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THE MAGICIAN.

CHAPTER I

IN this well-read age, it is needless to say, that the Jew's proposal to assassinate an enemy, too powerful to be brought to public justice, was listened to by his audience of the fifteenth century without the slightest manifestation either of surprise or horror. Douglas still thought, however, that he had a better chance of success with the sword, than the feeble old man with the dagger; and besides this, like a true knight-errant, he would almost have regretted the liberation of his mistress from the dragon which haunted her, if the adventure had been achieved by another. As for the three students, they were satisfied with neither champion.

They thought—and, perhaps, with reason—that the habitual punctilios of the knight would pass very well at a tourney, but were altogether out of place in the present emergency; while the deadly purpose of Caleb, after they had withdrawn from the fascination of the old man's glare, appeared to them almost ridiculous.

But the cool, or rather cold judgment of Andrew mastered even his own temperament; and, on the morning of his adventure, he took the way to the house of the Jew, determined to listen attentively to his instructions, and to obey them so far as he found it practicable and prudent.

The house of Rabbi Solomon was easily found; and he was conducted through several dark and narrow passages in it to the apartment occupied by Caleb. The room was large, but scantily furnished; and he found its tenant sitting at a table placed in the middle of the floor. No books, no papers, no food, were before him: his occupation was gone. No more the busy, restless, feverish alchemist we have seen him, he sate leaning his head upon his hand, his eyes round and dilated,

staring upon vacancy, and his features as destitute of colour and mobility as those of a corpse.

"Cover her with a veil!" said he, as Andrew approached the table, but without moving even his eyes, and in the voice of a sleeper who dreams. "I will not look upon her: not if my heart breaketh! Begone!" He looked up; and, after resting for an instant upon the visiter, his glance wandered round the room, as if in search of some one. The next moment he recovered himself, with a sound like that of a repressed shiver; and, crushing his withered fingers together, he rose up.

"It is cold," said he, with a ghastly smile; "but I cannot give thee a warmer welcome, for my fire is out; see! there is not a spark left!" and he walked towards the chimney, which, indeed, bore no vestige of fire, save the ashes of last winter. "Who hath done this?" continued he, starting back. "Here be two stools! For whom is the second? Why, what a fool am I! Sit thee down, friend Andrew, for thou and I make two; sit thee down—sit thee down."

Caleb betrayed no farther wandering of mind

during the interview. His thoughts, disturbed by the entrance of Andrew, in the midst of a reverie which had probably lasted several hours, seemed to recover their tranquillity as easily as the waters of a lake broken by the plunge of a stone; and the communion held between the two allies—with one brief and slight exception—was steady and business-like.

The questions to be propounded by Andrew related chiefly to the changes that might have taken place in the localities of the Magician's tower, and their connection with the rest of the building, during the residence of Orosmandel—a personage with whom Caleb appeared to be altogether unacquainted. He was particularly desirous of ascertaining whether the same interior communication, as formerly, still existed with the general storehouses of the castle; and he described minutely the manner in which it had been the custom to remove bulky articles from these dépôts into the tower.

If there was no change of importance, David was instructed to descend secretly, and in the night-

time, to the storehouse, immediately after the arrival of Houpelande's bales, and to cut one of them open, distinguished by stripes of green and red; in which he would find every thing that was necessary for the furtherance of their design. But in case circumstances should render his flight necessary before that moment, Andrew was furnished with a sealed document, addressed to his friend, which, he was assured, would materially assist in his escape.

"Having treasured in thy mind," concluded Caleb, "the answers of the young man, and delivered unto him this plan, which shall guide him, when he findeth opportunity of escape, through the watery wilderness, thou wilt ask him—No: what needeth this?—thou wilt ask him nothing. Thou wilt straightway hie thee back unto me; from whom thou shalt receive neither thanks nor silver, but gold—yea, much fine gold for thy pains. Yet, peradventure, he will open his lips unto thee without asking; and if so, thou wilt give ear unto his words."

"What words? On what subject?"

“Touching the Hebrew girl,” replied Caleb, in a hoarse whisper, “whom he received at my hands. My soul knoweth her fate; but I would also hear it with mine ears. Peradventure, thou laughest in thy sleeve at the folly of the Jew? Laugh on; for it is the weakness of human nature, and thou art a man as well as I. I tell thee I have seen that girl in my dreams; and all this day she was present before my waking eyes. And how? Sitting upon the ground? her garments rent? her face covered with a veil? and dust upon her head? I say unto thee, Nay: but in raiment of angel whiteness; her dark hair crowned with the flowers of spring; with the soft, yet exulting step of the gazelle; with a face fairer than the fairest among the daughters of Jerusalem—fair as that of Eve before she sinned—as that of Dinah ere she visited the daughters of Shalem—as that of Tamar when as yet Amnon was her brother! O God of Jacob, how hard of belief thou hast made the heart of a father!” At this moment a noise of loud voices, and tumultuous steps, was heard in the passage; and Andrew, gliding to the door, slipped in the bolt.

"It is ill conversing," he remarked, "with fractious people about one; and may be Messire Caleb would not like to be intruded upon just at this moment."

"Open the door, signor Jew," cried a rough voice from without, after a rougher hand had tampered with the handle, till the whole machine shook in its frame: "we are here, two cavaliers of name and honour, upon lawful business; and if, before we go, we have not an answer, yea or nay, from your lips, call me no more Claude Montrichard!"

"Then I answer, Nay," replied Caleb; "and now go in peace, and go speedily, or it will be the worse for you both."

"We take no answer till you hear our business. The old fool must be crazed, I think. Lend me your shoulder, Beauchamp, and I'll warrant you we shall be admitted to the honour of an audience with his highness in half a second."

"I draw you to observe, sirs," said Andrew, "before you offer violence, that you intrude, at your own proper peril, not only upon a Jew, but

upon a Christian, and a Scot to boot—one Andrew Kerr, whose blood is as red as that of the laird of Cessford himself. The beleaguered garrison," continued he, in a whisper, "should always put a good face upon the matter; and in the present case, the odds are desperate enough to require the bravest words in the vocabulary. By the gingling of their spurs, and the clank of their metal, our assailants are men-at-arms, ready accoutred for the field; and you, Caleb, it cannot be denied (to say nothing of myself, which would be indecorous), are but a Jew after all."

A part of this aside was drowned in the scornful laugh of Beauchamp.

"A Scot and a Jew!" said he. "By my hali-dome, a right well assorted pair, and perilous to boot! I pray thee, Montrichard, be not over valiant; let us keep the windward side of the door, if thou love me." Caleb, stepping before Andrew, whose hand instinctively grasped the hilt of his sword as he heard an English voice, withdrew the bolt, and threw open the door.

"What would ye?" demanded he, imperiously.

“Money! money!” replied Montrichard. “The knave Solomon is too cautious, and refuses to deal; but you, I remember—if you be indeed Caleb the Jew—have a spice of speculation in your spirit, which induces you to lend an ear for your own advantage, even when no tangible security is in the way.”

“I am Caleb, the son of Benjamin; and I know thee well, Claude Montrichard. But for the present I am engaged—every moment of my time, every ounce of my capital. I pray thee be satisfied.”

“And so I will, when you hear me. Your money, of course, is engaged; but then, you know, you can borrow from another, and that demands double interest. Come, come, we are no strangers to each other, although we may not have chanced to meet for a few years. Will you hear my project?”

“No! I say unto thee again, that I cannot, and will not, assist thee—even were ample security deposited in the palm of my hand.”

“Then the toads of La Verrière may croak unmolested for Claude! Come, Beauchamp,” and

he was just striding out of the room, when Caleb sprang after him with a sudden bound, and caught him by the arm.

"How now, sir Jew?" cried Montrichard, shaking him off with disgust and indignation, "what is the bond between us, that you dare profane my person with your unbelieving fingers?"

"Pardon me, valiant knight—or pardon me not, for it is all one. If the project of which thou hast spoken relate to La Verrière, I will hear it. Speak, and to the point!"

"Crazed, by the mass!—hopelessly crazed!"

"I opine," said Beauchamp, "that the respectable person, into whose presence you have introduced me, is one of those who have been compelled, for some years past, by the magic of Gilles de Retz, to keep full the purse, which he, at the same time, toiled with both hands to empty. If so, it is nothing more than natural that he should wish to go shares with the spoilers of La Verrière."

"It must be so. Wilt be one with us, Caleb? Say, wilt buckle harness on? Or act as the banker of the camp? Choose!"

“It may be that I shall do both. But to convince you that the crawling Jew hath already his hand upon his bow and his spear—know, Montrichard, and thou who art called Beauchamp, that this young man is even now setting forth, on a visit of espial, to the castle of La Verrière.”

“Ha! Is it even so? A perilous adventure, if report speak true!”

“Not for our red-blooded friend,” said Beauchamp; “for a Scot is like your cat-o’-the-woods, who can creep as well as spring; and he hath also the feline property, that if you throw him league-high over the ramparts, he will alight upon his feet—and that, too, on the sunny side of the ditch.”

“I accept the compliment,” replied Andrew, “and forgive the sarcasm. It is owing, no doubt, to those same qualities of courage and sagacity, that a Scot makes his way where a Southron dares not show his face.”

“No more of this!” cried Montrichard, stepping between them, “our present meeting may turn out fortunate for all parties, if we only improve

the opportunity. Prithee, Beauchamp, forget your national animosities, and, since the youth claims to be of noble descent, receive him as a comrade."

"I am the slave of my friends," replied the English knight, superciliously; and turning towards Andrew, he bent forward, in a scarcely perceptible degree, and moving no more a joint of his body than if his armour had been a single piece of cast metal. This salute, having been imitated by the Scot with mathematical precision, the meeting then proceeded to business.

Montrichard explained frankly—for the matter had now become public—that the family of Laval with their friends and kinsmen, had resolved to look on no longer as indifferent spectators at the dismemberment of the princely property of Gilles de Retz. They had determined not only to prevent the further sale of his lands; but to wrest back from the Duke, if necessary by main force, those which that grasping potentate had already acquired.

The first step, in any case, would have been to

get possession, if possible, of the baron's person, and garrison his castle with the troops of the malcontents; for this was the usual opening of proceedings in a question even of law, which related to a noble. But Gilles de Retz was, in other respects, placed in very critical and peculiar circumstances. The vague rumours concerning him, which had echoed all over Brittany, had now begun to assume some intelligible meaning. The cry of blood was heard from the ditches of La Verrière. The church, neither cajoled by his appearance of piety, nor bribed by his gifts, demanded an inquiry into the magical abominations into which he was reported to have fallen; and the Legate of Rome, then in Nantes, exerted himself openly to procure his arrest as a suspected sorcerer. The Duke himself, though steadily pursuing his own aggrandisement, in defiance of his nobles, could no longer affect deafness in the midst of such a clamour. The alleged crimes, both against religion and nature, were in fact at this moment the subject of discussion in the council; and it was confidently expected that in a

day or two the enemies of Gilles de Retz would be backed by the government of the country.

But let not the reader miscalculate the effect of so formidable a hostility. Gilles de Retz was so strong in personal connections, and so well entrenched in the fortifications of his castle, that he might have set at defiance even a combination like this. A general would have brought the warrant for his arrest at the head of an army; and his process would have been carried on by the losing and winning of battles. - If it was his fate to fall, he would have been defeated, and perhaps slain, on his own ramparts; but, if the contest could be sufficiently prolonged, the chances were, that circumstances of national emergency might occur, in which it would be the interest of all parties to terminate the affair by means of treaties.

The war, therefore, which the family of Laval contemplated, was tedious and doubtful; and Mont-richard sought to make preparations for the part he was to take in it, by raising a loan of money for the opening of the campaign. With the assistance of Beauchamp and his troop, he intended

to capture one of the inferior fortresses of the Lord de Retz, and compel the surrounding tenantry to pay his debt to the Jew. Beyond this his definite views did not extend. For any thing farther, he resolved, like a true soldier of fortune, to trust to the chance of arms.

His conference with Caleb, however, opened a clearer and prouder vista for his ambition. The old man assured him, in defiance of all received opinions, that the castle might be taken by surprise; and then, if successful, he, Montrichard, a subordinate leader in the cabal, would achieve the adventure in his own person. The wealth still at La Verrière, not only in money, but in precious articles of every description, was reported to be immense; and, as in single combats the horse and arms of the vanquished became the prize of the victor, so in assaults and sieges, if the conqueror did not help himself freely, he was held to be a person ignorant of the laws and privileges of arms.

As for Beauchamp, he had, no doubt, the same golden dreams as Montrichard; but, cold and supercilious as he appeared, he had also some that

were tinged *couleur de rose*. Want of employment, love of adventure, and a dwindling purse, all three causes combined, had induced him to take a part in the dangerous game now going forward; but no sooner had his eyes rested on the nobly beautiful face of Pauline de Laval, than a new impulse was added, which served, at once, to strengthen and elevate the others.

He became, from that moment, in the language of chivalry, the vassal of her charms; and, himself of a high and haughty family, he saw no impediment in the way of his love, which valour and good fortune might not remove. The enterprize to which the Jew darkly pointed—for he would give no explanation till the return of the spy—appeared to him to be an enterprize opened out for him expressly by his patron saint; and he turned towards the young Scot an eye, divested of every expression but that of the keen and critical inquiry with which practised soldiers examine their agent or comrade in a perilous adventure.

As for Andrew, who read nothing in his companions' looks, but that they longed mightily to

appropriate to themselves the honour and danger of an adventure, which he had privately determined to reserve for his own countrymen, he was little disposed to sympathize with the change in their demeanour. He continued to look first at one, and then at the other, with a coldness, but at the same time, with a keenness of observation, which at length gave some annoyance to the Englishman.

“By my faith,” said he, “if you will only use your eyes as well at La Verrière, you are the very man for our purpose.”

“You mistake,” said Andrew, quietly, “I thrust not my head into the lion’s mouth, for any purpose of yours. I go to La Verrière upon mine own errand; and while, there, if I further the views of Caleb, it is because he lends himself, in like manner, to mine. This, Sir Southron, is our way in the north.”

“And a very excellent way it is!” said Montrichard, biting his lips. “For our parts, we are ready to reciprocate with you, in every possible manner, if you will only let us know how.”

“That will I readily do on my return; and it

may be, that the only demand I shall make for my intelligence, will be a post in the forlorn hope of the attack. I might indeed boast of some little experience in culverines, and such like engines of war—but let that pass for the present. I shall now go forth, to creep into La Verrière; and if I only have the fortune to alight on my feet, when they throw me over the ramparts, we shall all four talk further;” and with a stiff bow to the knights, and a patronizing nod to the Jew, Andrew left the apartment.

“He will do!” said Montrichard, following him with a hawk’s glance. “Bold, tranquil, keen, smooth, and tough as twisted steel, that fellow wants nothing but a little rashness and stupidity, to be an accomplished soldier! And now, friend Caleb, comes the most unpleasant part of the business:—we cannot stir, hand or foot, without money.”

“It is ready.”

“Bravely spoken! And the security—hum!—let me see—what say you, Beauchamp?” Beauchamp shrugged his shoulders, and began to whistle.

"Sir knights," said the Jew, "It may come to pass that, through my means, ye shall enter in triumph within the gates of La Verrière. There is one there—a daughter of our people—whom ye will know by her rent garments, and the ashes on her head. Swear unto me, that ye will bring that woman forth, and place her within the hands of my kinsman, Solomon, of this house? Will ye swear?"

"We will pledge our honour," said Montrichard.

"But we will not profane the name of our Saviour," added Beauchamp, "by taking it in question at the demand of a Jew."

"I accept your word," said Caleb, with a ghastly smile; "for I know that ye think it more base to lie unto man than unto God."

"And the security? When will the bond be ready?"

"Security! Bond! Do ye think that the Jew will demand more assurance for his gold, than for his—Away! Begone! The money will follow you; and when the young man returneth, it may be, that we shall meet again."

“Crazed, by the Holy Virgin!” ejaculated Montrichard in a whisper, as he went out, “wild—frantic—clean distraught!”

“If so,” said Beauchamp, with a shrug, “it is fortunate that his gold, for which he can have no further use himself, falls into the hands of true believers.”

CHAPTER II.

It is necessary that we anticipate, by a brief space, the arrival of Andrew at the castle of La Verrière.

When Hagar and David parted, on the night when he had entered her room so unexpectedly, the heart of the young Jewess was in such confusion that it is no wonder if her usually steady brain shared a little in the disorder. She stood by the door, listening to his footsteps; and long after they had died away, continued to hear them in imagination; while tears, half of pity, half of a wild and fearful joy, streamed down her cheeks. She had at the same instant learnt to understand both David's feelings, and her own. There was no

longer any room for either doubt or fear. All was certainty—awful, dreadful certainty.

She at length turned round, with a faltering step, and whirling brain, and approached the bed. The Damsel remained buried in profound sleep; and it was some moments before Hagar could remember how she had come there. David was in her mind, and not his actions as regarded others. His words were still sounding through the innermost depths of her bosom—"Christian and Jewess no more, we are fellow beings, twin children of mortality, with one God for our judge, one earth for our grave!"

Summoning those energies, however, which she rarely summoned in vain, Hagar at length comprehended every thing; and it was with a gleam almost of hope, that she followed out in her own mind the adventure of which she traced the cause.

Pauline, it appeared to her, was, in one respect, in a predicament resembling her own: she was the expected neophyte of some new and extraordinary doctrine, of which her own father was the apostle. What was the end or object of this attempted prose-

lytism, Hagar could not tell, and hardly ventured to imagine. The philosophy of the calm and stately Orosmandel had come forth from the lips of Gilles de Retz in words of fire; and, on more than one occasion, the eyes of the Jewess had lightened, and her bosom throbbed high with enthusiasm, as she listened. The doctrine itself—grand, massive, lofty, and shapeless from its very vastness—was such as only a daring imagination could conceive, or follow. It was based upon pride and intellectual ambition. It asserted the equality of spirit throughout the universe, sinking man to the level of the worm, and yet raising him to the glory of the angels. It laughed at the immutability of nature, and preached rebellion against the decrees of destiny.

What was there in this to affright? It was not absolutely irreconcilable with some interpretations of revealed religion; it enlarged and elevated the mind; exercised the imagination; opened out more extensive views of the power of the Deity, and the vastness of the scheme of creation; and explored at least a portion of the immensity of the

universe which before was an abysm of darkness imperviable to the human gaze.

The evil was, that it was not merely a *speculative* philosophy, such as sages and poets might ponder over by the light of the midnight lamp. It was of a directly practical nature; and its proselytes were admonished, that they were to exchange slumber for waking, rest for action, the life of the body for the life of the spirit. By the body was meant, not merely the material form, but those sympathies which bind the human race together, and chain the individual to his place in creation. This bond was to be broken; the links of the habits torn asunder; the lessons of human wisdom unlearned; and the soul, even while tenanted a human form, set free from the trammels of humanity.

A curious distinction, however, was made between the habits, and acquired desires of the mind, and the instincts of the body. It was the former that were to be repressed, changed, or cast away; while the cravings of the latter, because they might be harassing to the spirit, were to be appeased by gratification. Was not this to strengthen the

meaner part of our nature, at the same moment when we attempted to liberate from its control the nobler? No, it was replied: it was to disunite for ever the two parts of our being. It was to confine the body to its sensual cravings, and leave the mind free to its intellectual pursuits. The passions might be indulged without danger; but the affections, which were the connecting links between the animal and the spirit, must be destroyed.

But here Gilles de Retz had hitherto stopped short. What was to be the application of so startling a lesson? No longer bold in reasoning or plausible in sophistry, at this point he hid himself in mysticism. With some reference to Orosmandel, as the master sage—with many hints that the moment for full explanation was not arrived—or that the mind of the novice was not sufficiently prepared, he retired from her presence, leaving her to digest what she had heard, and to lose herself in conjecture with regard to what was to come.

Hagar believed, from some words which had dropped unconsciously from the baron, that his

daughter was undergoing a similar course of instruction; and the adventure of this night inclined her to think, that the noviciate of Pauline was at an end, and that she had been admitted by Orosmandel into the secret. What secret this was, communicated in the dead of night, administered at the same moment with narcotic drugs, and followed by delirium and stupor, she dared not imagine. The whole, she could gather from the words of David, was a system of fraud and delusion. Yet how suppose that a father could be engaged in a plot against his own daughter? It mattered not: Prelati was the accomplice of Orosmandel, and if so, whoever were the other abettors, it must be in the perpetration of some gigantic crime.

At all events, her own situation and prospects were rather better than worse. In the morning she would make a confidant of Pauline; and that lady would perhaps be prevailed upon to take her under her protection. She would appeal to the baron's honour in behalf of David, whose liberation had been solemnly promised to her; and,

through the influence of his daughter she might herself be permitted to leave the castle. Such were the reveries of Hagar, when the attendants of the Damsel entered the room to seek their mistress.

Mademoiselle de Laval was carried, still sleeping, to her own apartments; and the Jewess followed close to the heels of the attendants, not daring to raise her head, and hardly believing her own good fortune. This, however, was soon at an end. The private corridor of the baron was separated from the other portion of the building by an iron door; on the inner side of which a porter sat constantly, day and night. The man recognised the two attendants, whom he had admitted but a few minutes before, and also the Damsel; but when Hagar attempted to follow them he thrust her back without ceremony. Remonstrances were vain; and she would have seized the young lady's gown to attempt to awaken her.

"It is needless," said the porter coolly, as he turned the key; "the damsel has no power on this side of the door. You can only pass by the

express orders of the baron." It may be conceived with what dismay the Jewess returned to her prison !

The next day, instead of waiting, as formerly, till she was sent for, she demanded an audience of the baron ; and, having received permission, she glided with a pale cheek, but a stately step, and a collected manner, to the room where he received publicly his visitors.

Gilles de Retz was striding rapidly through the room, with more of decision and exultation in his manner than she had ever witnessed before ; and Hagar paused, involuntarily, at the door, to contemplate for a moment his appearance. His step was firm, yet elastic ; his chest was thrown open with pride and determination ; his eyes blazed with a steady light ; and every part of his singularly handsome countenance bore the impress both of will and power. He was at an age when the passions are at the strongest ; and the frame in which they were lodged seemed to be as yet unwasted by the feverish workings of the spirit within. Even his hair, which was flung back

from his face in glittering clusters, exhibited no trace of that untimely change which prophecies decay, when man is still in the zenith of his strength, and whispers to the proud heart of forty years—"In the midst of life we are in death!" Hagar knew, while she looked upon him, that this man was a being either to be loved or dreaded, and she grew yet paler at the thought; but, summoning all her courage, she crossed her hands firmly on her bosom, and advanced into the room.

"My Lord de Retz," said she, steadily, "Thou didst tell me that the damsel, thy daughter, was absent from the castle on a visit. She hath now returned, for I saw her last night; and I claim thy promise to be permitted to lodge under her protection, so long as it is thy pleasure to keep me here a captive."

"You *are* a captive, Hagar," replied the baron, "and so am I. Yet we are not captives of each other, but of a higher power which modifies the actions of us both. Why did you thrust yourself upon me in the solitude of yonder midnight hill, sacred to the forgotten dead? Did I summon

you? Why, after we had parted, did you appear before me, like a spirit, in the midst of the private apartments of my own house? Were you sent for by me? You accuse me of contrivance and duplicity—it would be as rational for me to suspect you of forwardness and coquetry.”

“Suppose, then, that neither thou nor I have been to blame thus far—”

“I *know* it. I call God to witness that, from the moment of our first meeting, I have been as unconscious an agent in our destinies as a straw dancing on the waters of a torrent! You appeared before me; and, from the loveliness of your person, and the radiance of mind shining through your eyes, I believed you, for a moment, to be of a higher order of beings than we on the earth. I soon found my mistake. I saw that you were a woman—yet a spirit; a thing of dust, created lower than the demons, yet possessing within you the germ of that power which may be rendered capable of controlling and commanding them. What is it you desire? Liberty? It is neither mine to give nor yours to receive. Come, let us put it to the

test, and observe what will be the result. I bid you be free ! Away ! The doors shall be opened, till they strain their hinges. Vanish from my presence, and betake you, if you will, to the uttermost ends of the earth !”

“ Let me first ”—

“ Not a word ! Begone—I bid you be free ! What ! you hesitate ! Your cheek flushes, and then grows pale ! You will not accept of liberty ? Because you *cannot* ! You are mine, because my fortunes cannot be accomplished without your aid ; and I am yours, because without mine you cannot rise from the earth. I tell you, Hagar, we must on ; for there is no turning back. This world shall soon be no longer any thing to us but as one of the planets. Our home shall be the universe ; our dominion, the realms of space. Even our material part, which must still dwell below, will be sublimed by the dominance of spirit. Every fibre of the body will thrill with new and more delicate life ; till the meanest pleasures of the senses shall equal in poignancy the most ecstatic enjoyments of mind in an ordi-

nary state of existence. The connection which will exist between us can be only faintly shadowed forth by the name of love. Cut off from the upper beings by the difference in our created form, and from mankind by the acquisitions of our spirit, we shall be alone in the universe. The thoughts, and pursuits—as deep and vast as the immensity around us—which will be common to us both, but which cannot even be comprehended by others, will form the links of that chain which will bind us together, body and soul, as if in a single life !”

The baron spoke with headlong impetuosity. His words rushed forth, unselected and unimpelled; and his cheek burned the while, and his eye blazed, with an enthusiasm which would have fascinated, if it had not terrified, his hearer. This was no contrivance—no deceit. It was the earnestness of a man fully impressed with the truth of what he had said, and labouring under the influence either of inspiration or delusion. Hagar stood like one amazed; and looked upon the personification before her of Will and Power both with terror and admiration.

"I would cheerfully," continued he, "assign you a lodging in my daughter's apartments; but the hour of our fate is at hand, and all trivial considerations must be laid aside. It is impossible that you can have any serious apprehension for yourself; for although as completely in my power as if we were in the midst of a desert, I have never, in look, word, or action, offended your delicacy. The hour, I tell you, is at hand; and the intermediate time it is necessary that you pass in the study of Orosmandel." At these words, the Jewess, clasping her hands, uttered a stifled scream.

"Not there!" she cried, "not there! Bury me rather in the subterranean dungeons of thy house! Shut me up in damp, and darkness, and hunger, and cold—and see if there shall escape one tear from my eye, one murmur from my lips!"

"This is phrenzy, Hagar," said the baron. "Orosmandel, besides being a man without human passions himself, has a stake almost as deep as my own in your safety. Do you think that any consideration on earth would tempt me to place you in a

situation of danger? Do you at once doubt my love as a man, and my honour as a knight?"

"For thy love, my lord," replied Hagar, proudly, "it is a question in which I can have no interest; and which, indeed, as yet, to give thee due honour, thou hast not had the meanness to force into the ear of a captive. Last night, however, thy daughter was brought into my chamber by the young man whom thou didst solemnly promise some days ago to set at liberty. How am I to reconcile this with thine honour?"

"Easily: for the young man was in the service of Orosmandel, not in mine. My influence, however, has already been used, and I have received permission to do with him as I please. To-day—this instant, he shall depart. Will this satisfy you?"

"I thank thee, humbly and gratefully," replied Hagar; her mind relieved of one of its loads of care. "It is but to die," continued she, mentally, "and to die alone. I praise the Most High that David will neither witness nor share my fate!"

The baron, who seemed eager to re-establish himself in the good opinion of the Jewess, and also to give her some breathing-time before renewing the subject of their conversation, sent immediately to desire the attendance of Orosmandel's assistant. The servant whom he called for that purpose took the opportunity of announcing, that a messenger from Jacquin Houpelande waited without for an audience; and thus it happened, that David and Andrew entered the room at the same moment, by opposite doors.

Andrew bowed first to the lady, and then to the lord; and then looked steadily at his quondam comrade, thinking it prudent to wait for his recognition, and not a little marvelling at the new change which had taken place in his costume. David had doffed his cloak, and appeared now in a dress of buff leather, made so tightly to the form, that it must have been taken for his skin, had not his neck and chest, which were exposed, borne testimony against the fact, by their greater delicacy of colour. A red shawl, wrapped round his waist, completed his equipment; for his head was adorned only by his own

dark hair, which was thrown back in damp masses from his forehead. His face was flushed, and glistening with perspiration, like one who had been engaged in some hot and laborious employment; and his hands were completely bedaubed with the traces of his occupation. After one glance round the room, he looked neither to Hagar nor to Andrew, but, fixing his eyes on Gilles de Retz, awaited his expected communication.

"Young man," said the baron, after eyeing him keenly, "I have a commission for Nantes, which is my purpose to entrust to you. You shall be furnished with what is necessary in half an hour at the latest; when you must immediately set out, and spur on, without drawing bridle, till you reach the city. After having performed your task, and received a sum of money—much larger, probably, than you expected to earn in this house—you will consider that you are your own master, and choose any of the paths of the world, save that which leads to La Verrière."

"And I would pray thee," said Hagar, stepping eagerly forward, "to bear, also, a message for me.

Pardon me for interrupting the thanks thou wert about to pay to the Lord de Retz—and which are well due—” this she said with significance; “but I humbly entreat that thou wilt go to the house of Rabbi Solomon, and inform my father—Caleb, the son of Benjamin—that his daughter is well. What more, my lord, ought thy handmaid to say unto the Jew?”

“Nothing,” replied the baron, “it is enough.”

“Bethink thee. Is it really thy design to deliver me up into the hands of Prelati?”

“Of Orosmandel, girl! Prelati is dead, as my daughter can now testify.”

“He liveth!—but I know that it is vain for me to endeavour to oppose his plans. Wilt thou absolutely consign me to the tower which, if not now, was formerly inhabited by him?”

“It is necessary for the welfare of us both. But I swear——”

“Enough! Young man, thou must also say unto my father, that his daughter is a captive, and that he must ransom her—instantly if at all—with as many shekels of gold as he may think her life

worth. Wilt thou do this? Wilt thou hie thee to Nantes, for my sake, as swiftly as horse may speed?"

The look which Hagar rivetted upon the face of the scholar hardly outdid, in eagerness of interest, that with which Gilles de Retz and Andrew awaited his slow, calm answer.

"Were it my purpose," said he, "to visit Nantes, I would obey you without fail; but I am, at present, under voluntary engagement to Orosmandel, and I acknowledge no other master."

"My lord baron, I claim thy promise! With this, the private inclinations of the young man have nothing to do; and if he will not go freely—thrust him forth! Look to it, if thou desire that I am ever again to hold converse with thee, as with one on whose word I can rely!"

"My lord," said Andrew, who could no longer withhold, "after taking your instructions regarding certain bales, furnished by Jacquin Houpelande, the arrival of which at the hôtel de la Suze, I am come to announce, the young man, if it so please you, can proceed to Nantes with me." Gilles de

Retz stood all this while glaring at the scholar, with a mixture of surprise and indignation in his feelings, to which he thought it beneath his dignity to give vent.

“You hear !” said he, in a suppressed voice.

“I have answered,” replied David ; “and as for you, Sir meddler, since you will concern yourself in other people’s affairs, I advise you to ride back to your tailor’s clouts, as if the devil was behind you, and do the lady’s errand to her father yourself.”

“My lord,” said Andrew, “it is ill reasoning with fractious persons ; and if you will only cause him to be mounted behind my saddle, I undertake to carry him as clean off, as if he had been caught up in a whirlwind.”

“Silence, Sir !” cried the baron. “And you—did you actually comprehend that it was my pleasure you should proceed to Nantes.”

“I cannot deny it ; for your lordship is sufficiently plain spoken when you condescend to address your inferiors in station.”

“Do you hear this, Hagar ?”

“Oh ! it is phrenzy,” she replied, crushing her

fingers within each other ; “but he must go nevertheless.” www.libtool.com.cn

“Then, by St. Mary ! he shall go—like a clod flung over the ramparts ! Within there !”

“I call you to notice, my lord baron,” said David, “that I am neither servant, nor liegeman, nor kinsman of yours ; and that you have authority over me neither by law, nor blood, nor custom.”

“Silence vassal, or I will pin you to the wall !” and Gilles de Retz, who was but little accustomed to opposition, more especially within his own entrenchments, drew his sword, and advanced upon the contumacious dependent. David, in the meantime, stood his ground ; only slipping one hand into the shawl which girded his waist, and where, no doubt, his dagger was concealed, while he warned off his assailant with the other.

“Take heed what you do, my lord,” said he, “for, although unarmed, I am not to be slaughtered like a calf, at any man’s pleasure. Beware, if you love your life ; for the Borderer, when he turns to bay, is as dangerous as the stag of his own hills !”

At this moment, Orosmandel entered the room; and the baron, recollecting himself, fell instantly back; his face, which before was pale with rage, becoming red with shame. He muttered an apology between his teeth; but threw the blame upon the young man's insolence.

"What is this thou hast been about?" demanded the philosopher, turning mildly to his apprentice.

"Obeying your instructions," replied David, significantly, "and also declining to forsake my employment, at the command of a stranger, with whom I have nothing to do. I should say, indeed, at the command of three strangers; for all the three now before you, would have thrust me forth of this castle, without rhyme or reason! As for the tailor's ambassador, who was to have caught me up like a whirlwind—have you a sword under your cloak, messire, that you talk it so bravely?"

"I have," replied Andrew; "and one that glided out of its scabbard of its own accord, when you talked of turning to bay." And, opening his mantle partially, the gleam of a well-polished blade

was seen extending more than half the length of his person.

“A sword,” said David, with an appearance of heat, “that only shows itself when there are odds in its favour, is worth no more than a windlestraw. What would yours do in a case of equal numbers?”

“Try me, my man ! when it comes to cold steel, I can take a hint as well as another.”

“I pray you all to pardon me. I could bear, in a case of necessity, being put to death by a baron ; but the interference of this person has somewhat chafed my blood. To lay aside for the present, however, such idle converse, I have an explanation to make, which regards most parties here ; but, as I have heard that the doors in great men’s houses have the property of ears, you must permit me to shut these up ;” and the student deliberately bolted both.

Orosmandel, in the meanwhile, continued to regard him with calm attention, and the Lord de Retz with a scowl of impatient disdain. Alarm and expectation were in the eyes of the Jewess ;

but her manner otherwise was tranquil, and her figure as rigid as a statue. Andrew looked on with a grave and observant face, from which it would have been altogether impossible to predicate any thing, except the entire self-possession of the wearer.

“It is this lady,” said the student, after glancing at his audience one after the other, “who has egged on the baron to take me forcibly from the engagements I am under to him whom I serve, and to thrust me forth of the castle. Now, it is meet you should know the connection which subsists between her and me. She is the daughter of one to whom I acknowledge myself indebted, not only for the raiment which I possess (slightly diminished in amount, no doubt, by an epitaph ^e of my own, somewhat the worse for wear, which I left in his hands), but also for the instructions of several years in the sublime science of alchemy. In lieu thereof, and in full settlement of all scores between us, I, on my part, when my preceptor and his family were flying from Paris, in peril of their lives, undertook the charge of this young

woman's safety—solemnly promising to convey her to her relations at Nantes. Now, messires, that bond is unfulfilled. Instead of conducting her myself, I had the folly—should I not rather say the baseness?—to entrust her to another; and, in fine, she is now in the castle of La Verrière.

“What may be her anxiety to remove me from the house, who am, as it were, the representative of her father, I cannot say; but that does not interfere with the line of my duty—which is, to protect her at the hazard of my life. She is here—not to mince the matter—a prisoner; and, although her father, I have no doubt, is ready to pay down for her a king's ransom, yet is there no talk of negotiation. Under these circumstances, she is to be confined—aye, my lord, confined is the word—in a certain tower of the building, of which, right or wrong, she has an insuperable horror and aversion. It is not for me to speak of that place, seeing that I know but little of it myself; but this I may say, without transgressing my duty, that her repugnance, whether founded in prejudice or not, is natural, and easy to be understood. It is, more-

over—and this is all which concerns me in the question—a place of darkness and mystery, which the eye of man cannot penetrate; and thither, therefore, to speak plainly, I will oppose her being taken, even to the shedding of my blood!”

“Here is a peroration!” cried the baron. “By my faith, father, we shall be well served, if our business is to be entrusted to maniacs! The cure for this malady, I think, is a solitary dungeon, chains, straw, bread and water. Is it not so?”

“The youth for the present,” replied Orosmandel, “will betake himself to his employment, already too long interrupted; and the young woman, whose terror, as he remarks, is nothing more than natural and feminine, may remain in her present abode for a few days, till I find time to consider her case. A word, my lord;” and he drew the baron out of hearing.

“Thy triumph,” said he, “is premature. The Duke hath indeed made the purchase; but the money hath not arrived. Till then, this Jewess must be sacred, and it is better that she remain in a public part of the castle; else it will be in

vain to demand either loan or ransom from her father. As for the young man, he must live till the great minute of thy life hath arrived, for I have need of his services—but not longer.

“Hagar,” said David, in another part of the room, “you have gained but a short respite; yet keep up your spirits, and remember my words of last night.”

“Thou hast cast away thy life,” she replied—“and for me, wretch that I am! Oh, be careful, my best, my only friend! for I watched the face of him whom thou callest Orosmandel, and I saw suspicion lurking under the calm, deep moonlight of his eyes!”

“Andrew,” said David, “meet me secretly, after it is dark, at the top of the stair-case in the hall, which they will tell you leads to the magician’s tower.”

“I will, daddie,” replied Andrew, “but you are out in your policy for once. I have learnt that of the baron which would have justified us in smiting him, hip and thigh, as you no doubt intended; and that done we could easily have gagged the old

man, and made our way out of the castle—Jewess and all.”

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Hagar was then remanded to her prison ; David sent back to his manipulation ; and Andrew, having been invited to partake of the hospitality of the house for the night, dismissed with a condescending message to Houpelande, inviting him to bring his goods forthwith to La Verrière.

CHAPTER III.

ANDREW'S inspection of the defences of La Verrière, although, to a mind like his, a very exciting amusement, while it lasted, was by no means satisfactory in the results he obtained. The castle appeared to him to be absolutely impregnable; and when, in walking round the ramparts, he arrived at the two colossal culverines which adorned the principal gate, his heart died within him.

"Alas! daddie David," groaned he, "it is all over! If, with my little son of a gun, I defeated half-a-dozen of the best soldiers in Europe, its great-grandfathers ~~had~~, would scatter the army of Alexander! Our only chance is, that the cannoniers may be fools enough to load. Even a ball

of diameter like this, could not sweep away more than twenty men at a time; and it would be morally impossible to make such a monster disgorge twice in the same hour. After the first shot, therefore, the prestige would be destroyed, and the besiegers might approach close to the walls; as safe under the very chin of the giants, as if they were twenty leagues off. What could have come over David, that he did not smite the enemy when we had him in our power! But was it not rather my own fault? He, poor fellow, may have been bound by enchantment; and I, who was a free agent, should have struck the blow. I'll warrant me, if I had once stood fairly committed in the quarrel, David would have sprung to the aid of his comrade, if fifty spells had been over him."

Andrew was permitted to make his observations without the slightest hindrance. It seemed, indeed, as if the authorities in command, rather encouraged his inquiries, than otherwise; in the perfect confidence, no doubt, that his report could not be otherwise than favourable. While he was still lingering near the gate, with his eyes fixed, as if

by fascination, on the enormous culverines, De Briqueville, before whom he had been brought on his arrival, came up to where he stood, with a lady, whom he appeared to be attending on her afternoon's walk.

"You admire our cannon, friend!" said De Briqueville, with a smile. "This one, you must know, is the Duke, and the other the Baron; and if you want to match them, you must look among the Twelve Peers of France. I fancy you have hardly such things at home!"

"I will not precisely undertake to say," replied Andrew, "that we have culverines, or serpentines, of such unwieldy dimensions. The Scots, you must know, sir and madam (who are a very ancient people, being the Caledoniæ of the Romans, and descended from the old Scythian race), have a prejudice against the alliance of such inanimate things as they cannot wield with their own hands. They do not even affect so much as the English, their fractious neighbours, the use of arrows; holding it to be something less than manly to send such deadly missives through the air, on business

that ought to be transacted face to face. However, I would by no means disparage your culverines, which at least do credit to the founders; but with us at home, in fact, they could be of little use, for I assure you this bit hillock of yours whereon they have been so easily placed, compared with *our* mountains is an absolute wart!"

"Perhaps, also," said De Briqueville, with a sneer, "these same mountains may be deficient in the materials for powder."

"By no means," answered Andrew, hastily; "We have enough of willows for charcoal, which you think the best; although in my opinion honest fir or larch would answer the purpose better, of which we have a still more abundant supply. Those timbers we burn to cook our victuals, and so preserve human life rather than destroy it. Then we have nitre enough, God knows, which the old wives use, with common salt, to cure their beef; and as for sulphur, you may think it is plenty, when I tell you, that ~~there~~ are few of us who spare to employ it, for a kind of malady—brought

to us, it is said, across the channel by the south wind." www.libtool.com.cn

"Since you do not patronise cannon," said Pauline de Laval, who seemed desirous of prolonging the conversation, "pray what are the arms of your countrymen?"

"Madam, we have a dagger, fit for stabbing; and a sword that, if well applied, would slice you off a man's head so neatly as to leave no stain upon the blade. Then we have a pike, or spear, eighteen feet, six inches long, sufficient to keep off a charge of horse; and thus, with our steel coat and cap, defended at the joining between the two by a thick kerchief wrapped round our neck"—

"Sir, do you know Sir Archibald Douglas?" Andrew glanced at De Briqueville, who had just stepped aside to speak to the sentry; and then looking slily at the young lady, drew in his mouth like a purse, and gave an affirmative nod.

"Is he well?" said Pauline, colouring deeply.

"He is sound in body—but for the *sana mens*'—and Andrew shrugged his shoulders.

"For the what?"

"I would not just like to commit myself by affirming that he is well in spirit."

"Did he know—did he send—that is—."

"It would be improper to answer categorically, that he did not send; for, in fact, he looked more messages than I could carry, yet without ever uttering a word. If I could see as well into the mill-stone as my neighbours, I might venture to predicate that he would have thought it an enormous sacrilege to have mentioned a certain sacred name in my ears. Indeed, I have little hesitation in conjecturing, that he is somewhat wild—a little crazed, as it were—on the subject of punctilio. Would you think it? It was but the other day that he rated my comrade Nigel soundly for saving his life by slaying a horse, instead of striking unprofitably at a man cased in armour. Nay, if the culverine with which I put the assassins to flight had actually gone off, I do believe he would never have forgiven me, lest the shot might not have had the gumtion to strike within the four members!"

“By whom was his life attempted?”

“By six horsemen, with their vizors closed. Know you an individual called Prelati?” Pauline started, and grew pale.

“Nothing will satisfy our knight,” continued Andrew, “but he must have a fair fight with this Prelati, face to face; and, there being special reasons why he should be dissuaded from so doing, for at least a certain time, if your ladyship—”

“Tell him,” interrupted Pauline, eagerly, “that I entreat, and command him to forbear! Tell him that if he disobey me in this instance, I shall ever after hate as much as I have—have—esteemed him! Will you do this?”

“Assuredly I will. But there is another subject—.” At this moment they were rejoined by De Briqueville; who immediately after walked away with Mademoiselle de Laval, leaving Andrew staring after them with disappointment and mortification.

“They may well call me slow!” said he. “What a beast was I, to lose moments so precious in prating of culverines, punctilios, charcoal, sul-

phur, and cutaneous disorders ! Sir Archibald's business is done—for which he will by no means thank me, and David's name not even mentioned in her ears !” By the time he had made the entire circuit of the ramparts, it was completely dark ; and, watching his opportunity when there was no one in the hall, he glided into the staircase which he had previously ascertained led to the Magician's Tower.

Andrew, with all his shrewdness, was by no means insensible to the superstitious feelings almost universal in that age ; and when he found himself, in ascending the stairs, receding from even the grey light of the hall, and entering a region of darkness and mystery, it was not without some quicker motion of the heart that he repeated mentally an Ave.

His caution, however, did not forsake him. He crept up the steps as stealthily as a cat ; and when every gleam of light had deserted him, he went upon all fours, and thus might easily have been taken for the animal whose pace he imitated.

The stair led to the highest floor of the tower, and was therefore of considerable length; but multiplied by Andrew's imagination, it seemed to extend to a distance beyond all natural bounds. He at length began to conceive it possible that, for the offence of entering upon such an adventure, he was now travelling eternally through the void of space—when suddenly his head came in contact with the iron gate at the top.

When he had ascertained the nature of this obstacle, and the fact that he had really reached the landing-place, he raised himself cautiously, and put forth his feelers to examine the lock. The bolt was in, as thick as a man's arm: the gate was made fast, in such a manner, that it would have taken a well sized culverine, indeed, to open it without the key. Had David been aware that this would have been the case? Or was he now an unexpected prisoner? Might he not have been waiting in utter darkness for an hour past, and gone away in disappointment and dudgeon? Andrew pondered, and pondered—felt the thick

bars of the gate—endeavoured to insinuate his little finger into the bed of the bolt—and at length sat down, to meditate more at his ease.

Although the space around him was as black as night, he could see the dim light of evening beneath, at a distance which appeared to him to be immense. On this spot his eyes were fixed for so long a time, that his imagination began to grow confused; and at length he felt the sensation of being about to fall. He immediately started up; and, turning his back upon an appearance which only bewildered him, he grasped the bars of the gate with both hands, and gazed into the abyss of darkness beyond.

Before him, if all he had heard were true, was the study of the Magician; and still higher up, the lodging of his friend. A strange curiosity took possession of Andrew's mind. If David could not, or would not, keep the rendezvous, might not he visit him in his own quarters? Who could tell what discoveries he might make—what wonders he might behold—in tra-

versing the space between? Was it creditable either to his wit, or his courage, to have passed a day and night in La Verrière without having been able to obtain private speech of him to whom his errand was in reality done?

Andrew, after listening calmly to the suggestions of his prudence, and combating them successfully, seized a firmer and farther grasp of the iron; and inserting his knees between the bars, began to heave himself noiselessly up, with very little misgiving on his mind, that in a staircase where the walls were so roughly and slovenly built, he should be unable to insinuate his body between the gate and the roof.

The attentive reader will recollect that this gate was of no common altitude; and it is therefore not to be wondered at if Andrew's wandering of the imagination should have recommenced before he had reached the top. Often was he tempted to give up the adventure as hopeless, and allow himself to slip down; but as often did he find himself instigated to proceed by a still

stronger feeling—he knew not of what nature : till at length, it would have taken little to persuade him that he was enchanted.

On reaching the top, it may be a question whether he was more gratified or disappointed, to find that the gate and the arch of the roof met so nicely, that the human finger could not have been inserted between. At all events he hung suspended for some moments, as if to digest the annoyance, his fingers wandering almost incessantly over the surface of the stone ; till, at length, he felt one of the blocks of granite move sensibly in its bed, without the smallest agency of his, and turn round, as if to fall, for the express purpose of crushing him.

It required all Andrew's intrepidity to prevent the escape of a cry of terror which rose to his lips at the moment ; but, mastering this weakness, he first endeavoured—but in vain—to stop the motion of the stone ; and then, considering that to descend perpendicularly would be certain death, he sprang suddenly aside, catching by chance at a distant bar. In the midst of this manœuvre,

however, he was brought to, by the grasp of something, not unlike a human hand in the feel, upon his neck; and he heard these words pronounced in a low voice almost close to his ear:—

“Hold, you misbegotten elf! Let not our homulus prove a homunculus, and sneak out of his comrade’s way, without so much as a ‘God be with you!’ Is it to play the spy you are here, you tiny corpse-candle? Were it not a shame to cheat the fishes of the Erdre, I would this moment crush you to a pinch of dust, you bog-trotting, serpent-hunting, toad-inveigling little devil!”

“As God shall judge me,” said Andrew, half strangled in the powerful grasp, “I am five feet eight and a half! I a spy! Alas! Is it for the purpose of espial that a man thrusts his head into utter darkness? You mistake me for another; and, if you will only come down into the blessed light of heaven, you may convince yourself of the fact.”

“Why, in the most sacred name, are *you* here, Andrew?” Could you not have waited on the

stairs, like a decent man's son, till I came to you? Did you expect to find a crow's nest, that you would needs climb in this fashion? By the holy St. Bride, when I felt your head, as I opened the wicket, my heart jumped into my mouth!"

"The devil take your heart, and your hand to boot!" said Andrew. "Have I been climbing here, by the hour, for your sake, to be throttled by you at last? Do I feel like an elf, or a corpse-candle? By the mass! I fear you have gotten into ill company in this house; and a man they say is known by his comrades."

"It is all the effect of unlawful curiosity," replied David; "but I forgive you for the terror you have caused me; and the rather that the feeling was unreasonable in itself, seeing that he for whom I took you is at this moment playing his gambols among the toads and serpents of the swamp. Come, since you are farther ben than you were invited, you may as well rest where you are. There are few likely to stumble upon our counsels here!"

"I shall remain, David, since you desire it; but

as for rest upon these upright bars, it is out of the question. Had you provided but a nail projecting crossways for the accommodation of your guests, little fault need be found; but as it is, let me tell you, it is no mighty matter of a parlour."

Here the two students held high converse for a considerable time. Andrew was informed by his friend, that no change whatever had taken place in the mode of communication between the general storehouses of the castle and the tower; and that David was able himself to descend into the former whenever he had a mind. He was, in fact, at more liberty than he could account for; except on the supposition that his days were already numbered, and that it was thought impossible for him, in the interim, to make any dangerous use of such facts as might come to his knowledge.

"If your days are numbered in the castle," said Andrew, "why, in the name of God, did you not betake yourself to the outside of the walls, when your liberty was offered to you? One would think, that you really are bewitched; and although such a thing might well take place with Nigel, Bauldy,

or even myself, I actually marvel at its occurring to you !”

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“Did you not hear me explain, that, consistently with honour, I cannot leave the young woman, whom I solemnly engaged to protect, in the hands of her enemies ?”

“There is no dishonour in your abandoning a post where you can be of no use. Nay, it is folly, and something worse, to shut yourself up to die with her, instead of bestirring yourself without the walls in obtaining her release. I can tell you there is warm work forward; and it would be more both for your temporal and eternal advantage to come out, and take a hand in the game, than to stay here consorting with imps and goblins, and brewing drugs to raise the devil.”

“I am not wholly unacquainted, Andrew, with what is going forward out of doors, and I desired to see you here for the express purpose of taking a hand in it, and an important one too. Where is Douglas ?”

“At Nantes.”

“ Know you aught of Montrichard and Beauchamp ?”

“ They are at Nantes also ; and have borrowed money from Caleb the Jew, to fit them out for action against the Lord de Retz.”

“ Then let Archibald join them ; and with this secret, fit to buy the swords of their whole force—that the money paid by the Duke for his last great purchase comes hither to-morrow afternoon by the river, with such slender and disguised escort as may awaken no suspicion of its value. If they sieze this fund, it will cripple the baron at the outset. He will be compelled to borrow from Caleb ; and Hagar, therefore, will be delivered up intact, and I shall be set free. Tell these things to Douglas ; and add, that Prelati resides secretly in this house, and that his mistress is in worse peril than he dreams of.”

“ By my faith, David, it is not so unreasonable an enchantment that has beset you after all ! But why, if it was really a dagger which you were grasping in your shawl—why did you not embrace

the opportunity of escape which presented itself to-day?"

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"Because the slaughter of the baron would not have opened the gates to us, since we had not the word. That deed I would only have attempted in the event of their putting hands upon Hagar, to remove her to the tower by force. If successful, we must have taken our chance for the rest."

"Vastly well. I see you are so much at your ease, that perhaps it will be impertinent to intermeddle further. Yet in case circumstances should occur more instant than the risk of such trifles as assassination, here is a paper sent to you by Caleb the Jew, by means of which he thinks you may escape from the castle. And now, David, while I have blood enough left in my arms to get me well down to the surface of the earth, I shall bid you farewell."

"Tell me first, how is Nigel?"

"He is as long as ever, poor fellow, but that is the only evil report I have to make of him."

"And Bauldy?"

"He is making cogent love to Felicité, the

daughter of Jaquin Houpelande; and he, you know, although an echevin of Paris, is nothing more than a tailor. What think you of it, David? A tailor's daughter!

"Is she a woman?"

"A woman! Aye, marry is she; and as bonny a lass as ever looked at her own fair face in the waters of the Seine! A woman, every inch of her, I'll warrant."

"Then is she a match for a man. Greet me to them all, Andrew; and if I should never see them more, let this shake of the hand be the poor scholar's legacy. Say to the Jew, in case of the worst, that I forgive him my blood; and that I died to save his daughter. Farewell!"

Andrew wrung his comrade's hand, but could not trust his voice to reply to his adieu. He suffered himself to slip down to the landing-place, and then slowly descended the stair, and betook himself unobserved to the apartment assigned to him.

David, in the meantime, when he had heard the last footfall of his friend, and observed the faint light at the bottom of the staircase darken for a

moment, and then gleam as before, retreated, with a heavy heart, to his own roosting-place. The appearance of Andrew upon the scene, associated as it was with hope—freedom—companionship—and the thousand visions of daring and presumptuous youth, had acted as a stimulant upon his mind; and now that this factitious influence had been withdrawn, a corresponding reaction took place. He was once more left to his own unassisted energies. Before to-morrow's sun was fairly risen, there would not be a human being in the castle in the remotest degree interested in his fate—save one.

In the statement of the circumstances in which he was placed, made to Andrew, he had touched only upon the few specks of hope in the picture, leaving the rest in shadow. Even if the money were seized by the malcontents, however, it was hardly likely that Hagar would be delivered up to her father. Some juggle would, in all probability, be resorted to; and Caleb would be defrauded at once of his money and his daughter. There seemed to be an importance attached to her detention, to

which the purposes of mere voluptuousness on the part of the baron were subordinate. She was first, it appeared from all he had been able to gather, to be tempted to the performance of some dreadful and impious deed; and, if her seducers failed in this, she was then to be given up to the criminal desires of Gilles de Retz. In the former alternative she was to be the substitute of Pauline de Laval; and from the course of instruction he had seen adopted with that young lady, David could not but come to the conclusion, that the required service was one which could only be performed by a mind perverted from its integrity, or maddened into feverish delusion by drugs.

The time, however, when all would be certainty on this point, he had ascertained, was now near at hand. The catastrophe of the drama was approaching; the arrangements were nearly ready; and little more was wanting than the drawing up of the scene. The arrival of the money was to be the signal—or its loss.

On the morning of this day, he had determined to inform Gilles de Retz that Prelati was alive, and

even to explain, so far as was in his power, the delusions practised upon his daughter. The circumstances, however, which had subsequently occurred rendered this out of the question. The baron was now his enemy; and any attempted revelations of the kind would only accelerate his fate, by withdrawing from him the support of Orosmandel. That it was the philosopher, and he alone, who had hitherto kept him suspended over the abyss, he knew—as well as he knew that it was his intention to allow him to drop, as soon as his services could be dispensed with. David even knew, by observations connected with his employment, that the moment of his fate was that of the catastrophe in which either Hagar or Pauline was to be involved. The day of the arrival of the money, therefore, or of the news of its loss, was, in all probability, to be the last of his life.

These reflections kept him awake so long, that, after he did fall into a heavy and feverish sleep, he was only awakened by the beams of the sun glancing on his eye-lids. He started up, and proceeded to examine the paper sent to him by the Jew; a

purpose for which he had not thought it worth while to strike a light before going to bed.

The paper contained a minute plan of the swamp; by the assistance of which, it appeared, that any one light of foot, and steady of brain, might easily perform the exploit which had made Prelati seem, in the scholar's eyes, a supernatural being! This was, indeed, a document of importance; and for a moment David's heart beat high at the idea of escape. The selfish feeling, however, was soon repressed, and he considered the subject in a different light. If one man could traverse the dreadful path, why not a hundred? Could the Jew, possessing knowledge like this, have been seriously anxious to favour the designs of Montrichard? or was his merely a purpose of private vengeance, to be completed by others only, in case of his own failure? The latter must, no doubt have been the case; and Caleb, in putting into David's hands the plan of the swamp, not only provided for the escape of the victim he had half bound to the altar, but added to the chance of success in any attack upon the castle, which might

be made, after his own design had been either accomplished or frustrated.

In the hands of Douglas, a document like this would be invaluable. How to get it there was the question, for Andrew had left La Verrière before sun-rise. The student was almost frantic. This was the only probable chance that had as yet presented itself; and it was to elude his grasp, because he had not taken the trouble of lighting a lamp before going to bed!

On examining the paper farther, he found that the ramparts were descended by means of irregular steps, broken, as if by accident, in the wall. But there was also another intimation given with a view to escape, which, in the student's eyes, possessed a still higher interest. Near the middle of the plan of the heavens—which existed, it seemed, during Caleb's residence—there was a brazen hand, which, on being bent downwards, opened an avenue to the private apartments below. This accounted for the well-managed appearance of Prelati's spectre! By this means, in the case of Hagar being finally conveyed into the tower, David would obtain access to her prison, in

time to prevent the last violence, or to die with her !

As for the obstacle which had so successfully opposed his previous attempt to enter within the enchanted circle, he had discovered its nature during the instantaneous illumination of the apartment, on the night of Pauline's lesson. It was nothing more than a thin sharp-edged bar of iron, which ran breast-high from wall to wall. Two slender rods of the same description, which supported it in the middle of the floor, formed, no doubt, the door-way ; and, even if he could not find the secret of opening the bar at the top, he would have nothing more to do than to stoop his body, in order to pass under it.

The brazen hand seemed, to David, to be of still more importance than the guide through the swamp ; and he continued, with renewed zeal, the plan he had adopted from his first arrival, of prowling about after dark, and entering secretly the Magician's study, on every opportunity which presented itself. On the night of this very day, an adventure occurred to him, while thus engaged, of consequence enough to be treated of in a new chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

DAVID was once more ordered to usher into the study a visiter from the private apartments of Gilles de Retz. He was then to shut the door, and betake himself to his own dormitory for the night.

On the present occasion, the countenance of Orosmandel was more touched with care, amounting almost to anxiety, than he had ever seen it. In general, his expression, though mild and indulgent, was too little associated with the things common to humanity to excite a warmer feeling than reverence; or, at least, than that species of admiration which we bestow upon the idea of a superior being, invested with form and substance

by the enchantments of genius. To-night, however, there was a human light in the eye, and a mobility of the lip, which spoke of meditations more intelligible, though, perhaps, not less pure, than those of which the planets and the demons were the objects; and David, as he looked upon him, felt strongly the recurrence of an idea which had often stolen round his heart, that he had done this remarkable man injustice.

On such occasions, the scholar in vain inquired what could be the plans, for the furtherance of which so gifted a being was induced to hide his actions behind a cloud; and even to stoop to what appeared to be contrivance and duplicity, for the purpose of acquiring that ascendancy over the minds of other men, to which he would have been entitled by the unassisted strength of his own intellect. All this was hidden in impenetrable mystery, and the fact alone remained as evident as it was astonishing—that an individual, endowed with every noble quality of mind and heart, was the friend of the atrocious Prelati, and the ally of the voluptuous and abandoned Gilles de Retz.

The ideas which passed through the student's mind could hardly have been unobserved by the bright and penetrating eye which now rested upon his. The old man's expression softened as he looked; and a gentle smile broke gradually over his face, as if from some fountain of light within.

"I observe, by thy conduct to-day," said he, "that thou hast treasured my advice; and I forgive thy distrust for the sake of thy fidelity. Continue to avoid and suspect him of whom I warned thee. Believe not evil of me, even if thine own eyes should be the accusing witness; and rest assured, that the hour is at hand, when the light of heaven shall stream upon a path which appeareth to thee to lead through clouds and darkness!" David bowed himself humbly before the Magician; and walked away towards the private apartments, resolving to think for the future, that Orosmandel was an angel in disguise.

This time he had not been furnished with a lamp, and he did not ask for one; but by the faint light of the private corridor, when he opened the door, he observed that it was again Pauline who

sought admission. It was impossible for her, however, to recognise him, as he stood shrouded in the darkness of the tower; and she suffered him, after she had shut the door, to lead her on by the hand, without a word of communication passing between them on the subject of the Jewess for whom he had besought her protection. David did not advert to the cause of this seemingly cruel neglect; and he walked on in sullen mortification.

“And this is the goddess of Archibald!” said he, within himself. “Alas! is it not truly said, that love is blind? *Quisquis amat ranam, ranam putat esse Dianam!*” It was, perhaps, owing to the irritation he felt, that he abandoned his just-formed intention of obeying the philosopher’s commands, and retiring for the night. Nothing new, indeed, had occurred to re-awaken his suspicions; but ill-humour is always an infidel. Having ushered Pauline into the study, and seeing her advance several paces, he shut the door, and glided into his old retreat between the mummy and the skeleton.

Orosmandel was, as usual (when he received company), standing near the table with his face

towards the picture; and several minutes elapsed before he turned round. He at length did so, and glided noiselessly forth from the circle.

"My daughter," said he, "I hardly thought that so much courage could exist within so frail and delicate a frame. Thou hast already sought again, of thy own purpose, a place which must be associated in thy imagination with every thing most ghastly and unnatural. I lament, however, that thou hast chosen the midnight hour for thy visit; because it is my interest, in order to prepare thee for that which must soon arrive, to tame down thy youthful fancy, and leave thy reason free."

"Sir," replied Pauline, "I had no choice. I do confess that this place is abhorrent to my thoughts, but were it hell itself, I would still enter, prompted and supported as I am by those feelings which are the good angels of the soul."

"I know thy purpose," said the philosopher, coldly; "and as it at least belongs to the highest of the instincts of our human nature, it is entitled to some respect. A treasure, bought with the fairest, and almost the last, portion of thy father's estates, and

sent to him this afternoon by the Duke, has been intercepted by brigands. Thou desirest, perhaps, to know whether its recapture is possible? Thou wouldest inquire into the fitting moment for the attempt? Thou wouldest ask of me to examine, and calculate, the position of the stars, and so determine whether the celestial influences are favourable or otherwise? But thou art in error. The day, indeed, has been, when I looked into the book of nature, and opened the heavens before me like a map. But it is many years—many, many cycles since I closed the page in discontent. Mine is a far higher pursuit than astrological science; and thy father must look beyond the planets for salvation from the destruction which threatens him.”

“It is even on that point I would speak. The destruction which threatens my father, if I may judge by his manner, is instant, and terrible; and from some words which escaped him in the agony of his mind, connected with your own communications to myself, I am led to infer, that it is in my power to save him. The means, if I interpret rightly your broken hints, and the wincings of his

paternal love, are painful, awful, horrible—startling, not only to the weakness of woman, but to human nature. So far am I prepared. By the ghostly vision which stood before me on that spot, I can well guess what sights and sounds I may encounter; and, by the terrors which followed, I already know that the spirit of man lives, and dares, and dreads, and suffers, independently of the body; and thus have I learnt to look down with contempt on the feelings of mere mortal nature. Speak then! Tell me what is to be done! On the first trial I was found wanting, because unsupported by any thing higher than curiosity. The case is different now. I dare you to show me that from which I shall shrink, or command me to do that which I shall not venture!” Pauline approached close to Orosmandel as she spoke, fixing upon him a look which seemed to the scholar to emit sparks of light, even in the midst of the darkness which surrounded her; and, as she drew herself up to her full height, assuming a wild and picturesque majesty which gave the idea of one

inspired, David's heart smote him for the injustice he had done her.

"There spoke the spirit of Laval!" cried the philosopher, with exultation. "I hold as nothing the labours of years, since they have conducted me to thee—for thou art alone among the daughters of the human race! It is neither the stars nor the destinies which have brought round the period of thy probation, but the energies of thy own mind. To-morrow, at that moment when we say, 'to-night,' and ere the sound hath left our lips, it is morning—thou shalt know all—dare all—do all. Thy father shall be saved, and by thee; and a new course of existence entered upon by you both, better, higher, and nobler than as yet thy soul can conceive."

"Be it so," said Pauline, "I will now to the chapel, and spend the intervening time in fasting and prayer."

"There is nothing connected with religion," said Orosmandel, hastily, "in that which cometh. If there were, thou and I could not be engaged in the

same work. Religion is as far beyond even the sublimest science as God is beyond the spirits he hath created; and, although men must still believe as they are taught, yet it befitteth not the beings of earth to imagine that they know surely that of which the demons are ignorant. The work to be done toucheth not the welfare of the soul as regardeth its Maker, but as regardeth itself; and the powers to be invoked must be its own courage and energy. Fasting is doubly injurious, inasmuch as it not only weakeneth the mortal part, which is the vehicle of mind, but, through that weakness, disordereth the fancy."

"Alas, my father!" exclaimed Pauline, with a troubled sigh. "Strange and terrible must be that deed, in which the protection and assistance of the holy saints avail nothing! There are secrets, you seem to say, hidden even from the Demons! To me this is extraordinary doctrine; for I imagined that in that other world they inhabit, all was as clear as daylight to us."

"Thou believest as thou wert taught; and thou wert taught erroneously even from the books of thy

own faith. The ignorance, in some respects, of the Angels—who, according to the Christians, are of the highest order of Demons—is asserted by the apostle Matthew; and Job declareth, that the Almighty taxeth them with folly. All knowledge is relative. What we know is as nothing compared to the knowledge of the meanest of the Demons; and the knowledge of the greatest is less than nothing compared to that of God, their Creator.”

“There are ranks, then, among the Demons as among us?

“There is a scale extending throughout all creation. Man is the highest of that series of beings, the vehicle of whose spirit is the visible and tangible substance we call matter. The series beyond are of another frame, so highly etherealized by spirit, that, except by their own consent, they are invisible to mortal eyes. Among them, the same gradations of excellence and power prevail as among the things formed of clay. This was known to the Hebrew sages; and is mentioned, among others, by the prophet Daniel, and by all the apostles.”

“And these beings—so high, so dreadful—if

created like us, have they also our portion in death? Are their bodies of light dissipated in the waste of space? and their glorious spirits shed abroad over creation, like a perfume that loses itself in the air?"

"Such, reasoning by analogy, may be pronounced to be their fate; but of this we can know nothing with certainty. The idea of any thing without end cannot be grasped by the human intellect; and the immortality accorded to the Demons is probably nothing more than a space of time beyond our conception. This we know, however, that the same who existed in the earliest times of tradition exist at this day—for their names, differing with the languages in which they are pronounced, cannot conceal their identity. Long before the Babylonian captivity, the Hebrews had beheld those terrible shapes which alighted on the hill-tops of Chaldea. These are few, however; they are even as a handful compared to the myriads alluded to by Daniel, and by the apostles; and it therefore seemeth to me, that there are some among the race, *as among us*, who, by superior daring and

knowledge, have made themselves exceptions to that rule of creation, which is vulgarly called Destiny." The philosopher drew himself up majestically, while he spoke; and Pauline looked with awe at the wild and proud expression of his eyes, on which the light of the lamp at the moment fell—appearing to receive illumination, rather than bestow it.

"What a pity," thought David, as he gazed with admiration upon the old man, "that the youth of the body cannot be made immortal as well as that of the soul! But this I fancy is impossible; for even Aurora could not accomplish it in the case of her sweetheart Tithonus."

"Go now, my daughter," said Orosmandel, taking her hand, and leading her away, "Go in peace, satisfied that thy request is granted. Strengthen thy mind against itself—against the habits of thought and affection which have been instilled into it from the cradle. Remember that the salvation of thy father dependeth upon thee; but keep still more before thine eye that glorious destiny thou art about to achieve—the accomplishment of

which would be cheaply bought by the immolation of one half of the human race !” Pauline started, and turned round at the singular conclusion of this address ; she gazed in the old man’s face, and her lips opened to speak, but the words seemed to freeze in her mouth ; and pressing the hand which was at liberty upon her bosom, she walked slowly away.

When they had left the study, Orosmandel conducting the Damsel in the dark, David glided from his retreat. A thought struck him, as he crossed the floor, that it might be possible, in the few moments at his disposal, to ascertain the important fact, as to the existence of the brazen hand, which opened the avenue to the apartments below. He hesitated for a second ; and that second rendered his escape impracticable. A loud voice, and a quick tread, were heard approaching along the corridor ; and he had hardly time to regain his station behind the curtain, when Gilles de Retz strode into the room.

“ It must be done !” he said, forcing the words between his clenched teeth. “ And why not now

as well as again? Earth, heaven, and hell combine to drive me on; and what avails my resistance? Orosmandel"—for the philosopher re-entered the study at the moment—"you wonder, perhaps, at my agitation, and at the abruptness with which I have broken upon your privacy?—but no, you wonder at nothing. You are aware of the seizure of the money. My last resource is gone. The means by which I thought to keep my destiny at bay, or at least, to bring it round in the form and manner I chose, exist no longer. Do you know this?"

"I do. It is a trifle."

"A trifle? you will drive me mad! Look at me. I am Gilles de Retz—he who was not so much the child as the master of fortune—whose possessions were so numerous that his memory could not retain their names—whose eye brightened or withered that on which it fell—the sound of whose tread was waited for like the foot-falls of an approaching deity! What am I now?"

"An immortal spirit," replied the philosopher, "whose mortal form hath been stripped of the

paraphernalia with which it was invested by the accident of birth. For what wert thou deified, proud thing of dust? For thy lands?—for thy money? Behold, they are gone, and thou art a man! Is this all? What wouldest thou?” Gilles de Retz did not reply for some moments; but David could see that his whole frame was convulsed. The mien of Orosmandel, on the contrary, was proud and lofty, and the habitual calmness of his look, just touched, and no more, by indignation.

“Cast me not off,” said the baron, at length, “for, although weak and overthrown for the moment, I am resolved! It was but time—but a little time I demanded, and all would have been well. Have I not sought like one who was determined to find? Have I not trampled, and tortured by turns? Have I not shed blood, as if it had been water? Have I not writhed under the pangs of guilt, till the moral sensibilities became callous, and I slept, like a victim amidst the torments of the wheel? There is only one point in which I can still be wounded—one nerve

which, when wrung, will make me shrink and shiver, through my whole being. Pauline!—my own daughter! my only child!—the sole link which remains for me between earth and heaven!”

“Weak indeed!” exclaimed Orosmandel, in a tone of contempt mingled with pity. “The loss of thy paltry treasure hath not only overturned thy courage, but upset the whole fabric of thy mind. Art thou indeed the vile and guilty thing thou describest? Or is this a moment of what may be said to be nothing more than physical prostration, since the blow hath been struck through the things of the body? Dost thou now writhe in that sick-bed repentance, in which the spirit, succumbing under mere pain and weakness, howleth forth the recantations which are received by bigots and idiots, with more reverence than is due even to the avowals of healthful conviction?”

“I recant not!” said the baron; “I repent not! Neither heaven nor hell shall move me from my purpose! If I had not the sensibilities of a man, where would be my merit in controlling them? where the strangeness of my destiny in surmount-

ing the fate of humanity? I have but one human feeling remaining; and, if I shrink when that is rent away, so far from blaming my weakness, you should admire the courage which submits to so fearful an infliction. I tell you, that if no other can be found, my daughter—yes, Pauline—Aye, gaze and point, and wring your hands, pale shadow! Hence! Begone! This is no place for you!” His eyes wandered, as if following some object round the room, till they rested on the fold of the curtain behind which David was concealed. “You think to affright me from my purpose!” continued he. “Away! for I am more horrible to look upon than you.”

“Thy fancy wandereth,” said Orosmandel, laying his hand upon his shoulder. “These be shadows;” and touching the lamp with his wand, it threw a dull glare round the room.

“I know it,” replied Gilles de Retz, without withdrawing his eyes; “but, for all that, is it not enough to curdle a man’s blood? Do you call me coward now? See, I look upon her without blenching. Can you not speak as well as gaze?

Sight—sound—yea, touch itself—I can bear any thing. There is my hand—count if my pulse throb quick with fear ;” and he crossed the room to the spot on which his eyes were fixed.

“What, vanished !” cried he ; “Did I not say I was the more terrible of the two? Art thou indeed gone?” and, throwing open the curtain, he paused for a moment, as if transfixed, before the skeleton, which stood dimly visible in the gloom, confronting him with outstretched arm.

“I will not retract,” said the baron, faintly. “There—there is my hand !” and, as the dead fingers closed upon his, he sunk lifeless to the ground.

David, on the baron’s approach to his lurking-place, had shrunk behind the mummy ; where he waited, with his dagger ready drawn. The head of the conscience-stricken wretch, when he fell, was only a few feet from where he stood ; but so deep was the shadow in which the scholar was hidden, that he could see all that passed, without running any risk of being observed himself. Orosmandel drew near.

“This might have been good service, Ismael,” said he, addressing the skeleton, “if circumstances had coincided better : take thou care, Eugene”—to the mummy—“that thou mark times and occasions more attentively.” These were the names of the two murdered apprentices ! The old man then stooping down, lifted up the baron, as if he had been an infant, and carried him out to the middle of the floor.

David, as the fold of the curtain closed, shutting him up once more, in utter darkness, with the ghastly remains of his two predecessors, felt his blood run cold. The details of Marie’s legend came back upon his memory, and, with the dead witnesses beside him, he could not doubt its truth. He felt that he was indeed the Third Victim ; but more than ever resolved to sell his blood dearly, and, in fact, on consideration, somewhat better reconciled to the society of his two companions, from the idea of his being destined to be their avenger, he resumed his place, between them, and applied his eye as before, to the hole of espial.

The baron was already on his feet once more,

having revived instantaneously on the application to his nostrils of a distilled spirit, so pungent that even the scholar, although at some distance, could with difficulty hold from sneezing. By the assistance of this powerful drug, he seemed to regain his recollection at once, without passing through the intermediate stage of confusion; and, after a brief, but steady glance at the place where he had fallen, he turned to the philosopher.

"I crave your pardon for the interruption," said he, in a tone, half of haughtiness, half of shame; "but, with all your immobility, you will remember, I presume, that I have not yet passed my noviciate, and that my soul has not yet been altogether rent asunder from its earthly habits and prejudices."

"Talk not of it," replied the sage calmly; "that is a trifle;" using the expression for the second time during the intercourse, and in the tone of one who held all obstacles alike in habitual scorn. "The question is," continued he, "Doth thy resolution hold?"

"Do you ask of a swimmer, who has nearly

gained the opposite shore, having left behind him a breadth of water, over which there is no return, whether he will actually cross the gulf?"

"Then the thing is to be done—when? Wilt thou linger yet a little while? Wilt thou still send forth to gather the virgins of the land, even when thou observest that the lot hath already fallen?"

"Not fallen," said the baron hastily; "or, at least, the sacrifice is not inevitable. Do you remember the Trojan prince—for you are learned in the learning of all times and countries—whose daughter, chosen by lot for destruction—"

"Pshaw! I remember that Hesione was saved, and Laomedon slain." But at present I have no time for idle tales."

"Nor I!" exclaimed Gilles de Retz, with a sudden effort. "Hagar is as firm as a rock in the obstinacy of her unbelieving race. This night I could have slain her where she stood—but not till after I had bent her, in a humble matter, to my will, and so have reduced to be the plaything of

my senses, her who might else have been the agent and companion of my soul's ambition."

"It is well. The Jewess must remain intact, till the moment when thou canst dispense with her father's wealth; and that moment dependeth upon thyself. The peasant Marie—what of her?" The baron shook his head.

"Hast thou tried her well?" demanded the old man. "Hast thou touched upon the main-spring of her heart? She is fair, and therefore vain; poor, and therefore a lover of gold; proud, and therefore ambitious of title and nobility; a woman, and therefore given to pleasure, and pomp, and sway."

"I have tried her in all these. I have wrought upon her love and her fear—her pride, vanity, avarice, and ambition. For the tithe of what I have offered her, *I* would decimate mankind!"

"Then thou art resolved?"

"It must be so—I am," replied the baron, in a hoarse whisper. "Are you sure—of—*her*?"

"Absolutely. She hath inherited from thee a portion of thy own spirit."

"Alas, poor Pauline ! Will you not try her again—to-morrow ? You may be mistaken."

"I never mistake."

"And the bond?"

"It is ready."

Orosmandel walked into the circle ; and, extending his wand towards the altar, a small blue flame issued from the point, by which a sheet of folded parchment was seen lying upon a pile of bones. It was sealed with a black seal, still larger than those with which the princes of the time confirmed their public deeds.

"Art thou ready?" demanded the Magician.

"I am. But you have repeatedly told me, that all must be completed in a single night, and it is now almost morning."

"I tell thee we have yet time; for the Damsel is prepared. Dost thou hesitate?"

"I pray you bear with me," said the baron, in a faltering voice; "she is my daughter; and I thought, even at the worst, to have had one being in the world to pray for me in heart and spirit ! I left Marie—although with faint hopes of her, I

confess—yet on the understanding that she was to consider farther of what I had said. Let her be brought here, and deliver her answer in this sepulchral gloom, and in the midst of these forms of mystery and terror. Perchance her mind may be wrought upon by fear, although it is deaf to reason.”

“The experiment will be vain,” said Orosmandel, “and at present I have no time to await the result.”

“Then I will receive her alone. Give me this one chance; and if, when it fails, I do not act as you would have me—then abandon me at once to contempt, poverty, and death!” The philosopher hesitated.

“In a few minutes,” said he, at last, “I must be far hence; and for this reason I would have refused compliance with thy desire. Here, on the uninterrupted portion of the floor, thou art safe; but if, in forgetfulness, or curiosity, or passion, thou attempt to penetrate beyond, thy life is forfeited. Away! and bring the young woman hither. Thou and I shall meet again to-morrow.” The baron, relieved

as it appeared, by the respite of a single day; and perhaps hoping that something might really occur in the interval to snatch his daughter from the horns of the altar, thanked Orosmandel humbly for the boon, and left the apartment.

The Magician maintained the same calm dignity of deportment when supposing himself to be alone as when in the presence of his protégé or victim; and David, who had expected some demonstration of private character and feelings, was more than ever confounded and amazed.

Orosmandel approached the altar; and after dipping the end of his rod into one of the vessels, struck smartly with it a portion of the circle on the floor. On the instant, a low, hissing sound was heard; and almost at one moment, a thousand small tongues of flame rose up among the bones of which it was composed. So dull was this light, that it disclosed nothing more than the forms of the things among which it played without burning them; now illumining a skull, now peeping through the eye-holes, and now thrust out of the grinning mouth. David was absorbed for an instant in the

effect of this phenomenon. When he raised his eyes, the apartment was vacant—the Magician had disappeared.

The scholar was not slow of following the example. At that moment even the brazen hand had no longer any power to excite his interest; but slow, and feeble, and well-nigh sick at heart, he glided from his retreat, and regained his own apartment.

So far the secrets of his prison-house were unveiled. The baron, not satisfied with the paction he had long ago virtually entered into with the enemy of mankind, would needs put his hand to a bond; of which bond, as it appeared, his own daughter, failing the peasant Marie, was, in some terrific, yet inconceivable manner, to be the security! And what was the part taken by Orosmandel in this strange drama, in which was blended so much of the ludicrous with the horrible? David was so confounded by all he had heard and witnessed, that he was incapable of answering the question. It seemed to him that he had been in a dream, from which he had not even yet awaked; and

he lay for some time on his bed, quaking with the feeling of indefinite terror which besets a man who is bestridden by the night-mare.

Hagar, however, was absolutely safe for twenty-four hours. This was something ; but at the end of that period would come the struggle, of which no possible termination could be foreseen, save the destruction of both. O for some messenger to carry the plan of the swamp, with one whispered hint to the ear of Douglas ! But this was out of the question. Could he not fly himself ? By means of the secret outlet at the top of the gate, the court and the ramparts were accessible to him at all times ; and, fearing no failure either of heart or limb, the success of the attempt, he persuaded himself, would be beyond a doubt. But this would be to leave Hagar—to forsake her at the very moment of her approaching trial ; and to trust to the faithless tide of circumstances for his return.

Even while abandoning this idea, however, he sprang up from his bed ; and going out by the skylight window, sought his old post on the roof of

the tower. Near the surface of the earth, the atmosphere was as calm as death; but in upper air, it seemed as if the Demons were keeping their sabbath. Black and heavy clouds hurried across the sky; and as their shadows, cast earthwards by the struggling moon, passed and repassed over the Erdre, its smooth waters now resembled a lake of molten silver, and were now buried in unfathomable gloom. Two figures were visible on the swamp, receding from the castle; but at too great a distance to be recognised by a common spectator, even as human; yet David, whose eyes were taught by practice, and sharpened by exigence, had no difficulty in discovering them to be those of Prelati and the dwarf.

He lingered for some time on the roof, his eyes fixed, as if by fascination, on those mystic wanderers of the night; but at length, when they had completely vanished from his view, he crept back to his bed, and endeavoured to compose his troubled mind to sleep. This, however, was impossible. Prelati and the dwarf still flitted like spectres before him; Hagar and Pauline, with clasped

hands, white lips, and burning eyes, were by his side ; and in the distance, Archibald, and his three comrades, stood by the brink of the impassable swamp, extending their arms towards him, and their faint voices floating mistily over the deep.

He started up between sleeping and waking, as a louder cry smote upon his ear. He thought his own name had been pronounced ; and listened, with intense impatience, for a repetition, to know whether or not he was the sport of a dream. The sound returned, however, faint yet intelligible : and he heard distinctly the word " David " uttered in the midst of a succession of shrieks. He sprang at a single bound from his bed, rushed down the ladder ; and was in the middle of the Magician's study, before one other idea had crossed his mind than that the kind hearted Marie was in danger, and had summoned him to her assistance.

The peasant girl was still struggling, though almost exhausted, in the arms of Gilles de Retz ; whose face, illumined at the moment by the ghastly lamp, exhibited the paleness, not of passion, but despair. When the scholar entered, he stared at

him, as if he had been a messenger from another world, but still retaining Marie immoveable in his gripe.

“Who art thou?” demanded he, hoarsely.

“The comrade of Ismael and Eugene,” replied David. A spasm appeared to pass across the baron’s face; his arms relaxed their hold; and Marie fell to the ground. He did not bestow a glance upon her prostrate figure, but strode towards the door; addressing a single word to the intruder as he passed, in a tone of menace mingled with exultation, and given forth with all the energy of hate.

“To-morrow night!” said he, shaking his clenched hand above his head; and the next moment he disappeared in the darkness of the corridor.

“Marie,” said David, raising her up, and speaking in a quick yet clear whisper, “are you sufficiently composed to listen to words, on which life and death depend?”

“I am My mind is strong, though my frame

is weak; and even that would soon recover, could I obtain a draught of fresh air.

“Here, then, is a plan of the swamp, describing the mode of descending the ramparts, and tracing minutely the path which leads across the abyss. Is your heart stout? Is your brain steady? Is your foot light and free?”

“Fear not for heart, brain, or foot. I am a native of the banks of the Erdre; and when a girl, I have played upon marshes where the wild duck would scarce trust himself to alight.”

“Mark me, then. When you have gained the firm land, search instantly out Sir Archibald Douglas. I must trust to your wit to find him; for I can only inform you that he is known to Caleb, the Jew, who lodges with Rabbi Solomon of Nantes. Put the plan into his hands; and tell him, that if he can turn it to fitting and soldierly account before midnight, he will save his love and his friend from destruction. Will you do this?”

“I will, if I have life and strength to do it, so help me heaven!”

“Then give me your hand:” and he led her beneath the bar of iron, and into the enchanted circle; Marie following with a firmness of step, which even at that moment excited his admiration.

“On descending to the apartments below,” said he, “I believe I can promise that you will meet with no interruption. The dumb slave will question no one descending from this place; Orosmandel must long ere now have gone forth, having announced his intention of so doing in my own hearing; and Prelati and the dwarf I know, have already crossed the swamp. To the floor below these apartments, which is on a level with the ground, you will no doubt find a descent of the usual kind; and there, in fine, a door, opening upon the ramparts, will let you forth to light and liberty. Let us now search, in this accursed gloom, for a hand of brass, on turning down which the avenue will be disclosed.”

“It is here!” said Marie, stepping forward. She turned down the hand; and in the same instant sunk through the floor, and disappeared

with the speed and silence of light. Not a cry escaped from the lips of the dauntless girl; and when, in another minute, the trap-door as noiselessly rose again, and recovered its place, David could have believed that all was a dream.

Giving up not an instant, however, to surprise, he left the study, and, darting up the ladder, soon found himself on the roof of the tower. How long he waited for the appearance of Marie it is impossible to tell. The sands of time never seemed to run so slowly; and he had almost determined to return, and inquire into her fate in person, when he saw her make her appearance upon the ramparts. The moon was then obscured for some minutes; during which the whole world was wrapped in gloom. When again the light streamed suddenly down upon the earth, the white figure of the adventuress—who was still dressed in her bridal garments—appeared far out upon the swamp, gliding among the moonbeams, like a thing as fair, and unsubstantial. Sometimes it paused, as if uncertain of the path; but anew,

darting away, flitted swiftly on, till it looked like a thin, pale vapour skimming along the surface of the morass. The moon was again eclipsed; and David saw it no more.

CHAPTER V.

ANDREW, in the meantime, had left the castle, agreeably to his intention, soon after sunrise; and it may be supposed, that, with a commission like that which he had received from David, he did not draw bridle till he reached Nantes. He went straight to the lodgings of Sir Archibald; and there found his two brother students in deep conclave with the knight.

"If this be really Andrew in the flesh," cried Nigel, "there must indeed be magic in La Verrière! Why, man, we thought you would have taken at least a week to consider of the prudence of giving yourself another day. Houperlande's oxen, in the meantime, have all gone out

to grass; Bauldy there has set himself down before Felicité, to attempt palisade, ditch, rampart, and finally curtain, in regular succession; and the knight, and his esquire—that is, I myself—were just setting about defying Prelati to the field, and so finishing the adventure out of hand.”

“It is every word of it true,” added Bauldy; “and in case of failure in the duel—which indeed was to be looked for, with a ’squire as long as a lance, but neither sharp nor polished—we were to have had war in your absence, Andrew, glorious, gallant war. Nigel and I were to serve as men-at-arms with Sir Archibald; who was to take on for a while under a certain valiant commander, whose name is Montrichard.”

“What is the news?” demanded the knight, impatiently. “Did you get private speech of David? Have you brought us a plan of the castle in your memory? Or were you pitched over the ramparts the moment you got in, as one Beauchamp, a strolling Englishman, told us would be your fate?” Andrew looked sedately at the speakers, one by one, as they addressed him, and

then replied to them seriatim, beginning with the last.

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“Sir Archibald of the Braes,” said he, “I did get private speech of David; and, by the same token, a most uncomfortable parlour he has yonder, for any two Christian men to commune in. I will not precisely undertake to say how many miles it may be above the surface of the earth; but, certes, there is no crow in all the Borders of Scotland who could not offer better accommodation to a friend. The plan of the castle of La Verrière is this: impassable ditches, unapproachable ramparts, impregnable walls; with a gate defended by two culverines, each four times as long as Nigel, and wide enough in the mouth to swallow us all three. I was *not* pitched over the ramparts; but if the lord de Retz had been just a trifle more fractious, David and I should have been under the necessity of pitching ourselves, after slaughtering him in his own den.”

“By the mass!” cried Nigel, “there would have been some sense in that.”

“As for you,” said Andrew, turning to him, “you are unfit to be an esquire, as Bauldy has

justly observed, by reason of your unconscionable length. You are to conduct Jacquin Houpelande's waggon to La Verrière to-morrow; and I myself will remain with the knight."

"Heyday!"

"You, Bauldy, are to give up the idea of being a man-at-arms. You are to continue the siege of Felicité, all the time that Nigel is conducting you to La Verrière. I assure you I took David's counsel touching that matter, with no small apprehension on my mind; for you know he was always a stickler for propriety. I reminded him that Jacquin Houpelande was a tailor."

"And an echevin of the city!" added Bauldy, hastily.

"True: but it was no redeeming circumstance of rank that weighed with him. It was all on account of Felicité herself."

"God bless him!" cried Bauldy, breaking into a glow of delight. "He never saw her three times in his life, and yet—— Well, it is wonderful, the sense, the understanding, the gump-tion possessed by that daddie David! But what

did he say, man? what were the qualities he more particularly distinguished?"

"Tut!—we have no time for that now. He said, that though a tailor's daughter, she was still a match for you, because she was a——"

"Well?"

"A woman. And now, Sir Archibald."

"Aye, now comes my turn. May I crave to know what it is David's pleasure that I am to do, and what he wills that I must leave undone? Perhaps, since I am deprived of my esquire, I ought to consider myself forbidden to challenge Prelati at all?"

"Undoubtedly you ought. On this point, you are not only entreated, but commanded to forbear; and, in case of disobedience——"

"Sir!"

"Don't interrupt me, or I shall never remember the message. In case of disobedience, I say, you shall know, to your cost, what it is to be hated, as well as to be loved——"

"Holy St. Bride!"

"By a woman."

“What! This message was not from David?”

“No. I am just coming to his. You are by no means to take on with Montrichard, or any body else. You are to hire *them*, if they will accept of service; or, at least, you are to be the leader of the enterprize, assisted by me, in the character of esquire, or henchman, or any thing you please. The treasure, you must know, on which the enemy mainly depend, is to be sent to them in the dusk of this evening, by the river. It will probably be contained, for the purpose of exciting no suspicion of its value, in a market-boat, followed by two or three others, like a convoy of peasants returning homewards from the city. They must of course be met with by an equal fleet, chancing, at that moment, to come down the Erdre; of which you, Sir Archibald, shall be admiral. It order that your pennon may not be unattended, Bauldy and Nigel, if sufficiently well disguised to prevent them from being known afterwards, may be with us for an evening’s amusement; but they must take care, if not killed, to return unsuspected into the city, as they set out for La Verrière, with Jacquin Houpe-

lande and his cortege, in the morning. And now, my friends, set about mustering your force, without loss of time. I shall return before you are ready to set out; but, just at this moment, I have other affairs before me. All I have to add, by way of news, is, that David is in hourly and imminent danger of his life; and to you personally, Sir Archibald, that Prelati resides privately in the house, and that Pauline de Laval is in worse peril than you ever dreamt of. Further details as we row up the river. Meantime, adieu!"

Andrew then went to the house of the Rabbi Solomon, and was admitted, as before, to the presence of Caleb. The Jew was in the same room, sitting in the same attitude, at the same table; and so completely unchanged was the whole scene, since his last visit, that the emissary could have believed, that all which had taken place in the interval was only a gambol of the imagination, performed in the winking of the eye.

"Awake, Caleb," said he, "for I have good news!" The old man started.

“Good news!” repeated he. “Then she was not overcome? She died by her own hand; and gave forth her spirit to Jehovah, as pure as she received it!” His countenance was lighted up, while he spoke, by a fierce and terrible joy; and his eyes were fixed upon the calm face of the messenger, as if they would have pierced through the cold and immoveable surface.

“Your daughter,” replied Andrew, “is alive and well, both in body and mind. She spoke as bravely to them as if she wore a steel doublet instead of a silken vest; but she indeed looked like one who would not hesitate, if occasion called, to give up her life for her honour—or, to speak the truth, for any idle whim which the imagination of woman consecrates into something divine.”

“Is she in the tower? Answer me that, young man!”

“Not as yet.”

“When goeth she thither?”

“I fear me, to-morrow night.”

“It is well, it is well. It is indeed good news.

Thou shalt now have much gold for thy tidings ; and that will satisfy thy Christian heart better than thanks and blessings."

"Gold is a blessing of itself, Jew ; and truly one wherewith the Lord hath not blessed Andrew very abundantly. You must know, that we of the true faith think it as much our bounden duty to spoil the Jew of his gold, as your ancestors did to cheat the Egyptian wives out of their bits of trinkets, and bravery, and pots, and pans, and so forth, when they went up yonder from Ramases to Succoth. Alas !" continued Andrew, accepting a well-filled purse, and fastening it under his girdle, "to think of the sin of covetousness ! I doubt whether that same itching after the gold, and silver, and utensils, and old raiment of other people, is at this blessed day clean out of the fingers of the children of Israel."

"The young man David," said the Jew impatiently, "what didst thou learn from him?"

"Let me first have done with your daughter. She wishes you to know that she is a captive ; and that you must ransom her—instantly if at all—with

as many shekels of gold as you may think her life worth." www.libtool.com.cn

"Her life, young man, is worth not a tithe of one of these coins!"

"But if honourably delivered?"

"Not with gold—that cannot be with gold. No more of it. What sayest thou of David?"

"The localities of the castle are unchanged; he has refused to fly alone; and, in case of the worst befalling him, you are to know that he forgives you his blood, and that he died to save your daughter."

"Oh, that he were an Hebrew!" cried the Jew, smiting his hands together, "oh, that he were of the house of Israel, and of the blood of the sacred people! Alas! my senses again wander; for there is no hope but of revenge. When goeth the waggon of Houpelande to La Verrière? Answer me that."

"To-morrow morning."

"Good, good. I would speak with thy comrade who is called Bauldy; and in private, where the ear of Houpelande may catch no echo of our

voices. Wilt thou send him hither? Away, good Andrew, and do my bidding. Go at once."

"I will; for you have somewhat overpaid me for the message, and I am scarce of change. Look, however, that you stir not out, for he will be here soon, as in the evening we take an airing upon the river."

And the evening at last came. It was a soft and mysterious twilight, the tranquillity of which was undisturbed by a murmur among the trees, or a ripple on the water. The wind was not yet born, the existence of which a few hours later, was manifest to David in the rack hurrying across the sky, while all was peace below. The heavens were closely packed with those wave-shaped clouds which sometimes give them the appearance of a sea; and, although the moon was risen, it seemed as if her beams had not as yet acquired strength enough to break their prison. The scene to which we would transport the reader has been thus described, on another occasion, by the same humble pen of which he now follows the traces.

"The Erdre resembles more a basin of the

Loire, than a river falling into it. Its motion is invisible, its current imperceptible. You glide in a canoe-like boat over its waters as calm as death, shut in by melancholy banks, that look like the sides of a grave. The very mariners are silent, and their oars dip into the heavy element, as if they feared to disturb it. You fancy yourself, at length, on some lake, over which you are transported by the mute ministers of enchantment, and look forward with curiosity to the end of your voyage, which seems to be near at hand. If in the meantime, a trout should leap out of the water to look at you, as you pass, you are carried instantly to the Arabian Nights, and the Ebony Islands, and remember, with a pleasing shiver, the lady stepping out of the kitchen wall, and tapping the fish in the frying-pan, with her magic rod, as she inquired, 'Fish, fish, are you in your duty?' to which the fish answered and said, with equal mystery, 'If you are in your duty, we are in our duty; if you reckon, we reckon; if you fly, we overcome, and are content.'

"On reaching the end of the lake, however,

and near the bank, just as you are preparing to disembark, the canoe shoots round the corner, and you find another lake before you, of nearly the same form, and precisely the same character. You are reminded of the changes of a pantomime, though this one is much more cleverly performed. Before it took place, the river around you looked like a plain of black marble, polished like a mirror, in which the stirless trees on the banks were reflected with magical precision. But at the instant of the shifting of the scene, you are smitten—and the occurrence is not a rare one—by a blast of wind, which stops your breath, and almost upsets your frail bark. A sail would have been fatal. The blast whitens the black river where it passes, and some faint surges rise, as if unwillingly. But, in another moment, the foam disappears; the waters relapse into their enchanted slumber; and all is calm, and black, and mute, and lifeless as before.”

On the present evening, in the very midst of the calm twilight, when it would have been impossible to say whether the hour partook more

of night or day, two boats were drifting down between those mysterious banks. They were filled with men dressed in the slouching hats, and large holiday cloaks of peasants. The hour was late for such persons as they seemed, to be sailing towards the city; but they appeared to have no desire to abridge their voyage, using neither oar nor paddle, but permitting their rude vessels to glide sullenly along, at the almost imperceptible pace of the current.

On arriving at the embouchure of the little river Cens, the navigable part of the stream became more confined; the confluence of the two waters taking place in a bay, the surface of which was so completely covered with aquatic plants, as to resemble a marsh. On the opposite side, there was a projection of the land, corresponding, in some measure, to the concavity of the bay; only sharper, and in the form of a low promontory. As the boats approached this place, the current drifted them so close to the shallow part of the river, that one of the passengers, afraid of getting aground, caught hold of the steersman by the arm.

"I warned you," said he, sternly, "and by St. Bride, I will keep my promise either way! If you perform your task faithfully, you shall be well rewarded; if not"—

"Silence," Sir knight! said the man—"or if you must threaten, at least speak lower. On this river, you may hear a trout leap at many hundred yards. That I know myself; but there be some who say, that words spoken where the stream enters the Loire at Nantes, are instantly heard at La Verrière, and the answer returned in the same minute."

"For all that, take care we do not ground upon the shallows. At this moment we cannot see fifty yards of the river; and, for aught I know, the company we come to meet may be on the other side of yonder rocks. I promise you, my man, I do not like your looks; and, if you are a native of these parts, as you say, it is not a little suspicious that, instead of yielding slowly to bribes or threats, you should have undertaken a service like this, as recklessly as if the object were to break the crown of a brother peasant."

“And what then?” said the pilot, “Is it because I am a peasant that I cannot have my motives like other people? Now, I’ll warrant you, if I were a knight, I might be as ugly as sin, and as close a neighbour of Gilles de Retz as Satan himself—the Lord preserve and forgive me!—without exciting your suspicions. You would say—‘Ha! he hath his enmities and revenges—he holds him at feud,’ and all would seem well. Why, do you think I am not a man as well as you? You may grind us to dust, messire, but that will not take the human nature out of us; which is a part of the very substance of our souls and bodies!”

“I have heard the like impertinences before,” said a young man slowly, who was leaning against the gunwale, as if fatigued with inaction, “and by St. George, I think they are spreading in our England! What will the country come to, if such monstrous ideas should get abroad among the great mass of the common people? If all men are alike, there can be no need for an hereditary nobility at all; but each man, having inherited his father’s fortune, should scramble for distinction as he might. There

would be a chaos for you! When England sees that day, instead of being one of the great nations of Europe, she will be nothing more than a rock in the sea, the haunt of fishermen and pirates!"

"You mistake, Sir knight," said the first speaker, "It is not the doctrine, but its application which is wrong. All men are indeed alike in their human nature, and its feelings and passions, as this fellow would seem to urge; but some are born great and noble, and some little and mean. It is the duty of the former to grant shelter and protection, and of the latter to render service and fidelity. As the clump increases to the grove, and the grove to the forest, so individuals planted by God in this reciprocal connection, if they are only true to their several duties, become at length a mighty tribe. He who sows dissension among the parts, is guilty of the dismemberment of the whole. The chief who turns his dependents against him by oppression, cuts down the roof-tree of his fathers; and the clansman who would infringe upon the just privileges of his chief, is a parricide and a cannibal, who should be hung up alive

to feed with his body as foul carrion as himself !”

“ Silence with your arguments !” cried a third passenger, “ in which, so far as Claude can see, both Scot and Englishman agree like good fellows, in the main : that a peasant is to be a peasant, and a lord a lord, to the end of time. I even now heard a sound down the river, which more resembled the dip of an oar than the leap of a trout ; and our pilot heard it too, for he pricked up his ears like a hound.”

“ If you will take my advice,” said the person referred to, “ we shall lie to, under the shade of this promontory. Two strokes of the oars will bring us out to the middle of the stream when required ; and those you expect, if they attempt to fly, will ground upon the shallows of the bay.” This counsel, being deemed judicious by the leaders of the party, was immediately acted upon. The boats were brought close to the bank, with their heads outwards. A sufficient space was between to prevent their oars from getting entangled ; and in both vessels, these were extended parallel with the water, and ready to dip simultaneously as soon as the signal should be given.

In one boat, as the reader may have perceived, the principal persons were Douglas, Beauchamp, and Montrichard; and in the other, besides some friends of the malcontent baron, there were Bauldy, and Nigel, and Andrew. The last three, who had had rarely the luck, since they left the Borders, to fall in with an adventure of the kind on so respectable a scale, were too deeply absorbed in the sport to utter a word. They sate in watchful silence, eyeing one another with a grim smile; which the good humoured Nigel, however, had occasionally some trouble to prevent from breaking, on his part, into a chuckle of boyish delight."

In the first boat, the leaders were too much accustomed to such scenes to exhibit any token of more than ordinary emotion; yet Douglas, who in spite of the resistance of Beauchamp, had assumed the direction of the enterprise, felt not a little of that anxiety which is the penalty of rule. His eye was fixed so intently upon the pilot, that the latter, who seemed to be habitually of a downcast look, could not help at length manifesting his annoyance.

“Sir knight,” said he, in a low voice, “you stare at me, as if I was a wonder; and yet you have even now acknowledged, that a peasant may have the same feelings and passions as a noble. Now, the case is this. I was born on the estate of the Lord de Retz; and I have not only paid faithfully all his dues, but also served him zealously in other matters to which I was in nowise bound. It was but the other day that I delivered, by stratagem, into his hands a woman who fled from him.”

“A woman!”

“Yes—but she was only a Jewess. She was fair, however, almost as fair as the Damsel of Laval herself, and noble looking, and kind withal: and she gave me gold, when I looked but for silver. Yet I betrayed her; to recommend myself to the lord of the land, and to save my family, who had harboured her, from persecution. Well; what do you think was my reward? Why, the very next day, they carried off by force my cousin Marie, who was brought up with me from her cradle; and she is now caged in La Verrière, the plaything of the lordly appetite of Gilles de

Retz, to be polluted, and then cast forth into the ditch.” www.libtool.com.cn

“By the mass!” cried Douglas, “I thought I had seen your face before. You are Jehan, the brother of Annette, the same who”—

“Precisely. The same who would have delivered you into the hands of assassins. This was all for the sake of Marie; for they had the art to persuade me at the castle, that she had gone off with your friend, through your seduction. Now, are you satisfied? Have I cause, or not, for throwing off my allegiance to my chief? You only wonder that I should have found the courage! Yet it is you yourself who have torn away the prestige which encompassed La Verrière. When I saw that expedition flying homewards, as if the devil was behind them; and more especially, when I saw one in the midst, who seemed to have been raised from the dead to command it—‘Ho! ho!’ said I, ‘Is it you who will trample upon your peasants, and make their women harlots?’ And so I swore to be revenged!”

“Silence, fellow!”, whispered Beauchamp, “or

your equality in human nature with the Scottish knight will hardly save your churl's blood."

"Yes, silent all!" said Montrichard. "They come! Now, be ready, my men, to send us out into the middle of the stream at two bounds." The measured dip of oars was distinctly heard.

"Beauchamp," whispered Douglas in the knight's ear, "I shall forgive your taunts, if you only show me that your sword is as sharp as your tongue!"

"Thanks for your clemency!" replied the other; and in token of the bargain, they pressed one another's hand till the splints of their gauntlets crackled.

The sound of the oars came nearer and nearer; and then some voices were heard speaking in a muffled tone, which showed that the enemy, even on approaching so near to the termination of their voyage, had by no means laid aside their caution. The next moment, two boats, close to each other almost to touching, darted round the promontory; and Douglas, raising his battle-axe above his head for a signal, the ambush sprang

upon their prey, with no other notice of their approach than the shock and crash of the collision of the vessels.

Even the treasure-carriers found no time for exclamations, but assisted by their silence the policy of the assailants. The rowers, with one hand interposed their oars to protect their heads from the blow, while, with the other, they tugged at their swords, concealed and entangled, in their peasant's cloaks. The men-at-arms, lying perdue at the bottom of the boats, raised themselves up, with smothered curses, to meet an attack, of which they knew not the nature or strength; and thus the conflict went on for some time, with hardly any of the usual sounds of battle, except the clash of swords and battle-axes.

Such was the suddenness of the assault, that the affair would have been decided almost at a blow, had the numbers of the parties been equal; but on the side of the treasure-carriers, there were three boats, well manned, while Douglas commanded only two. This, even taking into account the dis-

advantage at which men fight who are set upon unawares, kept the balance pretty nearly equal; and in a few minutes, the shouts of the Laval party, when they had recovered recollection sufficiently to know that noise was their true policy, threatened to bring assistance even from the castle.

The middle boat of the three was evidently the one which contained the money; for the other two, instead of attempting to fly, pressed in to its assistance. The fight was thus concentrated in a single spot; and the majority of the combatants, crowding round the few who were actually engaged, could only take part in the conflict by their cries and gestures.

“Sir Englishman,” said Douglas, when they had both stood back to breathe for an instant. “Will you put it to the trial of our strength and courage which has the fairest mie?”

“Agreed,” replied Beauchamp. “May I crave to know which of the red-haired daughters of Caledonia has the honour of calling you her servant?”

"The daughters of Caledonia," said Sir Archibald, "are fairer than your mother's fame; but to-day I strike for Pauline de Laval!"

"And I also, in the name of St. Michael and St. George!—as witness this blow—" and Beauchamp, forcing his way to the front, raised himself upon the gunwale, and swinging his axe round his head, let it fall, with deadly aim, upon the casque of one who was clothed in complete mail, with vizor down, and who seemed to be the chief of the adverse party. This personage, however, stooping his head adroitly at the instant, the weapon just touched the smooth steel, and glancing away, the luckless knight, borne down by the impetus of his own blow, dived headlong into the enemy's boat.

"Douglas to the rescue!" cried Sir Archibald, bounding after him like a tiger. But he was down the same instant, felled by a blow from the redoubtable leader. At this sight, a shout burst simultaneously from three voices in the second boat; and Nigel, and his comrades, hewing down all opposition, forced their way into the enemy's

vessel, crying, "A Douglas! A Douglas! St. Bride for the Bleeding Heart!"

"The heat of the battle was thus suddenly transferred to the treasure-boat; and one of the others, imagining that its principal was taken, and the affair decided, made off at full speed, pulling lustily towards La Verrière. The crew of the remaining vessel, which was now stuck immoveable among the soft, deep mud, and aquatic plants of the bay, were not so fortunate. Some, indeed, contrived to reach the nearest land by swimming; but others were slain before they could spring from the gunwale; and others, attempting to strike across the river, were borne down by the weight of their armour, and disappeared before they had gained the middle of the stream. The waters of the sluggish Erdre, in the immediate scene of the fight, were one puddle of blood; only diversified here and there by a white bubble rising to the surface, with the last breath of one gasping beneath.

The pilot, in the meanwhile, sat immoveable in the stern of the boat; which, by this time, had

been whirled into the bay, and lay wedged among its floating turfs, and matted plants, with the treasure-boat close outside in deep water. He gazed, in stupified fear, not so much at the bloody scene, as at one of its principal actors. His eyes appeared to be fixed, as if by fascination, upon him who appeared to be the leader of the escort. This individual, indeed, performed such feats of strength and valour as excited the admiration of the whole of the combatants. The sweep of his arm appeared to be resistless; and his battle-axe struck to the ground whatever it touched. But, to turn the fate of the day, was impossible even for him; his comrades were slain by his side, or taken prisoners one by one; and, retreating from beam to beam of his own boat, he was at length driven into that of the pilot.

The dread which seemed to have taken possession of the mind of Jehan, instead of diminishing as the defeat of its object became certain, acquired new force every step that the stranger was forced backwards; till at length, on seeing him retreat alone into the boat where he sat, his stare became

ghastly, his jaw collapsed, and his whole countenance ~~assumed the colour and~~ immobility of death. The capture of this formidable personage, however, was now certain ; for the distance from the bank was at least twice more than a man could overleap, and the shaking and splashing, during the struggle, of the grassy surface between, proved the nature of the gulf beneath.

“Demand quarter !” cried Douglas, following the stranger, with some of the others, into the boat. “Keep back, my friends ; it were shame to slay so brave a man !” And the generosity was ratified by his comrades, who all cried out with one voice, “Yield, Sir stranger ! We grant you life and liberty !”

The vanquished knight, after turning one glance upon the space between him and the bank, paused for a moment, waving back his pursuers, as if he intended to accept the proffered grace. But the next instant, he turned round as quick as thought, caught up the pilot, with no more effort than if he had been an infant, and threw him, like a lifeless clod, midway to the land. He then leaped upon

the gunwale, sprang upon the breast of the fated wretch, and ~~thence~~ bounded anew far enough to reach the brink. Jehan uttered neither word nor cry; although the clutch he caught of the floating surface, when he descended upon it first, showed that he was still sensible. His body, which might else have floated for some time, spurned by the foot of the stranger sunk at once; and when the convulsion occasioned by the plunge was over, the tangled weeds of the Erdre closed over it for a pall.

Douglas did not this time repeat the contemptuous reproaches he had showered after his intended assassin, when he took to flight before the unloaded culverine!

"It is he!" was all that he uttered, in a tone of wonder and deep anxiety, as he followed with his eyes the retreating form of the stranger.

"It is he!" said Nigel, who overheard him.
"There is but one in Europe!"

"It is indeed he," repeated Andrew, musingly,
"as sure as a gun!"

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER the campaign had been opened in so brilliant and decisive a manner, it was necessary for Montrichard and his party, to throw off all disguise; and messengers, therefore, were despatched the same night from Nantes, to acquaint the more powerful lords of the family of Laval with what he had done, and to summon his immediate friends and neighbours (who awaited impatiently the signal), to a common rendezvous, with what force they could muster.

The money taken was not completely divided among the captors, because it was prudent, at least in the meantime, to represent their proceedings as arising from public and disinterested motives. A

sum, however, was subtracted from the fund, and equitably apportioned, sufficient to repay all parties for their trouble; and, among the rest, our three students found themselves possessed of what appeared to them to be inexhaustible wealth. The business in which they had assisted, was indeed, in some of its details, not altogether such as could be dwelt on with pleasure by the imaginations of youths raw to the world; but this was all the better reason why they should be paid handsomely for what they had done. As they pocketed the gold, they thought that war was not so *very* horrible a trade as it seemed; and then they set their faces to further adventures, with the grave looks of men who are "getting on," and waxing in the prosperity of life.

Early in the morning, the four Scots separated into two parties; Andrew and Douglas taking the road with Montrichard, and Nigel and Bauldy setting forth with Houpelande's waggon. Before they parted, Andrew ascertained that the culverine was still properly fixed, and took great pains to teach his comrades how to point it: only cautioning

them strongly not to be guilty of the extravagance and impolicy of charging it with powder and ball. He then took Bauldy aside, out of earshot, and said to him in a low voice:—

“You have seen Caleb, the son of Benjamin?”

Bauldy nodded.

“He is a decent man that, for a Jew.”

“Is he?”

“You had doubtless some cracks with him?”

“Doubtless.”

“He is not so ill-spoken neither. I dare say he told you what he wanted?”

“If he did, it was only natural.”

“Something, I guess, that is not to be cried in open market, like a proclamation?”

“You have hit the mark.”

“Well, well, God preserve you, Bauldy! I see you can keep your tongue within your teeth, and that is a rarer accomplishment than fiddling. But, between ourselves, if David should take me to task about the Jew’s communication—supposing I meet him first, poor fellow!—what am I to say?”

“Why, this,” said Bauldy, with a grave and

mysterious look, as he put his lips close to Andrew's ear, which distended visibly to catch the secret; "Just this,—and then God bless you till we meet again—that you know nothing at all about the matter!" and so saying, the canny Scot pushed his friend away from him, and went to lift *Félicité* upon the waggon.

Bauldy felt supremely happy. The assent given by David to his love-speculation was no less welcome than surprising; for, although hardly conscious of the fact himself, he had awaited the decision of the master-scholar with more dread and anxiety than if he had been his legal guardian. But how David's whole theory of sentiment and action could have been so suddenly overturned, was a puzzling question. He had always, as Andrew said, been a "great stickler for propriety;" which meant, as touching the present subject, that he was for having every body enter into the holy estate of matrimony, like the brutes into the ark, each male and female after his kind. The lion was to mate with the lioness, the boar with the feminine pig; and the gentle blood of such a beast as Bauldy,

was by no means to intermingle with the red puddle of a ruturier animal.

But Bauldy was unacquainted with the history of David, since he had leaped the window of the Scottish college, and withdrawn for ever from the maternal shades of Academia. In great political convulsions, rank and birth are forgotten; high families are overthrown; mean ones rise up from the dregs of society; and men begin to reckon by a new scale of honour—which, however (though this is beside the question), wants nothing but antiquity to identify it with the old. In like manner, when the individual is taken suddenly away from the routine of every day existence, to find himself involved in the shock and struggle of the world—with the allegorical winds and waters of life howling round his head and hissing in his ears—it is no wonder that he should forget the nice rules which he had planned for the government of society. In such a situation, all men are his fellows; only distinguished by their greater, or less capacity to battle with the waves, or ride

out the gale. His human instincts and affections have fair play; beauty is beauty, whether on the cheek of a peasant or a queen; and the companion—if such there should happen to be—of his toils and dangers, is considered worthy of his love, not as a member of this or that gradation of rank—but simply as a woman.

As Bauldy lifted up his fair burthen, to place her on the waggon, he pressed her more warmly in his arms than he had hitherto ventured to do. Her hand was temptingly near. He put his lips, unperceived, to the cool, fresh fingers; and almost lost his balance, when he felt the young bosom, which leant upon his shoulder, throb suddenly and wildly at the touch. The poor girl trembled as he set her down; her cheek paled and flushed alternately; and her eyes, dewy and half closed, were fixed upon her feet.

“Félicité,” said Bauldy softly, “the last few days have been the happiest of my life. How has the time passed with you?” She tried to speak, but seemed unable; and, in lieu of words, a

demure smile just touched, without stirring her features, and then fled suddenly, as fearing it had said to much.

“Our journey,” continued Bauldy, “is a type of the journey of life. Oh, if I could have you for a companion, not only on this smooth road, but on the long, and rough, and dreary ways of the world! I would guard you, *Félicité*, as a young mother guards her first-born. In the green fields, you should walk by my side; near the cool and murmuring fountain, I would lay you down to rest; in the mountain paths, I would bear you in my arms; and in storm and thunder, I would wrap my plaid round your head. I am poor, *Félicité*—but what then? I am young, and strong, and I am come of a gentle line. My heart is stout; and my bold father’s sword hangs by my side. What say you? Will you with me, over valley and mountain, plain and rock, in peace and war, in storm and sunshine? Speak!” During this address, the blood rushed tumultuously to her face, suffusing neck, and cheek, and brow with the

same bright glow; her eyes glistened with tears; and her lips quivered.

“Not to rest by the fountain,” she almost sobbed; “not to oppress you with my weight; not to add to your cares, and dangers, and fatigues; but to help—and sooth—and cheer—to lighten your journey with my songs—and bring down blessings on your head with my prayers!” Bauldy looked in his young mistress’s face, through the tears that stood trembling in his bold, blue eyes; and read there, in the midst of its ingenuous pride, and virgin shame, the apology and assurance of our high-hearted Juliet—

“But trust me, gentleman, I’ll prove more true
Than they that have more cunning to be strange!”

Such was the wooing of Bauldy.

Nigel, in the meantime, who, with all his rash, daring, off-hand mode of doing business, was as clear sighted as a hawk, guessed at once what was going on; and he took especial care to keep Houpelande out of the way. The worthy echevin,

indeed, was in nowise inclined to ride in front of the waggon, where, on turning his back, he might have seen the lovers. He remembered the "fractiousness," as Andrew called it, which he had witnessed on this very road, and was well contented to keep his horse close to the wheels of the vehicle, seeming to derive an idea of protection from its very bulk.

On the present occasion, he was dressed in all the finery of his municipal office; and, being really a personable man, the tailor was completely merged in the alderman. The idea of being admitted to the presence of the Lord de Retz, in his own house—of paying him a family visit, as it were, was highly flattering to his vanity, and he assumed a corresponding dignity of demeanour. Added to this, there was the pride of wealth—the idea of accommodating one of the greatest nobles of his time; and it was no wonder that he had peremptorily declined listening to the suggestion of Bauldy, that his daughter should be left behind till their return.

The reports, indeed, respecting La Verrière

were by no means favourable ; but he had the pledge of the accredited agent of its lord, that *his* bill at least was secure. The rich cloths, besides, were already made up, and into dresses of so rare and splendid a description, that if Gilles de Retz did not have them, they might lie upon his hands for ever. As for the habitual gallantry attributed to the baron, Felicité would be, in some sort, the guest, or at least under the protection, of Mademoiselle de Laval ; and that was enough to ensure her honourable treatment at the hands of the Damsel's father.

They arrived, without adventure, at the village near La Verrière ; and, much to his surprise, Nigel found the very scene going on which had been described to him as taking place here, by Sir Archibald. The knight had explained, both to him and Bauldy, the words and motives of Jehan ; and it was, consequently, with some interest, that they proceeded to inquire into the fate of Marie, and the particulars of the new nuptials that were going forward so soon after her disappearance, and on the same ill-omened spot

The villagers were in the height of their glee; tables were spread on the green, with wine in abundance; the rude song, and ruder jest went round; and when Nigel strode, like a youthful giant, into the midst, his appearance was marked—especially by the women—with shouts of welcome.

“Sit down, Sir stranger,” cried they, “pass not by, without drinking a cup to the health of the bride and bridegroom, who are soon to be man and wife!”

“Two of them, if you will!” replied Nigel joyously; “but permit me, in the meantime, to ask a question.”

“Drink first, and question afterwards,” said the bride, presenting him with a cup, after having touched it with her lips. She was a pretty brunette, with sharp, sparkling eyes; and looked still prettier in her dress of virgin white, and coronal of flowers.

“To your health, then, I drink, my bonny May, and to his whom you have favoured with your choice—a strapping youth he is, by the same

token, and well-favoured—and I wish you a life of honey-moons, and a knave-bairn every year that there is not a lass !” This speech was received with a shout, during which Nigel emptied the cup.

“And now for the question,” said he to the blushing and smiling bride ; “although it is one that may awaken unpleasant recollections to some of you here. I would demand of you news of Marie.”

The ill-omened name had no sooner escaped his lips, than the bride, uttering a loud scream, dropped senseless upon the ground. A storm of exclamations arose from the whole group ; and all crowded round to offer their assistance, or indulge their curiosity.

“This is Marie’s cousin, Lisette,” said one of the peasants, observing the inquirer stare at them in amazement ; “and the bridegroom is Marie’s betrothed, Victoire !”

“Let the jade lie then !” cried Nigel, indignantly. “To step thus into another’s shoes, and even before her fate is fairly ascertained !”

“Alas!” replied the peasant, “there is no need to trouble ourselves about that. It were enough, if she had only passed one night within the walls of La Verrière—Yes, lady,” addressing Felicité, who had joined the group, “your cheek may well grow pale at thought—enough to render her ever after unfit to step into an honest man’s bed. Whatever may become of her, she can never be the wife of Victoire; and, as Lisette had always a hankering after the young man, who is as well-pleased to have her as Marie for a wife—why, the sooner the thing is done the better; and now we only wait for the return of Jehan, as the priest will not do his office, without the personal sanction of her brother.”

“I will have more than Jehan’s sanction!” cried Lisette, getting up from the ground in strong agitation. “I will never marry without the sanction of Marie herself—so help me the Virgin Mother!” and she burst into hysterical tears.

“Have then your wish!” cried a voice from behind. “Marry the choice of your heart, if such be Victoire, and may God bless and prosper your

union!" Marie, who had joined them unawares, in the pre-occupation of the moment, now stepped into the circle; and the two brides, dressed in their wedding-garments, stood confronting each other. The new-comer was far more beautiful than Lisette, and the dignity of intellect sat so visibly on her brow, that the rude peasants felt an unconscious awe as they looked upon her. As for the suspicion that she had received stain or tarnish, at La Verrière, it was dismissed to the winds the moment she appeared.

Marie took off her chaplet, and considered it for a moment with a grave smile.

"The flowers are withered," said she at last, "and that is a sure sign that my wedding was not to be. Thus do I break the betrothing, and set Victoire at liberty!"—and tearing the garland in pieces, she threw the fragments at the feet of Lisette.

"And now," continued she, "in token of goodwill to my cousin, who but fulfils her woman's destiny, and of forgiveness to Victoire, who was never intended by heaven as a mate for me, I

would fain see the sacred knot tied which makes them one. If this can be, however, it must be at once ; for I have pressing business before me for the rest of the day. Where is Jehan ? Has he not already signified his assent to the priest ?”

“ He did not think it worth while,” said one of the friends, “ as he intended to assist at the ceremony himself. Yesterday afternoon, however, he went down to the river-side, after a horse which had strayed, and he has not been seen or heard of since.”

“ What horse was that ?” demanded she.

“ The horse left here by the strange gentleman, with whom it was at first supposed that you, Marie, had gone off ; but who is now said to be——”

“ Hush ! Hush !” cried the others.

“ The Third Victim !” said Marie. “ That horse must have been an instrument in the hands of Heaven ; but whether of preservation or destruction I fear to inquire.”

“ Fear no longer for Jehan !” said Nigel. “ He who one day betrayed a Jewess to destruction, and the next, delivered a Christian knight into the

hands of assassins, could hardly miss his reward. Go search for him in the bay of Cens, to the left of the embouchure of the stream, and you will find his body stiff and stark, in the thick waters, with a pall over it of the obscene plants that furnish food neither for man nor beast !”

“My brother ! my brother !” shrieked Lisette ; and she tore the bridal garland from her hair, and scattered its flowers upon the ground.

“This comes of being over-hasty,” remarked Nigel to Bauldy.

“It is a just punishment,” replied the other.

“Tell me, messire, for the love of God,” said Marie, “by whose hands did Jehan perish ?”

“He had the honour of meeting death at the hands—or, I should rather say, at the feet—of the stoutest warrior in Brittany ; whose name is Prelatl.”

“Mysterious heaven ! And the knight betrayed by Jehan,” continued she eagerly, “he did not fall ?”

“No. It was he who, without recognising his face, invited the dark-looking peasant to pilot him

down the Erdre, and thus unconsciously delivered him to destruction. Know you that knight?"

"I do. Ever since day-break, I have sought Sir Archibald Douglas; and on an errand on which hang life and death."

"Then you are sent by David Armstrong! Fear not to explain yourself to us; for we are friends and comrades of both, and leagued in the same cause." Marie, after some hesitation, explained herself fully, although declining to trust the plan of the swamp out of her own hands. In vain Nigel offered to be the bearer of it himself; reminding her of her incapacity to defend herself, if attacked upon the road. She replied, that her very insignificance would be her protection, and that, wrapped, in her peasant's cloak, she would be able to penetrate, where swords and spears would oppose the progress of one like him. Yielding at length to this reasoning, they described the place of rendezvous where she would find the knight; and, bidding her God-speed, the two friends resumed their journey. As they followed the waggon, which had gone slowly on, they could see

the marriage guests separating sadly, to their several homes ; and, by and by, they observed a woman come out from one of the huts, completely wrapped up in a cloak. She waved her hand to them, as she entered the moorland behind the village ; and, for a long time, the solitary figure was occasionally visible, skirting along the low hills in the direction of the Loire.

Felicité had heard enough to alarm her both for herself and her lover ; although she had still no suspicion that he who had taken his leave so tenderly, yet so gaily, on the evening before, to meet her in the morning with a glowing cheek and a laughing eye, had been engaged in the interval in a desperate and deadly fight, which cost the life not only of Jehan, but of many better and braver men. She stated her fears so strongly to Houpe-lande, that the echevin, who doated on his daughter, regretted that he had not taken Bauldy's advice ; and at length, although groaning at the idea of depriving himself of so trusty an escort, proposed to the Scot to carry her back to Nantes.

"It is impossible," said Bauldy, firmly, but

sadly, "I cannot accompany Felicité myself; but she will ride on Nigel's horse, and he and I will conduct the oxen ourselves, that she may have the attendance and protection of the drivers." His mistress opened her eyes upon him with astonishment.

"Ay, you may stare," said her father, "but it is the way with the students; whichever place holds out the fairest promise of drawing of blood, and breaking of heads, thither they will go, in spite of all the fathers and daughters in Christendom. I know them well, Felicité; and I can say, that there are more garments torn and dabbled in one night on the hill of St. Genevieve, than in the rest of France in a twelvemonth."

"Are you resolved?" said the young lady, in a low voice, as Nigel drew her father aside.

"I am. But you must not leave me in anger. We are leagued with Douglas in a plan to deliver a comrade of ours, who is now a prisoner at La Verrière, in instant peril of his life. We have just heard, most unexpectedly, that a surprise is to be attempted this night; and surely even you, my

gentle love, would not advise your friend, who has nothing in the world to depend upon, save his courage and his sword, to skulk out of the danger?"

"Come Felicité," cried the echevin, turning round, in a flutter, determined that his daughter should be safe at all hazards, "are you ready to mount?"

"Yes, father," said she—"the waggon."

"But I say, the horse. Come, up with you; and go, Nigel, and give the men their instructions. Quick, quick; we are too near La Verrière already."

"It is thither I am going," said the young lady, "and no more need be said about it. If there is no danger there, why should I turn back?—and if there be danger, is it not fitting that your daughter should share it?"

"But there is no danger for *me*. Lord love you, I am the first man of my guild! Danger indeed! Why girl, I am an echevin of Paris!"

"And I am an echevin's daughter. No more, dear father, for I have ceased to be a child.

Ever since we set out on this journey, I have felt myself growing into a woman; and I am determined to have my way for once!" Nothing that could be said by the whole three, had the slightest effect on Felicité, and she at length resumed her seat in the waggon, which moved on as before.

The fortress, as we have already observed, was not particularly imposing in its distant aspect; and when a low black building, appearing and disappearing by turns, according to the inequalities of the road, was pointed out to the travellers as the castle of La Verrière, a weight of care seemed to be removed from the breasts of the whole party. Jacquin Houpelande remarked, that the French nobles were much more splendidly lodged than those of Brittany; although, in all probability, the Lord de Retz considered it beneath so great a man to take any care about the house wherein he condescended to reside. And yet I must say," he added between his teeth, "that it was ill thought of by the baron, to provide himself with no better a castle when he ordered my magnificent liveries!"

Felicité amused herself with asking questions about the Damsel of Laval, touching her age, her beauty, and her dress; and with conjecturing whether the brave knight who was to take the castle by surprise, looked forward to her hand as a part of the goods and chattels which would be the fruit of his victory. As for Bauldy and Nigel, they thought that their luckless comrade must be spell-bound indeed, to remain in such a place a single night longer than suited his own pleasure and convenience. "At this distance, in fact," said Nigel, "I am inclined to doubt whether yonder walls are much more difficult to descend than those of the Scottish college."

On the first view of the ramparts, however, which they found suddenly barring their way, on emerging from a wood, an instantaneous change was operated on their minds. At the sight of the enormous culverines, both the echevin and his daughter turned pale; while Bauldy and Nigel broke into exclamations of astonishment and admiration. The garrison were now closely on their guard, doubtless from their loss the evening before; and it seemed to be as difficult a matter to enter,

as they had heard it was to leave, the enchanted stronghold. The waggon and its contents were scrupulously examined; the bales were pierced through with a sword, to ascertain that they held nothing more dangerous than garments; and the faces of the whole party were subjected to severe scrutiny in the guard-house.

This last was a ceremony which the students had by no means expected; and they began to consider, in some trepidation, whether their disguises during the fight on the river had been complete enough to enable them to escape detection. To be startled at midnight by the cry of "treason!" and the clash of arms, and to find themselves in the midst of the hurry and danger of an assault, were adventures for which they were completely prepared; but to be laid hold of as spies, and hung instantly up, to gasp and choke in the face of the blessed sun, were contingencies no less new than revolting to their imaginations. No remark, however, was made on their appearance; and in a little while, waggon, oxen, servants, travellers, and all, were swallowed up by the ponderous gates; which, shutting behind them with a

crash, and a roar, made more than one of the group quake to the very centre.

The party passed on in profound silence, only interrupted by an occasional exclamation of wonder from Nigel, or by a soft whisper addressed by Bauldy to his mistress. Jacquin grew more serious, and his face more pale, as they proceeded through the intermediate fortification; but on arriving at the last gate, where he saw the two culverines on the top, one at each side, supported on men's shoulders, while another stood behind, blowing his match, and pointing the deadly instrument full at his head, he had well nigh fallen from his horse.

"Hold, for the love of God!" cried he. "I am an echevin of Paris!"

"It is but a form," said Nigel; "See, the gate opens. Pass on."

"To the bottomless pit with their forms, say I! Why they might go off—those bloody-minded culverines—before the men themselves were aware! O my God! was the like of this ever heard or seen? And I an echevin of Paris!" He passed

through this gate, bending over his horse as low as if he had been riding for a prize; and when they had entered into the court, the perspiration was seen falling, in large drops, down his pale face.

He was somewhat re-assured, however, by being invited, the moment he dismounted, into the presence of Gilles de Retz; an attention, he thought, which it was civil in the baron to pay, and honourable in himself to receive.

"You see," said he, wiping his brow, "that no time is lost. Why, in the court-yard of a lesser noble, I might have kicked my heels for hours! It must be owned, however, that I have done the handsome thing by his'lordship; and above all, that I am an echevin of Paris, and the first man in my guild!" But when it was signified, that his Scottish allies must accompany him, he could hardly account for such a clause in the politeness; till, on the young men endeavouring to excuse themselves, on pretence of having to attend to the discharge of the waggon, a file of soldiers began to move towards them, at a signal from the obliging messenger. Jacquin saw at once, that, in a place

like this, it was ridiculous to have any thoughts of his own—that the ceremonial of the court of La Verrière was as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and the Persians. He therefore followed his conductor in silence, with Felicité clinging to his arm, and Bauldy and Nigel bringing up the rear.

In the hall of audience, they found Gilles de Retz, seated at table, with Sir Roger de Briquerville, and other officers, standing unbonnetted around. The baron seemed surprised at the entrance of Felicité, but he rose up, with habitual politeness, and pointed to a seat. His eye wandered over her figure for an instant; but speedily relapsing into the stern and gloomy abstraction from which their appearance had roused him, he seemed to forget that such persons were in the room.

“My lord,” said De Briquerville, after a pause, “the prisoners are here.” The strangers started at this announcement; and Houpelande made a sudden step forward, as if about to speak.

“O,” said the baron, with a careless bend of the head, and the slightest possible approach to a smile.

"You have brought the liveries? That is well. We shall confer touching them to-morrow; but in the meantime, you will stand aside, and answer whatever questions may be demanded of you. Are these the men, De Briqueville?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Where were you last evening at sunset, fellows?"

"We are no fellows," answered Bauldy, "but Scottish gentlemen, and somewhile students of humane learning at Paris."

"Very well. Where were you at sunset?"

"Fighting pell-mell on the river!" said Nigel, suddenly. "You see it is nonsense to deny it, Bauldy."

"And after slaughtering our men unawares, and stealing our money, you come hither to add the part of spy to that of murderer and thief? We doom you to the gallows. Let them swing, De Briqueville!" and the baron rose up.

"My lord," said the officer, "I have already suggested, that the men, who are Scots, and will therefore fight for any body, if they are paid well,

might be as useful on our side as against us ; and at present, you know, we have need of recruits."

"But are we to take their fidelity for granted? Who knows any thing about them? Do you—tailor?"

"My lord," said Houpelande, "I am an echevin of Paris! I will take my oath that they are poor, innocent, God-fearing youths; and if they were taking their pleasure on the river last evening, and may be drank a bottle or two of wine, and drew a few drops of blood, or broke three or four heads—what then?—they are students of humane learning, as they have informed you, and were brought up to such things as naturally as to Greek and Latin."

"What then, indeed! By the mass, this is a most valiant tailor, and an admirable witness to boot! We shall fall upon a plan of requiting him for his testimony before he leaves La Verrière.

"They are perhaps known," said De Briquville, "to Orosmandel's assistant; who is a countryman of their own, and was also a student at the university." David was accordingly sent for, and

made his appearance before another word had been uttered in the room.

“Do you know these men?” said the baron. The eye of the witness wandered slowly round the room, examining each person, individually, from head to foot.

“I do,” he replied. “That is Jacquin Houpe-lande ; whom I scruple not to recommend to your lordship as the best fashioner of an epitagium in Paris : although, in his accounts, as I have often urged upon him, he will occasionally confound the Latin particles.”

“And the other two?”

“I doubt whether so much can be said in favour of them. They are clerks of the university, indeed ; but, alas ! it is not always piety and learning that are to be found under the cowl. They were sore fighters, I remember, and given to drink wine, when by any chance they could get at it. But, in truth, I can say little about them ; being myself, from my youth up, a lover of peace, and a hater of brawls.”

"The turn-coat villain!" groaned Houpelande, half aloud.

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"That is nothing against them," said De Briquetteville; "at least nothing that we do not know already. But can you tell us what security have we for their honour, in case of their being admitted to save their lives by entering into the service of my lord?"

"I can answer that best, if you will tell me for what crime they have forfeited their lives."

"Only murder and robbery."

"As for murder," said David, "by which you no doubt mean, in general terms, a violent death, I should think that man over bold who would undertake to guarantee, either that they should refrain from giving it, or escape receiving it. But robbery, brings us direct to the question. We Scots, you must know, valiant sir, and my honourable lord, are sometimes in the case to leave our own beloved country; either because we have not wherewithal left to live in it, or because our enemies—or, as it may happen, the laws of the realm—will not permit us to do so. Now, suppose us landed in Brittany, at our own

charges, and with our own sword by our side, come hither all the way, of express purpose to take a hand in what may be going forward—how think you we determine as to our course of action? Observe, you are all alike to us; there is not one drop of your blood in our veins; we know you not from Adam; and we have, therefore, no duties to bind us, no predilections to consult.”

“You sell your swords, of course,” said De Briqueville, “to whomsoever will hire them.”

“Of a surety we do! And then you ask, what security you can have for our honour? Why, our honour goes into the bargain with our swords; and the honour of a military adventurer is fidelity. You have said, and said truly, that we do not *give* our fidelity: we sell it. But fidelity is not a material object, like house or land, which you part with in perpetuity. The service and the hire, go on from day to day; and thus I humbly opine, that you may absolutely depend upon a soldier’s honour, so long as you pay him better than other people.”

“A most wise conclusion!” said the Lord de Retz. “Hire them, De Briqueville, since you

will have it so; for the question of their life or death is not worth the words it has cost." Bauldy and Nigel looked at each other for a moment, and then the former stepped forward.

"My lord," said he, "we humbly thank you for the honour you intend us; but till our present engagement be at an end, we cannot possibly accept of it."

"Think better of it, young men!" said De Briqueville, sternly. "You will find that this is no boy's play. You are offered instant choice between the gallows, and a fortune which half your beggarly nation might covet."

"It is clear at least," cried Nigel, with a bitter and haughty laugh, "that your nation covets the strength and valour of ours. I take all here to witness, that we die, partly for conquering in battle, against odds of three to two, which this man calls murder and robbery; but principally because we refuse to forfeit our honour, by entering into the service of the Lord de Retz!"

"De Briqueville," said the baron, in a low voice, but which was heard distinctly all round the

room, "I am in no mood for fooling. Away with them at once!"

"Let there be three of them, then," replied the officer, whose cheek was burning with shame and anger. "We owe the taunt to this other Scot; and if he dangle with the rest, Orosmandel will never miss him."

"Whatever you owe me," said David calmly, "I could excuse your paying in such a manner as that. But I really cannot comprehend your anger. You have put the courage of your prisoners to the most ample proof; and if you were desirous of engaging them before, you ought, in common reason, to be doubly more so now. You do not know our countrymen. These young men are at this moment piqued in honour. Their pride is wounded, and their very valour impeached, by the alternative you have offered them. Manage them as is the custom of our canny country. Give them a night to think of it. Fill their bellies with the rich meats and strong wines of the castle, that they may compare them with the hungry diet to which they have been accustomed; and let them walk round your

impregnable ramparts, and think the while of the brown heaths and naked hills of their own home. If by this time to-morrow, they do not crave service under your banner as a boon, without consulting Orosmandel at all on the subject, I will place my head at your disposal."

"Will you do this?" cried the Lord de Ret suddenly, while a baleful smile lighted up his countenance. "It is agreed! Not another word, De Briqueville! Away, all of you. I bid you welcome to my poor house of La Verrière; and I pray you to feast your fill!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE audience-hall not being in the private apartments of the baron, David left it by the public avenue as well as the rest. Houpelande was in no state of mind to speak to him, and Felicité, with pale cheek, and staring eyes, looked like one walking in a dream. His fellow-students, however, were broad awake. They acknowledged the wisdom of his policy as regarded them; and comprehended at once that the lives of all three, together with the property of Houpelande, and perhaps the honour of his daughter, depended upon the success of Sir Archibald. It was now well on in the day; and by midnight, at latest, their fate would be sealed for good or bad.

Even supposing, however, that Douglas secured his footing within the walls, Bauldy and Nigel could by no means understand how a vast fortress was to fall into the hands of so small a force as could cross the swamp unobserved: but David informed them that this consummation was neither necessary nor possible. Douglas knew too well the art of war not to give himself the advantage of a division, by causing a simultaneous attack to be made on the outer works of the fortress. But, even if this were left undone, the forces of Mont-richard were known to be assembling in the neighbourhood; and on this night the dwelling-house would be comparatively deserted, and almost every man capable of bearing arms posted on the fortifications nearest the expected enemy. Bauldy and Nigel themselves might open the doors to the knight, if he could not accomplish it himself by force; and once in, they might defy, at least for some hours, the whole garrison out of doors.

The house of itself was a fortress of considerable strength, defended by a thick curtain; and being niched in the angle toward the river, it commanded

the passage of the Loire. Thus if the knight's enterprise succeeded, all who chose would be able to escape in the boats; and even the property of Houpelande might find its way back to Nantes in a much shorter time than it had taken to come.

This explanation, which David did not give, till they were in the court, and out of hearing even of the walls, was so satisfactory that a slight tinge of rose-colour began to revisit the cheeks even of Felicité. Her father, however, was still gloomy and disheartened.

"I am an echevin of Paris," said he; "but when the moment of strife comes, they will mind me no more than a cast-off coat. I can fight, for that matter, as well as another; but then it must be in the day-time, and in a sober, citizen-like manner. To be cutting and slashing, in utter darkness, and with all the noises of hell in my ears—why, it would make me mad. I should thrust straight on, and embowel my own mother if she stood before me. Now, if you, David, who always know what you are about, and who mind whether it is light or dark no more than a cat—if

for old acquaintance sake you would only let me take hold of your cloak, when it comes to escaping? —What, you wont?"

"My good friend," replied the scholar, "I grieve to say that you must not depend upon me for any thing. I have another, and a far harder task before me."

"I thought so. Nobody cares for the old tailor. I don't mind to be called *sartor* now, or *vestiarius* either; and I doubt whether, even if you did lend me a catch of your new cloak, the stuff is good enough to hold. The knight, Sir Archibald—he and I have drank together as good fellows, and I have seen him eat like three counsellors. Do you think he will remember me in this pinch?"

"Unhappily, he will have the Damsel of Laval on his hands."

"Not a doubt of it; or any body else but Jacquin. It is needless to speak to you, Nigel; for you go on as if you had as many lives as inches—and these are not far from four score."

"I should be quite at your service," replied Nigel; "but I must tarry behind to speak a word in

the ear to De Briqueville—he who is so ready at tying up Christians in bunches, like haddocks to dry.”

“I could have taken my corporal oath of that ! Bauldy, you have more sense than Nigel, though not much neither. If you will save me and my property, you shall have one half for your reward.”

“And who will save your daughter?”

“Sir, my daughter is myself; and the one cannot be saved without the other. Is it agreed?”

“Agreed. For my half of the property, I shall accept of a very moderate sum of money; and for my half of the persons, I choose Felicité !”

“What is that? You ! Come, this is nonsense. We have no child’s play before us, as De Briqueville most justly said.”

“Keep your money then, since you grudge the price of my service ! Felicité has already given me her heart, for that was her own to bestow; and I ask of you, in full of all demands, nothing more than her hand. Even this, however, I shall leave to your generosity, when all is over. In the meantime, you may be assured, that if I leave

this house alive, you and she shall be with me !”

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David recommended to his two comrades, to play the part of unwilling guests for an hour or two, but to allow their ill-humour to subside gradually under the influence of good cheer. If they could even affect intoxication towards bedtime, it would be so much the better ; as in that case suspicion with regard to them would be laid asleep for the night. But when thus disposing, as it were, with their heads, they were to have their eyes and ears in their breasts, like the Blemmyes of Ethiopia, mentioned, as they no doubt remembered, by Strabo. They were to observe the geographical position of their dormitory, so as to be able to find the great door in the dark ; and, while waiting for the sounds which should call them to such course of action as their prudence and courage might suggest, they were, above all things, to spend the interval in supplications to God, through the mediation of the Virgin Mary and the blessed St. Bride.

David then bade a solemn adieu to the whole

party individually; but, on arriving at Felicité, he lingered for a moment, and raised her hand to his lips.

“My bonny May,” said he, “I leave you in good hands. Instead of the wealth and municipal distinction to which you might have looked, you have chosen a stout arm, a true heart, and a blythe blue eye. In times, and countries, like these, the election is not only honourable to your womanly affections, but to your judgment; for the youth of the city are not only dissolute but effeminate, and truly it becomes a prudent lass, who would walk in safety through this perilous world, to have a man for her companion, and not to go to and fro in the image of the nymph Hercynna, the companion of Proserpine, with a goose at her side. *Deii vertant bené!* The dearest blessings of heaven be upon you! Away now with you all. Eat, drink, and be merry; and let not the thought cast a shade upon your brow, that we five, in all human probability, shall never meet again!”

David betook himself again to his employment; but it appeared that all was now at an end. The

fire was extinguished ; the crucibles were thrown into a heap in a corner ; and what remained of the various substances, which it had been necessary to separate with so much care, was swept into one heterogeneous mass. The object of his blind, but incessant labours, was no doubt accomplished. This night was to end the noviciate of Gilles de Retz ; to fulfil the purposes, whatever they might be, of Orosmandel ; and to see at length attempted the long projected villany of Prelati. What these things were, David knew no more than the man in the moon : yet he knew, that they involved the safety of Pauline's soul, of Hagar's honour, and his own life.

As the shades of evening began to fall, his cheek may have become paler, but his heart grew firmer and firmer. He had sharpened and polished the blade of his dagger, till it resembled a huge lancet. He had girded up the loins of his soul, as for a journey on which there was no turning back ; and though somewhat confused by the mystery in which the coming catastrophe was enveloped, he had accustomed himself to look so long and so steadily

into the darkness, that his mental optics were prepared to seize the faintest glimmering of light the moment it appeared.

He had leisure enough allowed him for reflection. His appearance, even in the passage, was observed with indifference. The Lord de Retz, indeed, deigned to notice him once as he passed with a scowl of disdainful triumph; and the dwarf, as he looked up in his face, perpetrated a grin, filled with so much devilish glee, that the scholar could hardly refrain from uttering an invocation aloud. But Orosmandel, his arms folded in his cloak, his head erect, yet the eyes fixed upon the ground, glided past him like a spectre. No one asked what he did there. It seemed as if the plans, which were approaching the moment of completion, were too securely laid to have any thing to fear from him. His day was past—his apprenticeship was out; and, like the crucibles and chemical agents in the laboratory, he was laid aside till the morning, when there would be time to break all in pieces and cast them into the river.

He was, at first, greatly puzzled to account for

the escape of Marie having attracted neither suspicion nor attention of any kind; but at length, on mature reflection, he ascribed it to what must have been its true cause. Gilles de Retz, ashamed of the circumstances of his defeat, was not likely to have mentioned the subject at all, unless interrogated; and Orosmandel was far too busy with more important reflections to think of the fate of a peasant girl. If her idea crossed the mind of the philosopher at all, he must doubtless have concluded, from the silence of the baron, that his persuasions had been unsuccessful, and that he had sent Marie back to her prison-chamber, to await his leisure for seductions of another kind. For Gilles de Retz, it was enough that he had left her in the Magician's study, and in the hands of his assistant: and as for a thought of her escape from the fortress, it could hardly have entered the brain of either party.

David, therefore, had come under no suspicion on this account; and he was snared so inextricably in the toils, that now even his cries and struggles would have provoked no more notice than the

dying agonies of a fish in the angler's basket. But it was not the moment for resistance; and as the evening darkened apace, he crept mutely up and down the ladder which led to his garret; now perching himself upon his tower of observation, and now gliding, like a shadow, through the corridor. All here was now as calm as death. The communications which appeared to have been going on throughout the day between the baron's private apartments and the study, were at an end. The quick, irregular step of Gilles de Retz, as he came and went, was heard no more; the goblin messenger of Orosmandel had performed his last commission; and the tall, still, spectral form of the Magician himself had vanished in the interior of his den. The elements which had been so long preparing, were ready; and there hung, brooding over the tower, that preternatural stillness which prepares the seaman for the bursting of the hurricane.

But when the air is stillest, and the ocean smoothest; and when the dark grey mist which curtains the sky, and the broad and dense shadow

which belts the horizon, let forth no sound to tell of what is coming—the elementary agents are at work within and beyond. The strife is going on; the chaos is in motion; although man, owing to the weakness of his outward senses, only feels that the evil spirits of nature are at hand by the quaking of his own heart.

In like manner—although to the ear and eye of the scholar all was silent and motionless around—within that mystic chamber at the very moment the war of the human passions was at its highest. The place was so constructed, that when the ponderous doors were completely closed, no sound could escape from within; and to this circumstance, no doubt, was owing the facility with which David had found access, whenever he chose, to the interior; for the time and labour which were requisite to shut up the room could not always be spared.

Ever since night-fall, Orosmandel and Gilles de Retz had been in colloquy, as secure from listeners as if they were in the middle of a desert. The baron, when he first entered, was calmer in his

motions and manner than on former occasions ; but his face was deadly pale, and the tone of his voice was so much changed, that it hardly appeared to be the same, although one would have been puzzled to describe the difference.

The arrangements of the place were the same as usual, with the exception of a light which burned upon the table, gleaming faintly through the crevices of a human skull. The parchment, with its black seal, was thus rendered more distinctly visible ; while a brazen hand behind the altar, touched by the rays of the lamp, appeared to point, with extended finger, to the mysterious document. On this object the eyes of Gilles de Retz were fixed.

“ All is prepared ? ” said he, when Orosmandel had secured the door.

“ All.”

“ And there will be time ? ”

“ Yea.”

“ That is well. You do not believe in destiny ? I do.”

“ What, the vulgar call destiny,” said Oros-

mandel, "is nothing more than a general rule, by which the universe of mind and matter is governed. It is practicable for individuals, by means of superior knowledge and higher daring, to step forth from the crowd, and free themselves from the yoke. The days of a man, for instance, are numbered at three score and ten years. How many overstep the bounds ! To extend the term by ten, twenty, or thirty years, is easy, even for common men. Shall it be said, that it is *impossible* to turn these acquisitions into cycles—scores—centuries ? When Adam, by eating of the tree of knowledge, became even as a demon, his next step, according to thy Scriptures, would have been to take also of the tree of life, and so live for ever."

"Not believe in destiny !" said Gilles de Retz, who apparently had not heard, or else was unable to follow, the reasoning of the philosopher. "Why, look you here ! Was it I who formed for myself that peculiarity of mind which incited me to the pursuit of occult studies ? Did I shape out the circumstances which have led me here ? These hands, which were once as soft and stainless as if

they had known no other bath than new milk, are now so incrustated with blood, that it is only use which enables me to bear the sight or smell ! Was this done of my own will ? I am ambitious, it is true ; but so are other men. * I am voluptuous ; and so are other men. Why did I not do as they ? Why did I not pass my life, or throw it away, in the chace after love or honour ? When I reached at distinction, it yielded itself, without an effort, to my grasp. When I looked with desire upon beauty, it melted spontaneously in my embrace. Even she—my wife—Catherine—who could have filled this wild bosom, as she filled my arms, when she had just suffered me to taste of the fulness of content—she died ! Was this my doing ? Why, if every drop of blood in my veins had been a separate and individual life, I would have given them all to save her !”

“ My son”—said Orosmandel.

“ Nay, hear me still. Bond after bond was loosed of my grasp of heaven, till only one golden thread remained. When you proposed to me to sever that blessed tie, by making Pauline a thing

as guilty as myself, I could have stabbed you to the heart. And what held me? Amazement, not so much at the wickedness, as at the folly of such a thought! I put back the clustering ringlets from the face of the innocent, and bright-minded girl, and looked through her's into her mother's eyes. And then I renewed my covenant with Catherine; and my heart was glad within me, as I thought, that come what might, I should still, while she lived, have one being on earth to pray for me, not for gain, but in spirit; and when she died, an angel in heaven, to join her mother in pleading for my soul at the throne of God."

"The time flieth apace," said Orosmandel impatiently.

"And then I tried the spells of love, and the allurements of wealth and power. I sounded the depths of woman's heart, and found vanity, ambition, voluptuous desire—all bad things that may coexist with maiden purity; but I found not what I wanted. When argument was unavailing, I substituted threatening; and when persuasion failed, I had recourse to force. Screams were heard within

these walls, instead of laughter ; and for wine, the banquet furnished blood and tears. The noble would gladly sacrifice her pride at my bidding ; the wealthy her wealth ; the virgin her modesty ; and thus my senses were pampered, while my soul brooded lonely, and afar off, over the fate she prophesied. The secrets of nature were invoked in vain, and gold was showered into the crucible, as if it had been water. Still there was hope. Still some new victim presented herself, almost unsought—for no other purpose than to baffle her destroyer ; and at length, a mighty sum, obtained with almost the last of my possessions, and at the probable expense of a civil war in the country, was the only chance left of saving father and daughter from destruction.” The baron paused, as if exhausted.

“The money was intercepted by brigands,” said the philosopher calmly, “and what then ?”

“Why, there it is ! The last stake was lost——”

“The last but one,” interrupted Orosmandel.

“Did I not tell you ? I am like a man sinking into a gulf, and catching desperately at the lichens

above his head. There is but one remaining—just one!—and that is small, and delicate——”

“But strong as twisted steel.”

“And graceful, and beautiful—twined round with the virgin flowers of spring, and glistening with nature’s holy water, the dews of morning! To that must I cling; on that must I fix my foul grasp—or perish.”

“The lichen will transplant,” said Orosmandel; “it will take root anew, in a firmer, loftier soil; and its crushed flowers will be no whit the worse. Still, if thy heart fail, there is time to retract, even at the twelfth hour. Thou art ruined, it is true. Lands, money, power, and place—all are gone. Verily one half that thou hast spent in this pursuit, would have sufficed, with prudence and house-keeping economy, for many years!”

“Do you dare to taunt me!” cried the baron, stung by the tone of voice in which this was uttered. “Is it not you who have led me on from the first step? Did I seek your presence or your counsel? Did you not appear before me, like a demon of the abyss, unsummoned, save by

the evil thoughts that were in my heart? Retract? What if I do retract? The world has yet wealth to win, and there are armies to command, and states to govern! What would the Duke refuse to the request of him whom his purchases have ruined?"

"Liberty!"

"How?"

"The Duke hath signed the decree for thine arrest."

"Mother of God, can this be possible? But I will be revenged! I will take back my lands by the strong arm. By St. Mary, I will light a brand, which shall set one half of Brittany in flames!"

"If thou do this, it must be alone; for the church hath already stretched forth her hand to set the mark of Cain upon thy brow; seeing which, men will hide their faces when thou passest by."

"Can you mean this?" said Gilles de Retz, trembling.

"The crimes imputed to thee, are murder and

sorcery ; and the president of thy trial is to be the Nuncio of the Pope. If thou refuse to surrender, then cometh excommunication ; if thou give thyself up—the fire and the faggot.”

The baron was stunned by this communication, which lost no part of its effect from the calm, cold manner in which it was delivered. His head drooped upon his bosom ; and his chest, which, the moment before, had been heaving with tumultuous passion, exhibited not even the motion of life. Orosmandel continued to regard him with a calm, but observant look.

“ And you will not believe in destiny ? ” said Gilles de Retz, at length, as he raised his head ; “ Come, I am ready. Forgive me for the idle words I have used ; and let us proceed. Are all things ready ? ”

“ All.”

“ And I also ; ” and the baron deliberately bared his left breast. The magician, then entering within the circle, approached the altar. He lifted up the parchment, and opened it ; when a powerful and

exhilarating odour escaped from its folds, and filled the whole apartment.

"Art thou prepared?" demanded Orosmandel, solemnly.

"Tell me first, if you remember our covenant? All things will I give, save one. When in the very gulf of sin, I will still have a hope—faint though it be—of salvation."

"Fear not. All is according to thy desire."

"Then am I ready."

"Approach, then. Do what thou doest quickly; for, until all is accomplished, thou must not draw thy breath within this circle. Come!" The baron paused for a moment; but then walking steadily towards the altar, he wounded himself with his dagger, and dipped in the blood a pen, which he received from Orosmandel. As he stooped over the bond, he was bewildered rather than guided by a sudden blaze of light. But he signed his name, and in the midst of a convulsion, resembling the slight shock of an earthquake, which shook the tower at the moment, he staggered out of the circle, and fell upon the floor.

When he recovered, he was again on his feet, supported by a grasp which Orosmandel held of his arm.

“Is it done?” said he. “Did I sign?”

“All is well. Thou wilt now prepare to go instantly forth whither thou knowest.”

“And Pauline? Has she consented?”

“She is prepared; but, as yet, in ignorance of the precise task that is before her. Whisper it not till the moment arrive; when every lingering scruple will be lost in enthusiasm. Away!” and Orosmandel, opening the massive door, the baron went out, and reeled, rather than walked, through the corridor to his own apartments.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHILE these things were taking place in the tower, Sir Archibald Douglas, and his allies, at some miles distance, were concerting measures for prosecuting the contest which they had commenced under such favourable auspices. The mind of the young knight, however, was by no means easy under the part he was playing; and, there was frequently so much inconsistency observed in his counsels, that he already began to lose the place he had acquired in the estimation of his companions.

He had opened his wooing, indeed, in rather an extraordinary manner—by robbing the father of his mistress of a large sum of money; and he was now openly in arms against him. He more than

half repented the reliance he had placed on David's judgment; and condemned the facility with which he had bent his neck to a yoke, which, however reasonable for the fellow students to bear, was unworthy of a belted knight. Pauline, it seemed, "was in worse peril than he had even dreamed of"—but surely not from her own father; and was it his wisest course to league himself with the spoilers of her house, and force his way to his high-born mistress at the point of the sword?

Andrew, however, who had by this time become the confidant of his plans and wishes, held strictly to his original opinion of the wisdom of the master-scholar. David, he observed, was not over-much given to explanation; but, neither would he suggest any plan to another, on which he had not previously brought to bear the resources of a mind far less given to miscalculation than is usual. It was difficult, doubtless, to conceive the nature of the danger which menaced the Damsel in her father's house—but was not the place a den of mystery altogether? Sir Archibald might depend that every thing would turn out for the best; and,

in the meantime, he had nothing to do but to follow out the suggestions of David, by prosecuting the war as briskly as possible.

In the midst of these debates, the news came to the camp, that the Duke had at length listened to the remonstrances of his nobles; that he had consented to surrender his last purchase on receiving back the money; and that an ordinance had been published, by sound of trumpet, forbidding the farther alienation of the family estates.

This, although certainly not quite unlooked for, came like a shock of thunder upon Montrichard and his comrades. The enterprise which had occupied their thoughts so long was to be abandoned; their German auxiliaries were to be turned adrift without satisfaction; and worse than all, the money they had so fairly earned was to be given up! Curses, both loud and deep, ran through the camp; and many a petty baron there prepared to ride home in headlong haste, to shelter himself from the creditors that had been gathered like harpies around him by the news of his expedition.

Beauchamp was perhaps in secret more discontented than any; although no one could have discovered this through the habitual apathy of his manner. He congratulated Douglas, sarcastically, on the wisdom he had exhibited, in seeming to doubt of the expedience of pursuing an adventure which he had himself commenced; and speculated on the advantage which the prudent Scot would enjoy, in the prosecution of his love suit, when undisturbed by the bustle of war.

“You cannot anger me, Beauchamp,” said Sir Archibald gaily; “for at this moment I am glad to the heart at what has occurred. When we have full leisure, however, if you will try with me, either on foot or on horseback, either with sword or lance,—not which has the fairest mistress—but which is the worthiest servant, I will exchange as many gibes with you in that fashion as you please.”

“And why not now?” said the English knight. “Neither you nor I are much encumbered with men to take care of; there is not a better field in Brittany than this whereon we stand; and here

be judges enow to determine our pretensions." The rude chiefs of the rising, gathered round them in expectation of the duel.

"Come hither," answered Douglas, "and I will tell you why it must not be now;" and the two knights—whose talk was of hewing one another to pieces—walked out of the group, arm in arm. On getting beyond ear-shot, the Scot, much to his rival's amazement, explained—if he can be said to have explained what he did not himself understand—the situation of Pauline de Laval; and proposed that, for the present, they should lay aside their mutual jealousies, and join hand in hand to save her. Beauchamp, although more a man of this sinful world than Sir Archibald, was not less a knight, and he at once pledged himself as required; but, in the midst of the arrangements consequent on their new confederacy, another messenger reached the camp, whose news turned all things upside down.

This was an officer of the law, bearing a warrant for the arrest of Gilles de Retz, on a charge of

murder and sorcery; and he called on all who heard, to assist him, in the name both of the church and the Duke.

If it be remembered, that many of the chiefs present were blood relations of the house of Laval, and that the ostensible object of the whole was simply to preserve the integrity of the family estates, it will easily be imagined, that this intelligence acted by no means as a sedative upon their disturbed nerves. The consultations that ensued, were brief, but conclusive. The Duke, before rendering justice, had put them to the trouble of taking up arms; and it was surely not in his service they would use them. The charge of murder might be brought against any baron in Brittany; but Gilles de Retz had murdered no kinsman of theirs, and what had they to do with it? As for sorcery, it was an affair they did not understand, and with which they would not presume to meddle; being well satisfied to leave such delinquences in the hands of the church, which they more immediately concerned.

Montrichard was the first to give the signal for

breaking up the rendezvous. Each chief collected his own men round his standard; and, by and by, the parts of the mass were seen detaching themselves by degrees, and successive bands marching sullenly away, to all points of the compass, and losing themselves in the shades of evening. Beauchamp, however, with about twenty spears of his own countrymen, still remained on the ground; and also Douglas (with Andrew for his esquire), surrounded by about as many more, consisting of foreign mercenaries, or isolated adventurers, who apparently not well knowing whither to betake themselves, looked up to him as to a leader, in as desperate a plight as themselves.

“Sir Knights,” said Andrew, after a silence of some minutes, “if you will take my advice you will ride your several ways with what speed you may. If the Lord de Retz get an inkling of your situation here, he will send out a force sufficient to cut you in pieces; and I pray you to observe, Sir Archibald, that being without my culverine, you can reckon me only as a common man. I have observed a figure, for some time past, crossing the

hills from the direction of La Verrière ; and, although it is now lost in the shadows that are falling around, I can almost undertake to say, that its errand is to us."

"You are right, friend," said Beauchamp, "for see, it appears again, advancing steadily to the mark—and in the semblance of a woman ! If you do not claim a monopoly in that way, Douglas, perhaps you will permit me to receive her?—Pshaw, it is only a peasant!" and, as he spoke, Marie stepped into the group, and approached Sir Archibald.

"I am late," said she ; "I have lost precious minutes in pursuing those whom I took for your party. Tell me, Sir knight, for the time presses, are these your friends by whom you are surrounded?"

"All friends."

"Yet speak low, my woman," interposed Andrew, "for you shall know that friends are oftentimes unsafe confidants. Bend down your ear, Sir Archibald; and if need be, you can take to yourself the merit of publishing the secret."

"He speaks well," said Marie; "step aside with me, for a moment, for my errand is of life and death."

"He speaks like a true Scot," observed Beauchamp, superciliously, when they were gone, and measuring Andrew with his eye, from head to foot.

"It is gratifying to me to hear the acknowledgment," replied the latter. "But you seem to be astonished, Sir knight—and the feeling is nothing more than natural—at finding a grain of common-sense beneath a steel cap! Now, I would have you to understand, that although possessing some slight knowledge of military matters—as touching culverines, for instance, and such engines of war, I by no means consider myself as a mere soldier; I am a votary, you must know, of that virgin-goddess, who had Jupiter for a mother, and Vulcan for a midwife; and who is not only the patroness of arms, but of wisdom, and the liberal arts."

"Silence, Andrew, for the sake of heaven!" cried Douglas, rejoining the group; "for this is a moment in which wisdom must give way to

daring. Sir knight, I have received sure intelligence, that the Damsel of Laval, if not saved this night, is lost. A plan has been put into my hands, which will enable us to cross the supposed impassable swamps of La Verrière, and so surprise the castle. Will you assist me?"

"Will *you* assist *me*?" replied Beauchamp, with heat. "It is my turn to lead; and there are twenty pairs of hands that go with mine, while you are almost alone. In any other adventure, I would second you at your request; but an enterprise which concerns the Damsel of Laval must be conducted by me."

"That cannot be," said Douglas; "yet it is not from any idle jealousy I refuse your offer. At a crisis like this, I would not hesitate to follow your standard, in a field on solid ground; but the habits of my boyhood, and the nature of the wild country where I was born, give me an unspeakable advantage over you, in an adventure like the present. What say you, gentlemen, are there none here who will follow me, for the sake of chivalry, and in honour of the lady they love?"

“ And for a rich booty, withal !” added Andrew quickly. “ I know every inch of the ground. The bulk of the garrison, you must be aware, will be out to-night, on the more distant fortifications ; and the house, if we once get into it—and which commands the passage of the river—may be defended against them all. As for the swamp, it has already been traversed by this bonny lass, and is there a man among us who would hesitate ?” These appeals had no effect on the Englishmen, who stood firmly, and in silence, by their chief ; but almost all the other desperadoes ranged themselves on the side of Douglas. They tied their horses in a neighbouring thicket ; and a rendezvous near the swamp, and a signal, being agreed upon, they began their march separately, in order that the point to which it tended, might not be discovered ; although, before setting out, they gave a loud shout, in order to apprize the scouts of the castle, if any were within hearing, that enemies were at hand. It was, indeed, the true policy of the adventurers, to keep the garrison that night in a state of constant alarm.

The two rivals saluted each other sternly and stiffly as they parted; but Beauchamp, with a degree of awkwardness, which contrasted strangely with the dignified, yet supercilious apathy of his usual demeanour.

“The danger which threatens the Damsel,” thought he, as he looked after the retreating figure of the knight, “cannot be within her father’s castle; and without the gates, I shall be as likely to protect her as he. My numbers, added to his, would give him at least the possibility of success—and that would be to put her into his hands. Yet he is a gallant fellow, though a Scot, and Pauline will weep for him when he falls!” The young knight’s eye fell upon the peasant-girl, who turned round several times to look at him, as she walked slowly away. He imagined that wonder and scorn sate upon her features. “It is a daring enterprize!” continued he mentally; “such an one as minstrels will celebrate with songs, and ladies with tears.—What ho! gentlemen!” and the ring of arms followed his sudden voice, as every one moved to

hear him. "Shall it be said that we alone hung back when danger like this was to be dared?"

"I was just thinking," replied the lieutenant, "that the Scot, by some miracle, may escape alive, and get back to tell it one day on the borders!"

"That were shame!" cried they all. "Let him lead across the swamp if he will; but once upon the ramparts, the best man will be first!" On the instant the awkwardness of the leader disappeared, as well as the island taciturnity of his troop. They tied their horses to the trees, the young knight gave the word, and, as they commenced their march, stepping lightly and cheerily along the sward, the cry of their nation rose clear and high in the evening air, "St. George for merry England!"

Douglas, in the meantime, followed by Andrew, walked swiftly on; but it was as yet far too early for action, as the fitful beams of the moon were only beginning to be felt amidst the flying twilight. He at length directed his companion to

proceed alone to the river side, and collect the men at the rendezvous; determining himself to approach within view of the principal gate, and endeavour to ascertain whether the garrison mustered there in such force as to leave a probability of the house being comparatively undefended.

His walk, owing to the nature of the ground, was much longer than he had expected. Occasionally, on reaching the summit of an eminence, he caught a distant peep of the Erdre, with a dark object at the brink which he knew to be the abode of Gilles de Retz; but his progress towards it was so slow, that he could have fancied himself in the condition of some knight of romance, who sought in vain the avenue to an enchanted castle. He was not yet within the circle of its attraction; and it seemed as if some good genius, operating through the natural intricacies of the ground, was warning him away from the fatal spot.

A large lake of the Erdre was at length before him; and, although the house was invisible, he recognised the localities, and knew that he could

be at no great distance from the place he sought. The dimness of evening was creeping rapidly around. The frame-work of the picture was misty and indistinct; and the dull sky seemed to be showering down shade upon shade over the whole piece. There was just light enough to gratify the eye, and darkness enough to excite the imagination; and nature looked like some lovely face, which is not the less lovely when seen through a veil.

He passed through an amphitheatre, and ascended a steep beyond. The view here was magnificent, embracing the large lake of the Erdre, and many of its windings before and behind; but Douglas bestowed not a glance upon the scene: he pressed forward through valley, and over steep, threading the forest with the intuitive instinct of the forest-born, and leaping the marsh-pools with the agility of a deer. He was able, for some time, to steer his course by the direction of the river, which was visible from every height; but, by and by, the mist gathering upon its surface, and rising from the marshes at its sides, rendered its form so indistinct, that it no longer served as a guide.

Douglas, whose fears for Pauline increased every moment, plunged on almost at random, till at length even the dusky twilight was no more, lost and absorbed in the darkness of night. He had by this time entered an extensive wood, which had appeared, to his hopes at least, if not to his conviction, so long as there was light enough to enable him to form some idea of its shape, to resemble the forest scenery that surrounded the castle of La Verrière. He still pressed on, therefore, in expectation of seeing lights in the windows, which might direct his further search.

And his expectations were realized; for he had not stumbled on in the dark for many minutes, when he saw something in the distance which resembled the glimmering of a taper. The light increased in magnitude, as he approached, till at length, he was somewhat startled to find that it must proceed from the flame of a torch. An opening in the wood, besides, by enabling him to catch a glimpse of the dull sky behind, convinced him that no human habitation intervened; and he paused, in some perplexity, to consider.

No one who is unacquainted with the manners of that epoch can enter into the feelings which this simple object—a torch seen at night in a lonely wood—awakened in the bosom of the knight. Of all the dangers which he had prepared to encounter, this seemed the most terrific; and, while the wild and singular tales connected with La Verrière, forced themselves like realities upon his imagination, he drew near with as much fear as a brave man can be supposed to feel.

It was fortunate for Douglas that some revulsion of his feelings had taken place, to diminish the rapidity of his approach, otherwise he must have fallen over a precipice of naked rocks, which intervened between him and the object of his wonder. The hollow below, of inconsiderable area, but great depth, was almost circular in form, and bound in by a range of cliffs, the sides of which were naked, but the jagged tops surmounted by uncouth-looking trees, twisting their ungainly branches over the gulf. The bottom of the amphitheatre itself was swollen here and there into irregular mounds; but, with the exception of a tall

yew-tree, which stood in the middle, it was wholly naked of foliage. www.libtool.com.cn

On the upper branches of this tree hung the light which he had supposed to be a torch. What was its nature he could not tell; but it seemed to be placed there as a lamp to enlighten this strange scene, on which it shed a steady, but dull and sepulchral glare. At the bottom of the tree there was a pit, which the shuddering witness speedily recognised, by its oblong form, to be an open grave; and near it lay a human figure—the corpse, no doubt, as Douglas thought, destined for such unholy burial. At a few paces distant, there was a heap of large stones, of a reddish colour, rudely placed together—resembling, perhaps, a Druidical altar; and near it an object which seemed to be a basket covered with a white cloth.

All this was so strange and unworldly, that when the first emotion of superstitious fear was over, the knight could easily have persuaded himself that he was in a dream. There was, indeed, spread over the whole scene, the same kind of dimness which attends our impressions in sleep.

The sides of the amphitheatre were without definite form; and their projecting points, and indented fissures, brought into play, in light and shadow, by the lamp, seemed like unearthly shapes waiting for the unhallowed rite; while the unchanging surface of the sky, seen among the twisted trees above, gave the idea of spectral faces looking down through the branches. The silence was so intense, that Douglas feared to interrupt it with his own breathing; and at length, dreading that he was fascinated there by a spell, he recited the pater-noster inwardly; and, turning resolutely, but noiselessly away, prepared to leave a spot dedicated, it was too evident, to services at which no Christian man ought to assist even as a spectator.

The next moment, however, a stir below caused him, half in fear, half in curiosity, to resume his observation. The supposed corse had moved its position, and discovered itself to be a hideous dwarf lying fast asleep. The light of the lamp fell upon the grotesque features of the face, that was turned upwards; and Douglas, as he gazed, could

easily have believed, that he saw, in bodily presence, one of those goblin-sprites, whose business it is to mislead and destroy.

A sound was now heard, apparently from the opposite precipice, but so faint that Douglas could not have detected it but for the preternatural stillness of the moment. At the instant, however, the sleeping dwarf sprang upon his feet, and throwing one of those somersets—heels over head, which are common on the modern stage, stood immovable. Presently a tall figure entered the arena slowly, by the further end. His dress resembled in some measure the robes of a high priest; but, on his breast and forehead, were large plates, apparently of polished gold; and he carried a long black wand in his right hand. Behind him two other persons approached still more slowly, who, at the exclamation of “Hold!” from the Magician, for such Douglas deemed him to be, stood still.

The priest then prostrated himself before the altar, remaining, however, at a little distance; and on rising, touched it with his wand, when immediately a clear blue light arose from the summit. His face

was now distinctly visible; and the knight saw, in the commanding and majestic features, and the beard as white as drifted snow, the likeness of Orosmandel.

“Approach!” exclaimed the old man, and his voice ran like music through the amphitheatre. The two persons behind obeyed; and, as they came within the light of the altar, Douglas almost fell to the ground, when he saw that one of the actors in this accursed rite was Gilles de Retz, and the other—Pauline! For some moments he was affected by a reeling of the brain, and a swimming of the eyes, which prevented him from either seeing or hearing; but, on recovering his faculties, the two lost ones were close to the altar, which he now observed was surrounded by a circle of human bones.

Pauline looked like a Pythoness, in the moment of inspiration. A small circle of jewels surrounded the crown of her head; but her hair, otherwise unconfined, floated wildly over her shoulders. She reeled in her walk, as one who had drank of some intoxicating drug, and a feverish brightness shone in her wandering eyes. Instead of being blanched

with fear, a red spot burned on either cheek ; and she looked round upon the scene with an inquisitive wonder, which seemed almost to partake of strange, unnatural mirth. The yew-tree—the lamp—the circle of human bones—the altar—all by turns were singled out by her flitting glance ; and then a sound resembling laughter escaped from her lips. But when her eye rested upon her father, a strong shudder shook her frame, and she drew close to his side, embracing his arm convulsively, as if at once to give and receive protection.

What passed afterwards was in dumb show. A dagger was placed in the hand of Pauline, and her father appeared to solicit her aid in vain to use it in some manner. He at length bared his arm, and held it close over the sacrificial fire. She still appeared to hesitate ; till a groan of pain escaped his lips ; when she suddenly plunged the point of the blade in the scorched flesh. The blood spouted from the wound upon the flame, which rose up with a sudden flash that rendered the whole amphitheatre, for an instant, as clear as day. A moment's pause ensued ; and then the ground seemed to move

beneath their feet, as if shaken by an earthquake. Some stones fell from the altar; and a thick blue smoke rose up from a thousand crevices around.

"It is accepted!" cried the high priest, who stood without the circle. "Another blood-sprinkling, and all is accomplished!" A pause took place. Pauline gazed in the face of Gilles de Retz, who seemed to shrink from the look. At last, siezing both her hands, he addressed her for some time in a low, but earnest tone.

She appeared, at first, not clearly to comprehend his meaning; but soon, as gathering conviction forced itself upon her mind, she raised her hands in horror and aversion. He became more animated, and urgent—seemed to entreat—promise—threaten—command; while Pauline remained silent, at first in determination, and then in stupefaction. At this moment, the hideous dwarf caught up the basket covered with a white cloth, and with a grin, half of malice, half of gratulation, handed it over the circle to the Lord de Retz.

"Strike!" cried the high priest, in a voice of thunder, as the baron drew aside the cloth.

The cry of a young child followed; and, at the sound, Pauline, starting from her trance, dashed the dagger upon the earth, and, catching the infant to her breast, covered it with tears and kisses.

Gilles de Retz sprung out of the circle, and rushed towards the priest, who, in pacing to and fro with impatience and disdain, had now stopped short under the cliff on which Douglas leant.

"Father," said the baron, in a voice of despair, "is there no other means? She is obstinate. Her hand may be forced to do the deed, but her heart never."

"Then thy trouble is lost," replied the Magician gloomily. "The blood must be shed by a pure maiden, and of her own free will."

"And is there *no* other means?" Orosmandel was silent for some moments.

"None?—None?" persisted the baron.

"Yes—one!" cried he, suddenly, in his smooth, sonorous tone no more, but with a voice as hoarsely ominous as that of a raven grating on a sick man's ear. "The maid must first be sacrificed by thee;

and then the blood of the infant will be accepted at thine own hands !”

“ My own daughter !—My own daughter !”

“ Perish, then, infirm of heart ! I leave thee to thy fate.”

“ A moment !—another moment !—I adjure thee in the name of the master thou servest !” and the desperate man rushed again towards the altar. What he said it was impossible to distinguish ; but one moment his face grew bright with enthusiasm, and the next black with rage : Pauline, in the meantime, only straining the infant closer to her bosom. At length, in sudden phrenzy, her father caught up the dagger, and grasping her by the hair, while he held the blade to her breast, exclaimed—in a tone which seemed to make the whole atmosphere vibrate—

“ Speak ! in a single word—or, sign but with thy finger in answer. Wilt thou kill, or die ?”

“ In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost !” cried a voice at the instant—but before the abjuration of Douglas was complete, the flame on the altar, and the lamp on the tree,

disappeared. A sound, like the rattling of bones, ran round the amphitheatre, mingled with sobs and wild laughter; and as the lover of Pauline descended the cliffs, with headlong impetuosity, it seemed to his excited imagination as if he heard also the gushing of blood.

By the time he had reached the plain below, all was silent; but he heard, or fancied he did so, the distant trampling of feet; and, assisted by the faint, grey light of the sky, where not a star was visible, he rushed towards the place where he had seen the actors in this memorable scene enter the arena. The faint twinkling of a lamp, although several hundred yards before him, served for some time as a guide; but soon, even this disappeared; and, having entered the forest, which extended far beyond the amphitheatre, he groped his way in utter darkness.

The loyalty of the knight must be ill-understood by those who imagine, that even the spectacle of his mistress taking an active part in ceremonies accursed of God and man could weaken his attachment, or change his heart. Douglas felt absolutely

convinced that Pauline was the victim of enchantment, and was, vulgarly speaking, under a spell; and he praised more the virtuous heroism of her nature for refusing to complete the sacrifice, than her weakness for commencing it. Was this the peril—more imminent, indeed, than he had ever imagined—alluded to by David? Was his midnight attempt intended to save both her soul and body? If so, the deed was accomplished. The magical ceremony was broken off in the midst; and however desperate might have been the intentions of Gilles de Retz in the impious phrenzy of the moment, it was absurd to suppose, that, in cold blood, and without having any advantage to expect, he would take his own daughter's life.

Pauline's farther safety, then, must be provided for in daylight. By the first peep of dawn, he would spur to the court of John V.; he would declare what he had witnessed in the presence of the Nuncio himself; if necessary, he would send his voice throughout Christendom, and call to the rescue of his mistress all the chivalry and nobleness of the time. The Lord de Retz, with an arrest

hanging over his head, and a bull of excommunication thundered against him, even if there survived not one natural feeling in his bosom, would not dare to increase wantonly the fury of his enemies. Even when defying the power of the state in his own person, he would give up his daughter to the protection of the laws; and thus Pauline would be saved—and by her lover.

As these reflections passed through his mind, the knight slackened his pace. David, it seemed, had been wrong in the hour, which was now elapsed, although it was not yet midnight. His warning, notwithstanding, had been effectual; and it was to the scholar he owed the salvation of his mistress. This idea called up another, which made the heart of Douglas leap with affright. It was not Pauline alone who was to have been saved by his prowess, but David also! On these precious moments, which he was now wasting in idle meditations, perhaps hung the life of his friend! Was he to be guilty of the selfish baseness of abandoning the enterprize the moment his own purpose was served? The young knight scorned the thought. He knew

that the adventure was desperate; and he felt convinced that on his own life depended the eventual safety of his mistress. What of that? He believed in honour with a religious faith. He would do his duty, and leave the rest to heaven.

Bitterly regretting the moments he had lost, he abandoned all thought of approaching the castle walls. He was determined that no appearance he might see there should prevent him from attempting the enterprize; and, bending his steps towards a part of the Erdre which he had recognised when as yet there had been light enough to observe distinctly, he found himself, in a much shorter time than might have been expected, approaching the brink of the swamp.

“Who goes there?” cried Andrew, emerging from a thicket.

“It is I. For God’s sake make haste! Where are our men?”

“Haste, indeed! And is it you who give the injunction? Where, in the most holy name, have you been this livelong night?”

“I have been at a sabbath of sorcerers; and that

same most holy name—to it be the praise for ever! —was to me even as a sword and a spear;” and, in a few words, he gave him an account of his adventure. “But come, make haste, I say,” continued he; “for, judging by yonder misty moon, the night is now in the death-grips with morning. Pray heaven a bloodier struggle be not even now going on in those dark towers! Where are our men?”

“Couched close by; their limbs stiffening in their armour in the night air, like a blade rusting in its scabbard. Will you sit for a while? Fye! you breathe as quickly as a young wench after a dance.”

“That is no wonder; for I have not had time to breathe at all for the last half hour. But it will pass.”

“And so it will; there is nothing like exercise for the asthma. I trow that shaking bog will give us something else to do than count our breath; and these black pools—lo you there! it is a head thrust up from the waters to see what we are about. Down again it goes—I wonder what the toads think of

the business! Come, gentlemen, up and be doing. Remember, the word for the onslaught is, 'Douglas to the rescue!'"

As the adventurers gathered round their leader, their practised ear caught the tread of a body of men approaching softly through the trees; and, forming into line instinctively, they drew their swords with one motion, the sound of which ran through the thicket like that of a brief gust of wind striking upon the leaves.

"Are you for Douglas?" cried Sir Archibald. "Speak, ere you come nearer!"

"We are for God and our standard!" answered Beauchamp. "But, to say the truth, Sir Scot, I now see that you were right in the matter of the leadership. I never yet stepped upon field which would not bear the weight of a man and his horse; and, with or without a plan, I should have been but a poor guide over yonder swimming, quaking, gurgling swamp. They say the lowlands of Scotland are mostly composed of such soil, and the highlands of granite!"

"Come one day and see, my friend," said

Douglas ; “ but, in the meantime, be sure that you put your feet in the very prints of mine. Here is now a gleam of the unsteady moon, which will light us from the firm land, and yet last not long enough to betray us. Come on, Sir knight—a better friend, or a braver foe, could not be desired. Andrew, you are next. Follow, gentlemen, one by one ; and heed not the shaking of the bog, for we will not give it time to sink. Holy and immaculate Mother of God, be thou as a lamp to our feet !”

The adventurers bowed down their heads during the invocation, and a rough whisper ran, like a breeze, through the crowd. The next moment, they stood again erect ; and the rustling of their armour, and catching of their breath, preparatory to taking the first step upon their perilous path might have been heard at some distance. They then, following their leader one by one, forsook the firm land. The motion of the floating mass, under so unusual a weight, communicated itself to the whole river, the waters of which rose in huge waves upon the bank ; and the rushing, gurgling, groaning noise of

the convulsed swamp seemed to fill the atmosphere. These desperate men, however, pursued their way, if not without fear, yet without shrinking; till, the moon diving suddenly into a thicker mist, they were enveloped by the shades of night; and a spectator on the main land would have supposed that they had been swallowed up, and had passed away for ever from the surface of the earth.

CHAPTER IX.

LONG and anxious was the watch that night of David Armstrong. Hour after hour passed on, and the portentous tranquillity of the castle was uninterrupted. He had observed Orosmandel go into the private apartments of Gilles de Retz, from which he did not again return; all was silence and solitude in the study within; and without, the swamp was only traversed by the shadows of the dull leaden clouds which moved slowly between the moon and the earth.

In vain he caught at the idea, that the appointed time was deferred. The very silence undeceived him. The stillness of the air—the veiled moon—the slow-pacing clouds—all were omens and wit-

nesses. It was not the muteness of sleep, but of watching, which pervaded the elements, and the spirit of the winds did not seem so much to rest as to hold his breath.

In this state of the imagination, the inaction to which the scholar was condemned, had in it something inexpressibly terrible. He was plunged among his own thick-coming fancies, like a man thrown bound and naked, in a den of wild beasts. He glared at the monsters, as they moved around, glaring at him; and envied the fate of the slave condemned to fight with tigers in the arena. As midnight drew near, his agitation increased almost to insanity. The shadows of night were converted into shapes of terror; mysterious voices filled the silence of the air; and, ever and anon, a wild scream, which he knew to be an illusion, yet felt as a reality, pierced through his brain.

He tried to compose himself, first by prayer, and then by passing methodically in review before him, the circumstances of his situation. Both of these employments, had their effect; and, when in the midst of the latter, he suddenly remembered the

request of Caleb the Jew, transmitted to him by Andrew, to ~~search in one of~~ Houpelande's bales for some object which would assist his purpose. That he had forgotten this so long, may be ascribed partly to the confusion of his mind, and partly to the little importance he attached to the request. With arms he had already been provided, and with a means of escape, if he had chosen to use it. What, then, could this further aid be—if, indeed, it was not the sovereign good of messire Jean, gold? He caught at the idea, however, now that it had suggested itself to his mind, as a positive relief; and set about fulfilling the Jew's desire, with the same zeal as if he had expected salvation from the result.

The stores of the castle communicated with the laboratory, by means of a long and steep stair; and David had once descended on business connected with his occupation, and more than once on a visit of espial. In the vaults themselves, a strong door opened into the ground-story of the tower, for the purpose of admitting such articles as could not conveniently be introduced through the study; and

as the scholar had observed that Hagar had never been received in the latter, he had some notion that, if taken into the tower at all, it would be by this avenue.

Having lighted his lamp, he descended the steep stair without interruption, and soon found himself in the vaults. The vast and massive door of the tower was closed as usual, and seemed as steadfast as the wall in which it was fixed. The door, also, opening to the court, strengthened by heavy bars of iron, was locked on the outside; and, added to these appearances of security, the low-browed arches, stooping as if they sustained the whole weight of the building, gave the idea of a dungeon where even hope could not live. Above, whence he had come, the well-closed avenue into Gilles de Retz's apartment, and the immense iron gate of the staircase leading to the hall, afforded the only outlets from the tower; so that it is no wonder, if both Orosmandel and the baron, who were unacquainted with his knowledge of the turning-stone, looked upon the apprentice, as a victim already bound inextricably to the altar.

David looked round among the anomalous objects which filled the place, and at length discovered the large bale indicated by Andrew. It was marked with stripes of blue and green ; but near them there was one also, more irregular in figure, the colour of which was red.

As a strange idea came into his head, he hastily touched the place with the point of his finger. It was moist and clammy ; and, with an ejaculation of surprise, not altogether unaccompanied by horror, he cut open the bale with his dagger.

In the middle of the package, surrounded by a thick layer of cloth, and laid out as if in a coffin, although with an air-hole opposite the mouth, intended, no doubt, for breathing, lay the body of Caleb the Jew !

“ Holy Mother of God ! ” cried the scholar, almost dropping the lamp, “ Is this a time for such legacies ? Even gold itself, though useless here, would have suited better as a posthumous gift. Unhappy old man, why hast thou sent thyself to me ? ” But, recollecting the next moment, that the blood was still moist, he began eagerly to

search for the wound ; and at length discovered that a sword, or some other sharp instrument, had passed through the flesh of the side beneath the arm-pit. The ribs, however, though grazed, were uninjured, and almost hoping that Caleb might have fainted from pain or weakness, he applied a phial of essence to his nostrils.

Life still lingered in the body, but only like the sunken flame of a lamp, which a breath may extinguish. An indistinct murmur came from the lips, and the hand twitched, as if the muscles were called, and called in vain, to perform the functions they now disavowed.

“ Speak ! ” said David, whispering softly in the wounded man’s ear. “ Try to speak ere your soul, which is flickering upon your lips, takes its departure ! Show me your wishes ; and, in token that I forgive you my blood, I swear to obey them, in so far as they compromise not the safety of Hagar.”

The lips of the Jew moved, but the sound that came from them was unintelligible. His hand again twitched convulsively ; and David, raising it in such a manner as to assist, without directing its

motion, found that the fingers rested on the breast. Something hard was concealed under the dress on this spot; and the student, well knowing his quondam master's knowledge of drugs, was not surprised to find that it was a small bottle.

He applied it hastily to the lips of the wounded man, from which the hue of life, recalled for an instant, was fast fading; and no sooner did a small portion of the contents enter the mouth, than Caleb opened his eyes. He tasted a second time and then rejected the phial.

"Enough for the present," said he, in a low but distinct voice. "A time cometh for the rest." David then dressed his wound to the best of his ability, staunching the blood, which had begun to flow anew; and in another minute, to his great astonishment, the Jew was able to sit upright.

"Why art thou yet here?" said Caleb collectedly.

"Because I have sworn not to fly without Hagar."

"What hast thou to do with Hagar, young man? She is a Jewess—thou a Christian."

"She is a woman—I a man! thus much my apprenticeship has taught me! We are of the same species—of the same human family; and we worship, though under different forms, the same God. What I have to do with her, is to watch over, protect, and save her—or lose myself."

"This is foolishness," said Caleb, but his voice faltered with emotion. "Fly, for it is in thy power. Lo! I have made thee the heir of my wealth. Away, and forget, in the lap of pleasure or of glory, the daughter of the stranger, and the old man who would have delivered thee up to the death!"

"You waste time," replied David. "To take your fortune would be to spoil the orphan, and that is forbidden alike by your law and mine. But it will be wiser employment for the present, if we consider how we are to save the gem about the disposal of which we argue so idly."

"That is my task, young man. I am now here to save my daughter, if she can yet be saved, or to avenge her, if fallen. Do thou care for thy own

safety, for thou canst not meddle in the business I have in hand.” www.libtool.com.cn

“Your business, I guess, is with Prelati. In that case, mine must be with Gilles de Retz, by whom the dishonour of Hagar, is as a thing sworn.”

“By Gilles de Retz ! God of Abraham ! Hath not my sin been yet redeemed ? What wilt thou do, good David ? What is thy plan ?”

“I had some hopes—but these begin to die away—of the castle being surprised to-night, by my friends, through the secret avenue of the swamp ; and, in that case, we all might escape in the boats. Should it happen otherwise”—and the student drew his polished dagger from its sheath—“Hagar herself told me to keep this to guard the life of its master ; and so I will—yea, even his life of life !”

“At this period of the conversation, the Jew again became weak, and he directed David to lift him up, and set him upon the ground.

“Is he gone forth !” said he, in a faint voice, “or do they tarry within ?”

"My impression is," replied David, "that there is no one in the tower, except, perhaps, a deaf and dumb slave; yet I cannot speak with certainty but for Orosmandel. Him I saw, two hours ago, enter the private apartments of the Baron. If Prelati and the dwarf have gone forth, as I believe they have, it is not by way of the swamp."

"It is well. And Hagar?—she hath not yet entered within these precincts?"

"Does this blade look else than a virgin?" answered David, smiling grimly.

"It is excellently well. Praise be to the Lord of Hosts that thou wert here!—for the strength was gone from my limbs; and, instead of rising up, like a lion from his couch—even like the lion of the tribe of Judah—I should have died where I lay, slain by the sword which the infidel dog at the gate thrust through the bale."

"You did not cry when he smote!" said David, with involuntary admiration.

"Patience," replied the Jew, "is the badge of our nation; for Issachar is an overladen ass stooping between two burdens. Were Israel as ready to strike

as to endure—but it may not be; the word is spoken, and we must await the day of the Lord.”

At this moment, a faint scream was heard, as if from the top of the stair-case, and David, grasping his dagger firmly, made a step forward. Caleb drank off what remained of the drug, and threw the phial away.

“Back, young man!” whispered he, catching hold of the scholar’s arm, with a force which made him start; “I tell thee again, this is no business for such as thou. If it be Prelati who cometh, he is cased in steel, against which thy blade would shiver like new ice; if it be not, the moment hath not yet arrived. Extinguish thy lamp; hide thee in yonder recess; and, as thou lovest the life and honour of Hagar, take no part in what thou shalt see!” Another scream showed, by the sound, that the victim had descended midway; and presently, the deaf and dumb slave made his appearance in the vault, with De Briqueville, bearing Hagar in his arms.

“I pray thee pardon me,” said the Jewess, looking round, when she was set down. “Had I

known that it was to a dungeon thou wert conducting me, I should have offered no resistance. Leave me, and I will forgive and pray for thee !”

“Nay,” cried De Briqueville, forcing a laugh, “you are too uncharitable in your conclusions ! This is only the ante-chamber of your destined lodgings ; within which you will find better accommodation than at Huguemont, and a hospitality that will not hear of refusal.”

“Art thou a knight ? Art thou a man ! Nay friend, not yet”—and she took hold of the arm of the slave, who was about to unlock the door ; “give me but another minute, for the love of gold, if not of God ! I have a father, messire ; and he is rich, and loves his child. Only leave me to myself ; let me but hide in this vault, and trust in Jehovah to find a refuge ; and a ransom shall be thine that might befit a princess !”

“And how shall it come into my hands ?” asked De Briqueville, from whose heavy features, it was impossible to gather, whether or not he thought seriously of the proposal.

“Thou shalt bear a message from me, with this ring as a sign; and thou shalt take with thee the young man, David Armstrong, to prove that it was given of my own will.”

“And what if he will not go?”

“Thou must then compel him, for my father will not believe thy words.”

“That is hard! I would I could manage it alone!”

“But thou canst not,” said Hagar eagerly. “Dost thou fear the young man? Take him even as a captive, bound hand and foot! Thou shalt have half the riches of my father; and, if it be not ready for thy hand in gold, he will borrow from his kinsmen, who are the wealthiest of their tribe.”

“But this David Armstrong. Truly I would it were otherwise. It cannot be done without him?”

“It cannot.”

“That is a pity! for look you here—I could not set out for Nantes before day-break, and in less than ten minutes, David Armstrong will be feeding

the fishes of the Erdre !" and the knight broke into a discordant laugh, which rang through the vault. Hagar appeared to be stunned.

"Dost thou mean this?" said she, at length; "Say that it is but a jest—that thou laughest at my misery, and I will forgive and bless thee!"

"It is no jest," said the knight; "and, rough as you may think me, I am your best friend to do away with this maiden fancy at once. Do you think David would have kept his roost, which was not twenty yards distant, if he had heard your voice? He did not hear—and why? Because his wine to-day was drugged—and our friend has a commission"—touching the slave's dagger, who grinned, and pointed up the stair-case—"to see that he awaken not from his stupefaction." The faint colour, which her varying emotions had sent into Hagar's face, disappeared suddenly, and had she not been supported by the slave, whose quick eye watched all her motions, she must have fallen to the ground.

"In with her now," said De Briqueville, making

a sign, "By my faith, she is a rare wench after all; and, if I believed that she was to come to bodily harm in the tower, I should think twice before she entered! As for her delicacy about the Lord de Retz—why, she will get over those whims in time, with every thing else that pertains to maidenhood. By the mass, if she were not an infidel, and therefore forbidden to me by our holy religion, it would take little to persuade me to think of her myself!"

"Yet another moment!" said Hagar, recovering her recollection, but not her colour, and standing upright, without assistance—"I have wept, prayed, screamed, struggled, bribed—and all in vain. Hope is no more. Lo, the door opens! I am on the threshold. Will the Most High, under these circumstances, impute it to me as a crime, if I transgress his divine laws?"

"That he will not!" said De Briqueville—"I will take my oath of it. And if he should—why, you are a Jewess, and will be damned at any rate!"

"In His mercy I put my trust; and I deliver

myself into His hands—thus !” and with the speed of lightning, she drew a small dagger from beneath her vest. Even the quick eye of the slave was too slow. He could not turn aside the blow ; but he instantaneously covered her heart with his broad hand, which she pinned to her side with the blade. Hagar, in all probability ignorant that her design had failed, was then carried senseless into the tower, amidst the muttered curses of De Briquerville, and inarticulate cries at once of pain and triumph from the slave.

During this scene, the Jew had maintained his hold of David ; sometimes pressing his arm, and sometimes drawing him back, as the rebellious motions of his charge required. At the proof, however, given by Hagar at that trying moment, of her deep love and feminine devotion, the breast of the scholar rose with such painful convulsions, as must in another instant have betrayed them, had he not been relieved by a gush of tears. The burning drops fell upon the hand of her father ; but the old man remained as calm and firm as a statue. As for the attempt upon her life it was so sudden

and unlooked for, that there was no time for interference even by a cry.

“All goeth well,” said the Jew, when the door had shut. “I feel that the God of Israel is on our side. In a little while they will come forth again, and when they are gone, I myself will enter.”

“And I also,” added David.

“Hast thou not something else to do before hand?”

“I like it not,” replied the scholar. “The slave will doubtless seek my roost, for the purpose of murdering me in my sleep; and if he return, his account of my absence, where flight seems impossible, will cause the very tower to be searched, and so we should be discovered. Yet I like it not—for he saved the life of Hagar!”

“And for what purpose? Because it is the living whom his master lusteth to dishonour, and not the dead! Let that thought nerve thee—but hush! they come.”

The door opened, and De Briqueville and the slave reappeared, the former muttering and grumbling, as he walked.

"I do not understand these women," said he, "and never did in all my life. Their flesh is as soft and smooth as the leaf of a lilly; and yet I could as easily persuade three men, in full harness, to do what they did not choose as one of them! However, she is safe enough now, and I wash my hands of her. Go first, sirrah, and light me up the stairs. I never could abide the looks of the dumb villain; and I will have nothing to do with his present errand. David should have swung to-morrow on the gallows, if condemned to death, for then it would have been the baron's affair: but to slay a sleeping man in his bed goes against my conscience. Well, well, if this night were once over, I trust we shall all be quiet and happy to-morrow!"

When the sound of his voice was lost in the staircase, Caleb pressed strongly the hand of his companion.

"In case we meet not again," said he, "I bid thee farewell. Thou shalt inherit my wealth, and my laboratory, with all its utensils and materials

for the great search, which thou knowest, could hardly be bought with gold.”

“If you are slain,” replied the scholar, “and if I escape, I shall keep your wealth in trust for your orphan. But, as for the Miraculous Stone, and the Elixir Vitæ, I tell you plainly I have done with them. Among the secrets I have learnt in my apprenticeship are these: that human life is long enough as it is; and that gold, except in the moderate quantity required for ordinary purposes, and attainable by honest industry, is the most useless of all commodities. And now, farewell; if I get over yonder grewsome business in time, I shall join you in your ambushade.” The Jew then wrung his hand once more, and entered the tower—shutting and bolting the door after him, as David, to his great wrath and amazement could distinctly hear!

“That is not in the paction!” cried the indignant scholar, knocking loudly. “Do you forget your age and infirmities, and will you trust the salvation of Hagar to so weak an arm?” But it

was vain to remonstrate. The sullen echoes of the place were the only reply to his blows; and, in the midst of all, the slave, with a lamp in one hand, and his long dagger glittering in the other, re-entered the vault.

David crossed his hands upon his bosom, and stood immoveable, looking towards the assassin; who, after a moment's scrutiny, came stealthily towards him, rising upon his tiptoes, at every step, as if about to spring, while his eye-balls glared in the red light of the lamp, like those of a beast of prey. No words were wasted; for one of the party could neither hear nor answer. They held communion only with the faculty of sight; and David's calm, but observant, glance was not withdrawn from the eye of the slave even to wink.

When the latter had come near his intended victim, he stepped aside, circling round him, like a bird of prey; while the scholar moved at the same time, as if turning slowly on a pivot. When the slave was at length within striking distance, he dropped the lamp suddenly, and sprang; but, as if the form before him had been but incorporal air,

he darted through the space where it had seemed to stand, and almost in the same moment, the dagger of the student was three times sheathed in his body.

David, as soon as he had ascertained that the wretch had ceased to breathe, drew him away; and, groping as well as he could in the dark, deposited the body in the package which had so nearly been Caleb's coffin, and fastened down the lid. He then ascended the stair, half hoping, since this adventure had terminated so well, that on regaining his tower of observation, he might see the expedition of Douglas crossing the swamp.

When he reached the door of the laboratory, however, he found it locked; and he was under the necessity of retracing his steps in the dark, to take the key from the dead man. This, firm as were David's nerves, was more difficult than to snatch the life from its casket; and his hand was far less steady when dabbling in the blood he had shed, than when grasping the dagger with which he had struck the blow.

But he at length reached the corridor in safety;

when he found that the enchanted silence of the castle was at an end. The tramp of the guard was distinctly heard without, and calling voices, and clapping doors within. Was he alone to remain inactive? How could he tell that Orosmandel would return by the private apartments, and thus afford him an opportunity, either by craft or force, of descending by the study? He crept out upon the roof of the tower by his skylight window. The night was dark; the swamp was covered as with a veil; the wind had arisen, and swept, with a low moaning sound, along the waste.

A sound, notwithstanding, came upon his ear, which was different from the accustomed noises of night. It came from the abyss; and the veil which covered it began to move tumultuously. The scholar waited no longer; but, seeking his nightly egress of the turning-stone, he glided down the stair, like a shadow passing along the wall.

CHAPTER X.

THE sounds heard by David were, in all probability, occasioned by the return of the Magician, and his cortege, from their broken sabbath; for at the same moment, Hagar heard the rampart-door of the tower open. Her prison was a small, but well-furnished room, on the ground floor, of which even the party walls were of enormous thickness. The door, like all the rest in this portion of the castle, was strengthened with iron, and on the present occasion, was locked on the outside. A single window, too narrow to admit the body even of a child, threw a dim light into the apartment.

Hagar, when she fully recovered her recollection, did not regret the loss of her dagger; nor did the

observant glance, which she threw round the room, inquire whether any substitute were at hand. The preservation of her life appeared to her to partake of the miraculous. It was a direct interposition of God himself; and, believing herself to be in hands so powerful to save, she now awaited the event, rather in awe and wonder than in fear. This, however, was not the uniform mood of her mind. Mingling with her religious confidence, there came fits of faintness and trembling; and pangs of terror shot ever and anon through her heart, even in its moments of loftiest enthusiasm.

Her enthusiasm, however, partook no more of that hue which glorifies the dreams of woman. David was slain, and the current of her life had changed. Her crushed heart could emit no tears. Sick of the daylight, she fixed her eyes on the darkness of the grave; and the boon she looked for at the hands of Providence, was to descend therein pure and unblemished. The doubt, however, which occasionally swept across her mind, as to whether this boon would be granted—and, perhaps, even a small and lurking hope which

sprung up, unconsciously to herself, that the tale of her lover's fate was untrue—prevented her from sinking completely into the apathy of despair.

The dread of Prelati had been early instilled into her mind. She had seen her father tremble before him like an infant; and she had observed on all things around her, the impress of his irresistible power. At his command, the hoards of the avaricious Jew had poured themselves at his feet; and Caleb, without a tinge of inhumanity in his disposition, had given up the blood of his dependants, one by one, to the same inexorable master. Beauty was rather the toy, than the serious desire of this unfathomable being—the toy which a child plays with for one moment, and breaks in pieces the next. His passions were not the lords, but the slaves, of his judgment; and when he designed to permit them gratification, it was like a chief, who calmly and scornfully gives up to the fury of his soldiery a conquered city.

When she heard the outer door of the tower open, a chill, like that of death, ran through her frame. She stood transfixed upon the floor,

breathless, motionless, and glaring towards the wall, as if she saw beyond it. Two persons entered. She heard their footsteps; she heard the breath of their lips—it seemed as if at that moment her ear, sharpened by intense terror, could have distinguished the waving of their hair! One, she knew, was Orosmandel, the other the dwarf. Was there yet a third? The door moved—it shut. Hagar fell, first on her knees, then on her face; and tears of weakness, rather than of joy, gushed from her eyes.

Calmly, yet sternly, the philosopher passed on, throwing a brief glance towards the room. He ascended a stair which led to his private apartments, and entered the one immediately under his study. This seemed to be the retreat of pleasure refined by taste. Elegance, combined with luxury, reigned around; and so well adapted was the very magnificence of the place, that an idea of fitness rather than splendour was conveyed. A sofa, covered with the richest velvet, embroidered with gold, appeared to be used as a bed, the scantiness of space permitting no separate chamber; and the

curtains of the narrow windows were voluminous folds of the same material, corresponding in colour and workmanship.

“All is over,” said Orosmandel, throwing himself upon the couch, “and the catastrophe hath turned out somewhat different from my expectation. How came it that thou, who canst hear a gossamer thread breaking under a flake of snow, knewest nothing of the presence of a witness? Art thou tired of my protection? Wouldst thou try the world without me? Wouldst thou sell thy weakling body to some strolling brotherhood of the Passion? or buy thee a jackanapes, and earn copper pieces by puzzling the crowd to tell which is which?”

“I knew not of the witness,” growled the dwarf, “and that is enough. But even were it a fault not to hear a man breathe at two hundred yards distance, I can afford to bear it. I! I did not fly from an unloaded culverine!—I did not lose a treasure, when attacked by inferior force—ha! ha! thou art indeed a fit organ of reproof! Protection! What do I give thee in return? Is it for myself

that I travail? Is it to gratify my own evil passions that I traverse the earth like a wind which beareth pestilence on its wings?"

"If my passions be evil," said Orosmandel, with a sardonic smile, "still they are passions; and that is excuse enough for my deviations from what the vulgar name virtue. But thou!—who gatherest in what thou canst not hold, and destroyest what thou canst not feed upon—how shalt thou be justified?"

"Why, that is it!" cried the dwarf, his limbs shaking with rage, and his eyes flashing with a baleful light. "That is the excuse which might justify the blackest devil in hell! Does the lame man help his neighbour along, or bear him down with his weight? Does the sick man exhale health, or disease, upon those who surround him? A speck, a blot on the face of nature—a loathing, a hissing, and a horror among the human race—is it *I* who should labour for the happiness of mankind, and the order and beauty of creation? Look here—I am a man as well as thou! There, where thou sittest, is the frame which the old sculptors

embodied from the whispers of their dreaming mistress. ~~There are the limbs which~~ the original Mother sometimes moulds, to show that even the visions of poetry have their source in her. There is the brow, encircled by that starry halo of command, before which all meaner creatures fall prostrate in the dust. Now look on this—ha! ha! ha! Are these legs made for any thing but to spurn? Are these nails—or talons? Are these hands for rending or embracing? Are these eyes for the smile of love and pity, or the glare of hatred and revenge? But the curse was not enough! I was made supple, that my gambols might draw down the laughter of mankind upon my head; crafty, that the passer-by might spring out of my path, and turning round, pursue me with shouts and stones: but the strength to execute followed not with the will to dare, and the thirst of vengeance; and so was I turned into the crowd of my fellow men, to endure their scorn, even when doing my utmost to deserve their hate!"

"It is enough. In me thou hast found an ally

sufficient to make up for the unkindness of nature. Watch better in future; for if I am the directing mind, thou art the faculties of sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell, which it sendeth forth for observation."

"And Prelati is the active force, the energy, the body, as it were? Good, good. But it is *not* enough. I know not why I should recall these things now—but they will come. Who would think, to look on us, that the same minute ushered us into life—that the same womb gave us birth—that we hung at the same breast! Thou!—ha! ha!—*thou* art my brother! *Why* was this? What crime had I committed against nature ere I was born, that, step-dame like, she should have mixed all the bitterness in my cup, and all the sweets in thine? Answer me that!"

"Thou art somewhat mistaken," replied Orosmandel. "In me the passions are stronger, because more practical, than in thee; and their disappointment, therefore, hath a bitterer sting. Ambition, for instance, which can find but little place in thy bosom, is the god of mine. Had

Prelati succeeded in his attempt upon the Damsel of Laval, through her it would have been easy to have obtained her weak father's forgiveness—and then no island of the ocean would have held his greatness! If to-night I had but once steeped her hands in guilt—she was ours, body and soul! That Demon, in whom I devoutly believe, although his abiding-place is not the empty air, but the minds of men, would then have truly come when called upon. I should have restored, by the magic of my will, the vanished hoards of Gilles de Retz. By the wisdom of my counsels, insured by thy omnipresence, and enforced by a sword which never yet met its equal, I should have scattered his enemies; and when it pleased the baron, in some speedy moment, to withdraw into a grave, or a cloister, it would hardly have dazzled the eyes of the victorious Prelati—the husband of his heiress—to look towards the ducal crown itself!” Orosmandel, appearing to forget his age in the picture thus conjured up by his imagination, started from the sofa, and with a burning cheek, and flashing eye,

walked with a warrior's stride through the apartment. www.libtool.com.cn

“Didst thou love her?” said the dwarf, with curiosity. “Is the sting of that passion left rankling in thy heart with the other?”

“As a man loves the hand that smites him—the tongue that reviles him—the eye and lip that scorn him! The day will yet come, when she shall repay with tears of blood, the years which Prelati hath spent in her pursuit! But enough of this. It is now almost our time. Is the boat ready? Where is the slave?”

“All is ready; and the slave is doubtless with the boat.”

“Armstrong, then, is disposed of?”

“His bottle of wine was, as usual, half empty when the dinner-things were removed; and thou knowest our friend Iglou loves the use of his dagger too well to make half work.”

“It is well.”

“He was too sharp for his vocation,” added the dwarf, with a grin. “Such as he do not deserve

to live; for they can answer no purpose but to interrupt the business of life. Besides, he scorned and gibed at me. Had my presence not been required at the intended sacrifice, I should have loved to have dealt with him myself, between sleeping and waking."

"Yet it is not for such demerits he hath perished," said Orosmandel; "for our sojourn here was at an end, and so was his vocation. But he loved Hagar, and the Jewess loved him."

"And thou? Thou lovest her not? Thou wilt carry her with us, only as a hold, should circumstances render it convenient to use it, upon the purse of her father?"

"Thou art mistaken. At first it was curiosity—interest—then admiration of her courage, and loftiness of mind which beset me. I saw that she was beautiful; and that, if fairly tutored, she might be useful. I marked her for my own; and when Gilles de Retz would, as usual, have taken the lion's share, I swore to foil him. She shall be mine, and remain so, if all her father's gold were ten times told down as a ransom. With the wealth I

have heaped up, and now safe at Florence, and Hagar for my mistress, I shall by and by cease to regret the time we have spent at La Verrière."

"Calculate not too surely," said the dwarf. "This is an unlucky night, and the Jewess is as slippery as an eel. Once in the open air, I should not wonder if she vanished like a shadow—thanking thee in her heart for her escape from the Lord de Retz!"

"She shall be mine," replied Orosmandel, "*ere she reach the open air!* Mine within these walls, were an army beating at the door! Mine, now and for ever! To be foiled once in a single night is enough, and more than I am accustomed to. Go, liberate the flutterer from the cage, where she doubtless is, since its gate is fastened on the outside, and send her hither." The dwarf received the mandate with a discordant laugh, which resembled a succession of screams.

"Get all things ready for departure," continued Orosmandel, "when I give the signal. I will myself lead Hagar to the boat."

When the dwarf had left the room, Oros-

mandel continued standing in the same attitude for some time, looking towards the door. Although his features were not so tranquil as hitherto, and a deep flush had risen to the brow, yet so much of a proud dignity remained, that, even setting aside the question of age, no one could have imagined that, at the moment, he meditated a deed of frightful violence. As he heard the soft footsteps of Hagar ascending the stair, he withdrew several paces back into the room; and when she entered, he received her with a bend of the head, at once graceful and commanding.

Hagar, after throwing a quick glance round the apartment, appeared to be somewhat re-assured; and she advanced several paces, crossing her hands upon her bosom, and bowing low before the master of her fate. When she raised her head, however, there was an expression in her face, which seemed to move the surprise of Orosmandel. There was less fear than he had anticipated, and also less courage of the mind. When the slight, momentary agitation, which she had experienced at the door, had passed away, a deep and death-like still-

ness descended upon her features—an air of desolateness, rather than of grief.

“Thy handmaid is here,” said she, in a low, calm voice, whose calmness was not that of peace.

“Dost thou guess why?” asked Orosmandel.

“Doubtless, to pay my thanks for my rescue from the hands of Gilles de Retz, and to arrange with thee the terms of the ransom which shall deliver me up in safety to my father.”

“Thou art mistaken. I value thee at too high a price to permit thy departure.”

“The Jew is rich, and so are all our kin! But, even were it otherwise, thou wilt not distress an old man for his daughter? Thou hast indeed the solitary look of one who knoweth not the ties of blood; yet thou hast no baseness in thy mien, and no cruelty in thine eye; and the many winters which have shed their snows upon thy beard, must have brought with them lessons of mercy to thy heart. Send me away, I beseech thee, in the name of the Most High God, from this den of horrors—in the guilt of which it is impossible that thou canst participate!”

“Horrors! What are these horrors? Thy cheek is as pale as a monument of Parian marble, the transparency of which showeth only cold, hard stone within; thine eyes beam not with natural light, but with the enchanted flame which hath brightness and no heat; and thy voice is even as a memory of music—a faint, hollow, lifeless echo of tones that have passed away! What blight hath fallen upon thy heart? Thy father liveth, and no death hath taken place since I saw thee last—save one.” The Jewess started. A flush rose to her face, and instantaneously faded away, into a more death-like paleness than before.

“Heed not my words,” she cried. “Grant me my prayer—or shew me thy commands.”

“What aileth thee? I talked of the youth who served in my laboratory. Thou art too proud to have loved such as he; and thou art too pure to permit thy cheek to flush at the idea of any man.”

“Sir,” said Hagar, “the love of the dead cannot be otherwise than pure! He was a stranger—even as I. For me he perilled his life—and lost it!” Her voice faltered; but it was only for an

instant: "On this subject," she continued, almost sternly, "we twain can have no mutual interest. I pray thee, once more, let us to business."

"Thou art a splendid creature, Hagar!" said the philosopher, looking at her admiringly: "There is more within thee, than the common vapour which women call their soul. I would thou hadst not loved this youth;—and yet, if I judge thee aright, thy mind is still stronger than the passion it contained. Were it possible, I would give thy wound time, and trust to nature for a cure: but just now, the moments are precious; and those who deal with the soul have their violent remedies, as well as the mediciners of the body. I remember, in earlier years, I loved a woman, who was fair and young, and whose case resembled thine. Dost thou smile at my white beard?"

"I smile not at all."

"She loved a youth, lofty enough, if compared with the mass of mankind, but far below her in the scale of intellectual being. She was one of those rare creatures, in whom thou canst not tell where

body endeth, and spirit beginneth. She was instinct, one would have imagined, with thought, instead of animal life. The very tone of her voice, the touch of her hand, spoke directly, as it were, and not through the agency of the senses, to the mind; and the sound of her foot, as it touched the earth, resembled the low, light wind, when it whispers mysterious things among the leaves. Such she was—or such I imagined her to be: and that in love, thou knowest, is the same. Now, this youth he comprehended her not. He thought of her only as of one of the daughters of men, and of her beauty as of the beauty of women. Yet he stood in my path; for the damsel, ignorant that among mankind there were spirits kindred with her own, loved him. What then was there to be done? My destiny called me away to other climes, and there was no time to allow her to find out her delusion. Canst thou guess what I did?"

"I cannot guess."

"I slew him."

"God of mercy! Thou!"

"I bore her away in my arms; revived her crushed heart, till it smiled and budded anew; opened out to her new worlds of thought, and prouder vistas of ambition; and this magnificent creature, who, in the arms of my rival, would have turned to clay, in mine became one of those spirit-women, to whom the antique world erected altars, and offered up sacrifices!" Orosmandel looked at her with a gaze so intense, and so dazzlingly bright, that he seemed to have not only the desire, but the power, to read her inmost soul.

"What thinkest thou of it?" said he.

"As of a deed abhorred of God and man," she replied solemnly. "But it was perpetrated in thy hot youth, when even the proudest reason is sometimes obscured by passion; and, judging by the accustomed serenity of thy brow of age, I feel that thou hast long since repented of thy crime, and received forgiveness and peace!"

"I thank thee," said Orosmandel, with a smile, which made her look at him with surprise. "Both thou and I have spoken, at least partly, in anticipa-

tion; and with the prospect before me of such future calm, I may now follow out what I have commenced with an untroubled mind."

"What meanest thou? Have I heard aright?"

"Thou hast heard thy fate in that of the imagined love of my earlier years."

"This is phrensy! Thou! Dost thou jest with a heart like mine—before the blood of him it loved is yet cold?"

"Hagar, it is no jest! If I afford thee not time, it is no fault of mine, but of circumstances over which I have no control. The moment approaches, when I must fly from this house—and with thee. Not to fly would be to give myself up to the death; and to fly without thee would be to render life worthless. Thou art wise as well as beautiful. Embrace willingly the fate thou canst not avoid; and so change passion into love, and strengthen love with gratitude!"

"Dost thou mock me?" cried the Jewess, her surprise lost in indignation, which had something fierce as well as majestic—"Willingly! And with thee!—whose soul is freshly stained with

blood dearer than my own ! Hence, coward, nor dare to raise thy craven eyes to the face of woman ! Hence, [murderer](http://www.libtool.com.cn), to thy skulking-place, with horror at thy heels, and scorn hissing in thine ears !”

“Damsel,” said Orosmandel, stepping suddenly forward, and grasping her by the arm, “thou hast nerved my heart, which even now began to plead in thy behalf. Besides, thou art more beautiful in anger than in despair. The glow of life hath revisited thy cheek, and all the woman flasheth in thine eyes ; thy bosom panteth and swelleth to the touch ; thy limbs round, and expand, with passion —Nay ! it is in vain to struggle ; and thou feelest that it is so. See, I confine not thine arm more closely than with the soft pressure of love ; and yet an armourer’s hammer could scarcely undo the clasp. I but now thought to fly with thee first, and then woo thee to be mine. My plan is changed. Thou shalt be mine now, and we shall fly afterwards.”

“Dreadful man ! add not to the guilt which hath already brought thy soul to perdition. Use not

the miraculous strength with which heaven hath endowed thee in the transgression of its laws. O shame! O horror! think of thy white hairs! I might be the daughter of thy daughter! In the eyes of thy people, I am of an unclean race!"

"What is age," exclaimed Orosmandel, whose face was now fiery red, "if it chill neither the body nor the soul? But yet to throw off a score, or two, of years methinks is no heavy miracle for love!"—and, tearing away his cloak, his beard, his eyebrows, he stood before her, on the instant, a man in the prime of life, cased in the hauberk of a knight.

"Lost! lost!" cried the Jewess; and her screams rent the air: but they suddenly ceased when she knew, from the dull, heavy sound given back by the massive walls and impenetrable door, that all hope of being heard was vain. As she gazed on the apparition before her, the light forsook her eye, and the colour her cheek; her form seemed to sink, and her heart to die within her; and although her eyes were open to an unnatural extent, she seemed more to have an

inward consciousness of the presence of her enemy, than to see him with the external organs of vision.

“How dost thou like the metamorphosis?” demanded the knight.

“As I like a bad man,” she replied, in a hollow voice, “changed into a fiend of the abyss! Will not money win thee to mercy—money that will buy thee whole years of pleasure? Will my blood not save me?—for thou art greedy alike of blood and of gold. Speak, Prelati, wilt thou indeed consummate a life of crime by a deed so coward-like and so atrocious? A man! Thou a man!”

“Ay, and a bold one!” cried Prelati, who was hastily releasing himself from his hauberk, and the other heavier pieces of armour—“or I should not trust myself thus with a desperate woman. Not for years before have I dared to doff this harness—not even within these walls; and now, methinks, my muscles play with a new life, as if they rejoiced at their emancipation.”

At this moment a knock was heard at the door.

“Make haste,” said the dwarf from without;

“for there are sounds abroad, which I know not of; and the night being now at its darkest, the moment of our departure hath arrived.”

“Presently,” replied Prelati. “Were an army before the walls, or even the secret of the swamp discovered, we should be safe here for hours, and be able still to command access to the river. And now, Hagar, thou art mine!”

Another long, wild scream broke from her lips, as he approached.

“Father of mercies!” she exclaimed, shutting her eyes, and clasping her hands upon her bosom, “Do thou give ear unto my cry, for man will not hear me! Help, thou Hearer of Prayer! Arise, O Holy One of Israel, for thine own name’s sake!”

As she uttered these words, Prelati had approached close beside her; and she sank, powerless, and almost senseless—not into his arms, but at his feet. At the instant he had been about to clasp her, he felt a sudden sting of pain, he knew not, in the tumultuous confusion of his thoughts, of

what nature, and a voice behind rang, like a knell, in his ears: www.libtool.com.cn

“The Lord, he is the God!” it cried—“The Lord, he is the God!”—and at every word, the long knife of Caleb the Jew darted deep into the vitals of the ravisher. Prelati sprang round, too late for life, but not too late for vengeance. With the last convulsive energies of nature, he caught up the unresisting Jew, and whirled him over his daughter’s head against the wall; and then, staggering back to the farther end of the apartment, he sank down upon the floor.

The senses of Hagar had not completely fled; and this surprising event recalled her at once to life and recollection. A single bewildered glance, indeed, round the room told the confusion of her thoughts—her amazement at the apparently preternatural appearance of her deliverer—and even her doubt as to the condition of her own intellects. But in one moment this was over; and in the next, she was seated on the ground, with her father’s grey head in her lap, and immersed in all the cares

and attentions which, in sickness, and at the hour of death, render her a ministering angel, who was before only a woman.

No cares nor attentions, however, were of any avail: the Jew sunk rapidly; and in a few moments, Hagar saw that she was to be alone in the world.

“Speak,” she whispered, “O my father! Show unto me thy last commands; for the seal of death is on thy brow.”

“I am slain,” said Caleb feebly, “but not by him. I arose from a bed of death, to save, or avenge thee. The transitory strength of my arm was from a drug; and that of my heart from above. Away, my daughter, and open the door which leadeth into the stores.”

“Father, I cannot leave thee!”

“There wilt thou perhaps find the young man, David.”

“Alas, alas! it is thou who goest where thou shalt find him!”

“Away, I command thee; for I cannot die till I know that thou hast one friend upon the earth.”

As Hagar darted down the stair, to obey her father, a hollow, rumbling noise resounded through the apartments below; and she paused for an instant, as she found that this proceeded from an attempt to force the door which she was directed to open. There was no time, however, to think; and besides, a wild hope had sprung suddenly up in her heart. She withdrew the bolt—and in an instant was in the arms of her lover.

“My God, I thank thee!” cried the scholar. A gush of tears from the full heart of Hagar thanked God too for her risen-again.

“Tell me all,” said he, “and in one moment. Is Prelati here?” She ascended the stair, yet weeping.

“There,” said she, “is all!” and David comprehended the scene in an instant.

“Hast thou hope of escape?” demanded the Jew.

“Yes—hope. But the struggle is even now going on; and, having seen that Hagar is safe, I must away to rejoin it.”

“Go then, and may the Lord of Hosts fight on

thy side. I bless thee, O my son, as fervently as I curse——”

“Curse him not!” cried Hagar, throwing herself suddenly upon her knees. “Enter not the presence of the Father of mercies with such a thought in thy heart ! Tell me that thou forgivest him, I entreat—I implore thee ! Tell me, with thy last breath, that thou art fit to meet thy God ; for the films of death are already closing over thine eyes !”

“Is he dead ?” said Caleb, faintly.

“Not yet. But thou forgivest him ?”

“I would I could live to hear that he was dead ! Yes, yes, I forgive him, in the hope that God will forgive me.”

“With thy whole heart — with thy whole soul ?”

“Yes, yes. Art thou sure he is dying ? If I could but live——” but the words died on his tongue, and his head fell back. Hagar put her lips to his ear, and continued to whisper comfort and exhortation.

David, in the meantime, who had crossed the

room, treading on the Magician's disguise, which lay upon the floor, stood gazing, with mingled feelings upon Prelati, who yet breathed, although the damps of death had settled on his brow. Suddenly, a ray of returning animation appeared on the wounded man's features, and he signed to the spectator to stoop down. His efforts to speak, however, were for some moments unavailing; but at length he uttered, in feeble, interrupted accents, these words :

"Knowest thou whether my brother—whether the dwarf—hath escaped?"

"I saw him spring through the crowd of my friends," replied David, "as they climbed up the ramparts, and then he vanished upon the swamp." A gleam of satisfaction spread, like sunlight, over the face of the dying man, and then slowly melted away. He spoke no more. No other change took place in the expression of his features; and no man can tell what was the nature of his last thoughts.

"He is dead!" said David solemnly, and he turned away.

“Dead!” cried the Jew, raising his head, with a sudden effort, and striving to look across the room, through the films of death. “Dead! and by my hand!—ha! ha! ha! The destroyer! the invulnerable! Hagar, I forgive him now! ha! ha! ha!” And Caleb, suffocated by the exulting laugh which mingled with the death-rattle in his throat, gave up the ghost.

CHAPTER XI.

IF David had not descended to the hall, after his successful duel with the slave, the attempt of Douglas and Beauchamp upon the castle would, in all probability, have failed. Immediately after the return of the Magician, and his cortege, he found Nigel and Bauldy fighting their way desperately, and almost in the dark, to the door, which was already attacked by the surprise party. The odds were so great against them, that even the accession of the master-scholar, as an individual, would not have saved their lives; but, in addition to his stout arm, he brought to their aid a prestige, before which all who saw him fled in dismay. The door, which no efforts from without could have

forced, was speedily thrown open to the invaders, who entered, at the moment when the alarm had been sounded from post to post upon the walls, and the whole strength of the garrison was crowding to the spot.

It is a remarkable indication of the state of mind that night of Gilles de Retz, that he heard not the rushing of armed men through his house, nor the cries for mercy, and shrieks of pain and terror, which filled the air. When Douglas and Beauchamp entered the room at the same moment, sword in hand, he was sitting at the farther end, in an attitude of stupor, his face as bloodless as that of a corpse, and his eyes fixed. Pauline was stretched upon the floor, her head resting upon a footstool, her arms clasped round one of his legs, and fast asleep !

“What would ye?” cried the baron, starting up, and laying his hand mechanically upon his sword.

“We have come, my lord,” said Douglas, “for the purpose of saving your daughter from a fate too horrible to think of; and it is our purpose to

remove her this night to the ducal court for protection."

"*How* have you come?" cried the baron, in a voice of thunder. "Are my people traitors, and are both heaven and hell against me?"

"Your people are true," replied Sir Archibald, "and a warrant having been issued against you, charging you with dreadful crimes, you will speedily have need of all their valour and fidelity. We have surprised your castle by a secret path across the swamp."

"One of the many means, my lord," added David, who had now entered the room, "which have been used to delude and destroy you!" The baron dropped his sword at these words, and sank down upon the seat, trembling and aghast.

It was evident that the sleep of the Damsel of Laval, was the effect of the drugs with which they had attempted to work upon her mind; but Beauchamp, who had no clew to explain it, looked with wonder upon the scene, and with still more wonder, upon the comparative coolness of Douglas.

He proposed, notwithstanding, that, since the lady could take no part in the affair, it should be left to the decision of her father, which of them should have the honour of her escort. This was agreed to; and the Lord de Retz, to whose ear the name of Beauchamp was familiar in the later wars of Brittany, had extended his hand to designate him as the one he chose, when Andrew entered the room.

“Choose *him*,” said he, walking up solemnly to Gilles de Retz, and pointing to Douglas, “*in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost !*” and the baron obeyed.

An unwilling truce was now established with the garrison out of doors, although it threatened to be of short duration. Not one of the soldiers could comprehend that this amicable arrangement was proposed with the serious concurrence of Gilles de Retz. They believed him to be a prisoner : ignorant that his only chains were a paralysis of the soul ; and by and by, they were seen re-assembling in large groups, and dragging culverines to a part

of the walls which would command the embarkation.

All things were at length ready. Pauline de Laval, Hagar, with the body of her father, and Felicité, were placed in the same boat—when it was discovered that Jacquin Houpelande was missing. The echevin, when the first alarm of the attack was over, and all things were going on smoothly, had occasioned some discussion even among his friends, by insisting upon carrying his property back with him. Beauchamp had strictly prohibited his men from taking booty; and David had promised so large an indemnity to Sir Archibald's followers—to the knight's unspeakable astonishment, it should be said—that they also gladly consented to forbear. Jacquin, however, argued, that the goods, as they were not paid for, were his own, and by no means the spoil of battle; and at length, by the consent of the Lord de Retz himself, he obtained the leave he sought. He had now been gone long enough to have effected his purpose, leaving Felicité in the care of Bauldy; and

it was only when the patience of the party had been exhausted, and their fears awakened by the hostile dispositions on the part of the garrison, that he made his appearance.

“Are the bales coming?” asked Bauldy. “A boat is ready for them, and we have not another moment to lose.”

“Push off!—push off!” cried the echevin, stepping in and sitting down beside him, with a bewildered and ghastly look.

“And the bales?”

“Let them go! I wash my hands of them! O holy and immaculate Mother, to think of the devices of Satan! What think you my rich cloths, and gold and silver trimmings, have turned into? Another man would have fainted upon the spot; but I looked on for more than half an hour, without moving my eyes even to wink.”

“And what did you look at?” cried more than one voice, eagerly.

“Why, at a corpse—stark, stiff, and black-aviced, and weltering in blood!”

“What, in all the bales?”

“In all, as I am a sinner! This it is to work for a MAGICIAN.

The boats were at length fairly under weigh, and floating down the river; but, even when all fear of interruption from the garrison had passed away, the party continued to gaze in silent awe upon the castle of La Verrière, as it slowly receded from their eyes. As the circumstances of his strange apprenticeship passed in review before David's mind, he needed the spectacle of the dead body of the Jew, with its head resting upon Hagar's lap, to convince him of their reality. The Third Victim had been redeemed from the horns of the altar—and at the exact cost predicted in the superstitions of the peasantry! Messire Jean, able no more to pay his tribute to the Demon under whom he had fallen, had broken the bond at the forfeit of his own life!

Apart from the rest of the garrison, on an angle of the ramparts, there stood a solitary figure; and on this the eyes of Pauline were fixed with a wildness of gaze which might have seemed to partake of insanity. As the boat receded, she rose up, and

bent so eagerly forward, that she must have fallen but for the support of Douglas. At length the figure on the ramparts moved, and the right hand was extended towards her. A scream broke from the lips of Pauline at the sight—

“My father blesses me!” she cried, and sank fainting into the arms of her lover.

THE reader may expect, in this place, some account of Prelati; but we have none to give. It is supposed, but even this is not fully known, that he was a Florentine by birth, and of good family. His education must have been a brilliant one for the age; and he must have fallen very early—perhaps when yet a child—into hands skilful to pervert even good and noble qualities to bad uses. His brother, the dwarf, who had talents enough to render lovely and respectable, even an unsightly

form like his, but who fell into the absurd error of supposing the body to be all in all, was never heard of more. If he did not perish that night in the swamp, he must have fled the country.

Their hoard of ill-gotten wealth was found at Florence, by David Armstrong—who did not leave La Verrière without possessing himself of the papers of Prelati; and some years after, it formed part of the rich dowry brought to his friend Douglas by the heiress of Gilles de Retz. The lapse of time which took place before the marriage of the knight was not considered by him as a misfortune. He had never contemplated aspiring to her hand, however eager he might have been to win her love, till he had rendered himself worthy of his fate, by distinguishing himself in arms. This consummation at length gradually came; and although some men laughed at his chivalrous punctilios, in an age when the loftiness of chivalry was a tale and a dream; yet all allowed that nobler deeds of valour and generosity had never been performed—

“Since the old Douglas’ day.”

When the time was expired allotted for mourning among the Jews, David Armstrong and Hagar bade adieu to their friends, and turned their faces towards a far and foreign land.

“The time will come,” said the ex-scholar, “when men will judge of their fellows by their deeds; and when it will be left to God to inquire whether or not he is worshipped in forms agreeable to him. Yet it is, indeed, a delightful thing, and beneficial to the soul, to have the same form of religion, as well as the same habits of taste, with her we love; and I trust that my example will induce no child of mine to look out for a wife, except among those whom he meets at the foot of the Cross. But, in the extraordinary circumstances in which we have been placed, I could see in Hagar only a woman: and after all, if she believe not in the man Jesus, is not her Jehovah the God Jesus? and do we not meet thus in the hour of prayer, and may we not hope to do so after the hour of death?”

It may be doubted whether Jacquin Houpelande would not have refused, after all, the suit of

Bauldy, had it not been for the shock his nerves had sustained at the sight of the dead slave in one of his bales. Had he returned to Nantes with his property, the idea of his own consequence would have come back upon his mind; and he would hardly have thought of matching his daughter with a poor adventurer. But as it was, he felt a positive relief in the alliance; and on the day of the marriage, surrounded by the bold and cheerful Scots, he enjoyed a feeling of security which he thought had been lost for ever.

But the most singular marriage was that of the cool, quiet, sagacious Andrew—with the peasant Marie! The first time he saw her, he was struck in a remarkable manner both with her beauty, and her thoughtful, collected air; and when circumstances, which it is unnecessary to detail, made them better acquainted, he felt justified in the opinion he had then instinctively formed. His first mention of the projected match exposed him to some good-humoured raillery, especially from Nigel, who had determined to follow the fortunes of David, “without encumbrance.”

"And then," continued he, after some mock objections had been answered, "What is the Venus of the proverb to do without Ceres and Bacchus? Suppose Marie brings you children?——"

"Silence, young man!" interrupted the master scholar, with indignation. "Since he loves, let him marry her; and God, and his own industry, to say nothing of David Armstrong, will take care of his family. The children of Marie shall be provided for, if she had as many as Eutyche—and she had thirty!"

Andrew was the only one of the comrades who settled at Nantes; where he rose, assisted by the influence of Douglas, into a station of profit and honour in the service of the Duke. His name, Kerr, in some of the documents of the time, is Frenchified into Caire; and in the following century, one of his descendants, proud, no doubt, of his Scottish ancestry, transmuted it into M'Caire, or Macaire.

Three years after the date of our story, in the month of September, 1440, a procession, of which Gilles de Retz was the hero, passed Andrew's

house. This weak-minded and strong-passioned nobleman had at length been taken, and condemned to the death which his crimes deserved. To these, the superstition of the age added SORCERY; and he who had been only a dupe, was burned for a wizard! Marie, on that dreadful morning, caused the doors and windows of the house to be shut up; and retiring to the room most distant from the street, she fell upon her knees, and remained there, with pale cheek, and mute yet moving lips, till the procession had passed by, and the sound of the death-hymn died away upon her ear.

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N O T E.

A FRENCH critic is surprised, that in so many romances there should be a MAGICIAN, while in not one is there any MAGIC. The reason is, no doubt, that the authors, capable of opening the mystic book have been withheld by those associations which connect the superstitions of infant science with the miraculous stories of our boyhood. The other subjects of vulgar credulity were believed to be less dangerous ground. The dread of spectres, for instance, even in this educated age, is not confined to the professedly ignorant, but exists, in a greater or less degree, in all classes of society ; and therefore no scruple was made, either to withdraw boldly the curtain which separates the two worlds,

or, after working upon the imagination through its instinctive and involuntary fears, to explain frankly the illusions that had governed it.

But, when referring incidently to the operations of ENCHANTMENT, or the popular belief in them, our romancers cautiously abstained from entering into details. The Magician was either a miserable juggler, whose tricks were unworthy of serious explanation, or a grand and shadowy personage, whose sublime pursuits would have become ridiculous, if too closely examined. They did not introduce the reader into the Circle, nor afford him more than a peep of the *smoke* of the Cauldron; and, when interrogated, with indiscreet curiosity,

“What is’t ye do?”

they replied, with the Witches of Shakspeare—

“A deed without a name!”

It seems to me, however, that the influence exercised, in the middle ages, upon the human

mind, by a belief in Magic—to say nothing of its earlier history—would warrant something more. I have even thought, that in describing the manners of the French nation in the fifteenth century, it was *necessary* to afford a large and important space to the superstition which delivered up the immortal Virgin of Dom-Remi to the flames. I considered, that a delusion operating so deeply upon the destinies of man, even when treated in its most grotesque details, could not be looked upon as contemptible. In the history of the too famous Gilles de Retz, I found unoccupied ground, and all the materials I could desire for my conjurations; and, in the shadowy portrait it was my business to draw of the Personage who really governed the fate of that remarkable criminal, I thought I should not offend probability by mingling with his own individuality the historical features of his class.

What these features were may be discovered with very little research.

It is needless to repeat the arguments which have been so frequently used, to prove that Magic, in early times, was nothing more than a knowledge

of the natural sciences. Moses was a still better magician than the priests of Pharaoh. Even without the divine assistance, he could have beat them at their own arts; or, in the poetical phraseology of his history, the rod of Aaron would have swallowed up theirs. This, however, would have gained him nothing but the crown of martyrdom; for the king himself was of the adverse sect, and was by no means dismayed at the occasional success of the strangers. It was the God of Israel who assisted the "enchantments" of the Hebrew sage by miracles, and thus drew forth the chosen people out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage.

In those days, and long before and after, the sciences were hidden in the temples, and that god was the greatest whose priests were the most learned. The whole progress of the Israelites is a religious struggle; and the first and greatest commandment given to this fickle and ignorant people is, "Thou shalt have no other gods but Me." Their frequent disobedience, notwithstanding the magnitude of the miracles of God, as compared

with the juggleries of the pagan priests, can only be explained, by supposing what was no doubt the case, that the latter were expressly and skilfully adapted for the purposes of delusion and imposition. Moses himself was too well acquainted with the men he had to deal with to disdain the use of artifice. The column of flame, for instance, seen by night, and of smoke by day, arose, in all probability, from the sacred fire carried before the ark; and it could not have been intended to serve as a pilot through the wilderness, since Hobab was entertained expressly for this purpose—"to be to them instead of eyes."

The knowledge of the priesthood was carefully retained within their own body. In general, it was guaranteed by tremendous oaths; and their secrets were written in unknown tongues, in ciphers inexplicable without a key, in languages composed of emblems. Their books were kept in the innermost recesses of the temple, and hedged round from curiosity by mysterious denunciations.

Men thus set apart from their fellows imbibed a peculiar character. *They were themselves the god :*

for it is not to be supposed that they believed in an idol in whose service they were every day employing the truths of science for the purposes of deception. Elevated far above the ignorant crowd by whom they were surrounded, their chief characteristic was a disregard of human life and human feelings. They trampled upon the ties by which they were not bound themselves. They poured blood upon their altars like water. Human sacrifices are common to almost all the early religions; and Abraham himself was neither surprised nor horrified at the command to slay his only son for a burnt offering.

At the gradual intermingling of the East with the West, of the unstable with the stable form of civilization, Magic necessarily declined in importance. The massacre of the Magi, after the fall of Smerdis, scattered abroad the secrets of the temple. The integrity of the pontifical order in Egypt was broken up by the consequences of the Roman conquest. Christianity, while as yet undebased by the juggles of the clergy, had no mysteries but moral ones; and all men were invited

to enter within its pale without money and without price.

The mystic union of the magi, however, still lived for a while in the various Secret Societies of Europe; and the wandering priest of Egypt, who had fled from his impoverished country, with no other riches than his manuscript of occult science, became the ancestor of the modern Sorcerer, and his magic book.

The portrait I have desired to draw of a Magician, in the foregoing work, comprehends, as I have said, the general historical features of the class; although the individual is a real personage. His magical tricks I have rendered few and unimportant; because the very best I could describe might be performed as well by any natural philosopher of the present day. His moral power, however—and in this I have exaggerated nothing—could only have been acquired and preserved by the union I have assumed to exist, of the highest qualities of intellect with the utmost depravity of mind.

The odours made use of in the Magician's study were well known to the miracle-workers. Jam-

blichus informs us, that certain perfumes rendered the mind more fit to receive the inspiration of the Deity; and Proclus describes a composition of this kind, made up of the amalgamation of various different odours, which was used by the institutors of the ancient priesthood. The property of the fumes of henbane, as disposing to strife and anger, it may be mentioned by way of illustration, is well known to modern medicine. A husband and wife, as is recorded in a French work of science, supposed themselves to be under the influence of witchcraft; because, although agreeing perfectly well on other occasions, they never could remain long at work together without a violent quarrel. On a packet of the troublesome grains being removed from the stove where it lay, peace was instantaneously restored in the family.

Of all the magical agents, fire is the most common. A box of phosphorus—or, still better, of Lucifer—matches, now in the hands of every old woman, would have terrified half the ancient world. Zoroaster, according to Hermippus (in Arnobius), possessed a fiery girdle as well as Orosmandel; but

this, with the aid of any of the pyrophoric substances, might be manufactured in the next street. If Horace had lived in our day, he would not have refused to believe in the miracle operated in the sanctuary of Gnatia, when the incense kindled of its own accord.

Spontaneous combustion sometimes produces as disastrous effects as if it had been the work of sorcery. Some years ago a man was tried in London for setting fire to a floor-cloth manufactory; which, there was as good reason to believe, had set fire to itself, by the casual meeting of different chemical substances. The jury, however, if the thing had occurred to them at all, would have been ashamed to be thought more credulous of impossibilities than a heathen poet; and the poor wretch (*who was hanged*), it is hardly uncharitable to believe, fell a victim to the ignorance of the nineteenth century, and the stupid brutality still remaining in the criminal laws of England.

The flame that does not burn, and the artificial earthquake, are well known to the readers of different little treatises on chemical recreations.

The time of the story, it will be remembered, was the epoch when the glorious Virgin of Dom-Remi was burnt for sorcery; but the peculiar character of the prevailing superstition is shown so clearly in a contemporary oration of a doctor of the Sorbonne, that I may be excused for adverting to it here.

“Superstition was so universal in France at this time, that in the oration pronounced before the Dauphin and the Court in justification of the Duke of Burgundy, by Master John Petit, professor of theology in the university of Paris, one of the principal charges made against the Duke of Orleans was, for having conspired against the life of the king by sorcery, charms, and witchcraft.

“His agents, according to the learned professor, took up their abode in the lonely tower of Mont Zay, near Laigny-sur-Marne, and their principal, an apostate monk, performed there numerous invocations to the Devil. At length, on a Sunday, one grand invocation was made on a mountain near the tower, and the priest of darkness, stripping himself naked to the shirt, kneeled down. He stuck the

points of a sword and dagger belonging to the Duke of Orleans in the ground, and near them laid the Duke's ring. Whereupon, two demons appeared to him, in human shape, and clothed in a brownish green, one of whom was called Hermius, and the other Estramain; and the monk paid them the same honour and worship which is due to our Lord.

“The demons then seizing the weapons and the ring, vanished; but the monk soon after found the sword and dagger lying flat upon the ground, the point of the former being broken off and laid in the midst of some powder. In half an hour, the second demon reappeared with the ring, which was now of a red colour, and presenting it to the monk, said to him, ‘Thou wilt put it into the mouth of a dead man, in the manner thou knowest,’ and then vanished. The whole oration, which is highly curious throughout, is embodied by Monstrelet in his *Chroniques*.”*

* “Romance of French History.” By the Author of the “Magician.”

The impositions of Orosmandel, if more refined, would have been less true, both to the manners of the epoch, and in fact; for, after the above extract, even the least informed reader will not be surprized to hear, that there is ample foundation for the wildest pages in the book.

The following is an account of Gilles de Retz, taken from a memoir of an excursion I made some years ago, among the localities of the story. It appeared in a publication which is now only to be found in the cabinets of the lovers of the arts; and which was discontinued, because the taste of the "general public," was not sufficiently refined, to appreciate justly the drawings of Turner.

"The bay of La Verrière, beyond the Cens, exhibits, in its tracts of mud, and shallow and stagnant waters, a striking picture of the fertility of nature. These are covered with vegetation, and present the botanist with a remarkable variety of curious plants. Near it an ancient ruin, concealed among the thickets, and scarcely distinguishable from the rocks on which it is raised, recalls to

our memory a character, remarkable for the same rank growth, and which, although now forgotten, or buried in poetry and fable, excited, at one time, the interest of all inquirers into the mysteries of the human mind.

“These ruins are all that remain of the abode of Gilles de Retz, the veritable Blue Beard, the hero of the celebrated tale of Perrault. He was Lord, also, of Ingrande, Chantocé, Machecore, Bourgnœuf, Pornic, Princé, and many other places—each of which claim the distinction of having been the principal theatre of his crimes. Without entering into this controversy, however, all that we can do at the present moment is, to offer a very slight historical account of the Marechal de Retz, who flourished—if the Upas tree can be said to flourish—in the reign of Jean V., Duke of Brittany, in the early part of the fifteenth century.

“Born of one of the most illustrious houses of Brittany, he found himself an orphan at twenty years of age, and the possessor of enormous wealth. He was of course immediately surrounded by parasites, who, by flattering the weaknesses, and

cherishing the evil passions of his nature, and introducing new ones, contrived to turn both his follies and crimes to their own advantage. He was a man of extraordinary bravery; and, while yet in his youth, acquired, by his services in war, the honourable title of Marshal. This, however, although high enough for his ambition, did not suffice for his vanity. He would be known to the world, not only as a brave soldier, but as a man of illustrious birth, immense fortune, and boundless generosity. The world, he knew, can only distinguish characters by their outward manifestations, and he therefore assumed a state befitting the exalted personage whom he imagined himself to be.

“When he went abroad, he was followed by two hundred men of his house, well mounted, and magnificently equipped; and, on returning to the chateau, he was joined, at some distance from the house, by his almoner, attended by a dean, a chanter, two archdeacons, four vicars, a schoolmaster, twelve chaplains, and eight choristers, each handsomely mounted, and followed, like his body

guard, by valets. The clothing of this ecclesiastical company was splendid in the extreme, consisting of scarlet robes trimmed with precious furs. In religious pomp, in fact, he was scarcely surpassed by the wealthiest churches. His travelling chapel dazzled every eye by the numbers it displayed of crosses, chandealers, censers, vases of gold and silver, and other ornaments. The procession was closed by six organs, each carried by six men.

“ All this state, however, which might have well satisfied a monarch, was vanity and vexation of spirit to Gilles de Retz, on account of one little desideratum. He wished that the priest of his chapel should have the privilege of wearing a bishop's mitre ; and this, in spite of his entreaties, his ambassadors, and his gifts, the Pope had the insolence to refuse ! The chateau in which he deigned to reside, emulated the splendour of one of those fairy fabrics which cost a poor author only a page or two of words. The roofs were painted in imitation of azure skies, sprinkled with stars ; the gilded cornices were carved so as to resemble

foliage, and the walls were tapestried with cloth of gold, which cost six hundred francs the ell. Often, however, he forsook this palace of the genii, in order to dazzle the wondering citizens, accompanied by a train of flatterers, dancing and singing boys, musicians and stage-players. He betook himself to some great town, where he not only treated the people to gratis representations of mysteries—the only sort of drama then known—but distributed refreshments to all who were polite enough to look on.

“It is hardly necessary to say, that a very few years were sufficient to exhaust a fortune subject to such demands, and pillaged at the same time, by the owner’s friends. Gilles was by no means alarmed at this consummation. His estates were so numerous that he could hardly repeat their names without book; and he looked upon them as possessing the same kind of inexhaustibility which he had attributed to his vanished millions. He began to sell. First went one Lordship and then another, till at last, his relations, taking the alarm, petitioned the king to forbid the further alienation

of the family property; which, after many disturbances, threatening a political convulsion, was at length done in due form, and the proclamation published by sound of trumpet.

“This was a blow which almost upset the brain of Gilles de Retz, enfeebled by continual debauchery. Was he to sink at once into the station of a private individual, and drag through an ignominious life, the remembrance of his past glories, converted into present shame? Money, it seemed, was the one thing needful—the bauble which he was accustomed to play with and throw away. Were there not other means of obtaining it than by the sale of estates? Could it not be dragged from the mine, or the deep, by other methods than the employment of capital and the working of machinery? His thoughts darted themselves into every hole and corner of human and superhuman speculation; and he gave to things possible and impossible, the same eager and devout attention. The following is the result, as it is related by a Breton historian.

“‘God not having listened to the implous

desires of the Marshal, this warrior resolved to obtain, by other ways, the power and riches of which he was ambitious.

“ ‘ He had heard that there existed on the earth, men who—for certain considerations, and by means of great intrepidity—had been able to overstep the bounds of the known world, and to tear away the veil which separates finite beings from forms of incorporeal air ; and that the spirits subjected to their power, were compelled to minister to their smallest wishes. On the instant, his emissaries set out to traverse Italy and Germany, to penetrate into distant solitudes, and the depths of primeval forests, and to sound the gloomy caverns, where report had placed the servants of the Prince of darkness. Soon malefactors, rogues, and vagabonds of all orders, formed the court of Gilles de de Retz. He saw apparitions ; he heard voices ; sounds of terrible import were muttered from the bosom of the earth, and in a little while the subterranean vaults of the chateau resounded to the cries of victims.

“ ‘ The most odious ideas that ever entered into

the depraved brain of the alchemist were put into practice, to effect the transmutation of metals, and obtain that philosopher's stone which was to confer on them riches and immortality. Mysterious furnaces were burning night and day; but the real treasures which disappeared in them were not sufficient to satisfy the cupidity of the adepts by whom he was surrounded. They presented to him, at length, an Indian sage, who, as they informed him, had travelled over the whole earth, and from whom Nature had been unable to preserve a single secret.

“ ‘ An imposing, and severe countenance, eyes that dazzled those on whom they shone, and a beard as white as snow, distinguished the man of the East; while his simple, but elegant manners, announced that he had lived habitually with the great ones of the earth. Nothing appeared new or strange to him; no name, no person, no event. He was almost always buried in profound silence; but when he did condescend to speak, his discourse was of things so extraordinary, so wonderful, or so terrible, and all occurring in his own presence, that

Gilles de Retz became fascinated while he listened, and delivered himself up, with all the remains of his fortune, to this remarkable stranger.

“ ‘ It was then that the dungeons of his chateau echoed with groans, and were watered with tears. It became necessary to call up the Princee of the Fallen Angels, the contemner of God, the devil, Satan himself, and the only cuirass which could preserve the invoker from the first effects of his indignation must be cemented with human blood. Nay, the Marshal himself must plunge the poniard into the heart of the victim, and count the quick convulsions that preceded and accompanied the instant of death.

“ ‘ At a short distance from the chateau there was a forest as ancient as the world, in the centre of which a little spring, bursting from a rock, was absorbed and disappeared in the ground. A thousand fearful tales were told of this solitary spot ; phantoms glided shrieking through the trees ; and, if any of the neighbours, attracted either by pity or curiosity, approached the unhallowed precincts, they were never more seen. Their

bodies, it was supposed, were buried round the spring. It was here that the Indian proposed to subdue the rebel angels, and to bring the most powerful among them under the dominion of the Marshal.

“One night, at the mid-hour, the sage proceeded to this spot, armed at all points, protected by the cuirass cemented by human blood, and furnished with the seal of Gilles de Retz, who followed him alone. He first dug a grave, round which he traced various circles, and these he intermingled with strange figures, in which he deposited some odd or hideous objects. He then built an altar with the earth taken out of the grave, and some flat stones that he had set carefully apart, placing upon it, when ready, the bones of the victims buried round the spring.

“A new crime was then committed. The blood of an infant flowed into the grave; and responding to its death-cries the voice of an owl was heard, which the stranger a few days before had set at liberty in the forest. Up to this moment, the theatre of the dreadful sacrifice, had received no

light except from some rays of the moon darting fitfully through the foliage; but when the Indian had pronounced certain barbarous and impious words, a thick smoke appeared round the altar, and was followed by a bluish light, so brilliant that the eye could scarcely endure it. The magician then struck fiercely on a buckler, which resounded to the blow: and in the midst of a terrific noise which filled the forest, a being resembling an enormous leopard, whose horrible form was long imprinted on the imagination of the Marshal, advanced slowly, with seemingly articulate roars, which the Indian explained in a low and troubled voice to his wretched employer.

“‘It is Satan,’ said he, ‘he accepts your homage. But curses on my soul! I have forgotten the most important part of the incantation. He cannot speak to you. Why did I not think of this sooner?’

“‘Can we not begin again?’ cried the Marshal, trembling with hope and fear.

“‘Peace, in the devil’s name!’ whispered the Indian, appearing to listen. ‘At Florence,’ con-

tinued he, 'yes, in the depths of that cellar—Do you then consent to the death of'—

"'Just heaven!' shouted the Marshal in a fury, 'May the great God confound you! have I not already promised?' But, at the holy name of the Father of mercies, the vision vanished; the echoes of the forest repeated a thousand wild and mournful cries, and the dazzling light expired in thick darkness.

"'I recommended silence to you,' said the Magician, after according an instant to human weakness, 'but the name which escaped from your lips has lost to you for ever the power you were on the eve of acquiring over the spirit. He said enough, however, to enable me to render you the possessor of all the treasures buried in the bosom of the earth. The talisman, by means of which this must be effected, is at the bottom of an urn in a tomb near Florence; and behold, continued he, stooping, and picking up a plate of gold which the Marshal had not before observed, behold the sign which will introduce me into places however deeply hidden.'"

“The Marshal returned to his chateau ; placed in the hands of the Indian the whole amount he was able to raise—saw him set out on his journey to Florence, and with a heart full of rage for having lost, by his own fault, the immense advantages he had expected, awaited with anxiety the expiration of the year, which the impostor had marked as the period of his return.

“Disappointed in his search after the philosopher’s stone, and in his longings for dominion over the powers of the air, Gilles de Retz sought in marriage a means of replenishing his coffers. The dowry of his wife was soon exhausted—or her charms palled upon his senses—and she disappeared ; a second supplied her place—a third—even to the seventh wife ! The cry of blood at length rose to heaven, and Jean V. Duke of Brittany, determined to arrest this gigantic criminal. After some difficulty he was taken—not in his own chateau, which was too well defended, but by means of an ambuscade, and thrown into the dungeons of Nantes.

“The Indian was next seized, who proved to be a

Florentine called Prelati. He was put to the torture, and confessed every thing. Gilles himself could not stand unmoved the appearance of the rack ; but, forgetting the resolution he seemed to have taken to die in silence, poured forth a declaration of his crimes which filled his judges with horror. Even in the midst of such revelations, however, he endeavoured to relieve himself of a part of the blame, by complaining of a bad education, and of the arts of Prelati and his accomplices, who, working upon his infatuated predilections for forbidden studies, had led him on insensibly from horror to horror, till at length his mind became seared to the sense of guilt. It is remarkable that the audience at this period of the trial, forgot the horror which such a monster ought to have inspired, and melted into tears of compassion.

“ Gilles de Retz was then condemned to be dragged in chains to the meadow of the Madeleine, near Nantes, and there to be bound to a post raised on a pile of faggots, and burned alive. The fathers and mothers of families who witnessed the trial fasted for three days after, according to the

custom of the period, in order to obtain a hearing for their prayers in behalf of his soul. They at the same time scourged their children with great severity, to impress upon their memory the awful lesson they had received.

“The Marshal was conducted to the place of punishment, in the midst of a vast procession, formed of the monastic orders, and the clergy, and secular congregations of the city. He was much cast down, and seemed to dread the sufferings he was about to undergo; but these, through the interest of his friends, were in part commuted, and when the flames rose, he was strangled, and with comparatively little pain, yielded forth his spirit to the latter judgment.

“The ruins of the chateau of La Verrière, and the whole scene around them, have an air of melancholy and desolation that disposes the mind to reverie. A stair cut in the rock leads to a little hall tapestried with ivy, and round this are planted seven funereal trees, as monuments to the manes of the seven murdered wives. At some distance from the chateau, there were found, in 1810, a

number of slate coffins. Near the Verrière, the ruins of an ~~and~~ bridge are seen under the surface of the Erdre; but the date of this construction is altogether unknown.

“ ‘None of those associations,’ says M. Richer, ‘which connect the epochs of history, are attached the banks of the Erdre. This tranquil river is the image of oblivion; and on its shores, as on those of Lethe, we seem to lose the memory of the past.’ ”*

* “Turner’s Annual Tour.” By the Author of “The Magician.”

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