count de Soissons, after having entertained me shortly with my own affairs, entered full career upon his; and briefly touching upon the causes which originally compelled him to quit the court of France, and retire to Sedan, he proceeded:--

"Here I would willingly have remained quiet and tranquil, till the course of time brought some change. I neither sought to return to a court where the king was no longer sovereign, nor to cabal against the power of a minister upheld by the weakness of the monarch. All I required was to be left at peace in this asylum, where I could be free from the insult and degradation which had been offered me at the court of France. I felt that I was sufficiently upholding the rights and privileges which had been transmitted to me by my ancestors, and maintaining the general cause of the nobility of France, by submitting to a voluntary exile, rather than yield to the ambitious pretensions of a misproud minister; and nothing would have induced me to raise the standard of civil war, even though the king's own good was to be obtained thereby, if Richelieu had but been content to abstain from persecuting me in my retirement. Not the persuasions of the Dukes of Vendome and La Valette, nor the entreaties of my best friend the Duke of Bouillon, nor the promises and seductions of the house of Austria, would have had any effect, had I been left at peace: but no! never for a day has the cardinal ceased to use every measure in his power to drive me to revolt. The truth is this: he calculates upon the death of my cousin Louis, and upon seizing on the regency during the dauphin's minority. He knows that there is no one who could and would oppose him but myself. The Duke of Orleans is hated and despised throughout France--the house of Condé is bound to the cardinal by alliance. He knows that he could not for a moment stand against me, without the king's support and authority; and he has resolved to ruin me while that support still lasts. For this purpose, he at one time offers me the command of one of the armies, that I may return and fall into his power; he at another threatens to treat me as a rebel and a traitor. He now proposes to *me*, a prince of the blood royal of France, a marriage with his upstart niece; and then menaces me with confiscation and attainder; while at the same time my friends on every side press me to shake off what they call apathy--to give my banner to the wind, and, marching upon Paris, to deliver the country, the king, and myself, of this nightmare cardinal, who sits a foul incubus upon the bosom of the state, and troubles its repose with black and frightful dreams."

As he went on, I could see that Monsieur le Comte worked himself up with his own words to no small pitch of wrath; calling to mind, one by one, the insults and injuries that the cardinal had heaped upon him, till all his slumbering anger woke up at once, and with a flashing eye, he added, "And so I will. By Heaven! I will hurl him from his usurped seat, and put an end to this tyranny, which has lasted too long." But very soon after, relapsing again into his irresolution, he asked, "What think you, Monsieur de l'Orme? Should I not be justified? Am I not called upon so to do?"

"I would pray your Highness," replied I, "not to make me a judge in so difficult a point; I am too young and inexperienced to offer an opinion where such great interests are concerned."

"Fie, fie!" cried he with a smile; "you, who have already acted the conspicuous part of member of the insurrectionary council of Catalonia! We are all inexperienced, in comparison with you.--Tell me, what had I better do?"

"If I must give an opinion, monseigneur," I replied, "I think you had better endure as long as you can, so as to leave no doubt in your own eyes--in those of France--in those of the world--that you are compelled to draw the sword for the defence of your own honour, and for the freedom of your country. But once having drawn the sword, cast away the scabbard."

"Then I am afraid the sword is half drawn already," said the Count. "There are eight thousand armed men in Sedan. Fresh troops are pouring in upon me every day. The news has gone abroad that I am about to take the field; and volunteers are flocking from every quarter to my standard. Yesterday, I had letters from at least sixty different parts of France, assuring me that, one battle gained, but to confirm the fearful minds of the populace, and that scarce a province will refrain from taking arms in my cause. De Retz is in hopes even of securing the Bastile; and he has already, with that fine art which you have remarked in him, bound to my cause thousands of those persons in the capital who in popular tumults, guide and govern the multitude. I mean the higher class of paupers--the well-educated, the well-dressed, sometimes even the well-born, who are paupers the more, because they have more wants than the ostensible beggar; these De Retz has found out in thousands, has visited them in private, relieved their wants, soothed their pride, familiarized himself with their habits and wishes, and, in short, has raised up a party for me

which almost insures me the capital."

This last part of the Count's speech instantly let me into the secret of Monsieur de Retz's first visit to me. My good landlady's tongue had probably not been idle concerning what she conceived my necessitous situation; and, upon the alert for all such cases of what Monsieur le Comte called higher pauperism, De Retz had lost no time in seeking to gain me, as he had probably gained many others, by a display of well-timed and discriminating charity.

God knows, I was not a man to look upon wealth and splendour as a virtue in others, nor to regard misfortune and poverty as a vice; and yet, with one of those contradictory weaknesses with which human nature swarms, I felt inexpressibly hurt and mortified at having been taken for a beggar myself.

Monsieur le Comte saw a sudden flush mount up into my cheek, and judging from his own great and noble heart, he mistook the cause. "I see what you think, Monsieur de l'Orme," said he; "you judge it mean to work with such tools; but you are wrong. In such an enterprise as this, it is my duty to my country to use every means, to employ all measures, to insure that great and decisive preponderance, which will bring about success, without any long protracted and sanguinary struggle."

I assured him that I agreed with him perfectly, and that I entertained no such thoughts as he suspected. "So far from it," replied I, "that if your highness will point out to me any service I can render you, be it of the same kind you have just mentioned, or not, you will find me ready to obey you therein, with as much zeal as Monsieur de Retz."

"There is a candour about you, my good De l'Orme," replied the Count, "which I could not doubt for a moment, if I would: but what would all my sage counsellors say--the suspicious Bouillon, the obdurate Bardouville--if I were to intrust missions of such importance to one of whom I know so little?--one who, they might say, was only instigated to seek me by a temporary neglect of Richelieu, and who would easily be led to join the other party, by favour and preferment?"

"I am not one to commit such treachery, my lord," replied I, hastily. "I am ready to swear before God, upon his holy altar, neither to abandon nor betray your Highness.

"Nay, nay," said the Count de Soissons, smiling at my heat, "swear not, my dear count! Unhappily, in our days, the atmosphere which surrounds that holy altar you speak of, is so thick with perjuries, that an honest man can hardly breathe therein. I doubt you not, De l'Orme; your word is as good to me as if you swore a thousand oaths; and I am much inclined to give you a commission of some importance, both because I know I can rely upon your wit and your honour, and because your person is not so well known in Paris as the other gentlemen of my household. But to return to what we were saying; still give me your opinion about drawing the sword, as you have termed it; ought I, or ought I not?"

"By my faith, your Highness," replied I, "I think it is drawn already, as you yourself have admitted."

"Not so decidedly," answered the Count, "but that it can be sheathed again; and if this cardinal, alarmed at these preparations, as I know he is, will but yield such terms of compromise as may insure my own safety and that of my companions, permit the thousands of exiles who are longing for their native country to return, and secure the freedom and the peace of France, far, far be it from me ever to shed one drop of Gallic blood."

"But does not your highness still continue your preparations, then?" demanded I.

"Most assuredly," replied the Count. "The matter must come to a conclusion speedily, either by a negotiation and treaty, which will insure us our demands, or by force of arms; and therefore it is well to be prepared for the latter, though most willing to embrace the former alternative."

"And does the minister seem inclined to treat?" asked I.

"He always pretends that he is so," replied Monsieur de Soissons. "But who can judge of what his inclinations are by what he says? his whole life is a vizard--as hollow--as false--as unlike the real face of the man. We all know how negotiations can be protracted; and he has used every means to keep this in suspense till he could free himself from other embarrassments. He asked our demands, and then misunderstood them; and then required a fuller interpretation of particular parts; and then mistook the explanation--then let a month or two slip by; and then again required to know our demands, as if he had never heard them; and then began over again the same endless train of irritating delay. But, however, there is one of our demands which we will never relinquish, and which he will never grant, except he be compelled, which is the solemn condemnation and relinquishment of all special commissions."

"I am not very well aware of the meaning of that term," said I: "may I crave your highness to explain it to me?"

"I do not wonder at your not knowing it," answered the Count: "it is an iniquity of his own invention, totally unknown to the laws of France. When any one was accused of a crime formerly,

the established authorities of the part of the country in which it was averred to have been committed took cognisance of the matter, and the accused was tried before the usual judges; but now, on the contrary, on any such accusation, this cardinal issues his special commission to various judges named by himself, uniformly his most devoted creatures, and often the personal enemies of the accused. Under such an abuse, who can escape? False accusers can always be procured; and where the judges are baser still, justice is out of the question. The law of France is no longer administered, but the personal resentments of Richelieu."

The conversation continued for some time in the same course, and turned but little to the advantage of the minister. The Count de Soissons had real and serious cause of indignation against Richelieu, on his own account; and this made him see all the public crimes of that great but cruel and vindictive minister in the most unfavourable light. The stimulus of neglect had, in my mind, also excited feelings which made me lend an attentive ear to the grievances and wrongs that the prince was not slow in urging, and my blood rose warmly against the tyranny which had driven so many of the great and noble from their country, and spilt the most generous blood in France upon the scaffold.

I have through life seen self-interest and private pique bias the judgment of the wisest and the best intentioned; and I never yet in all the wide world met with a man who, in judging of circumstances wherein he himself was any way involved, did not suffer himself to be prejudiced by one personal feeling or another. The most despotic lords of their own passions have always some favourite that governs them themselves. Far be it from me, then, to say, I was not very willing and easy to be convinced that the man who had neglected me had also abused his power, tyrannized over his fellow-subjects, and wronged both his king and his country. I was in the heat of youth, soon prepossessed, and already prejudiced; and whatever I might think afterwards, I, at the moment, looked upon the enterprise which was contemplated by Monsieur le Comte as one of the most noble and justifiable that had ever been undertaken to free one's native country from a tyrant.

There was also in the manners of the Count de Soissons that inexpressible charm which leaves the judgment hardly free. It is impossible to say exactly in what it consisted. I have seen many men with the same princely air and demeanour, and with the same suavity of manner, who did not in the least possess that sort of fascination which, like the cestus of the goddess, won all hearts for him that was endowed with it. I was not the only one that felt the charm. Everybody that surrounded the prince--everybody that, in any degree, came in contact with him, were all affected alike towards him. Even the common multitude experienced the same; and the shouts with which the populace of Paris greeted his appearance on some day of ceremony, are said to have been the first cause of the Cardinal's jealous persecution of him. One saw a fine and noble spirit, a generous and feeling heart shining through manners that were at once dignified while they were affable, and warm though polished; and it might be the conviction of his internal rectitude, and his perfect sincerity, which added the master-spell to a demeanour eminently graceful. Whatever it was, the fascination on my mind was complete; and I hardly know what I would have refused to undertake in the service of such a prince. At the end of our conversation, scarcely knowing that I did so, I could not help comparing in my own mind my present interview with the Count de Soissons, and that which I had formerly had with the Cardinal de Richelieu; and how strange was the difference of my feelings at the end of each! I left the minister, cold, dissatisfied, dispirited; and I quitted the Count de Soissons with every hope and every wish ardent in his favour; with all my best feelings devoted to his service, and my own expectations of the future raised and expanded by my communion with him, like a flower blown fully out by the influence of a genial day of summer.

On leaving the Count's apartments, I passed through a room in which I found Monsieur de Varicarville with several other gentlemen, to whom he introduced me; and we then proceeded to the grand hall of the château, where we were met by the personal suite of the Duke of Bouillon, who divided the interior of the citadel equally with his princely guest. The duke had this morning made some twinges of the gout an excuse for taking his breakfast with the Duchess in his own apartment, and the Count did so habitually; but for the rest of the party, two long tables were spread, each containing fifty covers, which were not long in finding employers. The table soon groaned with the breakfast, and every one drew his knife and fell to, with the more speed, as it had been announced that the tilt-yard of the castle would be open at eight of the clock, to such as chose to run at the ring. After which there would be a *course des têtes*. Neither of these exercises I had ever seen, and consequently was not a little eager for the conclusion of the meal, although I could but hope to be a spectator.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Immediately after breakfast I returned to the apartments of the Count de Soissons, to attend him with the rest of his suite to the tilt-yard; and in a few minutes after was called to his chamber by his valet. I found him already dressed, and prepared to take his share in the sports. He was fitting himself with a right-hand glove of strong buff leather, which covered his arm to the elbow, and in regard to the exact proportions of which, he seemed as curious as a young lordling of a new pourpoint.

"What, De l'Orme," cried he, "not gloved! You can never hold your lance without such a supplementary skin as this. Choose one from this heap; and see that the flap fall clear over the inner part of your fore-arm."

I endeavoured to excuse myself, by informing his highness that I was quite unused to such exercises; but he would not hear of my being merely a spectator, and replied, laughing--"Nonsense, nonsense! I must see how you ride, and how you use your sword, to know whether I can give you a regiment of cavalry with safety. Ho, Gouvion! order Monsieur de l'Orme's horse to be saddled instantly!"

There was of course no way of opposing the Count's command; and though I was very much afraid that I should do myself no great credit, I was obliged to submit, and accompanied Monsieur le Comte to the little court at the foot of the staircase, with somewhat nervous feelings at the idea of exhibiting myself before two or three hundred people, in exercises which I had never even seen. I had quite sufficient vanity to be timid, where failure implied the slightest touch of ridicule.

The tilt-yard consisted of a large piece of level ground, within the walls, of perhaps a couple of acres in extent, the centre of which was enclosed with barriers surrounding an oblong space of about two hundred feet in length by fifty in breadth.

The distance was so small from the court before the Count's apartments to the barriers, that he had sent on the horses, and walked thither, followed by myself and about a dozen other gentlemen of his suite. As we approached, the people who had assembled to witness the exercises, and amongst whom were a number of soldiers, received the Count with a shout sufficiently indicative of his popularity, and separating respectfully as he advanced, permitted him to meet a small knot of the more distinguished exiles, who had flocked to his standard at the first report of his having determined to take arms against the cardinal.

The Count proceeded onward, bowing to the people in recognition of their welcome, with that bland smile which sits so gracefully on the lips of the great; and then advancing with somewhat of a quicker step, as he perceived the group of nobles I have mentioned hurrying to meet him, he spoke to them all, but selected two for more particular attention. The first was a man of about fifty; and, after I had heard him named as the Duke of Vendome, I fancied I could discover in his face a strong likeness to the busts of Henri Quatre. The second was the Duke of Bouillon; and certainly never did I behold a countenance which, without being at all handsome, possessed so pre-eminently intellectual an expression. To me it was not pleasing, nor was it what is called shrewd--nay, nor thoughtful; and yet it was all mind--mind quick to perceive, and strong to repel, and steady to retain, and bold to uphold. The whole was more impressive than agreeable, and gave the idea of all the impulses springing from the brain, and none arising in the heart.

After he had returned the embrace of the Count de Soissons, his quick dark eye instantly glanced to me with an inquiring look.

The Prince saw and interpreted his glance; and making me a sign to advance, he introduced me to his ally as Louis Count de l'Orme, only son of the noble house of Bigorre, and first gentleman of his bedchamber. The Duke bowed low, and, with what I judged rather an unnecessary ostentation of politeness, welcomed me to Sedan; while the Count, with a smile that seemed to imply that he read clearly what was passing in his friend's mind, said in a low tone, "Do not be afraid, Bouillon: if he is not for you, he is not against you."

"He that is not for me," replied the Duke of Bouillon, with that irreverent use of scriptural expressions which was so common in those days--"he that is not for me is against me. I love not neutrals. Give me the man who has spirit enough to take some determinate side, and support it with his whole soul."

All the blood in my body, I believe, found its way up into my cheek; but I remained silent; and the Count, seeing that Monsieur de Bouillon was in an irritable mood, and judging that I was not of a disposition patiently to bear many such taunts as he had most undeservedly launched at me, led the way to the barriers.

Monsieur de Riquemont, the Count's chief *ecuyer*, having been appointed *mestre de camp* for the time, opened the barriers and entered the field first, followed by a crowd of valets and *estaffiers*, carrying in a number of lances and pasteboard blocks, made to represent the heads of Moors and Saracens, which were deposited in the middle of the field. The Prince then mounted his horse, and followed by the Dukes of Bouillon, Vendôme, and La Valette, rode through the barrier, turning to me as he did so, and calling me to keep near him.

I instantly sprang upon my horse, which little Achilles held ready for me, and galloped after

the count. All those whose rank entitled them to pass did the same. A certain number of grooms and lackeys also were admitted, to hold the horses, amongst whom Achilles contrived to place himself; and the barriers being closed, the rest of the people ranged themselves without, which was indeed the best situation for viewing the exercises.

At about two-thirds of the course from the entrance, raised above one of the posts which upheld the wooden railing of the enclosure, was a high pillar of wood, with a cross-bar at the top, in form of a gallows, and which was in fact called *la potence*. From this was suspended a ring, hanging about a foot below the beam; and, during the course, one of the Prince's domestics was mounted on the barrier, supporting himself by the pillar of wood, to ascertain precisely whether those who missed hitting the inside of the ring, and so carrying it away, might not touch its edge, which was counted as an inferior point.

The *mestre de camp* now arranged us in the order in which we were to run, and I was glad to find that I should be preceded by five cavaliers, from each of whom I hoped to receive a lesson. The Prince, of course, took the lead; and I observed that a great deal of dexterity was necessary to couch the lance with grace and ease. After pausing for a moment with the lance erect, he made a *demi-volte*, and, gradually dropping the point, brought his elbow slowly to his side; while putting his horse into a canter, and then into a gallop, he kept the point of the weapon steadily above the right ear of his horse, exactly on a line with his own forehead, till coming near the pillar with his charger at full speed, he struck the ring and bore it away. The marker now cried loudly, "*Un dedans! un dedans!*" and some of the *estaffiers* ran to place another ring.

In the mean while, amidst the applauses which multitudes always so unscrupulously bestow upon success, the count, without looking behind, rode round the field, slowly raising the point of his lance, on which he still bore the ring he had carried away. The Duke of Bouillon, notwithstanding his gout, proceeded next to the course; and, without taking any great pains respecting the grace of his movements, aimed his lance steadily, and carried away the ring. The Duke of Vendôme had declined running; and Monsieur de la Valette, though managing his horse and his lance with the most exquisite grace, passed the ring without hitting it at all. De Varicarville missed the centre, but struck it on the outside, when the marker cried loudly, "*Une atteinte! line atteinte!*" and the Marquis de Bardouville, who, like a great many other very hard-headed men, was famous for such exercises, spurred on and carried it away like lightning.

It now became my turn; and I will own that I wished myself anywhere in the wide world but there. However, there was no remedy; and I was very sure that, though I might not be able to carry away, or even touch the ring, I could manage my horse as well as any man in the field. But I had forgotten, that to every such compact as that between a man and his horse, there are two parties, both of whom must be in perfect good humour. The roan horse which had borne me from Paris was an excellent strong roadster, and sufficiently well broke for all common purposes; but for such exercises as those in which both he and his master were so unwillingly engaged, he had no taste whatever. It was with the greatest difficulty, therefore, that I compelled him to make his *demi-volte*, before beginning the course. This accomplished, he galloped on steadily enough towards the pillar; but, just at the moment that I was aiming my lance to the best of my power, the *potence*, the ring, and the man standing on the railing, all seemed to catch his sight at once; and thinking it something very extraordinary, and not at all pleasant, he started sideways from the course, and dashed into the very centre of the field, scattering the *estaffiers* and valets like a flock of sheep, and treading upon the pasteboard heads of Moors and Turks with most pitiless precipitation. Spurs and bridle were all in vain; I might as well have spurred a church-steeple; and, in the end, down he came upon his haunches in the most ungraceful posture in the world, while a loud shout of laughter from the Duke of Bouillon and several others, announced that my misfortune had not afforded the smallest part of the morning's amusement.

God forgive me! I certainly could have committed more than one murder in the height of my wrath; and, digging my spurs into my horse's sides with most unjustifiable passion, till the blood streamed from them, I forced him up, and rode round to the spot where the Duke of Bouillon stood, with intentions which I had luckily time to moderate before I arrived.

I passed on, therefore, to the Count de Soissons, merely giving the duke a glance as I passed, in which he might well read what was passing in my heart. He returned it with a cold stare, and then turned to Bardouville with a sneering smile, which had nearly driven me mad.

"Your Highness sees," said I, as I came near the Count, "the unfortunate issue of my attempt to give you pleasure. Perhaps you will now condescend to excuse my farther exposing myself to the laughter of Monsieur de Bouillon and his friends."

"Fie! you are angry, my dear De l'Orme," replied the Count, with a degree of good humour I hardly deserved. "I will certainly not excuse you going on with the exercises. You managed that horse as well as such a horse could possibly be managed; and a great deal better than any of the laughers would have done: but, though a good strong beast, he is not fit for such games as these; and, therefore, as soon as I saw him start, I sent one of my grooms for a managed horse of my own, that has a mouth like velvet, and will obey the least touch of the leg. Mount, my good De l'Orme, and shame these merry fools, by showing them some better horsemanship than they can practise themselves."

The Count then, turning to the rest, kindly amused a few moments in conversation, till such

time as he saw his groom trotting down the beautiful charger he proposed to lend me. I made a sign to Achilles to hold the horse I was upon; and alighting, the moment the other passed the barrier, I laid my hand lightly on his shoulder, and sprang into the saddle without touching the stirrup. The courses recommenced, and Monsieur le Comte again carried away the ring: not so the Duke of Bouillon, who merely touched it on the outer edge. The Duke de la Valette also gained an *atteinte*; and both Varicarville and Bardouville carried it away.

As may be supposed, I had watched narrowly every motion of the other cavaliers; and had remarked, and endeavoured to appropriate, all that sat gracefully upon them. Habituated from my infancy to almost every other corporeal exercise and game, I found no great difficulty in acquiring this; and mounted as I was upon a horse that seemed almost instinctively to know its rider's will, and obey it, I had every advantage. The noble animal performed his *demi-volte* with the utmost grace and precision; and now, finding by the very touch of the bridle that I had a different creature to deal with, I easily balanced the lance, as I had seen the Count de Soissons, kept the point over my horse's right ear, and, somewhat imitating the swiftness with which De Bardouville had run his course, I galloped on at full speed, struck the ring right in the centre, and bore it away at once.

The feelings of a multitude, unlike the feelings of most individuals, do not seem mixed and blended with each other, but each appears separate and distinct, reigns its moment, and then gives way to another, like the passions of an ardent and hasty man; and this, probably, because the sensations of all the parts of the crowd act in the aggregate, while any counteracting principle is confined to one or two, and does not appear. Thus the spectators outside the barriers, who had laughed with the Duke of Bouillon at my former failure, were as ready to triumph *with* me, as *over* me, and greeted my success with a loud shout; while suddenly bringing my horse into a walk, I proceeded round the field, slowly raising my lance with the ring still upon the point.

The Count de Soissons fixed his eyes upon me, and gave me a glance expressive of as much pleasure as if he had been the person interested; while the Duke of Bouillon looked on with an air of the most perfect indifference, and talked aloud with Bardouville upon the pleasures of a barbecued pig. Mixed feelings of indignation and triumph excited me to a pitch of exertion which brought with it greater success than I could have expected. I again carried away the ring; and, at the end of the third course, found myself only exceeded in the number of points I had made by the Count de Soissons, who had carried the ring twice, and struck it once.

The different pasteboard heads were now placed in the positions assigned for them; and the Count de Soissons, who generously entered into all my feelings, and saw that anger had made success a matter of importance to me, now beckoning me to him, bade me, in a whisper, to remark well the manœuvres of those who preceded me; and, above all things, to take care that I neither dropped my hat, nor withdrew my foot from the stirrup; as, though merely a matter of etiquette, the course was considered lost by such an occurrence. I thanked his Highness for his caution; and fixing my hat more firmly on my head, and myself more steadily in the saddle, I left him to run his course.

The heads had been placed, at various distances, along the line of the barriers. One, a most ferocious-looking Saracen, was fixed upon an iron stand at about one hundred and twenty-feet from the beginning of the course, and raised about eight feet from the ground. This was made to turn upon a pivot; and near it, in the exact centre of the course, was placed a target painted with a head of Medusa. As soon as all was arranged, the Count couched his lance and ran full speed at the Saracen; but not being hit exactly in the centre, the head turned upon its pivot, and the lance passed off.

The Prince, however, rode on; and tossing the lance to an *estaffier* who stood ready to catch it, turned with a *demi-volte* at the corner, and drawing one of his pistols from the saddle-bow, galloped towards the Medusa in the centre of the barrier. The crowd on the outside now ran in every direction; and the Count, discharging his pistol, hit the face upon the target exactly in the middle of the brow. Without pausing, he urged his horse forward; and making the same turn nearly where I stood, he came back upon the head, and fired his second pistol at it with the same success. He then made a complete *volte*, during which he replaced his pistol, drew his sword, and, galloping past the third head, which was placed upon a little mound of earth about two feet high, near the opposite barrier, he gave point with his sword in tierce, struck it on the forehead, and raising his hand in quarte, held up the head upon his sword's point.

I found that the groom who had brought down the Count's horse for me had taken care to provide pistols also; and, as the principal feats in this course were performed with weapons which I was accustomed to, I did not fear the result. The gentlemen who preceded me met with various success; but Bardouville, who was certainly the most stupid of them all in mind, was the most expert in body, and carried every point. I followed his example, and succeeded in bearing off the Saracen's head upon the point of my lance, making both my shots tell upon the head of Medusa, and bringing up the third head upon the point of my sword.

Accidental, or not accidental, my success changed the posture of affairs, for the Duke of Bouillon from that moment seemed to regard me in a very different light from that which he had done at first; and as we rode out of the barriers, he kept the Prince in close conversation, which, from the glancing of his eye every now and then towards me, I could not doubt had some reference to myself.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

On our arrival at the citadel, the two princes separated; and Monsieur le Comte retired to his own apartments, whither I followed him in company with the principal officers of his household. As he passed on into his own saloon, he made me a sign to enter also; and while a valet pulled off his boots, congratulated me upon my success in the tilt-yard. "Nor must you be discontented, De l'Orme," continued he, "because there was some little pain mingled with the first of your feats: it rendered your after-triumph the greater."

"Certainly, monseigneur," replied I, "I would rather it had not happened; but yet, of course, I do not look upon it as any very serious misfortune."

"And yet," said he, with a smile, "you looked at the time as if you felt it one. We are apt, my dear Count, to fancy in our youth that the sweet cup of life has not a drop of bitter; but we all soon discover that it is not so. With life, as with everything else, we find the bright and delightful scattered thinly amidst an immensity of baser matter. Those who seek pearls are obliged to plunge into the deep briny sea to drag them up, and even then perchance, out of every shell, ten will be worthless; but did we find pearls hanging amongst grapes, or diamonds at the roots of roses, we should value neither one nor the other as they merit. As it is, the threads of pain are woven so intimately in the web of life, that they form but one piece; and wise was the hand that ordered it so."

The Count being by this time disembarrassed of his boots, he dismissed the lackey, and then proceeded: "Now that we are alone," said he, "I will give up my homily, for I have other matter to consult you upon. This morning you said, in speaking of De Retz, that you would willingly undertake and execute for me any commission similar to that which he so dexterously exercises. Are you still so inclined?--Mark me, De l'Orme," he added suddenly, "you are bound by nothing that you said this morning. Men of a quick and ardent temperament like yours, are often led from one step to another in the heat of conversation, till they promise, and feel willing to perform at the time, many things that, upon mature consideration, they would be very sorry to undertake. Their feelings go on like the waves of the sea, each hurrying forward the one before it, till the ripple becomes a billow that dashes over every obstacle in its way. Then comes consideration, like the ebb of the tide, and their wishes flow gradually back, far from the point at which they had arrived at first. Should this be your case, you are free to retract; and I tell you beforehand, that the service upon which I would put you is one of difficulty, and also of some personal danger to yourself."

I replied by assuring the Count that what I had said in my former conversation with him, unlike most conversations on earth, contained nothing that I could wish unsaid--that my offer to serve him had originated in personal attachment, and that of course that attachment had much increased, instead of diminishing, by all that had passed during the morning. Danger and difficulty, I farther said, were hardly to be looked upon as objections, when by encountering them we could prove our sincerity; and, therefore, that he had nothing to do but point out the course he wished me to follow, and he might feel assured I would do so to the best of my abilities.

"Be it so then," replied the Count; "and I entertain no doubt of either your discretion or success. Before your arrival, I had intrusted to Monsieur de Retz all that a man of his profession could do for me in the capital; but still there is much more to be done. He has undertaken to win one part of society to our cause; but you must know that in Paris there is a complete class of men, distinct and separate from all the rest of the people, whom it concerns me much to gain, for the purpose of securing the metropolis. You will be curious to know what class I speak of:--I mean," he added with a smile, "the honourable body of bravoes, swash-bucklers, swindlers, and, in short, the whole company of those who, having no property of their own, live at the expense of others. I am credibly informed that these persons form one great body, and have certain means of corresponding and communicating with each other throughout the kingdom. The number in Paris is said to be twenty thousand. You may well look surprised; but it is an undoubted fact; and it is to gain these respectable allies that I now intend to send you back to the capital. The mission, truly, is not a very elevated one; but when I do not disdain to treat with such a body, you must not scorn to be my ambassador. In the conduct of this business, you and De Retz must be in constant correspondence; for though his clerical character stands in the way of his taking any active part in the negotiation itself, his knowledge of Paris, and all that it contains, may be of the greatest service to you in facilitating your communication with these gentry, who are not in general very fond of trusting their secrets with strangers."

The Prince was then proceeding once more to give the motives which induced him to look upon nothing as mean which could insure the most speedy termination to an enterprise on which

the fate of France depended--reasoning with all the eloquence of a man who, not very sure of being in the right, hopes to persuade himself thereof, while he is persuading another; but I assured him in reply, that I was perfectly convinced of the propriety of the conduct which he pursued, and only required to be made perfectly aware of the nature of my mission, what I was to demand, and what I might promise on his part.

"Much must be left to your own discretion," replied the Count: "the object is to insure that these men will instantly rise in my favour, on a given signal; but not to commit me to them so far, that I cannot retract should any change of circumstances induce me to abandon the enterprise."

The sketch of Monsieur le Comte, as drawn by the Marquis de St. Brie, instantly rose to my recollection at these words; and I saw how truly he had spoken, when he said, that want of resolution was the great defect of the Count's character. How dangerous such irresolution must ever be in the conduct of great undertakings was at once evident; and I almost shuddered to think what might be the possible consequences to all concerned, if the struggle that was likely to ensue could not be terminated at a blow. This, more than any other consideration, made me resolve to exert the utmost energies of my mind, in the part that was allotted to me, for the purpose of preparing everything to act upon the same point at the same moment, and produce one great and overpowering effect. I promised, therefore, to do my best, according to the views his highness entertained; and said that I doubted not of my success with the persons to whom I was sent, provided I was furnished with the necessary means to touch their hearts, through the only points in which the hearts of such men are vulnerable.

"You shall have it, De l'Orme! you shall have it!" replied the Count, "though money is one of those things of which we stand most in need. But you will not set out till to-morrow morning; and before that time, I will try to furnish you with a few thousand crowns, for I know it is absolutely necessary; especially as I trust you will, on your return, bring with you two or three hundred recruits; for should you find any of our friends the swash-bucklers, who have a grain or two more honesty than the rest, you must enlist them in our good cause, and send them one by one over to Mouzon. But now hie you to the rest till dinner; and accept, as a first earnest of my friendship, the good horse on whose back you were so successful just now. No thanks! no thanks, my good De l'Orme! Take him as he stands; and he may perhaps recall me to your memory when Louis de Bourbon is no more."

There was a touch of sadness in the Count's tone that found its way to the heart, and, like the whole of his manners, won upon the affection. It seemed to familiarise one with his inmost feelings, and any coldness in his cause would have been like a breach of confidence. A prince binds himself to his inferior, by making him the sharer of his pleasures or his follies; but he binds his inferior to him by admitting him into the solemn tabernacle of the heart.

On retiring from the prince's apartments, I felt no inclination to join any of the merry, thoughtless parties of his friends that were roving about the town and the citadel, some running to the mall, some to the tennis court, and all eager to chase away those precious hours, which man the prodigal squanders so thoughtlessly in his youth, to covet with so much avarice in his latter days. On the stairs, however, that conducted to my own apartments, I met Monsieur de Varicarville, who gave me the good morning, and stopped to speak with me. "I know not, Monsieur de l'Orme," said he, "whether I am about to take a liberty with you, but I have just seen your servant conducted to the private cabinet of the Duke of Bouillon. It appeared to me this morning that you were not inclined to attach yourself to the Duke's party; and that, from that or some other cause, he seemed somewhat ill-disposed towards you at first. I therefore presume to tell you of your servant's having gone to him, that if you did not yourself send him, you may make what inquiries you think fit. You are still young in the intrigues of this place, or I should not give you this warning."

This took place not above ten steps from my own chamber; and after thanking Varicarville for his information, I asked him to wait with me for Achilles' return, and we would question him together concerning his absence. This mark of confidence on my part opened the way for the same on the part of the Marquis; and after proceeding cautiously step by step for a few minutes, both fearful that we might betray in some degree the trust reposed in us by Monsieur le Comte, if we spoke openly, and neither wishing to intrude himself into the private opinions of the other, we gradually found that there was nothing to be concealed on either side, and that our opinions tended immediately towards the same point.

This once established, and the communication instantly became easy between us. Varicarville spoke his sentiments freely concerning the situation and character of the Count, and the schemes and wishes of the Duke of Bouillon, whose endeavours to hurry the Prince into a civil war were every day becoming more active and more successful.

"Notwithstanding the advantages which may accrue to himself," said Varicarville, "and which are certainly very many, I do believe that the duke seeks principally the good and honour of Monsieur le Comte; and did I feel sure that the event we desire could be procured by a single battle, or even a single campaign, I should not oppose him; for, an excellent soldier and even a skilful general, the Count would be almost certain to overcome the only disposable force which the cardinal could oppose to him. This, however, would not be the only arms with which the wily minister would fight him:--he would employ negotiations, treaties, and intrigues; and thus he would conquer, and even intimidate, a man who has really ten times more personal courage than

those who most eagerly urge him to war. From what you have said, I easily see that you have discovered the Prince's defect:--he has no resolution. He has the courage of a lion; but still he has not resolution. The first, to use the words of the Abbé de Retz, is an ordinary, and even a vulgar quality; the second is rare even in great men; but yet there are two situations in which it is eminently necessary--the ministry of a great country, and the chief of a conspiracy. Richelieu has it in the most eminent degree; and the man who would oppose him with success must not therein be deficient."

While he spoke, the door of the chamber opening, Achilles made his appearance, and was running up to me, when he perceived Monsieur de Varicarville, and suddenly stopped.

"What were you going to say, Achilles?" demanded I. "You may speak freely:--this is a friend."

"But what I have to say is a state secret, which I shall communicate to none but your lordship," replied the little player, with a look of vast importance. "Deep in the bottom of my profound heart will I hide it, till opportunity shall unlock the door and draw it forth from its dungeon."

Varicarville looked somewhat surprised; but I, who better understood my attendant's vein, merely replied, "You had better draw it forth immediately yourself, my good Achilles, for fear I should break the dungeon door, as you call it, and your head both in one."

"Oh, if your lordship insists," replied the little player, not displeased at the bottom of his heart to be delivered of his secret at once, "I have nothing for it but to obey. Know then, illustrious scion of a noble house, that as I was returning from that famous field, wherein you this morning covered yourself with victory, one of the domestic servants of the great and puissant Prince, Frederic Maurice, Duke of Bouillon and Sovereign of Sedan, pulled me by the tags of my doublet, and insinuated, in a low and solemn voice, that his master wanted to speak with me: to which I replied, that duty is the call which generous souls obey, and therefore that I must see whether you stood in need of anything, before I could follow him. Finding, however, that you were closeted with Monsieur le Comte, I proceeded to the lodging of the high and puissant Prince, who asked me if I were much in your private secrets. To this I answered, that I did not believe there was a thought on earth which you concealed from me."

"You were either a great fool or a great knave to say so," replied I, "and I do not very well know which."

"A knave, a knave! please your worship," replied Achilles, with a low bow. "A fool has something degrading in it. I would rather at any time be supposed to exercise the profession of Hermes than that of Æsculapius.--But listen! He next asked me how long I had been in your worship's service. On which I replied, all my life--that we had been brought up together from the cradle. My mother, I assured him, was your worship's wet-nurse, so that we were foster-brothers."

"A pretty apocrypha truly!" replied I; "but go on."

"His highness then asked me," proceeded Achilles, "whether your lordship leaned really to peace or war. To which I replied, that as yet, I believed, you were quite undecided, although your natural disposition led you to war, for which you had so strong a turn, that you must needs go fighting in Catalonia, when you had no occasion in life. At this I thought he looked pleased; but I was afraid of going any farther, for fear of committing your Excellence. So then, his majesty proceeded to say that I must try and determine you to war, and that you must try and determine Monsieur le Comte; and on the back of this he gave me at least one hundred excellent reasons why men should cut one another's throats, all which I have forgot; but doubtless your Eminence can imagine them. He then gave me a purse, not at all as a bribe, he said, but merely for the trouble he had given me; and made me promise at the same time not to reveal one word of what had passed to any one, which I vowed upon my honour and my reputation, and came away to tell your grace as fast as possible."

"And your honour and your reputation, *mon drole!*" said Varicarville, "what has become of them?"

"Oh, your worship!" replied Achilles, "I stretched them so often in my youth, that they cracked long ago; and then, instead of patching them up as many people do, which is but a sorry contrivance, and not at all safe, I threw them away altogether, and have done ever since quite as well without."

After having sent Achilles away, I consulted with Varicarville in regard to the proper course of proceeding under such circumstances.

"All you can do," replied he, "is to take no notice, and remain firm--if I understand you rightly, that you are determined to join with those who would dissuade the Count from proceeding to so dangerous an experiment as war."

"I am certainly so far determined," replied I, "that I will continue to oppose such a proceeding, till I see the Count once resolved upon it; but after that, I will, so far from endeavouring to shake his resolution, do all in my power to keep him steady in it, and to promote the success of the enterprise; for I am convinced that after that, hesitation and conflicting opinions in the party of

the Prince might bring about his ruin, but could do no good."

"Perhaps you are right," replied Varicarville, "and that is all that I could hope or require. When I see you alone with the Count, I shall now feel at ease, convinced that, as long as he continues undecided, you will continue to oppose any act of hostility to the government; and when he is decided, and the die cast, we must both do our best to make the issue successful."

Thus ended my conference with Varicarville, and nothing farther occurred during the day affecting myself personally. I heard of the arrival of several fresh parties, both from the interior of France and from the adjacent countries, which were almost peopled with French exiles; and Achilles also brought me news that the Baron de Beauvau had returned from the Low Countries, accompanied by a Spanish nobleman, as plenipotentiary from the Archduke Leopold and the Cardinal Infant of Spain; but nothing of any consequence happened till the evening, in which I was at all called to take part.

I strolled, however, through the town of Sedan; and from the labours which were hurrying forward at various points of the fortifications, I was led to conclude that the Duke of Bouillon himself anticipated but a short interval of peace. At length, as I approached an unfinished hornwork on the banks of the Meuse, a sentinel dropped his partisan to my breast, bidding me stand back; and, my walk being interrupted in that direction, I returned to the citadel and proceeded to my own chamber.

CHAPTER XL.

I was standing at the window of my bedchamber, in one of those meditative, almost sad moods, which often fill up the pauses of more active and energetic being, when the mind falls back upon itself, after the stir and bustle of great enterprises, and the silent moral voice within seems to rebuke us for the worm-like pettiness of our earthly struggles, and the vain futility of all our mortal endeavours.

Nothing could be more lovely than the scene from the window. The sun was setting over the dark forest of Ardennes, which, skirting all round the northern limits of the view, formed a dark purple girdle to the beautiful principality of Sedan; but day had only yet so far declined as to give a rich and golden splendour to the whole atmosphere, and his beams still flashed against every point of the landscape, where any bright object met them, as if they encountered a living diamond. Running from the south-east to the north were the heights of Amblemont, from the soft green summit of which, stretching up to the zenith, the whole sky was mottled with a flight of light high clouds, which caught every beam of the sinking sun, and blushed brighter and brighter as he descended. A thousand villages and hamlets with their little spires, and now and then the turrets of the châteaux, scattered through the valley, peeped out from every clump of trees. The flocks of sheep and the herds of cattle, winding along towards their folds, gave an air of peaceful abundance to the scene; and the grand Meuse wandering through its rich meadows with a thousand meanders, and glowing brightly in the evening light, added something both solemn and majestic to the whole. I was watching the progress of a boat gliding silently along the stream, whose calm waters it scarcely seemed to ruffle in its course; and, while passion, and ambition, and pride, and vanity, and the thousands of irritable feelings that struggled in my bosom during the day were lulled into tranquillity by the influence of the soft, peaceful scene before my eyes, I was thinking how happy it would be to glide through life like that little bark, with a full sail, and a smooth and golden tide, till the stream of existence fell into the dark ocean of eternity--when my dream was broken by some one knocking at my chamber-door.

Though I wished them no good for their interruption, I bade them come in; and the moment after, the Duke of Bouillon himself stood before me.

"Monsieur de l'Orme," said he, advancing, and doffing his hat, "I hope I do not interrupt your contemplations." I bowed, and begged him to be seated; and after a moment or two he proceeded: "I am happy in finding you alone; for, though certainly one is bound to do whatever one conceives right before the whole world, should chance order it so, yet of course, when one has to acknowledge one's self in the wrong, it is more pleasant to do so in private--especially," he added with a smile, "for a sovereign prince in his own castle. I was this morning, Monsieur de l'Orme, both rude and unjust towards you; and I have come to ask your pardon frankly. Do you give it me?"

Although I believed there was at least as much policy as candour in the conduct of the Duke, I did not suffer that conviction to affect my behaviour towards him, and I replied, "Had I preserved any irritation, my lord, from this morning, the condescension and frankness of your present apology would of course have obliterated it at once."

I thought I saw a slight colour mount in the Duke's cheek at the word apology; for men will do a thousand things which they do not like to hear qualified by even the mildest word that can express them; and I easily conceived, that though the proud lord of Sedan had for his own purposes fully justified me in the use of the term, it hurt his ears to hear that he had apologised to any one.

He proceeded, however: "I was, in truth, rather irritable this morning, and I hastily took up an opinion, which I since find, from the conversation of Monsieur le Comte, was totally false; namely, that you were using all your endeavours to dissuade him from the only step which can save himself and his country from ruin. Our levies were nearly made, our envoy on his very return from the Low Countries, all our plans concerted, and the Count perfectly determined, but the very day before your arrival. Now I find him again undetermined; and though I am convinced I was in error, yet you will own that it was natural I should attribute this change to your counsels."

"Your Excellence attributed to me," I replied, with a smile, at the importance wherewith a suspicious person often contrives to invest a circumstance, or a person who has really none--"Your Excellence attributed to me much more influence with Monsieur le Comte than I possess: but, if it would interest you at all to hear what are the opinions of a simple gentleman of his Highness's household, and by what rule he was determined to govern his conduct, I have not the slightest objection to give you as clear an insight into my mind, as you have just given me of your own."

The Duke, perhaps, felt that he was not acting a very candid part, and he rather hesitated while he replied that such a confidence would give him pleasure.

"My opinion, then, my lord," replied I, "of that step which you think necessary to the Count's safety, namely, a civil war, is, that it is the most dangerous he could take, except that of hesitating after once having fully determined."

"But why do you think it so dangerous?" demanded the Duke: "surely no conjuncture could be more propitious. We have troops, and supplies, and allies, internal and external, which place success beyond a doubt. The Count is adored by the people and by the army--scarcely ten men will be found in France to draw a sword against him. He is courage and bravery itself--an able politician--an excellent general--a man of vigorous resolution."

This was said so seriously, that it was difficult to suppose the Duke was not in earnest; and yet to believe that a man of his keen sagacity was blind to the one great weakness of the Prince's character was absolutely impossible. If it was meant as a sort of bait to draw from me my opinions of the count, it did not succeed, for I suspected it at the time; and replied at once, "Most true. He is all that you say; and yet, Monsieur de Bouillon, though my opinion or assistance can be of very little consequence, either in one scale or the other, my determination is fixed to oppose, to the utmost of my power, any step towards war, whenever his highness does me the honour of speaking to me on the subject--so long, at least, as I see that his mind remains undetermined. The moment, however, I hear him declare that he has taken his resolution, no one shall be more strenuous than myself in endeavouring to keep him steady therein. From that instant I shall conceive myself, and strive to make him believe, that one retrograde step is destruction; and I pledge myself to exert all the faculties of my mind and body, as far as those very limited faculties may go, to assist and promote the enterprise to the utmost of my power."

"If that be the case," replied the Duke, "I feel sure that I shall this very night be able to show that war is now inevitable; and to determine the Count to pronounce for it himself. A council will be held at ten o'clock to-night, on various matters of importance; and I doubt not that his highness will require your assistance and opinion. Should he do so, I rely upon your word to do all that you can to close the door on retrocession, when once the Count has chosen his line of conduct."

The noble duke now spoke in the real tone of his feelings. To do him justice, he had shown infinite friendship towards his princely guest; and it was not unnatural that he should strive by every means to bring over those who surrounded the Prince to his own opinion. When as now he quitted all art as far as he could, for he was too much habituated to policy to abandon it ever entirely, I felt a much higher degree of respect for him; and, as he went on boldly, soliciting me to join myself to his party, and trying to lead me by argument from one step to another, I found much more difficulty in resisting than I had before experienced in seeing through and parrying his artifices.

It is in times of faction and intrigue, when every single voice is of import to one party or the other, that small men gain vast consequence; and, apt to attribute to their individual merit the court paid to them for their mere integral weight, they often sell their support to flattery and attention, when they would have yielded to no other sort of bribery. However much I might overrate my own importance from the efforts of the Duke to gain me--and I do not at all deny that I did so--I still continued firm: and at last contenting himself with what I had at first promised, he turned the conversation to myself, and I found that he had drawn from the Count so much of my history as referred to the insurrection of Catalonia, and my interview with Richelieu.

I felt, as we conversed, that my character and mind were undergoing a strict and minute

examination, through the medium of every word I spoke; and, what between the vanity of appearing to the best advantage, and the struggle to hide the consciousness that I was under such a scrutiny, I believe that I must have shown considerably more affectation than ability. The conviction that this was the case, too, came to embarrass me still more; and, feeling that I was undervaluing my own mind altogether, I suddenly broke off at one of the Duke's questions, which somewhat too palpably smacked of the investigation with which he was amusing himself, and replied, "Men's characters, monseigneur, are best seen in their actions, when they are free to act; and in their words, when they think those words fall unnoticed; but, depend upon it, one cannot form a correct estimate of the mind of another by besieging it in form. We instantly put ourselves upon the defensive when we find an army sitting down before the citadel of the heart; and whatever be the ability of our adversary, it is very difficult either to take us by storm, or to make us capitulate."

"Nay," replied the Duke, "indeed you are mistaken. I had no such intention as you seem to think. My only wish was to amuse away an hour in your agreeable society, ere joining his highness, to proceed with him to the council: but I believe it is nearly time that I should go."

The Duke now left me. I was not at all satisfied with my own conduct during the interview that had just passed; and, returning to my station at the window, I watched the last rays of day fade away from the sky, and one bright star after another gaze out at the world below, while a thousand wandering fancies filled my brain, taking a calm but melancholy hue from the solemn aspect of the night, and a still more gloomy one from feeling how little my own actions were under the control of my reason, and how continually, even in a casual conversation, I behaved and spoke in the most opposite manner to that which reflection would have taught me to pursue.

Sick of the present, my mind turned to other days. Many a memory and many a regret were busy about my heart, conjuring up dreams, and hopes, and wishes passed away--the throng of all those bright things we leave behind with early youth and never shall meet again, if it be not in a world beyond the tomb. All the sounds of earth sunk into repose, so that I could hear even the soft murmur of the Meuse, and the sighing of the summer-breeze wandering through the embrazures of the citadel. The cares, the labours, the anxieties, and all the grievous realities of life, seemed laid in slumber with the day that nursed them; while fancy, imagination, memory, every thing that lives upon *that which is not*, seemed to assert their part, and take possession of the night. I remembered many such a starry sky in my own beautiful land, when, without a heart-ache or a care, I had gazed upon the splendour of the heavens, and raised my heart in adoration to Him that spread it forth; but now, I looked out into the deep darkness, and found painful, painful memory mingling gall with all the sweetness of its contemplation. I thought of my sweet Helen, and remembered how many an obstacle was cast between us. I thought of my father, who had watched my youth like an opening flower, who had striven to instil into my mind all that was good and great, and I recollected the pain that my unexplained absence must have given. I thought of my mother, who had nursed my infant years, who had founded all her happiness on me--who had watched, and wept, and suffered for me, in my illness; and I called up every tone of her voice, every glance of her eye, every smile of her lip, till my heart ached even with the thoughts it nourished; and a tear, I believe, found its way into my eye--when suddenly, as it fixed upon the darkness, something white seemed to glide slowly across before me. It had the form--it had the look--it had the aspect of my mother. My eyes strained upon it, as if they would have burst from their sockets. I saw it distinct and plain as I could have seen her in the open day. My heart beat, my brain whirled, and I strove to speak; but my words died upon my lips; and when at length I found the power to utter them, the figure was gone, and all was blank darkness, with the bright stars twinkling through the deep azure of the sky.

I know--I feel sure, now, as I sit and reason upon it--that the whole was imagination, to which the hour, the darkness, and my own previous thoughts, all contributed: but still, the fancy must have been most overpoweringly strong to have thus compelled the very organs of vision to co-operate in the deceit; and, at the moment, I had no more doubt that I had seen the spirit of my mother than I had of my own existence. The memory of the whole remains still as strongly impressed upon my mind as ever; and certainly, as far as actual impressions went, every circumstance appeared as substantially true as any other thing we see in the common course of events. Memory, however, leaves the mind to reason calmly; and I repeat, that I believe the whole to have been produced by a highly excited imagination; for I am sure that the Almighty Being who gave laws to nature, and made it beautifully regular even in its irregularities, never suffers his own laws to be changed or interrupted, except for some great and extraordinary purpose.

I do not deny that such a thing has happened--or that it may happen again; but, even in opposition to the seeming evidence of my senses, I will not believe that such an interruption of the regular course of nature did occur in my own case.

CHAPTER XLI.

Still, at the time I believed it fully; and, after a few minutes given to wild, confused imaginings, I sat down and forcibly collected my thoughts, to bend them upon all the circumstances of my fate. My mother's spirit must have appeared to me, I thought, as a warning, probably of my own approaching death: but death was a thing that in itself I little feared; and all I hoped was, that some opportunity might be given me of distinguishing myself before the grave closed over my mortal career. Now, all the trifles, which we have time to make of consequence when existence seems indefinitely spread out before us, lost their value in my eyes, as I imagined, or rather as I felt, what we ought always to feel, that every hour of being is limited. One plays boldly when one has nothing to lose, and carelessly when one has nothing to gain; and thus, in the very fancy that life was fleeting from me fast, I found a sort of confidence and firmness of mind, which is generally only gained by long experience of our own powers as compared with those of others.

While the thoughts of what I had seen were yet fresh in my mind, a messenger announced to me that the prince desired my presence in the great hall of the château as speedily as possible; and, without staying to make any change of dress, I followed down the stairs. As I was crossing the lesser court, I encountered my little attendant. He had been straying somewhat negligently through the good town of Sedan, and had been kept some hours at the gates of the citadel on his return.

I had not time, however, to give him any very lengthened reprehension; but bidding him go to my chamber and wait for me, I followed the Count's servant to the council-hall.

It was a vast vaulted chamber in the very centre of the citadel; and the candles upon the table in the midst, though they served sufficiently to light the part of the room in which they were placed, left the whole of the rest in semi-obscurity; so that when I entered I could but see a group of dark figures, seated irregularly about a council board, with several others dispersed in twos and threes, talking together in various parts of the room, as if waiting the arrival of some other person.

The words "Here he is, here he is!" pronounced more than once, as I entered, made me almost fancy that the council had delayed its deliberations for me; but the vanity of such an idea soon received a rebuff, for a moment after, the voice of the Count de Soissons himself, who sat at the head of the table, replied, "No, no, it is only the Count de l'Orme. Monsieur de Guise disdains to hurry himself, let who will wait."

Advancing to the table, I now found Monsieur le Comte, with Bardouville, Varicarville, St. Ibal, and several others whom I did not know, seated round the table, while the Duke of Bouillon was conversing with some strangers at a little distance. But my greatest surprise was to find Monsieur de Retz near the Count de Soissons, though I left him so short a time before at Paris. He seemed to be in deep thought; but his ideas, I believe, were not quite so abstracted as they appeared: and on my approaching him, he rose and embraced me as if we had known each other for centuries, saying at the same time in my ear, "I hear you have received the true faith. Be a martyr to it this night, if it be necessary."

I now took a seat next to Varicarville, who whispered to me, "We have here an ambassador from Spain, and you will see how laudably willing we Frenchmen are to be gulled. He will promise us men and money, and what not, this Marquis de Villa Franca; but when the time comes for performance, not a man nor a stiver will be forthcoming."

"Perhaps I may thwart him," replied I, remembering, at the sound of his name, that I had in my hands a pledge of some worth in the diamonds which Achilles had pilfered at Barcelona. Varicarville looked surprised; but at that moment our conversation was interrupted by the Duke of Bouillon turning round, and observing that the conduct of Monsieur de Guise was unaccountable in keeping such an assembly waiting in the manner which he did.

"To council, gentlemen!" said the Count, hastily. "We have waited too long for this noble Prince of Loraine. To council!"

The rest of the party now took their seats, and the Baron de Beauvau rising, informed the Count that he had executed faithfully his embassy to the Archduke Leopold and the Cardinal Infant, who each promised to furnish his highness with a contingent of seven thousand men, and two hundred thousand crowns in money, in case he determined upon the very just and necessary warfare to which he was called by the voice not only of all France but all Europe--a war which, by one single blow, would deliver his native country from her oppressor, and restore the blessing of peace to a torn and suffering world. He then proceeded to enter into various particulars and details, which I now forget; but it was very easy to perceive from the whole that Monsieur de Beauvau was one of the strongest advocates for war. He ended by stating that the Marquis de Villa Franca, then present, had been sent by the Cardinal Infant to receive the final determination of the Prince.

My eyes followed the direction of his as he spoke, and rested on a tall, dark man, who sat next

to the Duke of Bouillon, listening to what passed, with more animation in his looks than the nobility of Spain generally allowed to appear. He was simply dressed in black; but about his person might be seen a variety of rich jewels, evidently showing that the pillage which I had seen committed on his house at Barcelona had not cured him of his passion for precious stones.

After the Baron de Beauvau had given an account of his mission, the Duke of Bouillon rose, and said, that now, as the noble princes of the house of Austria had made them such generous and friendly offers, and sent a person of such high rank to receive their determination, all that remained for them to do was, to fix finally whether they would, by submitting to a base and oppressive minister, stoop their heads at once to the block and axe, and add all the most illustrious names of France to the catalogue of Richelieu's murders; or whether they would, by one great and noble effort, cast off the chains of an usurper, and free their king, their country, and themselves.

The Duke spoke long and eloquently. He urged the propriety of war upon every different motive--upon expediency, upon necessity, upon patriotism. He addressed himself first to the nobler qualities of his hearers--their courage, their love of their country, their own honour, and dignity; and then to those still stronger auxiliaries, their weaknesses--their vanity, their ambition, their pride, their avarice; but while he did so, he artfully spread a veil over them all, lest shame should step in, and, recognising them in their nakedness, hold them back from the point towards which he led them. He spoke as if for the whole persons there assembled, and as if seeking to win them each to his opinion; but his speech was, in fact, directed towards the Count de Soissons, on whose determination of course the whole event depended.

Varicarville did not suffer the Duke's persuasions to pass, without casting his opinion in the still wavering balance of the Count's mind, and urging in plain but energetic language every motive which could induce the Prince to abstain from committing himself to measures that he might afterwards disapprove.

It is a common weakness with irresolute people always to attach more importance to a new opinion than to an old one; and Monsieur le Comte, turning to De Retz, pressed him to speak his sentiments upon the measure under consideration. The Abbé declined, protesting his inexperience and incapability, as long as such abnegation might set forth his modesty to the best advantage, and enhance the value of his opinion; but when he found himself urged, he rose and spoke somewhat to the following effect:--

"I see myself surrounded by the best and dearest friends of Monsieur le Comte; and yet I am bold to say that there is not one noble gentleman amongst them who has a warmer love for his person, or a greater regard for his dignity and honour, than myself. Did I see that dignity in danger, did I see that honour touched, by his remaining in inactivity, my voice should be the first for war; but while both are in security, nothing shall ever make me counsel him to a measure by which both are hazarded. I speak merely of Monsieur le Comte, for it is his interests that we are here to consider; it is he that must decide our actions, and it is his honour and reputation that are risked by the determination. To me it appears clear that, by remaining at peace, his dignity is in perfect safety. His retreat to Sedan guarded him against the meannesses to which the minister wished to force him. The general hatred borne towards the Cardinal turns the whole warmth of popular love and public admiration towards the Count's exile. The favour of the people, also, is always more secure in inactivity than in activity, because the glory of action depends upon success, of which no one can be certain: that of inaction, in the present circumstances, is sure, being founded on public hatred towards a minister--one of those unalterable things on which one may always count. The public always have hated, and always will hate the minister, be he who he will, and be his talents and his virtues what they may. He may have, at first, a momentary popularity, and he may have brief returns of it; but envy, hatred, and malice towards the minister are always at the bottom of the vulgar heart: and as they could never get through life without having the devil to charge with all their sins, so can they never be contented without laying all their woes, misfortunes, cares, and grievances to the door of the minister. Thus then, hating the Cardinal irremediably, they will always love the Count as his enemy, unless his highness risks his own glory by involving the nation in intestine strife. It is therefore my most sincere opinion, that as long as the minister does not himself render war inevitable, the interest, the honour, the dignity of the Prince, all require peace. Richelieu's bodily powers are every day declining, while the hatred of the people every day increases towards him; and their love for Monsieur le Comte augments in the same proportion. In the meanwhile, the eyes of all Europe behold with admiration a Prince of the blood royal of France enduring a voluntary exile, rather than sacrifice his dignity; and, with the power and influence to maintain himself against all the arts and menaces of an usurping minister, still patriotically refraining from the hazardous experiment of war, which, in compensation for certain calamities, offers nothing but a remote and uncertain event. Peace, then! let us have peace! at least till such time as war becomes inevitable."

While De Retz spoke, the Duke of Bouillon had regarded him with a calm sort of sneer, the very coolness of which led me to think that he still calculated upon deciding the Prince to war; and the moment the other had done, he observed, "*Monsieur le Damoisau, Souverain de Commerci*"--one of the titles of De Retz--"methinks, for so young a man, you are marvellously peaceably disposed."

"Duke of Bouillon!" said De Retz, fixing on him his keen dark eye, "were it not for the gratitude which all the humble friends of Monsieur le Comte feel towards you on his account, I should be

tempted to remind you, that you may not always be within the security of your own bastions."

"Hush, hush, my friends!" cried the Count, "let us have no jarring at our council-table. Bouillon, my noble cousin, you are wrong. De Retz has surely as much right to express his opinion, when asked by me, as any man present. Come, Monsieur de l'Orme, give us your counsel."

I replied without hesitation, that my voice was still for peace, as long as it was possible to maintain it; but that when once war was proved to be unavoidable, the more boldly it was undertaken, and the more resolutely it was carried on, the greater was the probability of success, and the surer the honour to be gained.

"Such also is my opinion," said the Prince; "and on this, then, let us conclude to remain at peace till we are driven to war, but to act so as to make our enemies repent it when they render war inevitable."

"Whether it is so or not, at this moment," said the Duke of Bouillon, "your highness will judge, after having cast your eyes over that paper"--and he laid a long written scroll before the Count de Soissons.

The Count raised it, and all eyes turned upon him while he read. After running over the first ordinary forms, the Count's brow contracted, and, biting his lip, he handed the paper to Varicarville, bidding him read it aloud. "It is fit," said he, "that all should know and witness, that necessity, and not inclination, leads me to plunge my country in the misfortunes of civil war. Read, Varicarville, read!"

Varicarville glanced his eyes over the paper, and then, with somewhat of an unsteady voice, read the following proclamation:--

"*In the king's name!*[8] Dear and well-beloved. The fears which we entertain, that certain rumours lately spread abroad of new factions and conspiracies, whereby various of our rebellious subjects endeavour to trouble the repose of our kingdom, should inspire you with vain apprehensions, you not knowing the particulars, have determined us to make those particulars public, in order that you may render thanks to God for having permitted us to discover the plots of our enemies, in time to prevent their malice from making itself felt, to the downfall of the state.

"We should never have believed, after the lenity and favour which we have on all occasions shown to our cousin the Count de Soissons, more especially in having pardoned him his share in the horrible conspiracy of 1636, that he would have embarked in similar designs, had not the capture of various seditious emissaries, sent into our provinces for the purpose of exciting rebellion, of levying troops against our service, of debauching our armies, and of shaking the fidelity of our subjects, together with the confessions of the said emissaries, fully proved and established the criminality of our said cousin's designs.

"The levies which are publicly made under commissions from our said cousin--the hostilities committed upon the bodies of our faithful soldiers, established in guard upon the frontiers of Champagne--the confession of the courier called Vausselle, who has most providentially fallen into our hands, stating that he had been sent on the part of the said Count de Soissons, the dukes of Guise and Bouillon, to our dearly beloved brother, Gaston Duke of Orleans, for the purpose of seducing our said brother to join and aid in the treasonable plans of the said conspirators; and the farther confession of the said Vausselle, stating that the Count de Soissons, together with the dukes of Guise and Bouillon, conjointly and severally, had treated and conspired with the Cardinal Infant of Spain, from whom they had received and were to receive notable sums of money, and from whom they expected the aid and abetment of various bodies of troops and warlike munition, designed to act against their native country of France, and us their born liege lord and sovereign;--these, and various other circumstances having given us clear knowledge and cognisance of that whereof we would willingly have remained in doubt, we are now called upon, in justice to ourself and to our subjects, to declare and pronounce the said Count de Soissons, together with the dukes of Guise and Bouillon, and all who shall give them aid, assistance, counsel, or abetment, enemies to the state of France, and rebels to their lawful sovereign; without, within the space of one month from the date hereof, they present themselves at our court, wherever it may be for the time established, and humbly acknowledging their fault, have recourse to our royal clemency. (Signed) LOUIS."

No paper could have been better devised for restoring union to the councils of the Count de Soissons. War was now inevitable; and, after a good deal of hurried, desultory conversation, in which no one but the Duke of Bouillon showed any great presence of mind, my opinion, as the youngest person at the table, was the first formally called for by the Count de Soissons. I had not yet spoken since the King's proclamation had been read, and had been sitting listening with some surprise to find that men of experience, talents, and high repute, carried on great enterprises in the same desultory and irregular manner that schoolboys would plot a frolic on their master. I rose, however, with the more boldness, while Varicarville muttered to himself "the Spaniard will carry the day." I resolved, however, that this prognostication should not be wholly fulfilled, if I could help it; and addressing Monsieur le Comte, I said, "Your highness has done me the honour of asking my opinion. There can be now, I believe, but one. War appears to me to be now

necessary, not only to your dignity, but to your safety; and whereas I before presumed to recommend inaction, I now think that nothing but activity can insure us success. For my own part, I am ready to take any post your highness may think fit to assign me. One of the first things, however, I should conceive, would be to secure the capital; and the next, to complete the levies of troops, so that the regiments be filled to their entire number. Neither of these objects are to be effected without money; and as the Cardinal Infant has promised a considerable sum, and the minister in his proclamation gives you credit for having received it, I hope the Marquis de Villa Franca comes prepared to fulfil, at least in part, the expectations held out by his royal principal."

"Most unfortunately," replied the Marquis, in very good French, "at the time of my departure, no idea was entertained that the French government would so precipitate its measures, otherwise his highness, the Cardinal Infant, would have sent the promised subsidy at the time, and I know that no one will regret so much as he does, this unavoidable delay."

Varicarville looked at me with a meaning smile; and indeed it was evident enough, as it was afterwards proved by her conduct, that Spain was willing to hurry us into war, without lending us any aid to bring it to a successful determination. I therefore rejoined without hesitation, feeling that the proverbial rashness of youth would excuse some flippancy, and that I could not carry through my plan without--

"Under these circumstances, it seems to me very likely that Spain, our excellent ally, will save both her money and her troops, for probably, before her tardy succour arrives, we shall have struck the blow and gained the battle."

"But what can be done, young sir?" demanded Villa Franca, hastily: "Spain will keep her promise to the very utmost. On my honour, on my conscience, had I the means of raising any part of the sum in time to be of service, I would myself advance it, notwithstanding the immense losses I sustained by the Catalonian rebels."

Many a man's honour and his conscience would be in a very uncomfortable situation if the means of taking them out of pawn were presented to him on a sudden. That consideration, however, did not induce me to spare Monsieur de Villa Franca, whom I believed, from all I had heard of him, to be as tergiversating a diplomatist as ever the subtle house of Austria had sent forth. I replied, therefore, "If that be the case--and who can doubt the noble Marquis's word?--I think I can furnish the means whereby Monsieur de Villa Franca can fulfil his generous designs, and put it in his power instantly to raise great part of the sum required."

Every one stared, and no one more than the Marquis himself; but rising from the council-table, I whispered to Varicarville to keep the same subject under discussion till I returned; and flying across the courts of the arsenal, I mounted to my own chamber. "Achilles," cried I, as soon as I entered, "the Marquis de Villa Franca is here in the arsenal; are you still resolved to restore him the diamonds?"

"I am resolved to have nothing to do with them myself," replied Achilles; "for since the adventure at Lyons, I find that I had better give up both gold and diamonds, and content myself with simple silver for the rest of my life, if I would not be whipped through the streets, and turned out in a grey gown: but as to giving them back, all I can say is, your sublimity is a great fool, if you do not keep them yourself."

"It will be of more service to me to give them than to keep them," replied I; "but I will not do so without your consent;" and having by this time drawn them out of the valise, I held them out towards him.

"Give them, give them then, in God's name!" cried the little man, shutting his eyes; "but do not let me see them, for their sparkling makes my resolution wax dim. Take them away, monseigneur! if you love me, take them away. My virtue is no better than that of Danäe of old."

I did as he required, and hurried back to the council chamber, where all eyes turned upon me as I entered; and I found that the five minutes of my absence had been wasted on conjectures of what I could mean. "Monsieur de Villa Franca," said I, as soon as I had taken my seat, "you said, I think, that if you had any means of raising even a part of the sum required, in time to be of service, you would advance it yourself, upon your honour and conscience. Now it so happened, that a person with whom I am acquainted, was at Barcelona when your house was plundered, and in that city bought this string of diamonds, which were said to have belonged to you," and I held them up glittering in the light, while the eyes of the Marquis seemed to sparkle in rivalry. "He gave them to me," I proceeded; "and I am willing to return them to you, upon condition that you instantly pledge them to three quarters of their value, to the jewellers of this city; the money arising therefrom to be poured into the treasury of Monsieur le Comte; and you shall also give farther an hundred pistoles to the person who saved them from the hands of the rabble of Barcelona, he being a poor and needy man."

The proposal was received with loud applause by every one, except the Marquis de Villa Franca, whose face grew darker and darker at every word I spoke. "This is very hard!" said he, with the most evident design in the world to retreat from his proposal. "Those diamonds are family jewels of inestimable value to me."

"They are nevertheless diamonds which you shall never see again," replied I, "except upon the conditions which I mention. Nor do I see that it *is* hard. Monsieur le Comte will give you an acknowledgment for so much as they produce, as a part of the subsidy from Spain, advanced by you. Upon the sight of that, your own Prince will repay you, deducting that sum from the amount which he is about to transmit to Monsieur le Comte."

"Monsieur de l'Orme's observation is just," said the Duke of Bouillon. "You expressed the most decided conviction, Monsieur le Marquis, that his royal highness would instantly send us the subsidy; if so, the Count de Soissons' acknowledgment will be as good as a bill of exchange upon your own prince."

"But the proverb says," replied the Marquis, "Put not your faith in princes."

"It should have said, Put not your faith in Marquises," rejoined I, somewhat indignant at his attempts at evasion. "However, Monsieur le Marquis, the matter stands thus: if you consent to what I propose, we will send for the jewellers, the sum shall be paid, and you shall have the Count's acknowledgment; then, if you can get the money from your prince, you have the means of regaining the diamonds, with the sole loss of a hundred pistoles. If your prince did not intend to pay the subsidy, and you were not quite convinced that he would pay it, you should not have promised it here, in his name, and backed it with your most solemn assurances of your own conviction on the subject. At all events, whether he pays it or not, you are no worse than when you thought the diamonds were irretrievably lost; but so far the better, that you have had an opportunity of showing how *willingly* you perform what you pledged your honour and conscience you would do if you had the means."

A slight laugh that ran round the council-table at this last sentence, I believe, determined Monsieur de Villa Franca to yield without any more resistance, seeing very well, at the same time, that the only existing chance of recovering his diamonds at all, was to consent to what I proposed.

He felt well convinced, I am sure, that the Cardinal Infant had not the slightest intention in the world of paying the sum which he had promised; but, however, he had a better chance of obtaining his part thereof than any one else; and therefore, as there was no other means of insuring that his beloved brilliants would not be scattered over half the habitable globe before six weeks were over, he signified his assent to their being deposited with the jewellers of Sedan, in a tone of resignation worthy of a martyr.

The syndic of the jewellers, with two or three of his most reputable companions, were instantly sent for by the council; and during the absence of the messengers, a variety of particulars were discussed, and various plans were adopted for the purpose of commencing the war with vigour, and carrying it on with success. Amongst other things, the Prince announced his intention of intrusting all the steps preparatory to a general rising of the people of the capital, to De Retz and myself; and though I thought that there were one or two dissatisfied looks manifested upon the subject, no one judged fit to object. Probably, weighing the risk with the honour, they were quite as much pleased to be excused the Count's enterprize, as discontented at not having been distinguished by his selection.

At length the jewellers were brought before the council; and by their lugubrious looks it was evident that the worthy citizens of Sedan expected their noble and considerate Prince to wring from them a heavy subsidy. Their brows cleared, however, when the diamonds were laid before them, and their opinion of the value was demanded; and after some consultation they named a hundred and fifty thousand crowns as a fair price.

The farther arrangements were soon made; the merchants willingly agreeing to advance a hundred thousand crowns, upon the deposit of the jewels, before the next morning. As soon as this was concluded, the Marquis de Villa Franca drew forth his purse, and counting out a hundred pistoles, he pushed them across the table towards me, saying, with a sneering smile, "I suppose, though your modesty has led you, sir, to put the good deed upon another, it is in fact yourself whom I have to thank for so generously saving my diamonds, amongst the plundering banditti of Barcelona?"

The blood for an instant rushed up to my cheek, but it needed no long deliberation to show me that anger was but folly on such an occasion; and I therefore replied with a smile, "Your pardon, most noble sir! the person who with his own right hand captured your diamonds is a much more tremendous person than myself, so much so, that his enormous size and chivalrous prowess have obtained for him the name of Achilles. I will instantly send for him, and you shall pay him the money yourself, when you will perceive, that had he been inclined to keep your jewels with a strong hand, it would have been difficult to have wrung them from him."

Achilles was brought in a minute; and when I presented the diminutive, insignificant, little man to the Marquis, as the wonderful Achilles le Franc, who had by the vigour of his invincible arm taken his diamonds, the whole council burst into a laugh, in which no one joined more heartily than Villa Franca himself.

Achilles received his pistoles with great glee, and I believe valued them more than the diamonds themselves.

After this, it being late, the council broke up, and the Prince retired to his own apartments, desiring to speak with De Retz and myself, as he wished us to set out early the next morning for Paris.

When in his own chamber, he gave me an order for ten thousand crowns, half of which he directed me to apply to his service amongst the highly respectable persons to whom my mission was directed, and the other half he bade me accept, as a half year's salary, advanced upon the appointments of a gentleman of his bedchamber. It fortunately happened, that the order directed his treasurer to pay the money out of sums already in his hands; for I own that I should have entertained some scruple in accepting the part destined for myself, if it had been derived from the store of crowns which I had wrung out of the Marquis de Villa Franca's diamonds. As it was, necessity put all hesitation out of the question.

The Count had still a thousand cautions and directions to give, both to myself and Monsieur de Retz, the only one of which necessary to allude to here, was his desire that, while I remained in Paris, I should inhabit the Hôtel de Soissons. This plan of proceeding was suggested by De Retz, who laid it down as a maxim, that the sure means of concealing one's actions was to act as nobody else would have done. To insure me a kind reception, and full confidence from his mother, the Count wrote her a short note, couched in such terms as would make her comprehend his meaning without leading to any discovery, should it fall into the hands of others. After this, we took our leave, and left him to repose, retiring ourselves to make preparations for our journey in the morning.

CHAPTER XLII.

Day had scarcely dawned, when Monsieur de Retz and myself mounted our horses in the courtyard of the citadel, and set out on our return to Paris. We were accompanied by but one servant each; for the decided part which the minister had taken, left no doubt that all the avenues to Sedan would be watched with unslumbering vigilance.

After a short discussion, it was determined that we should not attempt the direct road; and, therefore, instead of crossing the bridge of Sedan, we followed the course of the Meuse for some way. At a village, however, about two miles from the city, we learned that the passages of the rivers were guarded, and De Retz proposed to return to Sedan and cross by the bridge. My opinion, however, was different. Where we then stood the river was narrow and not very rapid, our horses fresh and strong, so that it appeared to me much more advisable to attempt the passage there, than by riding up and down the bank to call attention to our proceedings. The only objection arose with little Achilles, who had a mortal aversion to being drowned, and declared that he could not, and that he would not, swim his horse over. I decided the matter for him, however; for at a moment when he had approached close to the bank, to contemplate more nearly the horrible feat that was proposed to him, I seized his horse by the bridle, and spurring in, was soon half-way across, leading him after me. His terror and distress, when he began to feel the buoyant motion of a horse in swimming, were beyond description; but as there was no resource, he behaved more wisely than terrified people generally do, and sitting quite still, let his fate take its course.

Cutting across the country, sometimes over fields, sometimes through small bridle-paths and by-roads, we at length entered the highway, at a point where suspicion, had she been inclined to exercise her ingenuity upon us, might have imagined that we had come from a thousand other places, with fully as great likelihood as Sedan; for the road, a little higher up, branched into five others, each of which conducted in a different direction.

Our journey now passed tranquilly, and on the evening of the third day we arrived at Paris. It was too late to present myself to the Countess de Soissons that night; and Monsieur de Retz offering me an apartment in his hotel, I accepted it for the time, not ill pleased to see as much as possible of the extraordinary man into whose society I had been thrown, and commenting upon his character fully as much as he did in all probability upon mine.

On our journey we had laughed over the circumstances of our former meeting; but I found that he still entertained great doubts of my discretion, by the frequent warnings he gave me not to communicate anything I had seen at Sedan to the Countess de Soissons.

"It is a good general rule," said he, "never to tell a woman the truth, in any circumstances. Praise her faults, abuse her enemies, humour her weakness, gratify her vanity, but never, never tell her the truth. One's deportment with a woman ought to be like a deep lake, reflecting everything, but letting no one see the bottom."

Monsieur de Retz's policy was not always exactly to my taste; but as the Count de Soissons had not bid me to communicate any of his affairs to his mother, I resolved of course to keep them as secret from her as from any other person.

As soon as I imagined that such a visit would be acceptable on the subsequent morning, I proceeded on horseback to the Hôtel de Soissons, wearing, for the first time, my fine Spanish dress of white silk, De Retz having warned me, that in all points of ceremony, the Countess de Soissons showed no lenity to offenders. To make the suit at all harmonize with a ride on horseback, I was obliged to add a pair of white leather buskins to the rest; but, as this was quite the mode of the day, Monsieur de Retz declared my apparel exquisite; and, being himself not a little of a *petit-maître*, notwithstanding both his philosophy and his cloth, he looked with a deep sigh at his black *soutane*, which he had resumed since our arrival at Paris, and declared that he had no small mind to cast away the gown, and draw the sword himself.

With a smile at human inconsistency, I left him, and rode away; and passing by my old auberge, in the Rue des Prouvaires, soon reached the Hôtel de Soissons. Here I delivered the Count's note of introduction to a servant, bidding him present it to the Princess, and inform her that the gentleman to whom it referred waited her pleasure.

I was not kept long in attendance. In a few minutes the servant returned, and bade me follow him to the apartments of the Countess. We mounted the grand staircase, and proceeding through a suite of splendid rooms, the windows of which were almost all composed of stained glass, bearing the ciphers C. S. and C. N. interlaced, for Charles de Soissons and Catherine de Navarre, we at length reached the chamber in which the Princess was seated with her women.

She was working at an embroidery frame, while a pretty girl of about sixteen stood beside her, holding the various silks of which she was making use. On my being announced, she raised her head, showing a face in which the wreck of many beauties might still be traced, and fixed her eyes somewhat sternly upon me; first letting them rest upon my face, and then glancing over my whole person with a grave and dissatisfied air.

"You come here, young sir," said she at length, "dressed like a bridegroom; but you will go away like a mourner. Your mother is dead."

God of heaven! till that moment, I had not an idea that, on the earth, there was a being so unfeeling as thus to communicate to a son, that the tie between him and the Author of his being was riven by the hand of Death!

And yet the Countess de Soissons acted not from unfeeling motives; she fancied me guilty of follies that, in her eyes, were crimes, and she thought, by the terrible blow that she struck, at once to reprove and reclaim me.

At first I did not comprehend--I could not, I would not believe that she spoke truly: when seeing my doubts in the vacancy of my expression, she calmly repeated what she had said.

What change took place then in my countenance I know not; but, however, it was sufficient to alarm her for the consequences of what she had done, and starting up, she called loudly to her women to bring water--wine--anything to relieve me. To imagine what I felt, will not be easy for any other, even when it is remembered how I loved the parent I had lost,--how I had left her--how deeply she had loved me, and how suddenly, how unexpectedly I heard that the whole was at an end, and that the cold grave lay between us for ever. My agitation was so extreme, that totally forgetting the presence of the Princess, I cast myself into a chair, and covering my face with my hands, remained speechless and motionless for nearly a quarter of an hour.

During this time, the Countess de Soissons, passing from one extreme to the other, did everything she could to soothe and calm me; and, had I been her own son, she could not for the time have shown me more kindness. She was frightened, I believe, at the state into which she had thrown me, and was still endeavouring to make me speak, when a tall, venerable old man entered the chamber, but paused, I believe, on seeing the confusion that reigned within. She instantly called him to her assistance, telling him what she had done, and pointing out the consequences it had had upon me. He approached, and after feeling my pulse, drew forth a lancet, and, calling for a basin, bled me profusely.

"You have done wrong, my daughter," said he, turning to the Countess with an air of authority, which she bore more meekly than might have been expected. "Mildness wins hearts, while unkindness can but break them. Leave me with this young gentleman, and I doubt not soon to restore him to himself."

The Countess did as he bade her, without reply; and desiring her women to bring her embroidery frame, she left the apartment. The bleeding had instantly relieved me. Every drop that flowed had seemed so much taken from an oppressive load that overburdened my heart; and when the old man sat down by me, and asked if I was better, I could answer him in the affirmative, and thank him for his assistance.

"I will not attempt to console you, my son," he proceeded, "for you have met with a deep and irreparable loss. From all I hear, your mother was one of the best and most amiable of women; and through a long life, we meet with so very few on whom our hearts can fix, that every time

death numbers one of them for his own, he leaves a deep and irremediable wound with us, that none but Time can assuage, and Time himself ought never wholly to heal. I know, too, at the moment when we find that fate has put its immoveable barrier between us and those we loved--when the cold small portal of the grave is shut against our communion with our friends--I know that it is then that every pain we have given them is visited with double anguish upon our own hearts, and a crowd of bitter, unavailing regrets fills every way of memory with dark and horrible forms."

I wept bitterly, for he had touched a chord to which my feelings vibrated but too sensitively. "In the gaieties of life," he proceeded, "in the pleasures of society, in the passions, the interests, the desires of human existence and of our earthly nature, we often forget those finer feelings--those better, brighter, nobler sentiments, which belong to the soul alone. Nor is it till *irretrievable* is stamped upon our actions, that we truly feel where we have been wanting in duty, in gratitude, in affection; but when we do feel it, we ought to have a care not to let those regrets pass away in vain tears and ineffectual sorrow, thus wasting the most blessed remedy that Heaven has given to the diseases of the soul. On the contrary, we should apply them to our future conduct, and by gathering instruction from the past, and improvement from remorse, should find in the chastisement of Heaven the blessing it was intended to be."

As I recovered from the first shock of the tidings I had just heard, I had time to consider more particularly the person who spoke to me. As I have said, he was an old man; and, from the perfect silver of his hair and beard, I should have supposed him above seventy; but the erectness of his carriage, the whiteness of his teeth, and the pure undimmed fire of his eye, took much from his look of age. His dress, though it consisted of a long black robe, was certainly not clerical; and from the skill with which he had bled me, I was rather inclined to suppose that his profession tended more towards the cure of bodies than of souls.

In reply to his mild homily, which appeared to me, notwithstanding the gentleness of his language, to point at greater errors than any I could charge myself with towards the parent I had lost, I could only answer, that it was hardly possible for a being made up of human weakness to be so continually brought in connection with another, as a son must be with a mother, without falling into some faults towards her; but that even now, when memory and affection joined to magnify all I had done amiss in regard to the dead, I could recall no instance in which I had intentionally given her pain.

An explanation ensued; and I found that my mother, when on her death-bed, had written to the Countess de Soissons, informing her of my disappearance from Bigorre, and attributing it to love for the daughter of a roturier in the vicinity, who had also quitted the province shortly after. She gave no name and no description; but she begged the Countess de Soissons to cause search to be made for me in Paris, and to endeavour to rescue me from the debasing connection into which, she said, the blood of Bigorre should have held me from ever entering.

"It is under these circumstances," proceeded the old man, "that the princess addressed you this morning with the abrupt news of your mother's death, hoping by the remorse which that news would occasion, to win you at once from the unhappy entanglement into which you have fallen."

"That the Countess de Soissons should be mistaken," replied I, "does not surprise me, for she did not know me; but that my mother should suppose any passion, whether worthy or unworthy, would have led me to inflict so much pain upon her, and on my father, as my unexplained absence must have done, does astonish and afflict me. Indeed, though my own death might have been the consequence of my stay, I was weak to fly as I did; nor should I have done so, had my mind been in a state to judge sanely of my own conduct. Will you, sir, have the goodness to inform the Countess de Soissons that the suspicions of my mother were entirely unfounded, and that I neither fled with any one, nor for the purpose of meeting any one, as she must evidently see, from my having found and attached myself to Monsieur le Comte. My absence, sir, was occasioned by my having accidentally slain one of my fellow-creatures, and my having no means of proving that I did so accidentally."

"It has been a most unhappy mistake," replied the old man, "for undoubtedly it has been this idea that wounded your mother to the heart. But I hurt you; do not let me do so. If it has been a mistake, you are no way answerable for it. I now go to give your message to the Countess, and will bring you a few lines addressed to you from your mother, but which, you must remember, were written under erroneous feelings."

Thus saying, he left me; and in a few minutes returned with the letter he had mentioned. "The Countess," said he, "is most deeply grieved at the mistake which has arisen, and especially at having, by her abruptness, aggravated the grief which you cannot but most poignantly feel. This is the letter I spake of; but you had better read it in private. If you will follow me, I will conduct you to an apartment, which, while you remain at the Hôtel de Soissons, the Countess begs you would look upon as your own."

I followed him in silence to a splendid suite of rooms, wherein he left me; and I had now time to indulge in all the painful thoughts to which the irreparable loss I had sustained gave rise. For some time I did not open my mother's letter, letting my thoughts wander through the field of the past, and recalling with agonizing exactness every bright quality of the mind, and every gentle

feeling of the heart now laid in the dust. Her love for me rose up as in judgment against me, and I felt that I had never known how much I loved her, till death had rendered that love in vain. Memory, so still, so silent, so faithless, in the hurry of passion, and the pursuit of pleasure, now raised her voice, and with painful care traced all that I had lost. A thousand minute traits--a thousand kind and considerate actions--a thousand touches of generosity, of feeling, of tenderness--every word, every look of many long years of affection, passed in review before me; and sad, sad was the vision, when I thought that it was all gone for ever. Anything was better than that contemplation; and with an aching heart, I opened the letter. The wavering and irregular lines, traced while life still maintained a faint struggle against death; the mark of a tear, given to the long painful adieu, first caught my eye and wrung my very heart, even before I read what follows.

"We shall never meet again!" she wrote. "Life, my son, and hope, as far as it belongs to this earth, have fled; and I have nothing to think of in the world I am leaving, but your happiness and that of your father. I write not to reproach you, Louis, but I write to warn and to entreat you not to disgrace a long line of illustrious ancestors, by a marriage, which, depend upon it, will be as unhappy in the end as it is degrading in itself. This is my last wish, my last command, my last entreaty. Observe it, as you would merit the blessing which I send you. Adieu, my son, adieu!--You may meet with many to cherish, with many to love you--but, oh! the love of a mother is far above any other that binds being to being on this earth. Adieu! once more adieu! it is perhaps a weakness, and yet I cannot help thinking that, even after this hand is dust, my spirit might know, and feel consoled, if my son came to shed a tear on the stone which will soon cover the ashes of his mother."

Every word found its way to my heart; and reverting to what I had seen on the night previous to my departure from Sedan, I fancied that my mother's spirit had itself come to enforce her dying words; and, yielding to the feelings of the moment, I mentally promised to obey her to the very utmost. Nay, more! with a superstitious idea that her eye could look upon me even then, I kneeled and declared, with as much fervency as ever vow was offered to Heaven itself, that I would follow her will; and as soon as the enterprise to which my honour bound me was at an end, would visit her tomb, and pay that tribute to her memory which she had herself desired. Then casting myself into a seat, I leaned my head upon my hands, and gave full rein to every painful reflection.

Let me pass over two days which I spent entirely in the chamber that had been allotted to me. During that time, every attention was paid to me by the servants of the Countess de Soissons; and the old man, whom I have before mentioned, visited me more than once, every time I saw him gaining upon my good opinion, by the kind and judicious manner in which he endeavoured to soothe and console, without either blaming or opposing my grief. Still, no word that fell from him gave me the least intimation in regard to the character in which he acted in the Hôtel de Soissons, though, from the evident influence he possessed over the Countess, it was one of no small authority. From him, however, I learned that my father had written briefly to the Countess de Soissons, informing her of my mother's death. To me he had not written; and, though I could easily conceive from his habits and character, that he had shrunk from a task so painful in itself, yet I could not help imagining that displeasure had some part in his silence.

On the evening of the second day, I received a visit from De Retz, who, notwithstanding all that had happened, used every argument to stimulate me to action; and, in truth, I felt that in my own griefs I was neglecting the interest of the Prince. I accordingly promised him that the next day I would exert myself as he wished; and, after conversing for some time on the affairs of the Count, I described to him the old man I had met with, and asked him if he knew him.

"Slightly," he replied. "He is an Italian by birth, and his name Vanoni, a man of infinite talent and profound learning; but his name is not in very good odour amongst our more rigid ecclesiastics, because he is reported to dive a little into those sciences which they hold as sacrilegious. He is known to be an excellent astronomer, and some people will have it, astrologer also; though, I should suppose, he has too much of real and substantial knowledge, to esteem very highly that which is in all probability imaginary. Have you not remarked, that there are fully more vulgar minds in the higher classes, than there are elevated ones in the lower? Well, the vulgar part of our *noblesse* call Signor Vanoni the Countess de Soisson's necromancer, though I believe the highest degree to which he can pretend in the occult sciences is that of astrologer; and even that he keeps so profoundly concealed, that their best proof of it hardly amounts to suspicion."

After De Retz had left me, being resolved at all events to waste no more time, every instant of which was precious in such enterprises as that of Monsieur le Comte, I desired Achilles to find me out the archer who had so well aided him in recovering my ring, and to bring him to me early the next morning.

This he accordingly executed; and at my breakfast, which was served in my own apartments, my little attendant presented to me a tall, solemn personage, who looked wise enough to have passed for a fool, had it not been for a certain twinkling spirit, that every now and then peeped out at the corner of his eye, and seemed to say, that the obtuseness of his deportment was but a mask to hide the acuter mind within. I made these observations while I amused him for a moment or two in empty conversation, till I could find an opportunity of dismissing two lackeys of the Countess, who had orders to wait upon me at my meals; and by what I perceived, I judged that it

would be a difficult matter to conceal my own purposes from such a person, while I drew from him what information I required.

I resolved, however, to attempt it, and consequently, when the servants were gone, I turned to the subject of my ring; and saying that I really thought he had been insufficiently paid for the talent and activity he had shown upon the occasion, I begged his acceptance of a gold piece.

The man looked in my face with a dead flat stupidity of aspect, which completely covered all his thoughts; but at the same time I very well divined that he did not in the least attribute the piece of gold to the affair of the ring. He followed the sure policy, however, of closing his hand upon the money, making me a low bow, with that most uncommitting sentence, "Monsieur is very good."

"I suppose," proceeded I, "that the strange fact of *pipeurs*, swindlers, swash bucklers, and bravoes of all descriptions, continually evading the pursuit of dame Justice, notwithstanding her having such acute servants as yourself, is more to be attributed to your humanity, than to your ignorance of their secrets."

This was put half as a question, half as a position, but in such a way as evidently to show that it led to something else. An intelligent gleam sparkled in the corner of the archer's eye, and I fancied that some information concerning the worthy fraternity I inquired after was about to follow: but he suddenly gave a glance towards Achilles; and, resuming his look of stolidity, replied, "Monsieur is very good."

"Go to Monsieur de Retz, Achilles," said I, "and tell him, that if it suits his convenience, I will be with him in an hour." Achilles was not slow in taking the hint; and when he was gone, I proceeded, spreading out upon the table some ten pieces of gold. "About these swash bucklers," said I, "I am informed they are a large fraternity."

"Vast!" replied the archer, in a more communicative tone.

"And pray where do they principally dwell?" demanded I.

"In every part of Paris," said the archer, looking up in my face, "from the Place Royale, to the darkest nook of the Fauxbourg St. Antoine. But it is dangerous for a gentleman to venture amongst them."

I saw he began to wax communicative, and I pushed a piece of gold across the table to confirm his good disposition. The gold disappeared, and the archer went on. "I would not advise you to venture among them, Monseigneur: but if you would tell me what sort of men you want, doubtless I could find them for you, and I can keep counsel."

"Why, my good friend," replied I, "I did not exactly say that I wanted any men; but if you will call me over the names and qualities of two or three of your most respectable acquaintances, I will see whether they be such as may suit my service."

The archer paused for a moment, screwing up his eye into a curious air of sharp contemplation; and then suddenly replied, "If I knew what your lordship wanted them for, I could better proportion their abilities."

"For general service, man! for general service!" replied I. "The men I require must obey my word, defend my life, drub my enemies, brawl for my friends, and in no case think of the consequences."

"I understand!" replied the archer--"I understand! There are Jean le Mestre, and François le Nain; but I doubt they are too coarse-handed for your purpose. They are fit for nothing but robbing a travelling jeweller, or frightening an old woman into fits."

"They won't exactly do," replied I--"at least if we can find any others."

"Oh, plenty of others! plenty of others!" said the archer. "Then there are Pierre l'Agneau, and Martin de Chauline. They were once two as sweet youths as ever graced the Place de Grève; but they have been spoiled by bad company. They took service with the Marquis de St. Brie, and such service ruins a man for life."

"I should certainly suppose it did," replied I; "but proceed to some others. We have only heard of four yet."

"Don't be afraid!" said the archer, "I have a long list. Your lordship would not like a Jesuit--they are devilish cunning--sharp hands! men of action too! I know an excellent Jesuit, who would suit you to a hair in many respects. He is occasionally employed, too, by Monsieur de Noyers, one of our ministers, and would cheat the devil himself."

"But as I do not pretend to half the cunning of his infernal majesty," replied I, "this worthy Jesuit might cheat me too."

"That is very possible," answered the archer. "But stay!" he proceeded thoughtfully. "I have got the very men that will do.--You need a brace, monseigneur--of course, you need a brace.

There is Combalet de Carignan, one of our most gallant gentlemen, and Jacques Mocqueur, as he is called, because he laughs at everything. They were both in the secret service of his eminence the Cardinal; but they one day did a little business on their own account, which came to his ears; and he vowed that he would give them a touch of the round bedstead. They knew him to be a man of his word, so they made their escape, till the matter blew by, and now they are living here in Paris on their means."

"And pray what is the round bedstead?" demanded I; "something unpleasant, doubtless, from its giving such celerity to the motions of your friends?"

"Nothing but a certain wheel in the inside of the Bastille," replied the archer, "on which a gentleman is suffered to repose himself quietly after all his bones are put out of joint. But as I was saying, these two gallants are just the men for your lordship's service: bold, dexterous, cunning; and they have withal a spice of honour and chivalry about them, which makes them marvellously esteemed amongst their fellows. Will they suit you, monseigneur?"

"I think they will," replied I; "but I must see them first."

"Nothing so easy," answered the archer. "I will bring them here at any hour your lordship pleases to name."

"Not here," replied I; "I must not take too many liberties with the Hôtel de Soissons. But I have a lodging in the Rue des Prêtres St. Paul, on the left hand going down, the fifth door from the corner, nearly opposite a grocer's shop. Bring them there at dusk to-night, and accept that for your trouble." So saying, I pushed him over two more of the gold pieces; and having once more satisfied himself that he perfectly remembered the direction I had given him, the archer took his leave, and I proceeded to my rendezvous with De Retz.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"Welcome!" said De Retz, as I entered, "most welcome! I am just about to proceed on an expedition wherein your assistance may be necessary. Will you accompany me?"

"Anywhere you please," I replied, "provided I be back by dusk."

"Long before that," answered De Retz. "I am going to take you to the Bastille."

My surprise made the Abbé explain himself. "You must know," said he, "that there is no actual impossibility of our gaining the Bastille itself for Monsieur le Comte de Soissons, in case his first battle should be so successful as to give fair promise for the ultimate event.--You like frankness," he continued, suddenly interrupting what he was saying, "and I perceive you are already beginning to look surprised that I, who have hitherto shown no great confidence in your discretion, should now let you into the most dangerous secrets of this enterprise. I will frankly tell you why I do so--it is because I need some one to assist me; and because I judge it more dangerous to risk a secret with two, than to confide it all to one, even should he not be very discreet. But I am also beginning to think more highly of your discretion. It is so bad a plan to let our first impressions become our lords, that I make a point of changing my opinion of a man as often as I can find the least opportunity."

It was very difficult to know, on all occasions, whether Monsieur de Retz's frankness was spontaneous or assumed. Whichever it was, it always flowed with a view to policy; and I found that the best way in dealing with him was at first but to give to whatever he advanced that sort of negative credence, which left the mind free to act as circumstances should afterwards confirm or shake its belief. In the present case I merely thanked him for his improved opinion of me, and begged him to proceed, which he did accordingly.

"The Bastille," he said, "serves Monsieur le Cardinal de Richelieu for many purposes: but its great utility is, that it disposes of all his enemies one way or another. Those he hates, or those he fears, find there a grave or a prison, according to the degree of his charitable sentiments towards them. There are, however, many persons whom he fears too much to leave at liberty, yet not enough to condemn them to the rack, the block, or the dungeon. These persons are shut up in one prison or another through the kingdom; and on their first arrest are treated with some severity, but gradually, as they become regular tenants of the place, the measures against them are relaxed; and they have, at length, as much liberty as they would have in their own house with the door shut.

"There are at present four men within the walls of the Bastille, who, having been there for

years, are scarcely more watched than the governor himself. The Duke de Vitry, the Count de Cramail, Marshal Bassompierre, and the Marquis du Fargis. All these are known to me; and Monsieur du Fargis is my uncle, so that I am very sure of the game that I am playing. The interior discipline of the prison is at present more than ever relaxed, under the present governor, Monsieur du Tremblai; and his politeness towards his prisoners is such, that one or other of the four gentlemen I have named have every day one of their friends to dine with them, which affords them the greatest consolation under their imprisonment. I have often thus visited the prison; and about ten days ago, while dining with my uncle, I had an opportunity of hinting to the Count de Cramail, who is the cleverest man of the party, the designs of Monsieur le Comte; and, at the same time, proposed to him a plan for rendering ourselves masters of the Bastille. He has promised me an answer to-day, when I have engaged myself to dine with Monsieur de Bassompierre; and the only difficulty is to obtain an opportunity of speaking in private. You doubtless have experienced how troublesome it is sometimes to win a secret moment, even in a saloon; judge, therefore, whether it is easy in a prison. You must lend your aid, and engage old Du Tremblai in conversation, while I make the best use of the time you gain for me."

I now very well perceived that De Retz had in a manner been forced to explain himself to me, as there was no other person in Paris acquainted with the designs of the Count de Soissons. I therefore gave him full credit for sincerity, and agreed to do my best to gain him the opportunity desired. By the time this explanation was given, it approached very near to one of the clock; and, not to commit such a rudeness as to keep waiting for their dinner a party of prisoners, whose principal earthly amusement must have been to eat, we set out immediately on foot, it being required that we should give as little *éclat* to our visits to the Bastille as possible.

A sort of mixed government then existed within the walls of the prison, being garrisoned with troops as a fortress, and also very well supplied with gaolers and turnkeys, to fit it for its principal capacity. Thus, though the gate was opened to us by an unarmed porter, a sentinel, iron to the teeth, presented himself in the inner court, and another at every ten steps. However, having, like the knights of the old romances, vanquished all perils of the way, we at length entered into the penetralia, and were ushered into the presence of the governor.

Monsieur du Tremblai, who died about six months afterwards, was too good a man for his situation; his reception of us was as kind as if we had been guests of his own; and the prisoners whom we went to see appeared to form but a part of his own family. I was now introduced in form to the friends of Monsieur de Retz: they were all old men; and had, in truth, nothing remarkable in their appearance. Monsieur de Vitry, celebrated in history as the man who, at the command of Louis XIII., shot the Maréchal d'Ancre on the very steps of the Louvre, was the only one whose countenance promised anything like vigour; but it was not to him that De Retz had addressed himself in his present negotiation, but to Monsieur de Cramail, whose face at all events did not prepossess one in favour of his intellect.

We dined; and the governor, seeing me dressed in mourning, and as gloomy in my deportment as my garments, luckily applied himself to console me, with so much application, that Monsieur de Cramail had an opportunity of speaking a few words to De Retz in private, even during dinner, while Monsieur du Tremblai endeavoured to solace me with *alose à la martinette*, and to drive out the demon sorrow with *pieds de cochons à la St. Menéhoulde*.

During the meal, De Retz took occasion to vaunt my skill at all games of cards, though, Heaven knows, he could not tell, when he did so, whether I could distinguish basset from lansquenet; but taking this for a hint, when the old governor asked me after dinner to make one of three at ombre, I did not refuse; and, as soon as we were seated, the Abbé, with Monsieur de Cramail, went out to walk upon the terrace, while Messieurs De Vitry and Du Fargis remained to look on upon our game.

Thinking to engage the governor to go on with me, I let him win a few pieces, though he played execrably ill; but I thus fell into the common mistake of being too shrewd for my own purpose. Had I judged sanely of human nature, I should have won his money, and he would have gone on to a certainty, to win it back. As it was, after gaining a few crowns, he resigned the cards, and asked if I would join the gentlemen on the terrace.

There was no way of detaining him; and, therefore, after making what diversion I could, I followed to the spot where De Retz and Monsieur de Cramail were enjoying an unobserved *tête-à-tête*. As we came up, I saw that the latter had a paper in his hand, which he was evidently about to give to De Retz. The moment, however, we appeared on the terrace, he paused, and withdrew it. The paper, I knew, might be of consequence; but how to take off the eyes of the governor was the question. I praised the view, hoping he would turn to look in his astonishment; for nothing was to be seen but the smoky chimneys of the Fauxbourg St. Antoine. But the governor only replied, "Yes, very fine," and walked on.

I now saw that I must hazard a bold stroke; and quietly insinuating the point of my sword between the governor's legs, which was the more easy, as he somewhat waddled in his walk, I slipped the buckle of my belt, the sword fell, and the governor over it. I tumbled over him; and while the paper was given, received, and concealed, I picked him up, begged his pardon, and brushed the dust off his coat; after which we passed a quarter of an hour in mutually bowing and making excuses.

De Retz then took leave; and, as soon as we were once more in the street, I left him to peruse the paper he had received at leisure, and hurried away to my lodging in the Rue des Prêtres St. Paul, to prepare for the reception of my archer and his recruits. In going to the Bastille with De Retz, I fancied that I saw a man suddenly turn round and follow us; and, on my return, I evidently perceived that I was watched. Whatever was the object, it did not at all suit me that any one should spy my actions; and, therefore, after various hare-like doublings, I turned down the Rue des Minims, got into the Place Royale, and gliding under the dark side of the arcades, made my escape by the other end, and gradually worked my way up to my lodging. My good landlady was somewhat surprised to see me, but I found my apartments prepared, and in order; and sending for a couple of flagons of good Burgundy, I waited the arrival of my new attendants.

I found that punctuality was amongst their list of qualifications; for no sooner did twilight fall than the archer made his appearance, followed by two very respectable-looking personages, whom he introduced to me severally as Combalet de Carignan, and Jacques Mocqueur. The first was a tall, well-dressed gallant, ruffling gaily, with feathers and ribands in profusion, a steady nonchalant daring eye, and a leg and arm like a Hercules. The face of the second, Jacques Mocqueur, was not unknown to me; and memory, hastily running back through the past, found and brought before me in a minute the figure of one of those worthy sergeants who had come to examine my valise on my first arrival at Paris. He was the one who had shown some valour, and had ventured a pass or two with me, after his companion had been ejected by the window.

I instantly claimed acquaintance with him, which he as readily admitted; saying, with a grin, that the circumstances under which we had last met would, he hoped, be quite sufficient to establish his character in my opinion, and show that he was well fitted for my service. Whatever reply he expected, I answered in the affirmative; and Combalet de Carignan, finding that his friend's acquaintance with me turned out advantageously, would fain have proved himself an old friend of mine also. Jacques Mocqueur, however, cut him short, exclaiming, "No, no! you were not of the party; and you just as much remember monseigneur's face as I do the high-priest of the Jews."

"Why, I have *done* so many sweet youths lately," replied the other, "and broken so many heads, that I grow a strange confounder of faces."

"Ay! if you had been with us that day," answered Jacques Mocqueur, "you would have had your own head broken. Why, monseigneur made short work with us. He pitched Captain Von Crack out of the window like an empty oyster-shell, and pricked me a hole in my shoulder before either of us knew on what ground we were standing;" and he made me a low bow, to send his compliment home up to the hilt.

"To proceed to business," said I, after I had invited my companions to taste the contents of the flagons, which they did with truly generous rivalry. "Let me hear what wages you two gentlemen require for entering into my service."

"That depends upon two things," replied Combalet de Carignan: "what sort of service your lordship demands, and what power you have to protect us in executing it. Simple brawling for you, cheating, pimping, lying, swearing, thrashing or being thrashed, fighting on your part, steel to steel, and any other thing in the way of reason, we are ready to undertake: but murder, assassination, and highway robbery, are out of our way of business. I have been employed in the service of the state, am come of a good family, am well born and well educated, and would rather starve than do anything mean or dishonourable."

"Nothing of the kind shall be demanded of you," replied I; "and the worst you shall risk in my service shall be hard blows."

"That is nothing," replied Jacques Mocqueur. "Combalet does not fear even a little hanging; but he dreads having a hotter place in the other world than his friends and companions. But for general service, such as your lordship demands, we cannot have less than sixty crowns a month each."

To this I made no opposition; and a written agreement was drawn out between us in the following authentic form:--

"We, Combalet de Carignan, and Jacques dit Mocqueur, hereby take service with Monsieur le Comte de l'Orme, promising to serve him faithfully in all his commands, provided they be not such as may put us in danger of the great carving-knife, the road to heaven, or the round bedstead. We declare his enemies our enemies, and his friends our friends; all for the consideration of sixty crowns per month, to be paid to each of us by the said Count de l'Orme, together with his aid and protection in all cases of danger and difficulty, as well as food and maintenance in health, and surgical assistance, in case of our becoming either sick or wounded in his service."

In addition to the above, I stipulated that my two new retainers were to abandon all other business than mine; and though they might lie as much as they pleased to any one else, that they should uniformly tell me the truth.

At this last proposal, Jacques Mocqueur burst into a fit of laughter; and Combalet de Carignan

hesitated and stammered most desperately. "You must know, monseigneur," said he, at length, "that my friend Jacques and I have established a high character amongst our brethren, by never promising anything without performing it. Now, everything that we say we will do for your lordship, be sure that it shall be done, even to our own detriment; but as to telling you the truth, I can't undertake it. I never told the truth in my life, except in regard to promises; and I own I should not know how to begin. It is my infirmity, lying, and I cannot get over it. Jacques Mocqueur can tell the truth. Oh, I have known him tell the truth very often; but really, monseigneur, you must excuse *me*."

"Well, then, Monsieur Combalet," said I, "your friend Jacques shall tell me the truth; and when you lie to me, he shall correct you; and I will set it down to your infirmity."

"Agreed, monseigneur, agreed," replied the other; "I am quite willing that you should know the truth. I do not lie to deceive. It proceeds solely from an exuberant and poetical imagination. But allow me to request one thing, which is, that you would call me De Carignan. I am somewhat tenacious in regard to my family; for you must know that I am descended from the illustrious house of Carignan of----"

"The infirmity! the infirmity!" exclaimed Jacques Mocqueur. "His mother was a lady of pleasure in the Rue des Hurleurs, and his father was a footman."

The bravo turned with a furious air upon his companion; but Jacques Mocqueur only laughed, and assured me that what he said was true.

All preliminaries were now definitively settled; and giving the archer another piece of gold, I hinted to him that he might leave me alone with my new attendants. This was no sooner done, than I proceeded to my more immediate object. "You think, doubtless, my men," said I, "that I am about to employ you, as you have hitherto been employed, in any of those little services which require men devoid of prejudice, and not over-burdened with morality; but you are mistaken. In the enterprise for which I destine you, you will stand side by side with the best and noblest of the land. If we fail, we will all lay our bones together; if we succeed, your reward is sure, and a nobler career is open to you than that which you have hitherto followed."

My two recruits looked at each other in some surprise. "He means a buccaneering!" said Combalet to his companion.

"Fie! no," replied Jacques Mocqueur, after a moment's thought. "He means a conspiracy, because he talks about its being a nobler career. Folks always call their conspiracies noble, though lawyers call it treason. However, monseigneur, if it is anything against our late lord and master, his most devilish eminence of Richelieu, we are your men, for we both owe him a deep grudge; and we make it a point of honour to pay our debts. But who are we to fight for, and who against?"

"Hold, hold, my friend," replied I, "you are running forward somewhat too fast. Remember that you are speaking to your lord, whom you have bound yourself to serve; and you must obey his commands without inquiring why or wherefore."

"Ay!" answered Combalet, "so long as they do not make us put our heads under the great carving-knife; but when your lordship talks about conspiracies----"

"Who talks about conspiracies, knave?" cried I, "finding that my horses were showing signs of restiveness--who talks of conspiracies? You have nothing to do but receive my commands; and when I propose anything to you that brings you within the danger of the law, then make your objection.--But to the point," proceeded I; "I am told, and indeed know from the best authority, that all the persons exercising your honourable profession, in any of its branches, form as it were a sort of club or society, which is governed by its own laws to a certain degree; and I am, moreover, informed that you have a certain place of meeting, where the elders of your body assemble, called Swash Castle, or Château Escroc, where you have a chief magistrate, named King of the Huns. Is not this the fact?"

I had gained my information from various sources, but greatly from my little attendant Achilles, who had an especial talent for finding out things concealed. My knowledge of their secrets, however, had a great effect upon my two attendants, who began to think, I believe, that either as a professor or an amateur I had at some former time exercised their honourable trade myself.

"There is no denying it, sir," replied Jacques Mocquer, at length; "we are a regular corporation. So much I may say, for you know it already; but ask me no farther, for we are bound by something tighter than an oath, not to reveal the mysteries of our craft."

"I am going to ask you no questions," replied I, firmly; "but I am going to command you to take me to your rendezvous, or Swash Castle, and introduce me to your worthy prince, the King of the Huns."

My two respectable followers gazed in each other's eyes with so much wonder and amazement, that I saw I had made a very unusual request; but I was resolved to carry my point; and accordingly added, after waiting a few moments for an answer, "Why don't you reply? Do not

waste your time in staring one at the other, for I am determined to go, and nothing shall prevent me."

"Samson was a strong man, monseigneur," replied Jacques, shaking his head, "but he could not drink out of an empty pitcher. Your lordship would find it a difficult matter to accomplish your object by yourself; and though here we stand, willing, according to our agreement, to serve you to the best of our power, yet I do not believe that we can do what you require."

"Mark me, Master Jacques Mocque," replied I, "my determination is taken. I came to Paris for the express purpose of treating with your King of the Huns, on matters of deep importance; and back I will not go without having fulfilled my mission. If, therefore, you and your companion can gain me admittance sinto your Château Escroc by to-morrow night, ten pieces of gold each shall be your reward; if not, I must find other means for my purpose; and take care that you put no trick upon me; for be sure that I will find a time to break every bone in your skin, if you do.--You know I am a man to keep my word."

"I do! I do! monseigneur," replied Jacques Mocqueur: "it cost me a yard and a half of diachylon, the last bout I had with you; and I would not wish to try it again. All I can say is, that we will do our best to gain a royal ordonnance for your lordship's admittance; but if you really have made up your mind to go, knowing anything of what you undertake, you must have a stout heart of your own; that is all that I can say. I have only farther to assure your lordship, that the more information you can give us of your purpose, the more likely are we to succeed."

"You may tell his majesty of the Huns," replied I, "that I come to him as an ambassador from one prince to treat with another--that he may find his own advantage in seeing me, for that I shall be contented to cast ten golden pieces into his royal treasury, as an earnest of future offerings, on my first visit; and that he need not be in the least fear, as I come unattended, and quite willing to submit to any precautions he may judge necessary."

After a little reflection, my two attendants did not seem to think my enterprise quite so impracticable as they had at first imagined it. They banded the *pros* and *cons*, however, some time between them, in a jargon which to me was very nearly unintelligible; and at last, once more assuring me that they would do their best, they left me, after having received a piece or two to stimulate their exertions. Before I let them depart, I also took care to enforce the necessity of despatch, and insisted upon it that a definitive answer should be given me by dusk the day after. As soon as Messieurs Combalet de Carignan and Jacques Mocqueur were gone, my own steps were turned towards the Hôtel de Soissons; and revolving in my own mind the events of the day, I walked on, like most young diplomatists, perfectly self-satisfied with the first steps of my negotiation, even before it showed the least probability of ultimate success.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Scarcely had I entered my apartments in the Hôtel de Soissons, ere I received a visit from Signor Vanoni, who informed me that the Countess was somewhat offended at my having gone forth without rendering her my first visit of ceremony. "She invites you, however," added the old man, "to be present to-night in the observatory of Catherine de Medicis, which you have doubtless remarked from your window, while I endeavour to satisfy her, as far as my poor abilities go, in regard to the future fate of her son, which she imagines may be learned from the stars."

"And do you not hold the same opinion?" demanded I, seeing that Vanoni had some hesitation in admitting his own belief in astrological science. "I suppose there are at least as many who give full credit to the pretensions of astrologers, as there are who doubt their powers?"

"My own opinion," replied the old man, "signifies little; I certainly must have thought there was some truth in a science, before I made it a profound study, which I have done in regard to astrology. However, if you will do me the honour of following me, I will show you the interior of the magnificent column which Catherine de Medicis constructed, for the purpose of consulting those stars which are now," he added, with a smile, "growing as much out of fashion as her own farthingale."

I followed him accordingly, and crossing the gardens, at the end of one of the alleys, came upon that immense stone tower, in the form of a column, which may be seen to the present day, standing behind the Hôtel des Fermes. It was night, but beautifully clear and starlight; and, looking up, I could see the tall dark head of that immense pillar, rising like a black giant high above all the buildings around, and I felt that much of the credence which astrologers themselves

placed in their own dreams, might well be ascribed to the influence of the solemn and majestic scenes in which their studies were carried on. I understood completely how a man of an ardent imagination, placed on an eminence like that, far above a dull and drowsy world below, with nothing around him but silence, and no contemplation but the bright and beautiful stars, might dream grand dreams, and fancy that, in the golden lettered book before his eyes, he could read the secret tale of fate, and discover the immutable decrees of destiny. I did more: I felt that, were I long there myself, I should become a dreamer too, and give rein to imagination as foolishly as any one.

We now entered the tower by a strong door, at which were stationed two small negro pages, each of whom, dressed in the Oriental costume, bore a silver lamp burning with some sort of spirit, which gave a blue unearthly sort of light to whatever they approached. Notwithstanding my own tendency towards imaginativeness--perhaps I might say towards superstition--I could not help smiling to see with what pains people who wish to give way to their fancy, add every accessory which may tend to deceive themselves. Anything strange, unusual, or mysterious, is of great assistance to the imagination; and the sight of the two small negroes, with their large rolling eyes and singular dress, together with the purple gleam of the lamps in the gloomy interior of the tower, were all well calculated to impress the mind with those vague sort of sensations which, themselves partaking of the wild and extraordinary, form a good preparation to ideas and feelings not quite tangible to the calm research of reason.

Vanoni saw me smile; and as we went up the stairs of the tower, he said, "That mummery is none of mine. The good Countess is resolved not to let her imagination halt for want of aid: but the belief which I give to the science of astrology is founded upon a different principle--the historical certainty that many of the most extraordinary predictions derived from the stars have been verified contrary to all existing probabilities--a certainty as clearly demonstrable as any other fact of history, and much more so than many things to which men give implicit credence. In the search for truth, we must take care to get rid of that worst of prejudices, because the vainest--that of believing nothing but what is within the mere scope of our own knowledge. Now it is as much a matter of history as that Julius Cæsar once lived at Rome, that in this very tower an astrologer predicted to Catherine de Medicis the exact number of years which each of her descendants should reign. It has been one cause of the disrepute into which the science of astrology has fallen," he added, "that its professors mingled a degree of charlatanism with their predictions, which they intended to give them authority, but which has ultimately discredited the art itself. Thus the astrologer I speak of, not contented with predicting what he knew would happen, and leaving the rest to fate, must needs show to the queen the images of her sons, in what he pretended to be a magic glass; and, by this sort of juggle diminished his own credit; though the *procès verbal* of what Catherine saw, taken down at the time, is now in the hands of the Countess de Soissons."

"May I ask the particulars?" said I, growing somewhat interested in the subject; "and also, whether this *procès verbal* is undoubtedly authentic?"

"Beyond all question," replied the old man, leading the way into a circular hall, at the very top of the tower. "It has descended from hand to hand direct; so that no doubt of its being genuine can possibly exist. What the queen saw was as follows: being placed opposite a mirror, in this very chamber, after various fantastic ceremonies unworthy of a man of real science, the astrologer called upon the genius of Francis II. to appear, and make as many turns round the chamber as he should reign years.

"Instantly Catherine beheld a figure, exactly resembling her son, appear in the glass before her, and with a slow and mournful step take one turn round the chamber and begin another; but before it was much more than half completed, he disappeared suddenly; and another figure succeeded, in which she instantly recognised her second son, afterwards Charles IX. He encircled the hall fourteen times, with a quick and irregular pace. After him came Henry III., who nearly completed fifteen circles; when suddenly another figure, supposed to be that of the Duke of Guise, came suddenly before him, and both disappearing together, left the hall void, seemingly intimating to the queen that there her posterity should end. There stands the mirror," he added, "but its powers are gone."

I approached the large ancient mirror with its carved ebony frame, to which he pointed, and looked into it for a moment, my mind glancing back to the days of Catherine de Medicis and her gay and vicious court; and binding the present to the past, with that fine vague line of associations whose thrilling vibrations form as it were the music of memory; when suddenly, as if the old magician still exercised his power upon his own mirror, the stately form of a lady dressed in long robes of black velvet rose up before me in the glass; and with a start which showed how much my imagination was already excited, I turned round and beheld the Countess de Soissons.

Without waiting for the reprimand which, I doubted not, she intended to bestow upon me, I apologised for having been rude enough to go anywhere without first having paid my respects to herself, alleging business of an important nature as my excuse.

"And pray, what important business can such a great man as yourself have in our poor capital?" demanded the Countess, with a look of haughty scorn, that had well nigh put to flight my whole provision of politeness.

"I believe, Madam," replied I, after a moment's pause, "that Monsieur le Comte your son informed you, by a note which I delivered, that I had to come to Paris on affairs which he thought fit to intrust to me."

"And a pretty personage he chose," interrupted the Countess. "But I come not here to hear your excuses, youth. Has Signor Vanoni told you the important purpose for which I commanded you to meet me here?"

I replied that he had not done so fully; and she proceeded to inform me, that the learned Italian, having been furnished by her with all the astrological particulars of my birth, which she had obtained from my mother many years before, and also having received those of the birth of her own son the Count de Soissons, he had chosen that evening for the purpose of consulting the stars concerning our future fate.

It is needless to go through all the proceedings of the astrologer, his prediction being the only interesting part of the ceremony. This he delivered without any affectation or mummery, as the mere effect of calculations; and his very plainness had something in it much more convincing than any assumption of mystery; for it left me convinced of his own sincere belief in what he stated. I forget the precise terms of his prophecy in regard to the Count de Soissons; suffice it, that it was such as left room for an easy construction to be put upon it, shadowing out what was really the after-fate of the Prince to whom it related. In regard to myself, he informed me that dangers and difficulties awaited me, more fearful and more painful than any I had hitherto encountered; but that with fortitude I should surmount them all; and he added, that if I still lived after one month from that day, my future fate looked clear and smiling. All who sought my life, he said farther, should die by my hand, or fail in their attempt, and that in marriage I should meet both wealth, and rank, and beauty.

Absurd as I knew the whole system to be, yet I own--man's weaknesses form perhaps the most instructive part of his history, and therefore it is, I say it--absurd, as I knew the whole system to be, yet I could not help pondering over this latter part of the prediction, and endeavoured to reconcile it in my own mind with the probabilities of the future. My Helen had beauty, I knew too well. Wealth, I had heard attributed to her; and rank, the Prince had promised to obtain. Oh man, man! thou art a strange, weak being; and thy boasted reason is but a glorious vanity, which serves thee little till thy passions have left thee, and then conducts thee to a grave!

Hope, in my breast but a drowning swimmer, clung to a straw--to worse--a bubble.

I followed the Countess de Soissons from the tower, thoughtful and dreamy; and I believe the old man Vanoni was somewhat pleased to witness the effect that his words had wrought upon me; though he could little see the strange and mingled web that fancy and reason were weaving in my breast--the golden threads of the one, though looking as light as a gossamer, proving fully strong enough to cross the woof of the other, and outshine it in the light of hope.

At the foot of the staircase we found the Countess's women waiting; and having suffered me to conduct her to the door of the Hôtel de Soissons, she gave me my dismissal with the same air of insufferable haughtiness, and retired into the house. As my apartments lay in one of the wings, I was again crossing the garden to reach them, when suddenly a figure glided past me, which for a moment rooted me to the ground. It was in vain I accused myself of superstition, of madness, of folly. The belief still remained fixed upon my mind, that I had seen Jean Baptiste Arnault, whom I had shot with my own hand. The moon had just risen--the space before me was clear; and if ever my eyes served me in the world, it was the figure of him I had killed that passed before me.

Without loss of time, I made my way to my own apartments; and pale, haggard, and agitated, I cast myself on a seat, while little Achilles, in no small surprise, gazed on me with open eyes, and asked a thousand times what he could do for me.

"It was he!" muttered I, without taking any notice of the little man.--"It was certainly Jean Baptiste Arnault, if ever I beheld him."

"My brother!" exclaimed Achilles; "I thought he was at Lourdes, with that most respectable gentleman his father, my mother's husband that was; and my parent that ought to have been--I certainly thought he was at Lourdes."

"He is in the grave, and by my hand," replied I, scarcely understanding what he had said; but gradually, as I grew calm, my mind took in his meaning, and I exclaimed, "Your brother! Was Jean Baptiste Arnault your brother?"

"That he certainly was, by the mother's side," replied the little player, "and as good a soul he was, when a boy, as ever existed." An explanation of course ensued; and on calling to mind the little man's history, I found that no great wit would have been necessary to have understood his connection with Arnault before. A more painful narrative followed on my part, for Achilles pressed me upon the words I had let fall. I could not tell him the circumstances of his brother's death--that would have been too dreadful for my state of mind at the moment; but I assured him that it had been accidental; and I told him the regret, the horror, the grief, which it had occasioned me ever since.

"Poor Jean Baptiste!" cried the little player, with more feeling than I thought he possessed, "he

was as good a creature as ever lived; and now, when I hear that he is dead, all his tricks of boyhood, and all the happy hours when we played together, come up upon my mind, and I feel--what perhaps I never felt rightly before--what a sad thing it is to be an outcast, denied, and forgotten, and alone, without one tie of kindred between me and all the wide world." And the tears came up into his eyes as he spoke. "Do not let me vex you, monseigneur," continued he: "I am sure you would harm no one on purpose; and you have been to me far better than kind and kindred; for you alone, on all the earth, have borne with me, and showed me unfailing kindness; but yet I cannot help regretting poor Jean Baptiste."

It was a bitter and a painful theme; and we both dropped it as soon as it was possible. Ideas, however, were re-awakened in my mind, that defied sleep; and though I persuaded myself that the figure I had seen was but the effect of an imagination over-excited by what had passed during the day, and the thoughts that had lately occupied me; yet, as I lay in my bed, all the horrid memories, over which time had begun to exercise some softening power, came up as sharp and fresh as if the blood was still flowing that my hand had shed.

I rose late, and while Achilles was aiding me to dress, I saw that there was something on his mind that he wished to say. At length it broke forth. "I would not for the world speak to you, monseigneur, on a subject that is so painful," said the little player, with a delicacy of which I had hardly judged him capable; "but this morning something extraordinary has happened, that I think it best to tell you. As I was standing but now at the gate of the Hôtel de Soissons, who should pass by but Arnault the old procureur. He stopped suddenly, and looked at me; and as I thought he knew me, though in all probability I was mistaken, I spoke to him, and we had a long conversation. Me he seemed to care very little about, but he asked me a world of questions about you; and he seemed to know all that you were doing, a great deal better than I did myself. I assured him, however, that the death of poor Jean Baptiste was entirely accidental, as you told me; and I related to him all that you had suffered on that account, and how often, even now, it would make you as grave and as melancholy as if it were just done. I wanted him very much to tell me where he lived, but he would not; and took himself off directly I asked the question."

It gave me some pain to hear that Achilles had now positively informed Arnault that my hand had slain his son. Helen could never be mine; I felt it but too bitterly, as the dreams which the astrologer's prediction had suggested died away in my bosom--and yet I shrank from the idea of her knowing, that he whom she had loved was the murderer of her brother. I could not, however, blame Achilles for what he had done. The name of Helen had never been mentioned between us; and when I thought that she was *his* sister--the sister of my own servant, though it changed no feeling in my breast towards her--though it left her individually lovely, and excellent, and graceful as ever in my eyes, yet it gave new strength to the vow I had made to obey my mother's last injunctions, by adding another to the objections which she would have had to that alliance. The conviction that we were fated never to be united took firm possession of my mind. Destiny seemed willing to spare me even the pain of faint hopes, by piling up obstacle on obstacle between us; but I resolved that, if I might never call her I loved my own, I would give the place which she had filled in my heart to no other. I would live solitary and unbound by those ties which she alone could have rendered delightful. I would pass through life without the touch of kindred or of wedded love, and go down to the grave the last of my race and name.

Such were my resolutions; and, variable and light as my character was in some degree, I believe that I should have kept them--ay! notwithstanding the quick and ardent blood of youth, and my own proneness to passion and excitement.

In the course of the morning, I visited Monsieur de Retz; and, according to the commands of Monsieur le Comte, we mutually communicated the steps we had taken--though I believe De Retz informed me of the success which had attended his negotiations, more to force me into a return of confidence than for any other reason.

"From the letter which Monsieur de Cramail slipped into my hand yesterday," said he, "as well as from what he told me *vivâ voce*, I can now safely say the Bastille is our own. Indeed, it is wonderful with what facility this party of prisoners dispose of their place of confinement; but the Count tells me here, that he has won the officers of the garrison, and the officers have won the soldiers--that, in short, all hearts are for Monsieur le Comte, and that it only wants a first success to make all hands for him too. Oh, my dear De l'Orme," he burst forth, "what a wonderful thing is that same word success! But once attach it to a man's name, and you shall have all the world kneel to serve him, and laud him to the skies--let him but fail, and the whole pack will be upon him, like a herd of hungry wolves. Give me the man that, while success is doubtful, stands my friend, who views my actions and my worth by their own intrinsic merit, and pins not his faith upon that great impostor success, whose favour or whose frown depends not on ourselves but circumstance."

As soon as it was dusk, I went alone to my little lodging in the Rue des Prêtres St. Paul; and, after waiting for about half an hour, received the visit of my two most respectable followers, Combalet and Jacques Mocqueur. As they entered, I saw by a certain smirking air of satisfaction on their countenances, that they had been successful in their negotiation, which they soon informed me was the case.

"We have permission from his most acuminated majesty of the Huns," said Jacques Mocqueur, "to introduce Monseigneur le Comte de l'Orme into his famous palace called Château Escroc, and

to naturalise him a Hun, upon the reasonable condition of his submitting to be blindfolded, as he is conducted through the various passes of the country of the Huns."

"In regard to being blindfolded," replied I, "I have not the least objection, as it is but natural you should take means to prevent your secret resorts from being betrayed; but I must first understand clearly what you mean by my being naturalised a Hun, before I submit to any such proceeding."

"'Tis a most august and solemn proceeding," replied Combalet de Carignau, "and many of the first nobility have submitted to it without blushing."

"His infirmity! his infirmity!" cried Jacques Mocqueur. "I pray your lordship would not forget his infirmity! Not a noble in these or former times ever thought of submitting to the ceremony but yourself;--but after all, it is but a ceremony, which binds you to nothing."

"If that be the case," replied I, "I will go; but be so good as to remark, that I have nothing upon my person but the ten gold pieces which I have promised your worthy monarch; and I beg that you will give notice thereof to the worthy corporation I am going to meet, lest the devil of cupidity should tempt them to play me foul."

"For that, we are your lordship's sureties," said Combalet. "I should like to see the man who would wag a finger against you, while we stood by your side."

"Your lordship does us injustice," said Jacques Mocqueur, in a less swaggering tone. "There is honour, even to a proverb, amongst the gentlemen you are going to meet; but if you are at all afraid, one of us will stay till your return, at the Hôtel de Soissons, where our friend the archer informed us you really lodged."

"I am not the least afraid," replied I: "but I spoke, knowing that human nature is fallible; and that the idea of gold might raise up an evil spirit amongst some of your companions, which even you might find it difficult to lay. However, lead on, I will follow you."

"I question much whether the council has yet met," replied Combalet; "but we shall be some time in going, and therefore we may as well depart." We accordingly proceeded into the street, where I went on first, followed, scarcely a step behind, by my two bravoes, in the manner of a gentleman going on some visit accompanied by his lackeys. At every corner of each street, either Combalet or his companion whispered to me the turning I was to take; and thus we proceeded for near half an hour, till I became involved in lanes and buildings with which I was totally unacquainted, notwithstanding my manifold melancholy rambling through Paris, when I was there alone and tormented with gloomy thoughts that drove me forth continually, for mere occupation. The houses seemed to grow taller and closer together, and in many of the lanes through which we passed, I could have touched each side of the street, by merely stretching out my hands. Darkness, too, reigned supreme, so that it was with difficulty that I saw my way forward; and certainly should often not have known that there was any turning near, had it not been for the whisper of mv companions, "To the right!" or "To the left!"

The way was long, too, and tortuous, winding in and out, with a thousand labyrinthine turnings, as if it had been built on purpose to conceal every kind of vice, and crime, and wretchedness, amongst its obscure involutions.

Every now and then from the houses as I passed burst forth the sound of human voices; sometimes in low murmurs, sometimes in loud and boisterous merriment; and sometimes even in screams and cries of enmity or pain, that made my blood run cold. Still, however, I pursued my purpose. I could but lose my life--and life to me had not that value which it possesses with the happy and the prosperous. I would have sold it dear, nevertheless, and was well prepared to do so, for I was armed with dagger, sword, and pistol; so that, setting the object to be gained by murdering me, which could but be my clothes, with the risk and bloodshed of the attempt, I judged myself very secure, though I found clearly that I was plunging deeper and deeper every moment among those sinks of vice, iniquity, and horror, with which some part of every great city is sure to be contaminated.

Suddenly, as I was proceeding along one of these narrow streets, a hand was laid firmly, but not rudely, on my breast; and a voice asked, "Where go ye?" Jacques Mocqueur stepped forward instantly, and whispering a word to my interrogator, I was suffered to proceed. In a few minutes after, we arrived at a passage, where my bravoes informed me that it would be necessary to bandage my eyes, which was soon done; and being conducted forward, I perceived that we went into a house, the entrance of which was so narrow, that it was with difficulty Combalet could turn sufficiently to lead me onward by the hand. I took care as we went to count the number of paces, and to mark well the turnings, so that, I believe, I could have retraced my steps had it been necessary.

After turning four times, we once more emerged into the open air, as if we crossed an inner court, and I could hear a buzz of many voices, seemingly from some window above. We now again entered a house; and, having turned twice, the bravoes halted, and I heard an old woman's voice cry in a ragged, broken tone, "They are waiting for you, you two lazy jessame flinchers. And what new devil have you brought with you?--A pretty piece of flesh, I declare! Why, he has a leg and an

arm like the man of bronze."

While these observations were being made upon my person, my two worthy retainers were detaching the bandage from my eyes; and as soon as I could see, I found myself standing in a large vestibule at the foot of a staircase. An iron lamp hung from the ceiling, and by its light I beheld a hideous old woman, in that horrid state where mental imbecility seemed treading on the heels of every sort of vice. Her high aquiline nose, her large bleared, dull eyes, swimming between drunkenness and folly, her wide mouth, the lips of which had long since fallen in over her toothless gums, all offered now a picture of the most degrading ugliness; while, with a kind of gloating gaze, she examined me from head to foot, crying from time to time, "A pretty piece of flesh!--ay, a pretty piece of flesh!--nice devil's food!--will you give me a kiss, young Beelzebub?" And throwing her arms suddenly round me, she gave me a hug that froze the very blood in my veins.

I threw her from me with disgust; and, in her state of semi-drunkenness, she tottered back and fell upon the pavement, giving a great scream; on which a man, who had been lying in a corner totally unseen by me, sprang up, and drawing his sword, rushed upon me, crying, "Morbleu, Maraud! How dare you strike Mother Marinette?"

It was a critical moment. To do anything with the wild and lawless, it needs to show one's self as fierce and fearless as themselves. My sword was out in an instant; and knowing that sometimes a display of daring courage, with men like those amongst whom I was placed, will touch the only feelings that remain in their seared and blackened hearts, and do more with them than any other earthly quality, I cried out to my two retainers, who were hurrying to separate us, "Let him alone! let him alone!--We are man to man. I only ask fair play."

"Fair play! Give him fair play!" cried Combalet and his companion to half a dozen ruffians that came rushing down the stairs at the noise. "Give the Count fair play!"

"It's a quarrel about a lady!" cried Jacques Mocqueur. "An affair of honour! A duello! Let no one interrupt them."

In the meanwhile my antagonist lunged at me with vain fury. He was not unskilful in the use of his weapon, but his was what may be called bravo-fencing, very well calculated for street brawls, where five or six persons are engaged together, but not fit to be opposed to a really good swordsman, calmly hand to hand. His traverses were loose, and he bore hard against my blade, so that at last, suddenly shifting my point, I deceived him with a half time, and not willing exactly to kill him, brought him down with a severe wound in his shoulder.

"Quarter for Goguenard! Quarter for Goguenard!" cried the respectable spectators, several of whom had, during the combat, served me essentially by withholding Madame Marinette (the beldame whose caresses I had repulsed so unceremoniously) from exercising her talons upon my face. My sword was instantly sheathed, and my antagonist being raised, looked at me with a grim grin, but without any apparent malice. "You've sliced my bacon," cried he; "but, *Ventre saint gris!* you are a tight hand, and I forgive you."

The wounded man was now carried off to have his wound *puttied*, as he expressed it; and I was then ushered up stairs into a large room, wherein all the swash-bucklers, that the noise of clashing swords had brought out like a swarm of wasps when their nest is disturbed, now hastened to take their seats round a large table that occupied the centre of the hall. In place of the pens, the ink-horns, and the paper, which grace the more dignified council boards of more modern nations, that of the worthy Huns was only covered, in imitation of their ancestors, with swords and pistols, daggers and knives, bottles, glasses, and flagons, symbolical of the spirit in which their laws were conceived, and the sharpness with which they were enforced.

At the head of the table, when we entered, were seated four or five of the sager members of the council, who had not suffered their attention to be called from their deliberations like the rest; and in a great arm-chair raised above the rest was placed a small old man, with sharp grey eyes, a keen pinched nose, and a look of the most infallible cunning I ever beheld in mortal countenance. He wore his hat buttoned with a large jewel, and was very splendidly attired in black velvet; so that, from every circumstance of his appearance, I was inclined to believe I beheld in him that very powerful and politic monarch called the King of the Huns.

As Combalet de Carignan and Jacques Mocqueur were leading me forward in state to present me to the monarch, he rose, and stroking his short grey beard from the root to the point between his finger and thumb, he demanded, with an air of dignity, "What noise was that I heard but now, and who dared to draw a sword within the precincts of our royal palace?"

This question was answered by Jacques Mocqueur with the following delectable sentence:--"May it please your majesty, the case was, that old Marinette did the sweet upon the Count here, who buffed her a swagger that earthed her marrow-bones; whereupon mutton-faced Goguenard aired his pinking-iron upon the count, and would have made his chanter gape, if the Count had not sliced his bacon, and brought him to kiss his mother."

This explanation, however unintelligible to me at the time, seemed perfectly satisfactory to the great potentate to whom it was addressed; who, nodding to me with a gracious inclination,

replied, "The Count most justly punished an aggression upon the person of an ambassador. Let our secretary propose the oaths to the count, our cupbearer bring forward our solemn goblet, and let the worthy nobleman take the oaths, and be naturalized a true and faithful Hun."

A meagre gentleman in a black suit now advanced towards me, with a book in his hand, and proposed to me to swear that I would be thenceforward a true and faithful subject to the mighty monarch, François St. Maur, King of the Huns; that I would act as a true and loyal Hun in all things, but especially in submitting myself to all the laws of the Commonwealth, and the ordinances of the King in council; as well as in keeping inviolably secret all the proceedings of the Huns, their places of resort, their private signs, signals, designs, plans, plots, and communications, with a great variety of other particulars, all couched-in fine technical language, which took nearly a quarter of an hour in repeating.

Greater part of this oath I took the liberty of rejecting, giving so far in to their mockery of ceremony, as to state my reasons to the monarch with an affectation of respect that seemed to please him not a little; and, though one or two of the ruffians thought fit to grumble at any concessions being made to me, it was nevertheless arranged that the oath should be curtailed in my favour, to a solemn vow of secrecy, which I willingly took.

An immense wrought goblet of silver was now presented to me, which I should have imagined to be a chalice filched from some church, had it not been for various figures of bacchanals and satyrs richly embossed on the stalk and base. I raised it to my lips, drinking to the monarch of the Huns, who received my salutation standing; but the very first mouthful showed me that it was filled with ardent spirits; and returning it to the cup-bearer, I begged that I might be accommodated with wine, for that there was quite enough in the cup to incapacitate me for fulfilling the important mission with which I was charged.

A loud shout at my flinching from the cup was the first reply; and one of the respectable cut-throats exclaimed from the other side of the table, "Give some milk and water to the chickenhearted demoiselle."

I had already had enough of brawling for the night; and as no farther object was to be gained by noticing the ruffian's insult at the time, I took the cup that was now presented to me filled with wine, and drank health to the King of the Huns, without seeming to hear what had been said.

The most delicate part of my mission still remained to be fulfilled, namely, to explain to the chief of all the thieves, swindlers, and bravoes in Paris, for such was the King of the Huns, the objects of the Count de Soissons, without putting his name and reputation in the power of every ruffian in the capital; and as I looked round the room, which was now crowded with men of every attire and every carriage, I found a thousand additional reasons in each villanous countenance for being as guarded and circumspect as possible.

How I should have acquitted myself Heaven only knows; but a great deal of trouble was taken off my hands by the King of the Huns himself; who, after regarding me for a moment with his little grey eyes, that seemed to enter into one's very heart, and pry about in every secret corner thereof, opened the business himself, and left my farther conduct comparatively easy.

"Count de l'Orme," said he, in a loud voice, while all the rest kept silence, "you have sought an interview with us, and you have gained it. Ordinary politicians would now use all their art to conceal what they know of your purpose, and to make you unfold to them more perhaps than you wished; but we, with the frankness that characterises a great nation, are willing to show you that we are already aware of much more than you imagine. You sent word to us that you came on a mission from a prince. We will save you the trouble of naming him. He is Louis de Bourbon, Count de Soissons!"

A murmur of surprise at the penetration of the king ran through the assembly; but to me his means of information on this point were evident enough. The archer had communicated to the bravoes that, though I received them in the Rue Prêtres St. Paul, I lodged myself at the Hôtel de Soissons. They had informed their chief of the same, and by an easy chain of conclusions he had fallen upon the right person as my principal.

How he came by the rest of his information I do not know; but he proceeded. "His highness the Count de Soissons is universally loved, in the same proportion that the minister, his enemy, is hated; and there is not one man amongst my subjects who does not bear the greatest affection to the one, and the greatest abhorrence towards the other."

A loud shout of assent interrupted him for a moment; but when it had subsided he went on. "The Count is, we are well informed, preparing on all hands for open war with the cardinal; and we also know, that there is more than one agent working privately in this city for his service. We are not amongst those who will be most backward, or most inefficient in his cause; and we only wish to know, in the first instance, what he expects of us. Not that I mean to say," he added, "that we do not intend therein to have some eye to our own interests; yet, nevertheless, the Count will not find us hard or difficult to deal with, as our enemies would have men believe."

In answer to this speech, I went directly to the point, finding that all diplomatising on the

subject was spared me. I therefore told the King of the Huns that he was perfectly right in the view he had taken of the case; and that as the Count was now driven to extremity by the Cardinal, it was natural that he should take every means to strengthen his own cause. Of course, under these circumstances, I added, he would not think of neglecting so large and respectable a body as the Huns, and had therefore sent me to pray them, in case of a rising in the city of Paris on his part, to support his friends with all their aid and influence, and to embarrass his enemies by all those means which no men knew so well how to employ as themselves. I farther added, that if, under the permission and sanction of their government, any of his Majesty's subjects would enrol themselves as men at arms, to serve the Count de Soissons under my command, the prospect of vast advantages was before them; but that, of course, I should require those men who, having some knowledge of military discipline and habits, would not need the long and tedious drilling of young recruits.

"Such have we amongst our subjects in plenty," replied the King of the Huns. "We are, as I need not inform you, essentially a military nation; and for our own credit, the troops we furnish to our well-beloved cousin, Monsieur le Comte, shall be of the best quality."

A murmuring conversation now took place through the assembly, each man expressing to his neighbour his opinion of what had just passed, in a low voice, that left nothing audible but the various curses and imprecations with which they seasoned their discourse, and which seasoning certainly predominated over the matter. This left me, however, an opportunity of gaining some private speech of the king, with whom, in a very short time, I contrived to settle all preliminaries. I paid my ten louis into the treasury, and promised twenty more, in case of his showing himself active and serviceable in the rising of the metropolis. He, on his part, engaged to select and send to a certain point on the frontiers, as many horsemen as he could rely upon, who were to take service with me, and to bind themselves by oath to obey my commands for one month. For the first month, all I could promise in regard to pay was twenty crowns per man; but this seemed quite satisfactory; and I believe the plunder to be expected, whichever party gained the day, was much more tempting in their eyes than the ostensible reward. The rendezvous was named at the little village of Marigny, beyond Mouzon, just over the frontier; and it was agreed that the king should send me, from time to time, a note of the numbers he despatched; and that on my arrival at Marigny I should disburse to each man his pay in advance, on his taking the stipulated oath, and showing himself ready for action, armed with sword, pistol, dagger, morion, back and breast pieces, and musketoon. The number which his most Hun-like majesty thought he could promise was about three hundred men; and I very naturally supposed that I should have somewhat of a difficult command over men who had long submitted to no law but their own will.

I knew, also, that so trifling an incident as my having refused to pledge the King in his goblet of strong waters might do much harm to my future authority; and, therefore, after having risen to go, I ran my eye down the opposite side of the table, and said in aloud voice, "Some one, about an hour ago, called me 'a chicken-hearted demoiselle.' If he will stand out here in the free space, I will give him the most convincing proof that my heart is as stout as his own, and my hand not that of a girl."

A fellow with the form and countenance of an ox-slayer instantly started up, but his companions thrust him down again, several voices crying out, "No, no! down with him! the Count is no flincher; look at Goguenard, the best man amongst us, floored like a sheep!"

"If any proof were wanting," said Jacques Mocqueur, stepping forward, "to establish the noble Count's slashing qualities, I could give it. I am known to be a tough morsel for any man's grinders; and yet, once upon a day, the Count did for two of us singlehanded. He sent Captain Von Crack out of the window sack-of-wheat fashion, and left me with the flesh of my arm gaping like an empty flagon."

This matter being settled, I drank a parting cup with his majesty, to the prosperity of the Huns, which was of course received with a loud shout; and, conducted by Combalet de Carignan and his companion, I left Château Escroc with my whole frame fevered and burning, from the excitement I had undergone.

I have only farther to remark, that, according to the oath of secrecy which I had taken, I should not now have placed even this interview on paper, had not that respectable body with whom I passed the evening been discovered some years since, and totally routed out of all their dens. The fraternity of the Huns will doubtless ever exist in Paris; but, thanks to the exertions of our late energetic criminal lieutenant, they are now, like the Jews, a dispersed and wandering people, each depending on his own resources, and turning the public to his own particular profit.

CHAPTER XLV.

During the ten days which followed, I received every morning news of some new detachment having set out for Marigny; and each despatch from the King of the Huns gave me the most positive assurance of his co-operation in favour of the Prince, as soon as a signal should be given for the rising in Paris.

De Retz was enchanted with the progress I had made, and declared, with a sneer even at the enterprise in which he was himself engaged, that now we possessed the poor, the prisoners, and the cut-throats, our success in Paris was certain.

"Amongst my researches," said he one day, while we were speaking over these circumstances, "I have met with a man that puzzles me. He is certainly poor, even to beggary, at least so my scout, who discovered him, assures me; and yet he refused pecuniary assistance, though offered in the most delicate manner I could devise, and repulsed me so haughtily, that I could not introduce one word of treason or conspiracy into my discourse. As you, my dear count, are about to venture yourself in mortal strife, you could not have a more serviceable follower than this man's appearance bespeaks him. He is a Hercules; and if his eye does not play the braggart in its owner's favour, he is just a man to kill lions and strangle serpents. You could not do better than visit him, telling him that you are my friend, and that I am most anxious to serve him, if he will point me out the means."

I was very willing to follow the suggestion of Monsieur de Retz, being at the very time engaged in searching for a certain number of personal attendants, whose honesty might in some degree neutralise the opposite qualities of those that waited me at Marigny. Having received the address then, I proceeded to a small street in the *cité*, and mounting three pair of stairs, knocked at a door that had been indicated to me. A deep voice bade me come in; and, entering a miserable apartment, I beheld the object of my search. The light was dim; but there was something in the grand athletic limbs and proud erect carriage, that made me start by their sudden call upon old recollections. It was Garcias himself, whom I had left at Barcelona borne high upon the top of that fluctuating billow, popular favour, that now stood before me in apparent poverty in Paris.

He started forward and grasped my hand. "Monsieur de l'Orme!" cried he: "God of heaven! then I am not quite abandoned."

His tale was not an extraordinary one. He had fallen as he had risen. The nobility of Catalonia, finding that the insurgents maintained themselves, and received aid from France, declared for the popular party, gradually took possession of all authority; and, to secure it, provided for the ruin of all those who had preceded them. Garcias was the most obnoxious, because he had been the most powerful while the lower classes had predominated. Causes of accusation are never wanting in revolutions, even against the best and noblest; and Garcias was obliged to fly, to save himself from those whose liberties he had defended and saved. Spain was now all shut against him. France was his only refuge; and, finding his way to Paris, he set himself down in that great luxurious city, with that most scorching curse in his own breast, a proud heart gnawed by poverty.

"But your wife, Garcias!" demanded I, after listening to his history--"your wife! what has become of her?"

"She is an angel in heaven!" replied he, abruptly, at the same time turning away his head. "Monsieur de l'Orme," he added, more firmly, "do not let us speak of her--it unmans me. You have seen a fair flower growing in the fields, have you not?--Well, you have plucked it, and putting it in your bonnet, have borne it in the mid-day sun and the evening chill; and when you have looked for the flower at nightfall, you have found but a withered, formless, beautiless thing, that perforce you have given back to the earth from which it sprang. Say no more!--say no more!--Thus she passed away!"

Since we had parted, misfortunes had bent the proud spirit of the Spaniard, while my own had gained more energy and power; so that now, it was I who exercised over him the influence he had formerly possessed over me. The aid he had refused from Monsieur de Retz, from me he was willing to accept; and, explaining to him my situation, I easily prevailed upon him to join himself to my fortunes, and to aid me in disciplining and commanding the very doubtful corps I had levied.

Upon pretence of wishing him nearer to me, I would not leave him till I had installed him in my lodgings in the Rue des Prêtres; and there, I took care that he should be supplied with everything that was externally necessary to his comfort, and that his mind should be continually employed.

I now added six trusty servants to my retinue, provided horses and arms for the whole party, and my business in Paris being nearly concluded, prepared to return to Sedan without loss of time; when one morning a note was left at my little lodging, desiring my presence at the Palais Cardinal the next evening at four o'clock, and signed "*Richelieu*."

I instantly sent off my six servants to Meaux, keeping with me Combalet de Carignan, his companion Jacques Mocqueur, Garcias, and Achilles, with the full intention of bidding adieu to Paris the next morning, and putting as many leagues as possible between myself and his

eminence of Richelieu, before the hour he had named. Time was when I should have waited his leisure with the palpitating heart of hope, and now I prepared to gallop away from him with somewhat more speed than dignity. The *tempora mutantur et nos mutamur* goes but a little way to tell the marvels that a month can do.

My plans, however, were disarranged by very unexpected circumstances. On returning to my apartments at the Hôtel de Soissons, I sat down for a moment to write; when, after a gentle tap, the door opened, and in glided the pretty embroidery girl whom, on my first arrival at the house, I had seen holding the silks for the Countess's work. She advanced, and gave a note into my hands, and was then retiring.

"From the Countess, my pretty maid?" demanded I.

"No, sir," she replied. "Pray do not tell the Countess that I gave it to you;" and so saying, she glided out of the chamber faster than she came.

I opened the note immediately, seeing that there was some mystery in the business; and with a tumult of feelings varying at every word, like the light clouds driven across an autumn sky, now all sunshine, now all shadow, I read what follows:--

"Monsieur le Comte,

"I have just learned from my father, that by some strange error you have not yet heard of my recovery, and that you have been passing the best of your days in regret for having, as you imagined, killed me, though we are both well aware that the wound I received was given in your own defence. I have been misled, Monsieur le Comte, by those who should have taught me right; but I will no longer be commanded, even by my father, to do what is against my conscience; and, therefore, I write you this letter, to tell you that I am still in life. So conscious was I from the first that I had received my wound as a punishment from Heaven for that which I was engaged in, that, on recovering my senses at the château, I attributed my situation to the accidental discharge of my own gun. All I can add is, that I always loved you, and would have served you with all my heart, had not other people put passions and wishes into my head that I ought never to have entertained. From all that, my eyes are now cleared; and, as a proof of it, I give you the following information--that if you will this evening at eight o'clock, when it is beginning to grow dusk, go sufficiently attended to the first carrefour on the road to Vincennes, you will have the means of saving her you love best from much fear and uncomfort. Even should you be too late, be under no dread that she will meet with any serious evil. On that score depend upon

"Jean Baptiste Arnault.

"P.S.--The carriage in which they convey her is red, with a black boot on each side."

I sprang up from the table, like Ixion unbound from his wheel. The load was off my bosom--I no longer felt the curse of Cain upon me--my heart beat with a lightness such as we know in boyhood; and the gay blood running along my veins seemed to have lost the curdling poison that had so long mingled with it. It was then I first fully knew how heavily, how dreadfully the burden of crime had sat upon me, even when my immediate thoughts were turned to other things. I felt that it had made me old before my time--daring, reckless, hopeless. But now I seemed to have regained the youngness, the freshness of my spirit; and Hope once more lighted her torch, and ran on before, to illumine my path through the years to come.

In the first tumult of my feelings, reflection upon all the collateral circumstances was out of the question; but upon consideration, I saw painfully how strange my absence must have appeared to my family, from Jean Baptiste having concealed that I was the person who wounded him. Doubtless, I thought he had told his father, who had thereupon instantly taken Helen from the château; and thus my mother had been led to connect my absence with her removal.

Several parts of Jean Baptiste's letter surprised me much. Of course, however, I put my own interpretation upon them, and then bent my thoughts upon the danger which, as he informed me, menaced my dear Helen. What its nature could be I could not divine; but without wasting time in endeavouring to discover that on which I had no means of reasoning, I proceeded as fast as possible to the lodgings where I had left Garcias; and, sending Achilles for Combalet and his companion, prepared to set out to the place which the letter had indicated. It was by this time wearing towards evening; but we had still a full hour between us and the time appointed. My impatience, however, would not brook the delay; and therefore, as soon as I had collected all my attendants, I set off at full speed, and arrived at the first carrefour on the road to Vincennes, about half-past seven o'clock.

It was still quite light, and a great many of the evening strollers of the city and its environs were passing to and fro, so that the sight of a gentleman in mourning, with four somewhat conspicuous attendants, planted in the middle of a crossroad, did not escape without remark. One by one, however, the observers passed away, each leaving a longer and a longer interval between

himself and his successor, while daylight also gradually diminished, and it became dark enough to conceal us from any but very watchful eyes. In the meanwhile, my imagination went throughout all the various evolutions that an impatient spirit can impose upon it; at one time fancying that I had mistaken the spot; at another, supposing that I had been purposely deceived; and at another, believing that the carriage which contained Helen had taken a different road.

At length, however, the creaking of wheels seemed to announce its approach, and, drawing back as far as we could from observation, we waited till it came up. At about twenty paces in advance came two horsemen, one of whom, as soon as he arrived at the carrefour, dismounted, and gave his horse to his companion, while he went back, and opening the door of the carriage, got in. I could not see his face; but he was a short man, not taller than my little servant Achilles, which was the more remarkable, from the difficulty he had in reaching the high step of the carriage. In a moment after, I heard Helen's voice exclaim, "I have been deceived; I will go no farther! Let me descend, or I will call for assistance!"

She was not obliged to call, however. Assistance was nearer than she thought. "Seize the horses, Combalet," cried I; and rushing forward, I tore open the door of the carriage, exclaiming, "It is I, Helen! it is Louis!--Who has dared to deceive you?"

She sprang out at once into my arms, while the man who had entered the carriage just before, made his escape at the other side. Swords by this time were drawn and flashing about our heads; for some men who had accompanied the vehicle made a momentary show of resistance; but they were soon in full flight, and we remained masters of the field without any bloodshed.

Whom I had delivered her from--what I had done--I knew no more than the child unborn; but she clung to me with that dear confiding clasp, in which woman's very helplessness is strong, and repeated over and over her thanks, with those words, with that tone, which assured me that every feeling of her heart was still mine. "Tell me, tell me, dear Louis!" said she at length, "by what happy chance you came here to deliver me!"

"It was by a note from Jean Baptiste," replied I. "But, dearest Helen, explain to me all this; for I am still in the dark. I know not whom I have delivered you from--I know not what danger assailed you!"

Helen now, between the confusion of the moment, and the supposition that I knew a thousand circumstances of which I had not the slightest idea, began a long detail which was totally unintelligible to me. She spoke of having been at the Hôtel de Chatillon, waiting the return of her father from Peronne, and went on to say that a forged letter had been sent her, signed with his name, importing that a carriage and attendants would come for her at a certain hour to bring her to where he was; and so perfectly imitated was the signature, she said, that not only herself, but the Countess de Chatillon had also been deceived. She was in the act of adding a great many particulars, which completely set my comprehension at defiance, when a party of horsemen, galloping like madmen, arriving on the spot, interrupted her farther narration.

"Here they are! here they are!" cried the foremost horseman, seeing through the semi-darkness the lumbering machine which had brought Helen thither, blocking up the road. "Here is the carriage! cut down the villains!"

"Hold, hold!" exclaimed I, drawing my sword, and advancing before Helen, while my sturdy retainers prepared for instant warfare. "Hold, fair sir, a moment. Words before blows, if you please. Who are you? and what do you seek?"

"Morbleu! Cut them down!" cried the young man, aiming a blow at my head, which I parried and returned, with such interest, that, I believe, he would not have struck many more had not a less hasty personage ridden up, crying, "Hold, hold! Charles, I command you hold. Sir stranger, hear me! You asked our name and what we seek," he added, seeing me pause. "My name is the Maréchal de Chatillon! and now, sir, tell me yours; and how you dare, by false pretences, to carry off a young lady from my house, placed under my care by her father?"

"My name, sir," replied I, "is Louis Count de l'Orme; and in reply to your second question, far from having carried off this young lady from your house, I have just had the pleasure of rescuing her from the hands of those who did--which you would have heard before, if this hasty person had been willing to listen, rather than bully."

"He is, sir, as you have said, far over hasty," replied the Maréchal; "but begging your forgiveness for his mistake, I have only farther to thank you, on the part of the lady, for the service you have rendered her, and to request that you would give her into my hands, as the only person qualified to protect her for the moment."

"I must first be satisfied that you are really the Maréchal de Chatillon, and that the lady goes with you willingly," replied I; "for there have been so many mistakes to-night apparently, that I do not otherwise yield her till I have seen her in safety myself."

"Yes, yes, Louis," replied Helen--I thought, with a sigh--"it is Monsieur de Chatillon, and I must go with him--after once more giving you a thousand thanks for my deliverance."

"Since such is the case, Monsieur de Chatillon," I rejoined, "I of course resign a charge, which

otherwise I should not easily have abandoned; but I must claim the privilege, as one of this lady's earliest friends, of visiting her to-morrow morning, to hear those particulars which I have not been able to hear to-night."

"I cannot object to such an arrangement," replied the Maréchal, alighting, while his more impetuous companion made his horse's feet clatter with a touch of the spur. "I cannot object to such a meeting--always understood, that the Countess of Chatillon be present. The carriage in which the rogues carried you off, my fair Helen," added he, taking her hand from mine, with much gentlemanlike frankness, "shall serve to carry you back again; and I will be your companion."

Helen now took leave of me, with more tenderness than at least the younger horseman liked; for he turned his beast's head and rode a little away. The Maréchal then handed her into the carriage, and, turning to me, he said in a low voice, "Your visit, Monsieur le Comte de l'Orme, if it must be, had better be early, for this young lady is about to undertake a long journey by desire of her father; but if you would follow my advice, you would, instead of visiting her at all, turn your horse's head from Paris as speedily as possible; for, believe me, neither your journeys to Sedan, nor your proceedings in this capital, have been so secret as to escape suspicion." He paused for a moment, after having spoken, as if he waited an answer, or watched the effect of what he had said. It came upon me, I will own, as if some one had struck me; but I had presence of mind enough to reply--"My proceedings in this city, seigneur, have certainly been sufficiently open; and, consequently, should pass without suspicion, if the actions of any one be suffered to do so. My journey to Sedan was open enough also; but my return from that place was as much so; and therefore, I suppose, I have nothing to fear on that score."

"My warning, sir, was given as a friend," replied the Maréchal de Chatillon; "and I would rather meet you a few days hence in the battle-field, as a fair enemy, than hear that you had been consigned to the dungeons of the Bastille, or executed in the Place de Grève. Adieu, Monsieur de l'Orme; make the best of my warning, for it is one not to be neglected." Thus speaking, he entered the carriage; and one of his followers, who had dismounted, shut the door and took the place of the driver, who had fled at the sight of drawn swords. Then turning the horses towards Paris, he drove on, followed by the train of the Maréchal de Chatillon.

In the meantime, the warning I had received sunk deep into my mind; and though I resolved to risk everything rather than quit Paris without coming to a full explanation with Helen, and satisfying myself concerning a thousand doubts that hung upon me, I despatched Garcias with Jacques Mocqueur to Meaux that very night, with the necessary letters of exchange to pay the troop that waited me at Marigny, and an order for them to obey him as myself, in case of my arrest or death; begging him at the same time, in either event, to lead them to Sedan, and head them in the cause of the Count de Soissons. Combalet and Achilles I took with me to the Hôtel de Soissons, but kept them there only for a moment, while I gathered together all my papers and effects. After which I gave the whole package into the hands of Achilles, and sending both out of the town with their own two horses, and a led one for me, I bade them wait for me at the village of Bondy till dusk the next night. If I came not then, they had orders to join Garcias at Meaux, and tell him that I was arrested.

All these precautions taken, I went to bed and slept.

CHAPTER XLVI.

It was barely light the next morning, when I was startled by hearing some one in my sleeping chamber, and to my still greater surprise perceived a woman.

The haughtiness and reserve with which the Countess de Soissons had thought fit to treat me had restrained all communication between us during my residence in her dwelling, to the mere observance of a few ceremonious forms, and therefore it seemed strange that she should either visit me herself at such an hour, or even send any of her attendants. The person who, not seeing I was awake, approached quickly towards me, was no other, however, than the pretty little embroidery girl who had brought me the billet from Jean Baptiste the day before.

"Monsieur de l'Orme! Monsieur de l'Orme!" cried she, in a low but anxious voice, "for God's sake, rise! The exempts are here to take you to the Bastille. I will run round and open that door. Come through it as quick as you can, and you can escape yet. My brother and Jean Baptiste will keep them as long as possible."

The door to which she pointed was one that communicated with a different part of the house, and had been locked externally ever since I had tenanted those apartments. She now ran round to open it, taking care, as I heard, to fasten all the doors of my suite of rooms as she went, so that

I remained locked in on all sides. I lost no time, however, in my toilet, and was just dressed when she opened the door on the other side, while, at the same time, I could distinguish the noise of persons wrenching open the door of the farther ante-room. Three more locks still stood between me and my pursuers; but without pausing on that account, I followed my pretty guide through several chambers and passages, till, descending a staircase, we entered the garden, and gliding behind a tall yew hedge which masked the garden wall, we made our way straight to the tower of Catherine de Medicis.

"They will search here, certainly," said I, pausing, when I saw she intended to lead me into the tower. "As soon as they find I have quitted my apartments, they will naturally examine this place of retreat."

"Hush!" cried she, "you do not know all its contrivances, monseigneur." Opening the door, she permitted me to enter, and following, locked it on the inside. We now climbed the spiral staircase, up to the very highest part of the tower, and emerged on the stone platform at the top. Exactly opposite to the mouth of the staircase which we had ascended, she pointed out to me one of the large flag-stones with which the observatory was paved, saying, "You are a strong man--you can lift that."

I knelt down, and getting my fingers underneath the edge, easily raised it up, when I beheld another staircase precisely similar to that which we had ascended, and which, passing round and round the tower, exactly followed all the spires of the other, thus forming a double staircase through the whole building. My pretty companion now tried whether she could herself move the stone; and finding that she could do so with ease, as it was scarcely thicker than a slate, she followed me down, and drew it in the manner of a trap-door over us. The whole reminded me so much of my flight with the unhappy Viceroy of Catalonia, that I hurried my steps as much as possible, with the remembrance vivid before my mind's eye, of the dreadful scene with which that flight was terminated.

"We are safe now, monseigneur," said my fair guide, with a *naïvete* which some men might have mistaken for coquetry: "by your leave, we will not go so fast, for I lose my breath."

"If we are safe then, my pretty preserver," replied I, taking a jewel from my finger, which I had bought a few days before for a different purpose, "I have time to thank you for your activity in saving me, and to beg your acceptance of this ring as a remembrance."

"I will not take it myself, my lord," replied she; "but, with your leave, I will give it to Jean Baptiste, who has a great regard for you, and who sent me to show you the way, as I know all the secret places of the hotel, and neither my brother nor he are acquainted with them."

"And I suppose that Jean Baptiste, then, is to be looked on in the light of your lover, fair lady?" demanded I.

"He is a friend of my brother, the Countess's page," replied the girl; and then added, after a moment, "and, perhaps, a lover too. I do not see why I should deny it. He slept here last night with my brother, to be out of the way of some evil that was going on, and they two lying in the gatehouse, first discovered that they were exempts who knocked at the gate so early, and what they wanted."

"Will you bear a message to Jean Baptiste?" said I. "Tell him that I am not ungrateful for his kindness; and bid him tell his sister, that nothing but that which has this day happened would have prevented me from seeing her as I promised."

"His sister!" said the girl. "I did not know that he had a sister--but hark! they are searching the tower."

As she spoke, I could plainly hear the sound of steps treading the other staircase, and passing directly over our heads; and curious was the sensation, to feel myself within arm's length of my pursuers, without the possibility of their overtaking me.

"They have broken open the door," said my companion in a low tone. "We had better make haste; for when they do not find you in the tower, they may set guards in the streets round about."

We were by this time near the bottom of the stairs, and the light which had hitherto shone in through various small apertures in the masonry of the tower, now left us, as we descended apparently below the level of the ground. My pretty little guide, however, seemed to hold herself quite safe with me, though the situation was one which might have been hazardous with many men, and led me on without seeming to give a thought to anything but securing my safety, till we had passed through a long passage, at the end of which she pushed open a door, and at once ushered me into a small chamber, wherein an old woman was in bed. Startled out of a sound sleep, the good dame sat up, demanding who was there.

"'Tis I, aunt! 'tis I!" replied the girl; "where is my uncle's cloak? Oh, here; wrap yourself in that, monseigneur, and take this old hat, and no one will know you.--I will tell you all about it, aunt," she added, in answer to a complete hurricane of questions, which the old woman poured forth upon her--"I will tell you about it when the Count is safe in the street."

"Is it the Count? Lord bless us!" cried the old woman, wiping her eyes, and mistaking me for the Count de Soissons: "dear me! I thought monseigneur was safe at Sedan."

My fair guide now beckoning me forward, I left the old lady to enjoy her own wonderment; and leaving a piece of gold for the hat and cloak, thrust the one over my brows, and cast the other round my shoulders, and proceeded to a second chamber, where was an old man at work, who looked up, but asked no questions, though probably he saw his own cloak and hat on the person of a stranger.

Opposite to me stood an open door, evidently leading into a small street; and taking leave of my conductress merely by a mute sign, I passed out, and to my surprise found myself in the Rue du Four.

I had kept my own hat still under the mantle, which was, in truth, somewhat too small to cover me entirely; the point of my sword, my boots, and almost my knees, appearing from underneath, and betraying a very different station in life from that which the cloak itself bespoke. However, as thousands of intrigues of every kind are each day adjourned by the first rays of the sun that shine upon Paris, and as the parties to them must often be obliged to conceal themselves in many a motley disguise, I calculated that mine would not attract much attention dangerous to myself, if I could but escape from the immediate vicinity of the Hôtel de Soissons. I therefore walked straight down the Rue du Four, and passing before the new church of St. Eustache, I gained the Rue Montmartre, and thence crossing the Boulevards, was soon in the country. Pausing under an old elm, the emblematic tree of my family, I cast off the cloak and hat I had assumed, judging that I was now beyond the likelihood of pursuit, and walked as fast as possible towards Bondy. I arrived there in about a couple of hours, and found Achilles sauntering tranquilly before the door, while Combalet swaggered within to the new-risen host, hostess, and servants of the little inn, neither of my attendants expecting me for many an hour to come.

My order to horse was soon obeyed, and before mid-day I was safe at Meaux, where I gave but a temporary rest to my horses; and being joined by Garcias and the rest of my suite, I set out again with all speed towards Mouzon.

The necessity of borrowing another person's name was in those days so frequent with every one, that on my announcing myself to my servants as the young Baron de Chatillon, the nephew of the maréchal of that name, I caused no astonishment, and they habituated themselves to the new epithet with great facility.

Riding on before with Garcias, I now explained to him all that had occurred, which I had not had time to do before. My first piece of news, that Jean Baptiste Arnault was in existence, surprised him as much as it had done myself.

"I would have vowed," said he, "that what I saw before me, when I joined you on that morning in the park, was nothing but a heap of earth, which would never move, nor breathe, nor think again. It is very extraordinary! and now I think of it, Monsieur de l'Orme, I am afraid that I did you some unnecessary harm in the opinion of the Chevalier de Montenero. Do you remember that day, when we saved him from the fury of Gil Moreno? Well, as I was hurrying him away to his horse, I told him that his life itself depended on his speed; to which he answered, 'I would give life itself to be assured whether Louis de Bigorre did slay him or not;' alluding to something he had been speaking of with you. I thought as you did, that this Jean Baptiste was really dead; and therefore I replied at once, 'Slay him! to be sure he did--and did right too.'"

"Good God! Garcias!" cried I. "He was speaking of another event--of the priest at Saragossa, whose death I had no more hand in than you had!"

I know not how it is, but often in life, one accidental mistake or misunderstanding appears to bring on another to all eternity. There seems occasionally to be something confounding and entangling in the very essence of the circumstances in which we are placed, which communicates itself to everything connected with them; and, with one help or another, they go on through a long chain of errors from the beginning to the end.

My vexation was evident enough to mortify Garcias deeply, without my saying any more; and therefore, when he had told me that the Chevalier, on receiving the news he gave him, had instantly sprung into the saddle and ridden away in silence, I dropt a subject on which I felt that I could not speak without irritation, and turned to the coming events.

We continued our journey as rapidly as possible, and my *nom de guerre*, I found, served me well at all the various places of our halt, as I heard continually that troops were marching in all directions towards the frontier, evidently menacing Sedan, together with every particular that could be communicated to me respecting their line of march, their numbers, and condition; for all of which information I was indebted to my assumed name of Chatillon, the Maréchal de Chatillon himself being appointed commander-in-chief of the king's army, or rather, I might say, the minister's, for the monarch was calmly waiting the event of the approaching contest at Peronne, without showing that interest in favour of the cardinal which he had hitherto evinced on all occasions.

We passed safe and uninterrupted across the whole country from Paris till we came within a

few leagues of the banks of the Meuse, where the presence of the enemy's army rendered our movements more hazardous, and consequently more circumspect. From time to time we met several parties of stragglers hastening after the camp, with some of whom I spoke for a moment or two; and finding that no suspicions were entertained, and discipline somewhat relaxed, I ventured more boldly to the Meuse, and presented myself for passage at the wooden bridge above Mouzon, after ascertaining that it was but slightly guarded. Notice had been given to all my followers, in case of the slightest opposition to our passage, to draw their swords and force their way across; and accordingly, on the cravatte on duty demanding a passport, I said I would show it him, and drawing my sword, bade him give way.

He did his duty by instantly firing his carbine at me, which had nearly brought my adventures to a termination; for the ball passed through my hat; but spurring on our horses, we bore him back upon half a dozen others, who came running forward to his aid, drove them over the bridge at the sword's point, and, galloping on, gained the wood on the other side of the river.

After this rencontre we made all speed through the least frequented paths towards Marigny, and when we found ourselves within half a league of the village, I sent forward Jacques Mocqueur and Achilles to ascertain what had become of my recruits, whom I found I had posted somewhat too near the enemy's position.

In about an hour they returned, bringing with them a single trooper, who was without a casque of any kind, and wore a peasant's coat over his more warlike habiliments. In addition to all this, he had apparently taken as much care of his inward man as of his outward, for he was considerably more than half drunk.

"Happy for this sweet youth," said Achilles, who, as may have been observed, was fond of displaying his antique learning--"happy for this sweet youth, that we are not amongst the Epizephrii, or he would certainly have been hanged for drinking more wine than the physicians recommended. But we have drawn from him, monseigneur, that his companions, judging themselves somewhat too near the enemy, have betaken themselves to the nearest branch of the forest of Ardennes, hard by the village of Saule, where they are even now celebrating their elaphobolia, or venison feasts, having left this Bacchus-worshipper to tell us the way."

Though our horses were weary, we could of course grant them no rest till they had carried us over the six leagues that still lay between us and Saule, which, after many misdirections, we at last found--a little village cradled in the giant arms of the Ardennes.

My heart somewhat misgave me, lest my respectable recruits should have exercised any of their old plundering propensities upon the peasantry; and the appearance and demeanour of the comrade they had left behind, to acquaint us with their change of position, did not speak much in favour of their regularity and discipline: but I did them injustice; and on my arrival, though I found that they had laid many of the antlered people of the forest low, and eke added many a magnificent forest hog to their stores of provision, they had not at all molested the populace of the country, who, remembering the ravages of Mansfelt's free companions, looked upon my followers as very sober and peaceable soldiers indeed.

When I arrived, they were in a large piece of open forest ground, between the village and the actual wood. A great many old oaks had been cut down there the year before, and their roots had sent out a multitude of young shoots, amongst which the daring, hardy men I had engaged, had gathered themselves together in picturesque groups, roasting the venison for their evening meal, or elaphobolia, as Achilles termed it. In the meanwhile the declining sun shone through the long glades of the forest, sometimes catching bright upon their corslets and morions, sometimes casting upon them a deep shadow from any of the ancient trees that remained still standing; but, altogether, giving one of the finest and most extraordinary pieces of light and shade that ever I beheld. The noise of our horses' feet made them instantly start up from their various employments; and, recognising me for their commander, they hailed my arrival with a loud shout.

They were all, as I soon found, old soldiers; and, well aware of the infinite use of discipline even to themselves, they had employed the time of my absence in choosing petty officers from amongst their own body, and in renewing their old military habits and manœuvres. The system which they had employed was not, perhaps, entirely that which my late military readings had taught me theoretically; but as I saw it would cause me infinitely less trouble to adopt their plan than it would give them to acquire mine, as well as be less liable to mistakes, I applied myself to reviewing and manœuvring them the whole of the next day, while I sent Achilles and one of my servants to Sedan, charged with my bills of exchange for paying my levies, and with a letter to the Count de Soissons, informing him of my success.

I felt assured that all the news I conveyed to him would give the Count no small pleasure, not only having fulfilled all his wishes in Paris, but brought him a reinforcement of nearly three hundred mounted troopers, all veterans in affairs of war from their ancient profession, and acuminated in every point of stratagem from their more recent pursuits.

In the evening Achilles returned, bringing me the money I required; and a letter from the Prince, together with a reinforcement of twelve troopers, whom the Count judged might prove serviceable to me in disciplining my little force. The letter was as gratifying as ever flowed from the pen of man; and the money, which I instantly distributed amongst my followers, conjoined

with the presence of the men-at-arms the Count had sent me, contributed to establish my authority with my recruits as firmly as I could wish; though I believe that, before this came, they were beginning to grumble at the somewhat childish reiteration with which I took pleasure in making my new troop go through its evolutions. At the time, I found plentiful excuses in my own mind for so doing; but I believe now that my feelings were somewhat like those of a boy with a new plaything.

The next morning, according to the commands of the Count, I recrossed the Meuse by a bridge of boats which the Duke de Bouillon had newly caused to be constructed, and then marched my men upon a little hamlet behind the village of Torcy; after which I left them under the command of Garcias, as my adjutant; and accompanied by my servants, turned my bridle towards Sedan, to communicate with the Prince, and receive his farther commands.

I arrived at Sedan about five of the clock. All within the town was the bustle and confusion of military preparation. Trumpets were sounding, arms were clanging in every direction: the breastplate, the morion, and the spur, had taken the place, in the streets, of the citizen's sober gown, and the man of law's stiff cap; and many an accoutred war-horse did I encounter in my way to the citadel, more than Sedan had ever known before. The servants that accompanied me, including Achilles, Combalet, and his companion, were nine in number; and I had taken good care before I left Paris, that they should be sufficiently armed, to take an active part in the warlike doings then in preparation. My train, therefore, as I rode through the streets, excited some attention; and amongst a knot of gentlemen that turned to look, near the citadel, I perceived, to my surprise, the Marquis de St. Brie! It may well be supposed that the sight was not particularly gratifying; and I was passing on, without taking any notice, hoping that he would not recollect me, from the great change which the few months that had passed had wrought in my appearance. My beard, which, when I had last seen him, had been too short to be allowed to grow, was now longer, and cut into the fashionable point of that day; my mustachios were long and black; my form was broader, and more manly; and my skin, which then was pale with recent illness, was now bronzed almost to the colour of mahogany.

But he was not one of those men who easily forget; and, after looking at me for a moment, during which the change somewhat confused him, he became certain of my person; and spurring forward with a smiling countenance, in which delight to meet with an old friend was most happily and dexterously expressed, "My dear Count Louis!" cried he, "I am delighted to see you. This is one of those unexpected pleasures with which that fair jilt, Fortune, sometimes treats us, to make us bear more patiently her less agreeable caprices."

I meditated knocking his brains out, but I forbore, on reflecting that the consequences of any violent proceeding on my part might be highly detrimental to the interest of the Prince. A moment's farther consideration made me pursue the very opposite course to that which I had first proposed; and smothering my feelings towards Monsieur de St. Brie as far as I could, I replied, that the meeting was certainly most unexpected; but that, as I found him there, of course I supposed I was to look upon him as a friend and partisan of Monsieur le Comte's.

"Of course!" replied he. "I am his highness's humble friend and devoted follower; though I have yet hardly the honour of his personal acquaintance, being far better known to the noble Duke of Bouillon. However, here I am, to fight side by side with you, my dear Count, as I once proposed; and we will see which will contrive to get his throat cut soonest in the Prince's service."

"It will certainly not be I," replied I, gravely; "for wherever the battle takes place, however I may exert myself therein, I shall come out of it as unscathed as I went in."

"Indeed! how so?" demanded the Marquis. "Do you wear a charmed coat of mail, or have you been dipped in Styx?"

"Neither," replied I: "but it is my fate! In the calculation of my nativity, it has been found, that whoever seeks to take my life, their own shall be lost in the attempt. Two persons have made the essay--and two have already fallen. We shall see who will be the third." What I said was simply intended to touch the marquis upon a spot where I knew he must be sensible; but the excessive paleness that came over his countenance was far more than I expected to behold: it was more than I could suppose the mere fear of having been discovered would excite in a man of such principles. Could he be superstitious? I asked myself--he, a free-thinker, a sceptic both by an erroneous application of his reason, and by the natural propensity of a sensualist to reject everything but what is material--could he be superstitious?

But so, in fact, it was, as I soon found more clearly by the multitude of questions which he asked me concerning the person who had calculated my nativity, and given the prediction I had mentioned; citing, as he did so, the names of all the astrologers in Europe, from Nostradamus up to Vanoni himself. After a moment, however, he seemed to be conscious that he was exposing himself; and looking up with a forced laugh, "Dreams! dreams!" said he, "my dear Count. How can the stars affect us upon the earth? If I were to choose a way of fooling myself with prophecies, a thousand times rather would I follow the art of the ancient Tuscans, and draw my divination from the lightning, which at all events comes near our mortal habitation."

"I know you are a sceptic in all such matters," replied I; and riding on, I left the Marquis to

muse over the prediction as he thought fit, reserving to myself the right of calling him to a personal account for his former conduct towards me, when I should find a fitting opportunity. His character was then a new one to me, and I could hardly persuade myself that he did really believe in the dreams which even my reason, all hag-ridden as it was by imagination, cast from it the moment it had power to follow its direct course. But I have had occasion to remark since, that those who reject the truth of religion are generally as prone as devotees to the dreams of superstition.

I was immediately admitted into the citadel, and as I was dismounting in the court, encountered Varicarville. "Welcome, welcome back! Monsieur de l'Orme," said he. "We need all friends, now, to carry through our enterprise; and Monsieur le Comte tells me, that you not only bring us good news from Paris, but a considerable reinforcement. You come from Torcy. What is the news there? Did you see the enemy? When are we likely to prove our strength together?"

"I come to seek news myself," replied I. "No enemies have I seen, but half a dozen soldiers, that we drove over the wooden bridge near Mouzon. When does rumour say we shall have a battle?"

"The day after to-morrow, at farthest," replied Varicarville, "if Lamboy with his Germans arrives in time. But hie to the Prince, De l'Orme. He expects you, and is now waiting you in the saloon, hoping some news from Torcy."

I proceeded to the Count's apartments accordingly, and finding no one to announce me by the way, I entered the saloon at once. The Count de Soissons was leaning in a large arm chair, with his head bent forward, and one hand over his eyes, while Vanbroc, his Flemish lute-player, was playing to him the prelude of a song. My entrance did not make the Prince look up, and Vanbroc proceeded. After a few very sweet passages preliminary to his voice, he sung, as nearly as I can remember, the following, to a beautiful minor air:--

SONG.

I.

Give me repose and peace! Let others prove
  The losing game of strife;
Or climb the hill, or plough the wave;
To find out fortune or a grave,
  Stake happiness and life.
    Oh, give me rest and peace,
    And quietude and love!

II.

Give me repose and peace! The power, the sway,
  The sceptre, crown, and throne,
Are thorny treasures, paying ill
The sacrifice of joy and will--
  All man can call his own.
    Oh, give me rest and peace,
    To bless my humble day!

III.

Give me repose and peace! I covet not
  The laurel or the wreath,
Wars to the brave, strifes to the strong,
Ambitions to the proud belong--
  All hand in hand with death.
    But be repose, and peace,
    And life, and joy, my lot!

The musician ceased, but still the Prince kept his hand before his eyes, and I could see the tears roll slowly from underneath it, and chase one another down his cheek, so great had been the power of the music upon him.

"No more, Vanbroc--no more!" said he, at length raising his eyes. "Ha! De l'Orme. You should not have seen me thus: but I was ever more easily vanquished by music than by the sword. But now to business: leave us, Vanbroc."

The lute-player withdrew, and the Prince, instantly recovering from the momentary weakness into which he had been betrayed, proceeded to question me respecting the minor details of my negotiation in Paris. With all that I had done he expressed himself infinitely contented, and showed the confidence which my conduct had inspired him with, by making me acquainted with every particular that had taken place at Sedan during my absence, together with all his future plans, as far as they were formed.

"To-morrow evening," said he, "or the next morning at farthest, Lamboy, the Imperial General, will join us with five thousand veteran Germans. As soon as he is prepared to pass the river, I

also shall cross by the bridge, and forming our junction on the other side, we will together offer battle to the Maréchal de Chatillon, who has been for some days at Remilly."

"I believe your highness is misinformed," replied I; "for hardly yet five days ago I saw Monsieur de Chatillon in Paris:" and I proceeded to inform the Count of the circumstances which made me so positive of the fact.

"He was there last night, however," replied the Count; "for one of our scouts watched him pass the Meuse and advance some way to reconnoitre Lamboy: his person was known, and there could be no doubt. At all events, we shall fairly offer our enemy battle on the day after to-morrow. Lamboy commands the infantry, Bouillon the cavalry, and myself the reserve.--But what makes you look so grave on my saying that Bouillon commands the cavalry?"

"My reason was frankly this, monseigneur," replied I; "Monsieur de Bouillon has never shown any great regard for me; and I have farther this day met a person on whose conduct towards me I have already expressed myself to your highness without restraint--I mean the Marquis de St. Brie." The Count started. "He boasts himself the friend of Monsieur de Bouillon," continued I, "and you may easily imagine what sort of harmony there can exist between him and me. The little troop I have levied consisting entirely of cavalry, it will not of course be very pleasant to me to fight side by side with a man who has twice attempted my life; but however----"

"Stay, De l'Orme!" said the Count. "No likelihood exists of that taking place which you anticipate. Your troop has been destined by Bouillon and myself for a manœuvre, which we are sure you will execute well, and on which the fate of the battle may probably depend. If we can gain the ground that we wish, the cavalry, under the command of Bouillon, will remain in the hollow way till such time as the enemy lose somewhat of their compact order; as soon as ever this is ascertained, by a signal from the hill behind, where you may have remarked an ancient pillar--the signal, remember, is the raising of a red flag on the pillar--Bouillon advances and charges the cavalry of the enemy; but some cooperating movement may be necessary to second the efforts of the Duke, and, consequently, we have determined to post a body of cavalry behind a little wood, to the left of our position. You must have seen it. But you shall be furnished with a plan of the country, like this on the table. Here, you see, is the great wood of the Marfée. Here the little wood to the left, joined to the Marfée by this low copse, which I shall take care to garnish for you with a body of musketeers. Here the high summit, on which, if we have time to reach it, we shall take up our position; and here the hollow way for Bouillon's cavalry. Your body of troopers must be stationed just behind the wood, from whence you have a full view of the pillar. The moment you see the red flag, draw out and charge the right of the enemy. You have before you a gentle slope, which is, in truth, the only part of the ground fit for cavalry; and your being there will have two great advantages;--that of seconding Bouillon; and, in case of the enemy attempting to turn our left flank, that of making his manœuvre fall upon himself. It was for this reason that I ordered your troop on to the hamlet behind Torcy, from whence, on the morning of the battle, you can easily take up your position as we have arranged. Do you fully understand?"

"Perfectly," replied I; "and the arrangement is of course most gratifying to me. Not that any circumstances should have induced me to pursue a private quarrel to the detriment of your Highness's service. I have already met the Marquis de St. Brie and spoken to him, without noticing his attempt upon my life."

"You did right, De l'Orme," replied the count, his brow knitting into a sterner frown than I had ever seen him assume. "But if he has the insolence to present himself before me, my conduct must be very different. In addition to this attempt upon you, he is known to have been the murderer of the Count de Bagnols, and strongly suspected of having poisoned poor De Valençais. My own honour and dignity require me to have no communion with such a man, let his rank and influence be what it may. If I can meet with Bouillon, we will make such arrangements as will spare me the mortification of publicly repelling this bad man. Come with me; we will see if we can find him."

So saying, he took his hat, which lay upon the table, and passed into the anteroom. Several of his attendants were now in waiting, and rising, followed with me into the court, and thence into the great square before the château.

It was a fine sunny evening in July, one of those that seem made for loitering in the shade, with some pleasant companion, listening to dreamy fanciful talk, and drinking the balmy breath of the summer air. As our misfortune would have it, however, the first person we encountered thus employed was the Marquis de St. Brie himself, who had by this time dismounted; and, surrounded by a crowd of the most distinguished persons at Sedan, was entertaining them with that easy flowing conversation which no one knew so well how to display as himself. I could tell by the countenances of the listeners, and the smile that sat upon the lip of each, the very tone of what was passing; and I could almost fancy I heard it all--the tart jest, the pointed sneer, the amusing anecdote, the shrewd remark, the witty turn, all softened and harmonized by the language, which made the company of that infamous man so fascinating and so dangerous.

The Prince, who knew him by sight, was passing on to the other side of the square, where the Duke of Bouillon was himself inspecting a body of infantry; but the party of gentlemen instantly advanced towards us, and one of them, coming a step forward, begged leave to make the Marquis de St. Brie known to his Highness the Count de Soissons.

"Sir!" replied the Count, tossing back the plumes of his bonnet, as if to let every one see that he did not make the least inclination to the person thus presented to him; "thank God! I know the Marquis de St. Brie thoroughly, and seek to know no more of him;" and thus speaking, he turned his back upon the Marquis, and walked forward to the Duke of Bouillon, to whom he explained in a few words his feelings in regard to the other, without, however, at all implicating my name in the business.

"Few people can look upon him with less respect than I do," said the Duke of Bouillon in reply. "But he is a man of great wealth and influence, and though he is here at present with only a few servants--which I will own strikes me as singular--he promises me a reinforcement of five hundred men in three days, which may be very serviceable for the purpose of improving our victory the day after to-morrow. Your highness must really allow me to explain away your treatment of him, in some degree, for he is too influential a person to be lost."

The Count would hardly hear of any qualificatory measure; but, after a long discussion, he gave way in some degree. "Well, well," said he, "say to him what you like, but do not let him come near me, for I cannot receive him with civility."

"I will take care that he be kept away," replied the Duke. "The only difficulty will be to make him remain with us at all."

We now returned to the citadel; and the rest of the evening passed in all the bustle and activity of preparation. The service which I was to execute was again and again pointed out to me, both by the Prince and the Duke of Bouillon, the last of whom, probably to animate me to still greater exertion, gave unlimited praise to all the arrangements I had hitherto made, and expressed the utmost confidence in my co-operation with himself in the battle that was likely to take place.

Looking on my troop as perfectly secure under the command of Garcias, I remained at Sedan that night, spending the rest of my time, after I had left the Princes, in fitting myself with the necessary defensive armour which I had not been able to procure in Paris. This was not done without some difficulty even at Sedan; for the armourers had quite sufficient occupation with the multitude of warlike guests that filled the city.

When this was accomplished, however, and I possessed my morion, back and breast-pieces, taslets and gauntlets complete, I sat down to write a letter to be delivered to my father in case of my death in the ensuing battle, and gave full instructions concerning it to little Achilles, whom I intended to leave at Sedan. After this, I paused for a moment at the open window of my chamber, watching some thick clouds that came rolling over the moon, and thinking of the strange, strong effect of imagination, which I had there myself experienced, together with the extraordinary coincidence of my mother's death being announced to me so soon afterwards.

As I stood I heard a window below me open, and some voices speaking. What they said at first was indistinct, from the noise of a tumbrel rolling across the court; but that ceased, and I could plainly distinguish the tone of the Marquis de St. Brie, saying, "I tell you, I saw him myself, with the Marquis de Sourdis in the other army: if it was not he, it was his spirit. He was paler, thinner, darker, older--but there was every line--and yet surely it could not be."

"No, no, my lord!" replied another voice. "I saw him as dead as a felled ox, and I gave him myself another slash across the head, to make all sure, before I threw him into the water."

"I will trust my own hand next time, however," said the Marquis. "Not that I doubt you, my good----"

As he spoke, I remembered that I was eaves-dropping; and though, if ever there was an occasion where it might be justified, it was then, I felt ashamed to do so, and retired to bed, bidding my servants, however, lock the door of the anteroom before they slept.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Early next morning, a firing was heard in the direction of Torcy; and springing on my horse, I galloped off for the scene of action, as fast as possible. Before I came up, however, the firing had ceased; and I found my troop under arms in the hamlet where I had left them, though the village itself, not above five hundred yards in front, was in the hands of the enemy. A regiment of infantry, which Monsieur de Bouillon had thrown forward into the village of Torcy itself for the purpose of covering his bridge of boats, had been attacked, it seemed, by the advance-guard of the enemy, and, after a sharp struggle, had been driven back upon the hamlet behind, from

which Garcias had made a very brilliant charge upon the pursuing parties of the enemy, repulsed them with some loss, and compelled them to content themselves with the village they had taken.

As may be imagined, I was mortified at not having been present; but I expressed to my troop my high satisfaction at what had been done; and told them, in a brief harangue I made them on the occasion, that his highness the Count de Soissons reckoned greatly upon their valour for success; and that, therefore, he proposed to intrust to them, under my command, some of the most important manœuvres which had already been determined upon. Praise was perhaps the more palatable to them, as their bravery had been attended with no loss, and as they had driven back the enemy at the expense of a few slight wounds. Loud cheers, therefore, attended me as I rode with Garcias along their ranks; and these were repeated still more loudly when the commanding officer of the infantry rode up to Garcias, and thanked him for the very successful diversion which my troop had operated in his favour.

Finding that the enemy did not make any disposition for advancing farther, which would indeed have brought them almost under the guns of Sedan, I rode into the town to inform the Count of what had occurred; and after a brief interview with him, I delivered the letter for my father into the hands of little Achilles; and taking with me all my papers, I bade adieu to my little attendant with feelings that perhaps do not often exist between master and servant, and returned to my troop for the night.

Before joining them, however, according to the commands of the Count, I reconnoitred the position I was to take up the next morning, and passed by the pillar from which the signal was to be given. It had formed part of an old Roman arch, and probably had recorded some victory of those wonderful barbarians, the Romans, over their still more barbarous enemies, the Gauls; but as I looked at the broken fragments of the structure they had probably raised, in the fond hope of immortalizing some long-forgotten deed, the thrilling feeling of man's mortality--of the mortality of all his works--the mortality of his very fame, came coldly over my heart; and I turned away, repeating to myself some of the lines which my dead friend Father Francis of Allurdi had once cited--

"Glory, alas! what art thou but a name?"

and returned to the post assigned me, thinking of *what might be in another world*.

Towards six o'clock, a heavy rain began to fall; but that did not prevent me from having several messengers from the Count de Soissons--one bidding me make good the hamlet which I occupied, at all risks; another informing me that Lamboy, with the Germans and the cannon, had arrived, and would pass the next morning early; and a third giving me orders to quit the hamlet as silently as possible, before daybreak the next day, and to take up the position assigned to me. This last command made me order my men to rest as soon as possible; and I also threw myself down upon some straw, completely armed except my casque; and after giving about half an hour to some vague wandering thoughts regarding the morrow, I felt that thought was of no use, and addressed myself to sleep. The fear, however, of not waking in time, abridged my slumber to two or three hours; and rising, I went out of the hovel in which I had been lying, to ascertain by the appearance of the sky what o'clock it was.

All was dark and silent, though I could hear at intervals the neighing of the horses in the enemy's army, and could see the long line of dim watch-fires, half extinguished by the rain, which marked where the veteran Lamboy had taken up his ground on the opposite hill.

Shortly after the clocks of Sedan struck midnight, and I resolved to give my men yet an hour's sleep, that they might be as fresh as possible the next day.

It was an hour of the deepest and most awful thought for me. Every one must feel, the day before he risks his life in mortal combat, sensations that assail him at no other time--the eager anxiety to know the issue--the doubt, if not the fear, of the event--the thought of earth, and all that earth has dear--the calculations of eternity--all that is awful in our vague and misty state of being then presses on the mind: and he is the brave man that looks upon it without shrinking. But my feelings were deeper and more exciting than those of most men, because my all was staked upon that battle. If it should be won, the Count de Soissons would be master of the councils of France: the only remaining obstacle between Helen and myself might easily be removed. Rank, wealth, power, affection, were all within my grasp; and never did my heart feel what love is, so much as it did that night. But if the battle were lost, I had no longer anything to live for;-- home and country, and station, and love, and hope, were all gone; and I resolved that life also should be cast upon the die.

It seemed but a minute since twelve o'clock had struck, when one followed it by the clocks of Sedan--so busy had been the ideas that hurried through my brain. But action now became my duty; and waking Garcias, we proceeded to take the necessary measures for decamping in silence.

No men in the broad universe could have been found better calculated for every motion which required secrecy than my three hundred: they provided themselves with forage and provisions for the next morning, mounted their horses, and rode out of the hamlet, without even disturbing the regiment of infantry that lay beside them; and the only person, I believe, whom we woke out

of his slumber, was a weary sentinel, who, without the excuse of Mercury's wand, had followed the example of Argus, and fallen asleep upon his watch. Woke suddenly by our passing, he seemed to think the best thing he could do was to fire his piece; and accordingly snapped it at my head; but luckily, the priming had fallen out while he slept, and it missed fire. I seldom remember a more unpleasant ride than that from Torcy to the heights of the Marfée. The rain had come on more heavily than ever; the whole way was a long, broken ascent, traversed by ravines, and often interrupted by copses; and the ground was so slippery, that our horses could scarcely keep their feet. We passed it, however, after much difficulty; and there was some consolation in knowing that the enemy's army would have to vanquish the same obstacles before the battle, if they dared to attack us.

Day began to break heavily as we reached the wood, without any sign of the rain abating; but the smaller detached part of the forest, behind which we were posted, formed almost entirely of old beeches, gave us better shelter than we could have hoped.

On our arrival, I found that the Count, according to his word, had already detached a company of musketeers to take possession of the copse wood between us and his main position; and had also sent forward several tumbrils with provisions and ammunition in plenty. Together with these was a letter for me, containing some farther orders, and a very ample commission under his hand, by which I found that the infantry beside me were also placed under my command.

As we were all new troops, there was no jealousy respecting seniority of service; and I found the officer of the infantry well disposed to act with me, especially as all I required was for his own security. It appeared to me that the copse in which he was placed was of much more importance than had been attached to it, as, in case of the enemy possessing himself thereof, which would have been easily done by advancing through a hollow way to our left, the left flank of the Prince's force was completely exposed.

To render it, then, as defensible as possible, I proposed to the other officer to employ our spare time in throwing up a strong breastwork of earth and boughs before it; and all our men setting to work with great eagerness, before seven o'clock we had completed a line, which placed it in comparative security.

Towards eight the rain ceased; and for the rest of the day merely came down in occasional showers. It had been hitherto so thick that the line of the Meuse, and even the town of Sedan, had been scarcely distinguishable; but now it drew up like a curtain, and I could see the troops of Lamboy descending toward the bridge of boats, and gradually passing the river, in as fine unbroken order as if on a review.

Shortly after, the bridge of Sedan began to be occupied; and pennons, and plumes, and standards, and flashing arms, and all the pageantry of war, announced that the princes were on their march to form their junction with the imperial army. My eye then turned anxiously towards Torcy; but all was still in the camp of the enemy; and I saw the two allied armies approach near and more near, and then unite, unopposed and seemingly almost unnoticed.

Winding in and out of the ravines and over the hills, the army of the princes now began to mount towards the heights on which I was stationed; and it was near nine o'clock before the report of a cannon announced that the Maréchal de Chatillon intended to take any notice of their movements.

No time, however, was now to be lost; and making my men refresh both themselves and their horses, I waited impatiently for the arrival of the army. All sombre thoughts, if I had entertained any such before, now vanished like mists before the sun. The sight of the moving hosts--the recollection of all that was that day to be won--the thoughtless aspiration which all young minds have for glory--the love of daring natural to my character; all stimulated me on the onward path; and slow, slow did I think the approach of the forces, as winding their way over the wet and slippy ground, they advanced towards the position which they proposed to take up.

For some time, as they came nearer, I lost sight of them in the hollow way; but a little after ten the advance-guard began to appear upon the heights, and took their ground with the left resting upon the copse. Regiment after regiment now presented itself, and I could see them, one following another across the underwood, defile to the places assigned to them, but lost them one by one in a few minutes after, behind the wood of the Marfée.

The sounds of the trumpets, however, the loud commands of the officers, the crashing and creaking of the ammunition carts, all assured me of their proximity; and in a few minutes after, one of the Prince's equerries rode up to ascertain that I had arrived, and to tell me that no alterations had been made in the dispositions of the day before. I pointed out to him the work we had constructed; and in a short time afterwards he returned, by the Prince's express command to thank me, and inform me of his high approbation of what had been done.

While we were still speaking, the enemy began to appear on the opposite slope, and in a moment afterwards a discharge of artillery from beneath the hill gave notice that the battle was commenced upon our right, where the infantry of Lamboy were still making their way up to the heights. The sound of the cannon, so much nearer to me than I expected, I will own, made me start; but springing at once into the saddle, lest any one should see fear in what in truth was but

surprise, I rode round alone to a spot where, through the trees, I could see what was passing in the hollow.

The smoke of the cannon greatly impeded my sight, but I could perceive a body of the enemy's pikemen in the act of charging the German infantry, who were borne back before my eyes near two hundred yards, but still maintained their order. Every step that they yielded, my heart beat to be there, and lead them back to the charge; but then again, I thought that if I might be permitted to charge the flank of the pikemen with my men-at-arms, I could drive them all to the devil.

At that moment my eye fell upon a group of officers gathered upon a little knoll, in the front of whom was evidently the Count de Soissons, dressed in a suit of steel armour I had seen in his apartments, and accompanied by an elderly man in German uniform, whom I concluded to be Lamboy. The Count was pointing with his leading staff to the retreating infantry of his left wing, while the other seemed to look upon the whole with the utmost composure. In a moment after, an equerry set off from the Count's party, and a company of our musketeers instantly wheeled upon the flank of the pikemen, and drove them back under a tremendous fire, while the Germans again advanced and took up their position as before.

The smoke of the musketry now interrupted my view in that direction; and turning round, I found that I had insensibly advanced so far as to be out of sight of the pillar from whence the signal was to be displayed. Riding back as fast as I could, I rejoined my troop; but no signal had yet been made; and as I looked up towards the hill, where I expected every moment to behold it displayed, all was clear, calm, and quiet; offering a strange contrast to the eager and deathful struggle upon which I had just been gazing.

"We shall not be long now, Garcias," said I, riding up. "Is all ready?"

He assured me that it was, and passing along from man to man, I spoke a few words to each, telling them that the infantry had already repulsed the enemy, and that we might soon expect to be called upon; saying everything I could think of to animate them to exertion, and beseeching them not to let the love of plunder induce them to separate before the battle was completely gained.

They all made me the most solemn promises in the world not to lose their discipline, to which of course I attached due credence; believing it to be just as probable for a tiger to abandon bloodshed, as for them to resist plunder even for a moment. A vigorous and effective charge, however, I knew to be the great object desired; and I doubted not from their whole tone and bearing that they would effect it as well as I could desire.

In the meanwhile, the din increased. We could every now and then hear the dull, measured sound of the charging of horse, mingled with the continued firing of the musketry, and at intervals a discharge of cannon; while the smoke, rolling over the wood, reached even the spot where we stood, and made me fearful lest I should lose sight of the signal-pillar.

Every minute I thought the sign must be made, and no language can express the impatience I began to feel as the minutes flew by and it did not appear. The firing appeared to me to grow less; and I felt angry that the battle should be lost or won, without my presence. No longer able to bear it, I rode on about twenty yards to the corner of the wood. The whole scene was covered with white wreaths of smoke, but the greater part of the attacking army was now displayed upon the same plain with ourselves; and I could see that the battle was far from concluded, though the attack of the enemy upon our position was languishing, and his troops considerably broken and disordered. Small parties of horsemen, separated from their regiments, were scattered confusedly over the plain. Groups of men on foot, carrying the more distinguished wounded to the rear, appeared here and there through the smoke. Aides-de-camp riding from spot to spot, and officers endeavouring by bustle and activity to re-animate the flagging energies of their soldiers, were seen hurrying about in all parts of the enemy's line; and I looked upon the whole scene as I have often done upon a disturbed ant-hill, where I have seen confusion and hurry in every member of the insect populace, without being able to divine their operations or understand their movements.

Column after column, as I stood and watched, was brought up against our battalions, but each after a discharge of musketry turned off as from a stone wall. Not three hundred yards from me was a dense mass of cavalry, and I could see its officers endeavouring to animate their men to the charge. At that moment I looked back. The red flag was displayed from the pillar; and spurring back to the head of my troop, I led them out from the wood. Their impatience had been nearly equal to my own; and, as the whole field of battle opened before them with all the thrilling and exciting objects it presented, they gave a loud and cheering hurrah, which seemed to be answered by a flourish of trumpets, at the very same moment, from the cavalry of the Duke of Bouillon that just appeared above the hill, about a quarter of a mile from us. The flourish and the shout acted as a signal of concert. A moment sufficed to put my troop in order; and pointing onward to the enemy with my sword, while my heart beat so as almost to deprive me of breath, I gave the word "Charge!" Onward we galloped like lightning, treading, I believe, on many of the dead and dying in our passage: the ground seemed to vanish under our horses' feet, the open space was passed in an instant. Nearer, and nearer, and nearer, as we came, each individual adversary grew into distinctness on our eyes. We passed the flat like a cloud-shadow, sweeping

the plain. We reached the brow of the descent, and hurled down the side of the slope upon the flank of the enemy; like an avalanche upon a forest of pines, we bore them headlong before us. Charged at the same moment by the Duke of Bouillon in front, and surprised by our headlong onset from so unexpected a quarter, the enemy's cavalry were borne back upon their infantry, their arms and fled; many of the cavalry turned their reins and galloped from the field; and though some fought still hand to hand, it was with but the courage of despair; for the army of Chatillon was by that one charge thrown into complete rout.

One officer in full armour seemed to single me out; and, not willing to disappoint him, I turned my horse towards him. Parrying a blow he was making at my neck, just above the gorget, I returned it with the full sweep of my long heavy sword. It cut sheer through the lacings of his casque, which another blow dashed from his head; when the face of a young man presented itself, whom I immediately remembered as the somewhat hasty youth I had seen with Monsieur de Chatillon in Paris.

"Will you quarter?" said I.

"Never!" replied he, aiming another blow at my head; but at that moment, Combalet de Carignan, who was behind me, fired a pistol at him, the ball of which passed right through his head. He sprang up in the saddle, his sword fell from his hand, and his horse, freed from the rein, galloped away wildly over the field. I had no time to see farther what became of him; though, when I lost sight of him in the confusion, the horse was still rushing on, and the rider--though dead, I feel sure--still in the saddle; but by this time, although all had passed like lightning, my troopers were far before me; and, notwithstanding the endeavours of Garcias to keep them together, were separating and pursuing the fliers one by one. I hurried forward to unite my efforts to those of the brave Spaniard; but just as I came up, a small peloton of the enemy's infantry, that had kept together near some valuable baggage, gave us one parting volley before they fled, and to my deep regret I beheld Garcias fall headlong from his horse.

Springing to the ground, I raised his head on my knees, and saw that the bullet had gone through his corslet just above the lower rim. "Jesu Maria!" cried he, opening his eyes, from which the light of life was fleeting fast--"Jesu Maria!--"

"I am afraid you are badly hurt, Garcias," cried I, more painfully affected by his situation than I could have imagined.

"I am dying, señor!" muttered he in Spanish--"I am dying! Thank you for your care--your kindness. It is vain--I am dying! Oh, señor--François Derville! that unhappy man--do you remember--how I slew him at the mill! I wish I had not done it--I can see him now! Oh, I wish I had not done it--Sancta Maria! ora pro----"

The heavy cloud of death fell dully down upon the clear bright eye. Fire, and soul, and meaning, passed away, and Garcias was nothing.

I bade my servants, who were still with me, carry him to the rear; and springing on my horse again, galloped forward, to see if I could restore some order to my troop.

By this time, however, all was confusion. The field was scattered with small parties of horsemen riding here and there, and cutting down or making prisoners the few of the enemy that remained. Nothing was to be seen but heaps of dead and dying, masterless horses flying over the plain, cannon and waggons overturned, long files of prisoners, and groups of stragglers plundering the fallen; while part of the village of Chaumont appeared burning on our right, and towards the left was distinguished a regiment of the enemy, who had still maintained their order, and were retreating over the opposite hill, fast but firmly. The rear-rank was seen to face about at every twenty or thirty yards, and by a heavy regular fire drive back a strong body of cavalry that hung upon their retreat. Gathering together about twenty of my men, I rode as fast as I could to the spot, and arrived just at the moment the enemy faced and gave us a volley. If I may use the expression, it made our cavalry reel, and more than one empty saddle presented itself; but what engaged my attention was, to behold in the officer commanding this last regiment of the enemy, the Chevalier de Montenero.

As I was gazing at him, to assure myself that my eyes did not deceive me, the Duke of Bouillon rode up, and demanded where were the greater part of my men, in a tone that did not particularly please me. "They are where the greater part of your own are, my lord," replied I; "some dead, some plundering, some following the enemy."

"If that be the case," rejoined he, sharply, "you had better go and join them yourself; for Monsieur de l'Orme and half a dozen men are no service to *me*."

"You speak rudely, Monsieur de Bouillon," replied I; "and methinks on a day of such victory as this, you might conduct yourself differently to one who has shared in the dangers of the struggle, whether he shares in its advantages or not." The duke's visor was up, and he coloured highly; but without waiting for reply, I turned my rein, and rode away.

My men, who had only followed me in the hope of more fighting, seeing me leave the spot where it was going on, turned to the trade they liked next in degree, and separated to plunder as before. Without caring much how they employed themselves for the moment, I rode back towards

the spot where I had before seen the Count de Soissons, and pushing my horse up the hill, I saw him still posted on a little eminence, with a group of his officers and attendants at the distance of about a dozen yards behind him--he seeming to enjoy the sight of the field he had won, and the others apparently discussing with some animation the events that had lately passed.

Silence had now comparatively resumed her reign; for though a straggling fire might be heard from time to time, mingled with distant shouts and cries, the roar of the battle itself was over. The ground between me and the prince also--a space of about a hundred and fifty yards--was clear and unoccupied; but being upland, it of course delayed my horse's progress. Happy, happy, had I been able to have passed it sooner! Just as I was mounting the rise, a horseman dashed across the top like lightning--reined in his horse a moment before the Count--I heard the report of fire-arms. The horseman galloped on, and I saw the prince falling from his horse.

The noise called the attention of those that were near; and when I arrived they had gathered round the Count, and were untying his casque; but all that presented itself was the cold blank face of the dead. Above the right eyebrow was the wound of a pistol-ball, which must have gone directly into the brain; and the brow and forehead were scorched and blackened with the fire and smoke of the pistol--so near must have been his murderer.

Thus died Louis Count de Soissons, in the moment of triumph and victory--triumph turned to mourning, victory rendered fruitless by his death![9]

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"Ah! Monsieur de l'Orme!" cried de Riquemont, the Prince's first *ecuyer de la main*, as I galloped up. "Here is a dreadful catastrophe! Monsieur le Comte, I am afraid, has accidentally shot himself. Twice during this morning I have seen him raise the visor of his casque with the muzzle of his pistol, and I warned him of the event."

"No, De Riquemont!" replied I. "No! the Count has been murdered! Look at his pistols; you will find them charged. As I rode up the hill, I saw a horseman pass him, I heard a pistol fired, and beheld the Count fall."

"I saw a horseman ride away also," cried one of the attendants: "he wore a green plume, and his horse, which was a thorough barb, had a large white spot on his left shoulder."

"I know him, I know him, then!" replied I, "and I will avenge this on his head, or die." So saying, I turned and galloped down in the direction which the horseman had taken, without seeing or caring whether any one followed me or not.

Certain that the assassin had betaken himself to the hollow way, I felt sure that, whether he went straight forward, or crossed over the hill, I must catch a glance of him if I rode fast. I was mounted on the noble horse the unhappy Prince had himself given me; and, as if feeling that my errand was to avenge his lord, he flew beneath me like the wind. I was just in time; for I had scarcely reached the bottom of the glen when I saw a hat and green feather sinking behind the hill to the right. I spurred across it in an instant, and at the distance of about one hundred and fifty yards before me, in the ravine below, I beheld the same horseman I had but too surely marked before, now galloping as if he well knew that the avenger of blood was behind him.

The ravine led into a road which I was acquainted with, from De Retz and myself having followed it on our return from Sedan to Paris. It was the worst a fugitive could have taken, for it had scarce a turning in its whole length; and, once we were both upon it, the chase of the assassin became a matter of mere speed between my horse and his. They were as nearly matched as it is possible to conceive; and for more than four miles which that road extended, I did not gain upon him forty yards.

At length, however, the path was traversed by the little river Bar, broad and spreading, but scarcely deeper than a horse's knee. The bridge was built of wood, old and insecure; and he that I pursued took the river in preference. In the midst his horse's foot slipped, and fell on his knees. His rider brought him up; but the beast was hurt, his speed was over, and before he had gained twenty lengths on the other side, I was up with him, and my hand upon his bridle-rein.

"Turn, villain! Turn, murderer!" cried I, "and prepare to settle our long account together. This day, this hour, this moment, is either your last or mine."

"By my faith, Monsieur de l'Orme," replied the Marquis de St. Brie--for to him it was spoken--"you hold very strange language; but you had better quit my rein; my attendants are within call,

and you may repent this conduct. Are you mad?"

From whatever accident it happened, his attendants were evidently not within call, or he would not have fled so rapidly from a single man. While he spoke also, I saw him slip his hand softly towards his holsters, and in another moment most probably I should have shared the fate of the Count de Soissons, but before he could reach his pistol, I struck him a violent blow with my clenched gauntlet that dashed him from his horse. I sprang to the ground, and he started up at the same moment, laying his hand upon his sword.

"Draw! draw, villain!" cried I. "It is what I seek! draw!"

"Doubtless," replied he, with a sneer, that he could not restrain even then, while at the same time fury and hesitation were strangely mingled in his countenance--"doubtless, when you are covered with a corslet and morion, and I am without any defensive arms."

"That difference shall soon be done away," cried I, casting away my casque, and unbuckling my corslet, while I stood between him and his horse, and kept a wary eye upon him lest he should take me at a disadvantage; but he had other feelings on the subject, it seems, for before I was prepared, he said, in a faltering tone, "You have told me yourself, that whoever seeks your life shall die by your hand. The combat with you is not equal."

"Fool!" cried I, "fool! You, a murderer, and an infidel!--are you superstitious? But draw, and directly, for I would not kill you like a dog. Think of the noble Prince you have just slain--think of the unhappy Bagnols, the proofs of whose innocence and your treason are now upon my person."

"Ha!" cried he, suddenly drawing his sword, "have at you then. You know too much! At all events, 'tis time that one should die."

So saying, he waited not for me to begin the attack, but himself lunged straight at my breast. The struggle was long and obstinate. He was an excellent swordsman, and was besides better armed for such an encounter than I was, his sword being a long Toledo rapier, while mine was a heavy-edged broadsword, which would thrust, it is true, but was ponderous and unwieldy. I was heated too, and rash, from almost every motive that could irritate the human heart. He had sought my own life--he had taken that of one I loved and esteemed--he had snatched from me all the advantages of success and victory, at the very moment they seemed given into my hand. Thus, anger made me lose my advantage; and it was not till a sharp wound in the shoulder taught me how near my adversary was my equal, that I began to fight with caution and coolness.

The glaring of his deadly eye upon me showed me now whenever he meditated a thrust that he fancied certain; and I could perceive, as he saw the blood from my shoulder trickle over the buff coat I had worn under my corslet, a smile of triumph and of sanguinary hope curl his lip, as his faith in the astrologer's prophecy gave way.

A wound in his neck soon turned his smile into an expression of mortal wrath, and making a double feint, which he thought certain, he lunged full at my heart. I was prepared--parried it instantly--lunged before he could recover, and the hilt of my sword knocked against his ribs, while the point shone out under his left shoulder. He felt that he was slain; but, grappling me tight with the last deathly clasp of expiring revenge, he drew his poignard, and, attempting to drive it into my heart, wounded me again in the arm. With difficulty I wrenched it from him, and cast him back upon the ground, where, after rolling for a moment in convulsive agony, and actually biting the earth with his teeth, he expired with a hollow groan and a struggle to start upon his feet.

So keen, so eager, so hazardous had been the strife, that though I became conscious some spectators had been added to the scene of combat, I had not dared to withdraw my eye for an instant to ascertain who they were. When it was ended, however, a voice cried out, "Nobly done! bravely fought! Pardie, one does not see two such champions every day!" and turning round, I found myself in presence of an old officer, accompanied by another little man on horseback, together with about twenty musketeers on foot.

"And now, pray tell us, sir," demanded the officer, "who you are, and whether you are for the king or the Princes?"

"I can save him that trouble," interrupted the little man who accompanied him, riding a step forward, and exposing to my sight the funnel-shaped boots, the brown pourpoint, and the keen, inquisitive little countenance of my old persecutor, *Jean le Hableur*. "This, Monsieur le Chevalier," he continued, "is Monsieur le Comte de l'Orme, the dear friend and ally of his highness the Count de Soissons, and one of the chiefs of the rebels; and let me tell you that you had better put irons on both his hands and his feet, for a more daring or more cunning plotter never tied an honest man to a tree in a wood."

"I shall certainly use no such measures against so brave a soldier as this young gentleman seems to be," replied the officer. "Nevertheless, you must surrender yourself a prisoner, sir," he added, "without you can show that this old man speaks falsely."

"He speaks truth," replied I. "Do with me what you like--I am very careless of the event."

"From your despairing tone, young sir," observed the officer, "I conclude that your party has lost a battle, and that Chatillon has gained one."

"So far from it," replied I, "that never did any one suffer a more complete defeat than the Maréchal de Chatillon this day. His cannon, his baggage, and his treasure, are all in the hands of the Duke of Bouillon; and he has not now one man upon the field of battle but the dead, the wounded, and the prisoners."

"God of heaven!" cried the old officer, deeply affected by the news. "Sir, you are surely too brave a man to tell me a falsehood?"

"I speak the truth, upon my honour," replied I; "and more, I warn you that, if you do not speedily retreat, you will have the cavalry of the Prince upon you."

"We must take you with us, however," answered the other. "Some one look to the young gentleman's wounds, for I see he is bleeding."

My sword was now taken from me, my wounds were bandaged up, as well as the circumstances permitted; and being placed upon my horse, I was carried to the end of the road, where I found that the soldiers who had made me prisoner were only the advance party of a regiment that had been hurrying to join the army of the king. The old officer with whom I had spoken was the Count de Langerot, their commander, who, having heard the distant report of cannon, together with the rumours which spread fast among the peasantry, had ridden forward to gain some farther information, and had come up just before the death of the Marquis de St. Brie.

The regiment immediately retreated to Le Chesne, and during the time I remained with it, I was treated with every sort of lenity and kindness by its commander; but this only lasted for a day; for the Maréchal de Chatillon having joined the regiment at Le Chesne, and collected together the scattered remnants of his army, sent me prisoner to Mezières, under a large escort, making me appear, by his precautions, a person of much more consequence than I really was, probably thinking that a prisoner of some import might do away, in a degree, the humiliating appearance of his defeat. Perhaps, however, I did him wrong; but I must confess, at the time, I could see no other object in sending me from Rethel to Mezières under a strong detachment of cavalry.

At Mezières I was consigned to a small room in the château, which, though not a dungeon, approached somewhat near it in point of comfort; and here plenty of time had I to reflect at my leisure over the hopelessness of my situation. With the death of the Count de Soissons, every dream of my fancy had died also; and all that I could do, was to turn my eyes upon the past, and brood despairingly over the delights of the years gone by, with thoughts cold, unfruitful, agonising--as the spirits of the dead are said sometimes to hover round the treasures they amassed in their lives, at once regretting their loss, and grieving that they had not used them better.

Thus hour after hour slipped away, each one a chain of heavy, painful minutes, gloomy, desolate, deathlike. My gaoler was a gaoler indeed. For several days he continued to bring me my food, without interchanging with me one word; and his looks had anything in them but consolation. At length, on the seventh morning, I think it was, he came with another like himself, bearing a heavy set of irons, and told me I must submit to having them put on my legs and arms.

Of course I remonstrated against the degradation, urged my rank, and asked the reason of the change.

"Because you are condemned to death," replied he. "That is enough, is not it?"

"Condemned to death!" I exclaimed, "without a trial? It is false--it cannot be."

"You'll find it too true, when they strike your head off," replied the gaoler; and without farther information left me to my own thoughts. I had before given up life, it is true--I had fancied that I cared not for it, now that I had lost all that made life deal--but, nevertheless, I found that the love of being lingered still, and that I could not think, without a shudder, on the fond fellowship betwixt body and soul being dissolved for ever.--For ever! the very word was awful; and that fate which I had never shrunk from, which I had often dared, in the phrensy of passion or the folly of adventure, acquired new strange terrors when I viewed it face to face, slowly advancing towards me, with a calm inevitable step.

While I sat thinking upon death, and all the cold and cheerless ideas thereunto associated, a gay flourish of trumpets was borne upon the wind, jarring most painfully with all my feelings. The sounds came nearer, mingled with shout, and acclamation, and applause: and then, the evident arrival of some regiments of cavalry took place in the court of the château where I was confined; for there was the clanging of the hoofs, and jingling of the arms, and the cries of the commanders, and all the outcry and fracas of military discipline. During the whole day the noise continued with little intermission; and though I would have given worlds for quiet, quiet was not to be had.

It was about four o'clock, and the rays of the summer sun were gleaming through the high

windows of my prison, kindling in my bosom the warm remembrance of nature's free and beautiful face, when the gaoler entered, and told me I must follow him. I rose; and being placed between two soldiers, I was marched through several of the long passages of the château, as fast as my irons would permit, to a small anteroom, where, being made to sit down upon a bench, I was soon after joined by one or two others, manacled like myself.

Here we were kept for some time, with guards at all the doors, and the gaoler standing by our side, without affording a look or word to any one. At length, however, the sound of persons speaking approached the door of what seemed the inner chamber; and, as it opened, I heard a voice which, however unexpected there, I was sure was that of the Chevalier de Montenero.

The sound increased as he came nearer, and I could distinctly hear him say, "Your Eminence has promised me already as much as I could desire--the enjoyment of my fortune, and my station in France. All else that you could properly grant, or I could reasonably request, depends, unfortunately, upon papers which are, I am afraid, lost irrecoverably; and I have only to thank you for your patient hearing, and the justice you have done me."

As he spoke, the Chevalier came forward, accompanied, as far as the door, by Richelieu himself, who seemed to do him the high honour of conducting him to the threshold of his cabinet.

"Monsieur le Comte de Bagnols," said the minister, to my infinite surprise and astonishment, addressing by this name him whom I had always been taught to call the Chevalier de Montenero, "what I have done is nothing but what you had a right to claim. Your splendid actions in this last campaign prove too well your attachment to the king and the state, for me to refuse you every countenance and protection in my power to give; and believe me, if the letters, and the marriage certificate you allude to, can by any means be recovered, everything that you could wish will be rendered easy. In the meantime, the King's gratitude stops not here. We look upon the safety of the greater part of the army to have depended upon your exertions, and we must think of some means of rewarding it in the manner most gratifying to yourself. You will not leave Mezières for a few days--before then you shall hear from me."

The Chevalier, or rather the Count de Bagnols, took his leave and withdrew, without casting his eyes upon any of the wretched beings that lined the side of the anteroom. My heart swelled, but I said nothing; and, in a moment after, was myself called to the presence of the minister.

He was seating himself when I entered; and as he turned round upon me, very, very different was the aspect of his dark tremendous brow from that which I had beheld on another occasion. The heavy contemplative frown, the stern piercing eye, the stiff compressed lip, the blaze of soul that shone out in his glance, yet the icy rigidity of his features, all seemed to say, "I am fire in my enmities, and marble in my determinations;" and well spoke the inflexible spirit that dwelt within. When I thought over the easy flowing conversation which had passed between me and that very man, his unbent brow, his calm philosophising air, and compared the whole with the iron expression of the countenance before me, I could scarcely believe it had been aught but a dream.

"Well, Sir Count de l'Orme," said he, in a deep hollow tone of voice, "you have chosen your party. You have abandoned an honourable path that was open to you. Of your own free-will you attached yourself to treason and to traitors, and you now taste the consequences."

"Your Eminence," replied I, calmly--for my mind was made up to the worst--"is too generous, I am sure, to triumph over the fallen."

"I am so," answered Richelieu, "and therefore I sent for you, to tell you that, though no power on earth can alter your fate--and *you must die!*--yet I am willing that any alleviating circumstance which you may desire should be granted you in the interim."

"I have heard," replied I, "that no French noble can be judged, without being called for his own defence. It is a law not only of this country, but of the world--it is a law of reason, of humanity, of justice; and I hope it will not be dispensed with for the purpose of condemning me."

"You have heard truly, sir," replied the Cardinal. "No one can be condemned without being heard, *except* it can be proved that he has knowingly and intentionally fled from the pursuit of justice: he is then condemned, as it is termed, *par contumace*. It was not at all difficult to prove your flight, and you were condemned by the proper tribunal, together with the Duke of Guise and the Baron de Bec. You are the only one yet made prisoner; and though perhaps the least guilty of the three, the necessity unfortunately exists of showing them, by the execution of your sentence, that no hope exists for them.--Have you anything to ask?"

"Merely," replied I, "that time and materials may be allowed me to write some letters of great consequence to my family and others."

"What time do you require?" demanded Richelieu. "The day of your execution rests with me. Name your time yourself; but remember that, if you ask longer than absolutely necessary for the purpose you have mentioned, you are only prolonging hours of miserable expectation, after all hope of life is over."

I had now to fix the day of my own death. It was a bitter calculation, but running my eye through the brief future, I tried to divest my spirit of its clinging to corporeal existence, and

estimate truly how much time was necessary to what I wished to accomplish, without leaving one hour to vain anticipations of my coming fate.

"Three days," replied I, at length, "will be sufficient for my purpose."

"Be it so," said the minister; and taking a paper already written, from his portfolio, he proceeded to fill up some blanks which appeared to have been left on purpose. I knew that it was the order for my execution; and my feelings may be better conceived than described, as I saw his thin, pale fingers move rapidly over the vacant spaces, fixing my fate for ever, till at last, with a firm determined hand, which spoke "*irrevocable*" in its every line, he wrote his name at the bottom, and handed it to the gaoler, who stood beside me, and advanced to receive it.

"Have those fetters taken off," said the minister, in a stern tone, as he gave the paper. "You have exceeded your duty. See that the prisoner be furnished with writing materials, and admit any of his friends to see him, one at a time. Farther, let his comfort be attended to, as far as is consistent with security. Remove him!"

His tone, his manner, admitted no reply; and as he concluded he turned away his head, while I was led out of the cabinet, and carried back to my cell. While the gaoler, after having taken off my irons, went grumblingly to seek the materials for writing, which he had been directed to furnish, my thoughts, flying even from my own situation, reverted to the title by which the minister had addressed the Chevalier de Montenero.

The Count de Bagnols! Was it--could it be possible that he was that Count de Bagnols, said to have been assassinated by order of the Marquis de St. Brie? At first I could hardly believe it; but as I reflected, the conviction came more and more strongly upon my mind.

Every circumstance that I remembered showed it more plainly. He himself had first told me the tale of his own supposed death, and that with a circumstantial accuracy that any one but a person actually on the spot could hardly have done. He had remained for years living under an assumed name, probably because he had not the papers necessary to establish his innocence of the charge the Marquis had brought against him. I had just heard the minister allude to those very papers. From Achilles I had learned that the Count's fortune had been transmitted to Spain; and the Viceroy of Catalonia had told me that the Chevalier was not a Spaniard. I had also overheard the Marquis de St. Brie, only a few nights before, declare that he had seen in the royal army some one whom he had believed dead many years, and to whose supposed death he was evidently in some degree accessory. To no one could what he had said be so well applied as to the Count de Bagnols.

Undoubtedly, then, the Chevalier de Montenero, the man whom, perhaps, of all others, I esteemed the most on earth, but whose good opinion I had lost by a succession of inexplicable misunderstandings, was one and the same with that Count de Bagnols, the separate incidents of whose story had come to my knowledge by a thousand strange accidents, whose fate had always been to me a point of almost painful interest, and whose most important documents were still fortunately in my hands. I had now, then, the means at once of clearing myself of all suspicion in his eyes, and of conferring on him the means of equally showing his own innocence to the world. True that I could never see the happiness I knew I should give him--true that his good or bad opinion could serve me no longer upon earth; but still there was the consolation of knowing that my memory would remain pure and unsullied in his eyes; and that the benefit I had it in my power to confer would attach feelings of love to my name and regret to my loss.

Surely the wish to be remembered with affection is hardly a weakness. The warrior's or the poet's hope of immortality on earth--the laurel that binds the lyre or the sword--is perhaps the most daring, yet the emptiest of all imaginative vanities; but there is something holier and sweeter in the dream of living in the love of those that have known us--it is, indeed, prolonging attachments beyond the grave, and perhaps derives its charm from an innate feeling in the breast of man, that friends part not here for ever.

As soon, then, as paper and ink were brought me I sat down; and after writing my last farewell to my father, and a few lines expressive of my deep, my unchangeable affection to Helen Arnault, I proceeded to sketch out for the Count de Bagnols the history of my unfortunate adventure at Saragossa. I told him the promise I had entered into, never to disclose the circumstances to a Spaniard, and showed him that, as long as I had believed him to be such, my lips had been necessarily sealed. I pointed out to him the mistake which Garcias had committed; I related to him my rencontre with Jean Baptiste; and farther, as briefly as possible, I gave him the outline of everything which had occurred to me since we had last met, up to the moment that I wrote; and having told him how I had avenged him on the Marquis de St. Brie, I enclosed his papers, which I had always kept about my person. Lastly, I begged him, if I thereby rendered him any service--if I had ever held any place in his esteem--if I had by that explanation at all regained it, to see my father; and bearing him my last farewell, to entreat him for my sake to look upon Helen as his child--to remember how I had loved her, and to love her for her love to me; and now, wishing him personally all that happiness in his latter years which had been denied to his youth, I bade him an eternal adieu.

This cost me all that night and the greater part of the next morning; but by the time that my gaoler visited me my packet was prepared, and showing him some louis--the last I had about me--

I promised them to him if he would deliver that letter to the Count de Bagnols, if he was still in the town, bringing me back an acknowledgment that it had been received.

In less than an hour he returned, and gave me a paper written hastily in the hand of the Chevalier. It only contained, "I have received a packet from the Count de l'Orme--BAGNOLS." I gave the gaoler his promised reward, and he left me.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Shortly after the gaoler had quitted my chamber, a priest came to visit and console me; and after a long conversation he also departed, promising to see me again next day. His arguments and reasoning were, I believe, very common-place, and delivered with no great eloquence or talent; but I was then very willing to lend myself to any one who would lead my ideas from the world I was about to quit to a better one beyond. Not that I entertained a doubt upon the subject; but I was glad, by dwelling upon the idea of a life to come--by giving it a more tangible essence and being--by lending conviction the more brilliant colours of imagination--to forget the regrets that attached me to this.

When he had left me, a sort of drowsiness fell upon me, which I received as a friend also. I had, as I have said, sat up the whole of the night before, writing, and the irritation of my two wounds, which had never been dressed since I arrived at Mezières, had greatly exhausted me. The approach of slumber, therefore, was an unexpected blessing, and without farther preparation than merely laying my head upon the table, I fell asleep. The battle of earthly hope and fear was over in my bosom; and, like two inveterate enemies that had slain each other, they left a dead, void calm, in place of their long and agitating conflict. My sleep then was not like that of a child, light and balmy--oh, no! it was more like the sleep of death--profound, still, feelingless. It wanted but the fall of the one irrevocable barrier to have been death itself.

I was awoke abruptly by some one touching me; and, starting up, I was caught in the arms of the Chevalier de Montenero--I should say, the Count de Bagnols.

"A thousand thousand thanks!" cried he, "my friend, my benefactor, my more than son! Oh, Louis! no words can speak the joy, the satisfaction, the relief your letter has given me. Not alone from the packet it contained--though I have been seeking it for long and weary years, as the only means of recovering rank, and station, and honour, and casting back his accusation on the villain's head who wronged me--but more, far more, from the proofs it brought forward, that the man on whose high principles I had staked my estimate of human nature for ever, was not the villain I had been misled to believe."

The Count was here interrupted by the gaoler, who had remained standing near the door, with his immense bunch of keys still in his hands. "Come, come!" grumbled he, in his dogged, surly tone, "you can tell him all that, Monsieur le Comte, in another place. As you have brought the youth's pardon, and the order for his release, you had better take him away: for I never met one yet who liked to stay here, and I want to do the room. We shan't be long without some other, thank God!"

The words I heard fell dully upon my sense. I heard the sound, and it startled me; but I received from it no defined meaning that I could understand and believe.

"It is true, Louis! it is true!" said the Count de Bagnols; "your pardon is granted, and you are no longer a prisoner. You owe it not alone to me, however; the Duke of Bouillon made your enlargement and security one of the several points without which he would not lay down his arms. I applied to the Cardinal at the very moment that that point was about to be refused. Two concurring motives produced more than one could have done. He yielded, and you are free; but upon the condition that you instantly return to Bearn, and do not pass its boundaries for one year. Peace is now concluded. To-morrow the Duke of Bouillon will be here, and in the evening I myself set out for Bigorre. You shall journey with me, and I shall have the happiness of restoring you to the arms of your father."

"Willingly," replied I; "but before I go, I must see the Maréchal de Chatillon, and inquire after Helen Arnault. I left her in circumstances which required explanation. See her I know I cannot, for she was going to leave Paris; but I must and will ascertain where she is, and how I may hear of her. Monsieur de Bagnols, you have yourself felt, and can, I trust, understand my feelings."

"I do, my dear Louis," replied he: "but to see the Maréchal is quite impossible: for he is at this time nearly a hundred leagues from Mezières. But leave all that to me. I know him well, and shall

have to send a messenger to him myself: therefore I may safely promise you, that by the time you arrive at Lourdes, you shall have every information you desire."

This was hardly satisfactory; but I had no other course to pursue, and therefore yielded, though it cost me no small pain once more to quit the vicinity of her I still loved so unabatedly, without being able to satisfy myself of her fate. I have bound myself to tell both the good and the evil in my history, and I must here acknowledge, that a gleam of satisfaction came over my mind, when I thought that the youth whom I had seen with the Maréchal de Chatillon, and to whom I hesitated not to attribute the quality of Helen's lover, could no longer pursue his suit. It was a selfish satisfaction enough, I am afraid, and I reproached myself for it as soon as I felt it. It was a base, ungenerous triumph, I thought, over the dead, and I would fain have scourged it from my breast; but it was in vain--I could not chase it away. It was there in my heart a part of my humanity, and I found it impossible to banish it from my bosom.

From the prison the Count conducted me to his dwelling; and after a night's delightful repose--repose of mind and of feeling, as well as of the mere body--I rose the next morning, refreshed, and disposed to view my future prospects with a brighter eye than I had even done the night before. Still Helen formed a part of them all. Reality in this respect lent hope no aid; for I remembered my mental promise to my mother, and I felt that I could not--that I dared not break it. It was a contract between me and the dead, from which no living voice could absolve me. Yet still I hoped; and, a dreamer from my infancy both by nature and habit, I never felt the gay but baseless architecture of my fancy rise more splendidly than when Hope, without any earthly basis, but supported alone by her own pinions, commanded the work, and her willing slave, Imagination, found bright materials in the air.

Before departing from Mezières, I begged the Count de Bagnols to send a messenger to Sedan, desiring little Achilles to join me at the Château de l'Orme; and as he had in his hands upwards of a thousand crowns belonging to me, I doubted not that, armed with that magic wand, money, he would get through his journey quite as well, though somewhat more slowly, than any of the ancient magicians, either mounted on hippogriff, or enthroned in flying chair.

A horse had been prepared for me, as well as every other thing I could need, by my friend; but as the news of my enlargement and pardon had spread through the town of Mezières, where the regiment of Monsieur de Lagnerol, who had made me prisoner, then was, he generously sent me back, before my departure, the beautiful charger which had been given me by the unfortunate Count de Soissons; and I own that few things he could have bestowed would have borne so high a value in my eyes; for the memory of the manner in which he had been bestowed at first, added a thousand-fold to the noble beast's intrinsic worth.

Towards two o'clock, we began our journey--not, as I had often ridden with the Chevalier de Montenero, alone in unostentatious comfort, unpursued by a crowd of useless attendants. His restored rank--hampered with an inconvenience, like every other long-coveted gratification of the earth--required him to lay aside the freedom of an inferior station; and, followed from Mezières by twenty armed horsemen, we took our way back towards Bearn.

Scarce a hundred yards from the gates of the city, we were met by the Duke of Bouillon and his train, going, according to the terms of amnesty, to renew the homage he had so lately cast off, to the crown of France. He reined in his horse on perceiving me; and approaching, saluted me gravely, but politely.

"I am happy, Monsieur de l'Orme," said he, "to see you at liberty, and am glad that this accidental meeting gives me an opportunity of thanking you for your co-operation on a late occasion, and of expressing my sense of your gallant services to the cause in which we were then both engaged, somewhat better than hurry and an impatient disposition permitted me to do when last we met."

"Mention it not, Monsieur de Bouillon," replied I: "the memory of one to whom we were both sincerely attached, would of itself have banished any momentary irritation from my mind long ago, even if I had not been made acquainted with the generous care you had taken to provide for my security."

After a casual word or two farther upon the same subject, we took leave of each other, and parted; and I pursued my way in company with Monsieur de Bagnols.

During our first day's journey, the Count ceased not to question me upon all the little minute points of my story, and I filled up all the blanks in my tale with the same frankness which I have done in telling it here. I showed him all my feelings, and all my thoughts--all that I had wished, and all that I had done.

He dwelt particularly upon my unfortunate adventure at Saragossa. "I was wrong, Louis, certainly very wrong," said he, "in suspecting you of such a crime, and I owe you some reparation, which, doubt not, shall be made. However, if you remember that I saw you enter your own house that night, when every witness you brought forward swore that you had never quitted it, you will see that I had some cause for suspicion. I had been engaged myself with my banker in reading over some very old accounts, concerning the sums which my intendant Arnault had transmitted to Saragossa, many years before; and I had discovered therein so many frauds and

villanies, that I came away sick with human nature. I saw you enter your lodgings as plainly as I see you now; but judging you engaged in some intrigue, into which it was neither my business nor my wish to inquire, I passed on. The circumstances that followed gave a new character to my suspicions; and finding the high ideas which, notwithstanding all your faults, I had entertained of you suddenly cast down, I treated you with haughtiness and impatience, when it would have been better to have shown kindness and confidence. At the same time, let me say, that for years, Arnault, for purposes I now understand, had been labouring to undermine you in my opinion; and, though I have since discovered him to be as bad a man and as daring a villain as ever existed, and suspected him even then, yet the suspicions he instilled into me remained on my mind, being confirmed by other events at the time which I could not doubt.

"However," he added, with a smile, "I suppose I must not express what I think of Arnault so strongly, or I shall have your love for the daughter in arms against me. Still, whatever fortune he has, and, as you say, it must be considerable, has been robbed from me."

I was silent; for every word that connected Helen and Arnault in any way together, went painfully to my heart, cutting through all my hopes. The count, I believe, saw he had hurt me, and turned our conversation, the next day, to his escape from the assassins of the Marquis de St. Brie.

"There are circumstances even now," said he, "after a lapse of more than eighteen years, on which I dare not let my thoughts rest. Do not suppose I allude to pains and griefs. Time has softened those; but I speak of the happiness that I enjoyed for a brief space, which, whenever I think of it, awakens every pang in my heart. I had, as I remember to have told you on a former occasion, made my escape from the prison in which I had been confined on the accusation of the greatest villain that ever, I believe, the earth produced. I had prepared everything for my flight into Spain, with all that I held dear on earth--my wife; when, on the very night that it was to have taken place, as I entered the park, I was attacked by four hired bravoes, attached to the villain St. Brie. Resolved to sell my life dearly, I defended myself with desperation, till at length I fell, with a severe wound in my side, and while I was on the ground, received a blow on my head, which effectually stunned me.

"The assassins then carried me down to a stream that ran not far from the spot, and threw me in, as they thought lifeless. But the very plunge in the water recalled my senses; and I was making some faint efforts to swim, when I was drawn out by two of my followers, whom I had left waiting at a cottage below.

"Their approach scared away the assassins; and though so weak that I could not stand, and delirious from the blow on my head, I was put into a litter and borne away to Spain, by my attendants and a friend, who, having brought about my escape from prison, would have risked his own life if he had stayed.

"The news of my death was general; my estates of Bagnols, which could not be sold, were sequestrated and given to the Marquis de St. Brie. I was arraigned and condemned on my nonappearance; and, as I slowly recovered from my wounds, I heard that the last tie between myself and France was broken--my wife was dead. In a former embassy to Madrid, which terminated in the marriage of Anne of Austria to our present king, I had become personally known to King Philip; and it was proposed to me to enter the Spanish service, to which I assented, on the engagement never to be employed against my native country. With a part of the money transmitted beforehand to Saragossa, I bought the small estate of Montenero, and took that name, abandoning the one under which I had known so many misfortunes. I was sent with the forces to New Spain; had many opportunities of distinguishing myself; rose high in station; and amassed, without either avarice or extortion, a large, I may say an immense fortune. But it gave me no happiness--in fact, I had, personally, no use for it. I was both a soldier and somewhat of a cynic, and consequently not very much inclined to waste wealth either in show or in luxury. Still I had a most passionate desire to revisit my native country. Many other circumstances also combined to carry me thither. The hope of reestablishing my character and name, which in the first bitterness of my griefs I had slighted, grew upon me with years, and I directed Arnault, to whom I still paid a salary, to make every inquiry and effort to recover the papers I had lost, offering a reward which might have tempted a prince. No one, I have discovered, knew so well as he did where to find them; and when, after seeing your encounter with the Marquis de St. Brie, I betook myself to Spain, lest I should be discovered before the proofs of my innocence were procured, he not only found them, but sent them to me by your good friend Father Francis of Allurdi, who, as you may remember, lost them on the road."

The manner in which the Count's papers had been lost now instantly flashed across my mind. After my adventure with the gamblers at Luz I remembered to have met with the pretended capuchin as I mounted the stairs. The door of Father Francis's chamber was open, and the papers had been enveloped in the same cover with some pieces of gold. The matter was evident enough. The baffled sharper had indemnified himself for his failure in cheating by a little simple robbery, and having stolen into the good priest's room while he slept, had filched from his baggage the packet, which to the tact of his experienced fingers seemed most valuable. After having made what use he thought proper of the gold, it is probable that, seeing the papers were of some consequence, he had kept them about him, in hope of accident turning them to account, till he was killed in his attempt to murder me, when it may be remembered the papers were found upon him.

I communicated my supposition to the Count, who agreed with me entirely; but my interruption seemed to have acted upon his story much in the same manner that Don Quixote's did upon that of Sancho Panza; for he ceased there, and would not again resume it, saying, with a smile, that he had really little more to tell, except that, anxious to re-establish his fame, he had, through some great interest he possessed in the army, and from the pressing necessity which the government had lately experienced for troops, obtained permission, under his assumed name, to levy a regiment at his own expense, and had commanded it at the battle of the Marfée, the result of which I already knew.

Avoiding Paris, we now approached Bearn, with as long journeys as we could make each day; and oh, what a crowd of thrilling, mingled emotions hurried through my bosom, when, from the hill behind Pau, I again beheld the grand chain of the purple Pyrenees spreading far along the horizon, robed in that magical garment of misty light, which makes them seem something too beautiful for earth! Oh, my native land! my native land! bound to my heart by every sweet association of youth--by all the opening ideas that infancy first receives, welcoming every new impression as a joy--by every glad thought--by every pure bright feeling!--when thou ceasest to be dear, most dear to me, the lamp of memory must be extinguished, and the past all darkness indeed!

From Pau we sent forward a messenger to announce our coming to my father, and the next morning early we set out for Lourdes. I will not attempt to embody in words what I felt during that ride. My sensations were so confused, so sorrowful in some respects, and so painfully joyful in others, that I could not separate them even at the time. Both the Chevalier and myself were silent; and the only words which, I believe, passed between us were, when, on entering Lourdes, I begged him to ride on, while I turned my horse towards the old church of the Assumption, in which stood the tomb of the Counts of Bigorre.

I entered the church--there was no one there; and passing into the little chapel, where the monument stood, I read over some letters that were freshly chiselled in the marble. They recorded the death of my mother; and leaning down my head, I poured upon them the tribute of my heart's best feelings. I remained long there--longer than I had intended; but I found a calm and a consolation in the sad duty that I rendered, which cleared and tranquillized my feelings. As I came out of the church, I found a number of the peasantry near the door, gazing on my beautiful horse, which I had ridden during the last day, and had tied to a cypress while I went in. They all recognised me; but divining the employment in which I had been engaged, they did not speak, but doffing their bonnets, let me depart in silence.

Proceeding somewhat slowly on the road, I suffered the Chevalier to arrive some time before me, certain that my father would understand and appreciate the motives of my delay. Gradually, however, the château with its towers and pinnacles became visible--every old-accustomed object, every well-remembered scene. Yet in the few months of my absence so many great and important events had occurred to me, so many thoughts had hurried through my brain, so many feelings had left their impression on my heart, that I almost wondered to find everything still so much the same; and had it been all in ruins, should have scarcely been surprised, so many years--ay, years! seemed to have elapsed since I beheld it.

In the court, all the old servants pressed round me, and overwhelmed me with their caresses. Some wept, and some laughed, and some, with the old feudal affection, kissed my hand; so that I was glad to escape from them as soon as I could.

"To the saloon! to the saloon! monseigneur," cried old Houssaye, as I broke from them, and ran into the house. To the saloon, then, I turned my steps, threw open the door, and entered. But what was it I beheld? There was but one person there--a young lady in deep mourning, holding, as if for support, by the arm of one of the antique chairs--it was Helen! my own Helen! and in a moment she was in my arms, and clasped to my heart, with a paroxysm of overflowing joy, that for the time swept every dark idea away before it.

"Oh, Louis, dear Louis!" was all that she could say; and what I said, Heaven only knows. "But where are they?" cried I, at length. "Where is my father?"

"In his library, awaiting you," replied Helen. "But *my* father kindly thought that our first meeting had better be alone, and therefore he bade me stay here: but now let us come to him."

"Your father, Helen!" said I, some chilly feelings coming over my heart that I dared not tell her--"is your father here?"

"Certainly," replied she, "he is in the library with yours. But come, dear Louis, come!" and leading the way, with a light step she ran on to my father's apartments. The door of the library was open, and gliding forward, she threw her arms round the Count de Bagnols, exclaiming, "My dear father, Louis did not know that you had arrived."

"Nay, more, Helen," replied the Count, "he did not know till this moment that you were my child. Louis, forgive me, if I did not tell you this before. It was not, believe me, from one remaining shade of doubt; but it was, that I wished you to hear tidings that I was sure would give you joy, from the lips I believed--I knew--to be dearest to you on earth."

They flashed through my brain at once--the thousand circumstances which, if I had entertained any suspicion, would have long before shown me the whole truth. At the same moment, however, I found myself clasped in the arms of my own father, and the happiness of meeting, for some time, interrupted all farther explanation.

The explanations that were to be given me were nevertheless many. From comparing the dates of Helen's age with the certificate I had seen of the Count's marriage, it was evident that the Countess must have died in giving her birth. On this, however, her father never spoke; perhaps it was too painful a theme for him to touch upon. He told me, however, that he had never himself learned that he had a child, till he was in New Spain, when Arnault communicated it to him, knowing that thus fresh sums of money would naturally flow into his hands. He took care also that no doubt should exist upon the Count's mind respecting the truth of his statement, by sending him the proof of Helen's birth, obtained from the abbess of the convent wherein the Countess had died.

He thus gained his object: the child was consigned to his care by her father, who could not for the time quit with honour the service in which he was engaged; and Arnault received every year large remittances for the education of his charge, which he applied of course to his own righteous purposes. At length the Count returned; and, hurried on by the strong impulse of paternal love, ventured to cross the frontier. He found that his intentions had been anything but fulfilled. Arnault, it is true, had taken the child from the convent where her mother had died, the abbess of which very willingly resigned her, as old Monsieur de Vergne had now given his whole soul over to the dominion of Mammon, and refused even to pay the pittance required for her support. The procureur, too, had brought her up as his own daughter; but education she had received none.

It may easily be imagined that the Count was not a little indignant at this neglect; but Arnault denied having received greater part of the sums that had been transmitted to him; and an examination of his accounts was likely to have followed, which might have shown his character to his lord in its true light. My mother and myself, however, arrived, as I have detailed in the first part of this book, on our visit of gratitude, while the Count was in his house; and Arnault, to turn away the threatening storm, proposed to my mother to substitute Helen in place of Jean Baptiste, whom she had offered to receive into our family. The Count, though charmed with the new arrangement, resolved not to lose sight of the treasure he had regained, and directed Arnault to purchase and repair for him the house in which he afterwards resided.

It is probable that the worthy procureur, had he seen any prospect of gain, would have betrayed the Count to the government; but Monsieur de Bagnols had left his fortune still in Spain; and as, for obvious reasons, he continued to employ his former intendant, the only profit likely to accrue to Arnault was to be expected from his lord's life and security.

In the meanwhile the Count, easily foreseeing the likelihood of an attachment springing up between myself and Helen, applied himself to watch my opening character, and to instil into my young mind all the great and noble principles of his own. Where he succeeded, and where he failed, must be judged of by the foregoing pages. That he did fail in many instances I am but too painfully conscious.

By this time, Arnault, ever fertile in schemes where wealth was to be won, aware that the Count had not communicated her birth to his daughter, who was still too young to be intrusted with such a secret, had laid the somewhat daring project of marrying his son to Mademoiselle de Bagnols; doubtless imagining that his knowledge of the Count's secret threw more power into his hands than it really did. There were many obstacles, however, to be overcome, the two greatest of which were, the likelihood of my winning Helen's love, and the timidity and disinterestedness of Jean Baptiste, who still, be it remarked, believed Helen to be his sister, having forgotten, with the days of his childhood, her first coming to his father's house.

On discovering Helen's birth and probable wealth to his son, Arnault found him deaf to the voice of interest; but he contrived to influence him by other feelings, and, at the same time that he blackened my character to the Count de Bagnols, he took advantage of Helen's gentle kindness towards her supposed brother, to persuade the good youth that she was in love with him.

As Helen grew towards womanhood, the Count, for many reasons, thought it fit to inform her of her birth; but by various circumstances his communication was delayed. In the meanwhile my journey to Saragossa took place, and the unfortunate adventure in which I was there engaged; and the Count, influenced by the suspicions to which that adventure gave rise, instead of making me the bearer of a message to my mother and his daughter, informing them of his real rank and of her birth, as he had once designed, intrusted the charge to good Father Francis of Allurdi, who perished in the snow at the very moment he was about to communicate it to me. To Helen, however, the Count wrote, on hearing of the good Father's death, and beginning to entertain more than doubts of Arnault's probity, he procured the delivery of his letter through the smuggler Garcias. At the same time, hearing of an intimacy between my family and the Marquis de St. Brie, he enjoined his daughter to maintain the most profound secrecy upon the subject.

Jean Baptiste had now suffered himself to be persuaded that Helen loved him; and the sudden dispersion of his golden dreams, by overhearing the acknowledgment of her affection towards

me, ended, as I have related, in the fit of passion which had nearly brought about his own death.

Arnault, nevertheless, resolved not to abandon his scheme while a chance of success remained. He saw that the Count's confidence in him was gone, and knew that a thousand accidents might occur to bring about a full discovery, and complete his ruin. His only hope, therefore, was in the success of his plot. Being the only person but Jean Baptiste who knew the real cause of my flight, he spread about the report that I had carried off the daughter of a bourgeois of Lourdes, who had, in fact, been seduced by the Marquis de St. Brie. The Count de Bagnols had by this time returned from Spain; and one accusation falling on me after another, he resolved to remove Helen from the Château de l'Orme, viewing with as much apprehension the chance of a union between her and me, as he had once regarded it with hope and pleasure. Having given up all expectation of recovering the proofs of his innocence, and his daughter's legitimacy, he took measures to let the Cardinal de Richelieu know that he was still in life; and received the assurance that he might live peacefully in France, and that no farther proceedings would be instituted against him, if he continued under an assumed name. He wished, however, to do more; and setting off for Paris with Helen, he took up his abode in the hotel of his cousin and ancient companion in arms, the Maréchal de Chatillon; when one night passing through the streets in the carriage of the Maréchal, his attendants found me lying senseless, by my fall from the window.

I was borne to the Hôtel de Chatillon, and what passed there is already written. The motives which induced the Count not to see me himself, and to deny to his daughter's utmost entreaties but an interview with me of a few minutes, may easily be understood, as well as his having caused me to be removed during my sleep to my own lodgings, to which my traiteur's bill, found in my pockets by the good nun who acted as my nurse, furnished the address.

Finding his villany discovered, and fearing that restitution might be called for, Arnault had delivered Lourdes from his presence a few days before the Count carried Helen with him to Paris. There the procureur also arrived: and as soon as he discovered the absence of his former patron, who had by this time joined the army, he resumed his former designs, and endeavoured to carry Helen off. His purpose was, as I have shown, frustrated by the information I received from Jean Baptiste, who had by this time fallen in love himself with the pretty little attendant of the Countess de Soissons, and was besides heartily ashamed of having yielded in the former instance to his father's schemes. What ultimate object Arnault had proposed to himself in taking Helen from her father's protection never distinctly appeared; for though, not many months after, Jean Baptiste brought a bride to Lourdes, and was, as a reward for his integrity, installed in his father's place as intendant to the Count de Bagnols, yet he could give us no farther information, his father having concealed the particulars of his plan even from him.

Arnault himself we never saw or heard of again; and it seemed evident that he had fled his country, in fear of the proceedings which the Count instituted against him. The last news we received of him was from Helen herself, who had seen him watching under the porch of the convent of the Minims, as she set out for Pau, on the morning when I was obliged to make my escape from the Hôtel de Soissons.

Her father, fearful of the consequences if the Count de Soissons should march upon the capital, had requested the Maréchal de Chatillon, then about to visit Paris on the business of the army, to send his daughter back to Bearn, under as strong an escort as he night before put the Maréchal upon his guard; and the party who accompanied Helen to the house of the old Countess de Marignan, her relation at Pau, rendered all danger out of the question.

Little more remains to be said, for I was at length happy--and happiness is silent. Helen shortly after was made my own, by the irrevocable ties which, to those who truly love, are doubly dear from their durability. In her arms, I have found far more of delight and peace than even the dreams of my own imagination had portrayed; or Hope, that constant flatterer, had promised in her sweetest song. Twenty years have now elapsed; and though Time, the slow destroyer of man's joys as well as of his works, may, and probably will, day by day rob me of some power or of some enjoyment, for those twenty years I have known almost unmixed happiness. This glorious past I may truly call my own, and fate itself cannot snatch it from my grasp.

Still, however, though Memory has there its certain treasure, hope runs on before; and I look forward to my future years with tranquillity. Thank Heaven, I have learned as much content as is necessary to enjoyment and is compatible with activity; and that spirit of adventure, which was once my torment, has now fallen asleep, never I hope to wake again.

To you, my son, I give this history of your mother and myself; and as I see, in some degree, the same spirit rising up in you, that caused so much misery to your father, let me, before I lay down the pen, point out the moral of my tale. If you remark the various events of this story, as they hang one upon another, you will perceive, that had I not suffered the love of adventure to lead me to the very brink of vice, in the circumstances that occurred to me at Saragossa, I should not only have escaped the pain immediately consequent, but the Count de Bagnols would have confided to me the secret of his own rank and Helen's birth. No motive for concealment would have existed between us; my parents would have known all and approved all--I should never have had to reproach myself with the murder of him I thought her brother--I should never have been obliged to fly from my home--I should never have been a houseless wanderer over the face of the earth, accompanied by misery and remorse.

Yet understand me: I blame not enterprise, I blame not enthusiasm; it is the spring of all that is good, great, and admirable in existence: but the art of happiness is to guide enthusiasm firmly on the path of virtue; the art of success, to guide it on the path of probability.

FOOTNOTES.

Footnote 1: A small town, with a picturesque castle crowning a high rock, at the entrance of one of the Pyrenean valleys, about ten leagues distant from Pau.

Footnote 2: A favourite dish in the small inns of Bearn to this day.

Footnote 3: Although no such lakes are now in existence, we find, in consulting authorities contemporary with the writer of these memoirs, that the valley of Gavarnie, from the village to the Marboré, was in that day completely filled with a chain of small lakes, the basins of which are still evident.

Footnote 4: The same fancy is current amongst many Eastern nations, and probably arrived at the Spanish smugglers through their Moorish ancestors.

Footnote 5: I believe that this description is exact in regard to the personal appearance of the Count of Colomma. He was a Catalonian by birth; had served with great distinction; and, previous to this unhappy revolt, had been looked upon with both pride and affection by his fellow-countrymen.

Footnote 6: The ordinary Spanish accounts declare that the peasantry who acted so conspicuous a part in the insurrection of Barcelona were merely reapers, who came thither on Corpus Christi Day, according to custom, but without any political object. "En el tiempo de la recoleccion de los granos," says one author, "bajan muchas cuadrillas de segadores de las montanas de Cataluna, para ejercer su profesion en los partidos maritimos, y tienen la costumbre de concurrir a la capital el dia de la festividad del Corpus, que aquel fue el siete de junio. Esta masa va dispuesta a la sedicion aumentó los materiales del volcan," &c. &c. There can be no doubt, however, that immense bodies of a very different order of persons, all prepared to urge on the revolt, had flocked into Barcelona several days before.

Footnote 7: This chapter in the original MS. appears written in a different hand from the rest, and was probably interpolated long after the composition of the whole, to explain historical circumstances which had passed from men's memories.

Footnote 8: Translation of the original document.

Footnote 9: This is the only clear and satisfactory account that has ever been given of the death of that most amiable prince, the Count de Soissons. The Maréchal de Chatillon, in his narrative of the battle of the Marfée, states, that the Count was killed by one of the queen's men-at-arms, and the Maréchal de Faber countenances the same supposition: but this was proved to be false by the Count's own attendants, who unanimously declared that the battle was won before his death. M. Jay, in his History of the Administration of Cardinal Richelieu, leans to the belief that the Count accidentally shot himself; and M. Peyran, in his History of the Principality of Sedan, starts the very strange idea, that the Prince chose the very moment of victory to commit suicide. Others have attributed his fate to an assassin hired by Richelieu; and even these Memoirs leave some doubt as to whether the motive of the Marquis de St. Brie was merely personal resentment, or the instigation of another.

THE END.

T. C. Savill, Printer, 4, Chandos-street, Covent-garden.

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