The Brothers: A Tale of the Fronde

Henry William Herbert

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Thus did they fall their kindred hands imbrued
With mutual taint of fratricidal gore:

Twin−brethren from their birth, and twins in death;
Pierced by the accursed sword, that so cut short
Strife madness sin and more than mortal hate.

æschylus.

VOL. I.

ADVERTISEMENT.

A PORTION of the work now submitted to the public may probably be recognised as having been before them in a somewhat different form several of the earlier chapters having been originally published in the pages of the American Monthly Magazine. For reasons with which it is unnecessary to trouble the world, the publication of The Brothers in monthly parts was discontinued; and it is, he fears, rather through the partiality of his friends, than through the sobriety of their judgment, that the author has been induced to unite these passages into a connected form, for the purpose of submitting them, with their sequel and conclusion, to that ordeal which must decide whether their existence shall continue beyond the hour in which they see the light.

New−York, June 10*th*, 1835.

Acknowledgment

TO COLONEL JOHN TRUMBULL, OF THE ARMY OF THE REVOLUTION.

To one of his most esteemed friends, than whom, he is alike proud and thankful to say, he has found none more valuable, or more true as a slight, but not, he trusts, impertinent token of his sincere veneration and most warm gratitude this book is dedicated by the author; with a deep sense, that, should it elsewhere meet so favourable a reception as it is like to do from him to whom it is now tendered, it will scarcely be indebted less to the indulgence of the public, than he is himself to the friendship of the individual.

New−York, June 10, 1835.

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.

"Myself Have stooped my neck under your injuries, And sighed my English breath in foreign clouds, Eating the bitter bread of banishment: While you have fed upon my seignories, Disparked my parks, and felled my forest woods; From my own windows torn my household coat, Rased out my impress, leaving me no sign, Save men's opinions and my living blood, To show the world I am a gentleman." King Richard II.

It has been a day of storm and darkness the morning dawned upon the mustering of the elements vast towering clouds rose mass upon mass, stratum above stratum, till the whole horizon was over−canopied. Then there was a stern and breathless pause, as if the tempest−demon were collecting his energies in silent resolution; anon its own internal weight appeared to rend the vaporous shroud asunder, and the big rain poured down in torrents. At moments, indeed, the sunbeams have struggled through the driving rack, and darted down their pensiles of soft light, showing even more blithely golden than their wont, from the very contrast of the surrounding gloom. Still noon arrived, and there was no cessation of the strife. At that hour, the blue lightning was splitting the tortured clouds in twain, and the thunder roaring and crashing close above our heads. The melancholy wailing of the winds among the sculptured pinnacles and ivyed turrets of our Elizabethan mansion the sobbing and creaking

of the immemorial oak−trees, their huge branches wrestling with the gale the dashing and pattering of the heavy rain and, deeper and more melancholy than all, the gradually increasing moan of the distant river, have conspired all day long to cast a gloom alike upon the face of nature and the heart of man. Yet now evening has brought back peace, and calm delicious sunshine.

I sit beside my open casement, and the fresh odour of the drenched herbage rises refreshingly to my senses the west is clear and beautifully blue the broad sun sinking slowly below the horizon, cloudless, indeed, but veiled in that soft haze, which enables me to gaze upon his glories with undazzled delight. Towards the east the heavy clouds are rolling away, their edges touched so sweetly by the last rays of the declining day−god that it is hardly possible to conceive them as they seemed a few short hours ago the harbingers of desolation and dismay. The very rain−drops sparkle like diamonds on every blade of grass, on every leaf of those old oaks, which smile as tranquilly in the glow of this soft evening as though they had never borne and shuddered beneath the weight of the tempest there is a mute voice of rejoicing breathed up from all around me thousands of summer flies are on the wing the rooks are wheeling on their balanced pinions high up in the breezeless air the deer have come forth from the tangled coverts wherein they cowered during the tempest, and are grazing in picturesque groups in all directions the clustered woodbines, twining over every coigne and buttress, smell wooingly it is an evening of fragrant loveliness.

Such has been the picture of my own career. My youth and manhood have been spent in domestic feuds and foreign warfare, in banishment, hardship, bloodshed, sorrow my declining years are flowing away in peace, tranquillity, and happiness. I know not how it is, nor wherefore, but my thoughts have been cast backward towards the eventful past more strongly during this morning than at any previous period in the course of many years.

I have lived in a singular and most important age; an age which will, I believe, hereafter date as an era which will be a precedent for future centuries the seed of a harvest that shall be reaped hereafter. In almost every region of the earth there have been strange commotions a new spirit seems to have gone forth among the people a thinking, questioning, resisting spirit. I have seen a king a mild and, in the main, a well−intentioned king dragged down from the throne of his ancestors haled, like the vilest of criminals, to the ignominious scaffold, for the mere upholding of that dignity, and asserting that prerogative, which, a hundred years ago, a man would have been considered frantic to have called in question. I have seen the people triumph by the mere force of popular opinion, and by the steadiness of their united efforts, over the bravest, the wealthiest, the most enlightened aristocracy of the universe. I have seen liberty degenerate into license; and despotism as it has at some time done in every age and every country spring up, the very consequence of that same license. I have seen a puissant people break all the bonds of civil and political society, with the avowed intention of shaking off an oppressive government. I have seen them plunge into the maddest anarchy, till, sickened and wearied out with the abuse of that very freedom for which they had so greatly done and suffered, they have themselves called forth an iron despot from their own peculiar ranks have erected over themselves a power ten thousand times more absolute ten thousand times more galling, than that which they had previously cast down. I have seen a man a man of the people of the despised and trampled people set himself upon a par with the mightiest potentates of his age. I have seen a usurper raise my native country to a situation, to a pre−eminence among the nations of the world, such as she never occupied before, no, not in the days of the greatest of her legitimate sovereigns. I have seen his unassisted wisdom defeat the deep diplomacy of the most crafty statesmen; I have seen the navies of Spain and Holland humbled before his all−victorious banner. I have seen monarchs courting the alliance of one who was, a few brief years before, a by−word and a laughing−stock to our bold cavaliers. All this have I seen, and more all this have I seen in my own native England; and though I strove against the elevation of that wondrous being with the whole energies of my mind and body; though I was an exile from the land of my fathers during the plenitude of his power; though I have subsequently seen the restoration of the ancient dynasty, and with it have recovered my patrimonial possessions I faithfully confess my own conviction that Cromwell was ay! and will be considered the mightiest of usurpers, and the most wise of conquerors. I believe that his enlightened policy will be resumed hereafter; I believe that the harvest he has sowed will be reaped and garnered by our sons, and our

sons' sons; I believe that the spirit which he has set afloat will go on increasing from hour to hour will go on working, whether for good or for evil I know not, for centuries yet to come; I believe that it will give brith to revolutions such as our fathers have never dreamed of, such as ourselves have never witnessed; I believe, even now, that convulsions are at hand, greater in their result than those in which it has been my lot to play no humble part, and which shall themselves but pave the way for greater that shall follow; I believe that the ages of legitimacy have already passed from earth; and when I look upon the madness, the baseness, the loathsome sensuality, the frantic ingratitude of present rulers, I could almost rejoice in the belief did I not foresee the wreck of many a noble institution did I not foresee the fall of much that is venerable, much that is in itself good did I not foresee that the march will be still onward onward till reform shall have degenerated into revolution till the pruning away of excrescences shall have led to the uprooting of the tree till the mania for freedom shall have become a mania for change and that of change for abolition. I look upon the present peace, the present gleam of national repose and welfare, but as a brief precarious truce, originating from the mere necessity of taking breath. We have already witnessed how the triumph of the popular faction, and the establishment of a self−styled republic in Britain, gave birth to the assertion of equal rights, to popular excitement, and to civil war in the neighbouring realm of France; and though, for a time, the flame of popular spirit hath in this country, as it were, burnt itself out, and so perished for the lack of sustenance while on the other side of the Channel it hath been extinguished by the still powerful hand of the nobility I yet believe that the suppression hath been but for the moment; and that it will again burst forth with a broad and all−pervading radiance.

It is my firm conviction that the order of things which has been, never will be again! that the events which in my youth were hourly taking place as familiar things, not only never will take place again, but, in the lapse of a single century, will be either utterly forgotten, or, if recorded, be looked upon as wild and extravagant, almost as impossible fictions. It is this conviction which has now determined me to revise some papers, on which I stumbled accidentally, as it were, this morning; relating to events which while they have been altogether the most important of my own life possess so much of what even now, in the comparatively settled state of affairs throughout the world, appears wild and marvellous, that I cannot but feel certain, that to remote posterity they will bear the semblance of things wholly out of the course of society, and may, therefore, if preserved, convey to them much information, and some entertainment.

The events in my own life, to which I have already alluded, are so intimately connected with the history of France during the period at which they occurred, and the account of them seems to me to furnish so admirable a commentary on the state of things as they then were, that I have determined, before giving them to the public which it is my intention to do precisely as the journal in which they are imbodied was written at the time to preface them by a slight sketch of the situation of that country in which alone they could have happened. It will be of course borne in mind that the triumph of free principles in England although it had ended in the elevation of a despot to the throne had, nevertheless, been in itself complete; and although the powers *that were* in France had looked on for the most part in apathy, or, perhaps, in sympathy with the misfortunes of Charles, there can be no manner of doubt but the people received encouragement to make an effort for the establishment of such a constitution as might preserve to them the liberties to which they now for the first time began to consider themselves entitled. The weakness of the hands in which government was vested; the debility of the aristocracy, which, during the long reign of Louis XIII., had been humbled to the very dust by the iron policy of Richelieu; their want of union among themselves, which prevented the possibility of their either rallying in a mass to the defence of the throne, or of their successfully resisting the attacks designed against their own body; the youth and consequent long minority of the king; the infatuation of the queen−regent, Anne of Austria, for the feeble yet crafty successor of the stern Richelieu; the poverty of the country; the exhaustion of the treasury, through the constantly recurring expenses of the Spanish War; the heavy taxes levied, now on the office−holders, now on the people at large; and, above all, the bitter hatred which was almost universally entertained against Mazarin, operating more than all the rest to divide and distract parties all conspired to render the moment in the highest degree favourable to an attempt which would probably have taken place long before, had it not been that the preceding minister had been no less ready to defend than willing to execute to the utmost his despotic powers that his talents were inferior only to his ambition, and his ambition when his passions or his fears were

once fairly excited to his cruelty.

The immediate cause of the popular outbreak, which in our days received its denomination of the *Fronde* from the mimic warfare of children about the streets, who would occasionally resist the police sent to disperse them with slings and stones was the attempt to impose a tax upon all the sovereign courts of judicature throughout the realm, the Parliament alone excepted. These bodies, composed of the most distinguished jurists of the day, at once passed the celebrated Edict of Union; under which, all those who hated the cardinal, whether from public disaffection or from private pique, from self−interest or patriotic feelings, banded themselves at once. After many fruitless negotiations between the court and the Parliament, which only served to render the intriguing parties more desperately hostile to each other, both parties took up arms nearly simultaneously: a *bourgeois* guard was organized; the streets of Paris were barricaded; the Archbishop coadjutor of Paris De Retz raised a large force of cavalry at his own private expense; and the armies thus levied were intrusted at once to the command of some score of exceedingly clever, but no less profligate, nobles, who had, moreover, no feelings in common with the mass of their party, save hatred to Mazarin a passion which was always ready to give place to aught that might further their own self−advancement. The Dukes of Elbeuf and Beaufort, Monsieur de Bouillon, and the celebrated Rochefoucault were on the instant openly and actively engaged on the popular side; while Turenne was more than suspected of an intention to bring up the army with which he had first foiled, and then defeated, the brave De Merci on the Rhine to the aid of the *Frondeurs*. On the other side, the Prince de Condé and the Duke of Orleans were appointed leaders; multitudes of the young and profligate noblesse, who, during the administration of Mazarin's predecessor, had been excluded from all power of intriguing for or against the government, rushed forward with all that mad levity which constituted the national character of France. To this it was that I attribute the success of the court faction: the people, doubtful of their own power sufficient, by−the−way, to overturn a stronger government than that of Mazarin united the nobles to their cause, who fought for them, as they intrigued for themselves, vigorously enough, till some new caprice, some fresh amour, or some hope of advancement, caused them to desert their party, and go over at once by scores at a time to the opposite faction. This levity, this utter want of principle, this vacillation of purpose among the leaders not one of whom, by−the−way, is free from the charge of repeated acts of treachery to his party tended not only to weaken the popular party, but finally to render the *bourgeoisy*, with whom the spirit of rebellion in the first place originated, so weary of a war by which they speedily found that they were gaining nothing, while they were suffering extremities, that they finally suffered it to cease, as it were, by common consent of all engaged. For aught I know, it is the only rebellion which ever extinguished itself, which died of exhaustion, unsuppressed by its political antagonists, and unpunished, when all was over, by its political conquerors.

This tergiversation it is, also, that will hereafter tend to render the annals of the *Fronde* a mass of inextricable confusion; and which can hardly fail to place obstacles of the greatest weight in the way of future historians. There is no one prominent character among the principal actors Molè, the president of the Parliament, alone excepted who did not repeatedly turn sides, as interest or humour prompted him; and the slightest pretext was held cause enough for defection from the banners of either faction! The promise of favours from a vain and capricious beauty; the hope of a higher station of the government of a petty town, or of the command of a regiment; the most trivial disgust at any others of his party, were enough to overturn all scruples of honour, consistency, or principle, even in the bosoms of such men as Hocquincourt, Turenne, and Condé. Historians, for the most part, err in attributing great popular movements, great political results, to individual leaders, overlooking entirely the will and action of the great masses, on which, in truth, the conduct and bias of the leaders must generally depend. In this strange rebellion the people were in earnest the leaders in sport: the people were striving for liberty, from an ardent thirst for freedom in the abstract, from a desire to ameliorate their present condition, and to establish government on sound and popular principles; the leaders were striving, as I have said before, in very levity of heart, from the mere desire of action and momentary importance, or at best from the lust of personal aggrandizement. To this, then, I ascribe the fact that the people were overthrown; and to this I am willing to assign, by anticipation, the failure of all those who shall hereafter strive to reconcile the strange confusion of this wild rebellion to any of the ordinary standards of principles and actions, causes and effects.

Since my restoration to my own country−−from which I was a weary exile for many a long year, fighting, like my betters, for my own hand, and perhaps also from a mistaken predilection for the royalist party, which had been not a little strengthened by the unfortunate termination of our English civil wars, and by the mad abuses there consequent upon the triumph of the populace−−since my restoration to my own country, I have heard actual spectators of the commotions of the Fronde term it "a rebellion unennobled by the spirit of liberty;" and actually turn it into a jest, as a trivial senseless uproar, excited by men of ambition and women of light character, begun in levity, and prosecuted to satiety. I, on the contrary, feel certain that I can see in its blind and undigested movements the working of a spirit which will one day shake the world; which will place it beyond the power of ministers or princes to sway public opinion like a wind−waved reed; which is even now working onward, in my own country, towards a mighty revolution, provoked by the insanity of the monarchs who, taking no lesson from the fate of their fathers, are rushing headlong to their own destruction; and which will one day, unless I err more wildly than I can easily believe, pervade the whole of Europe. But enough has been said already to give a slight clew to the reader of the following pages, by which he may find his way through the mazes of this almost forgotten period.

The ensuing chapters were written immediately after the occurrence of the events to which they relate many of them almost contemporaneously. The only judgment I can form of the influence they may exercise on the minds of others, is from that which they possess on my own. From having perused them this morning distant as is their date, and widely as I feel my own character to have been changed in the interim I have returned, as it were, to the very days of my prime the actors are before my eyes I can hear their voices I can read their countenances. It is for this reason that I am unwilling to change a word, even for the improvement of the style: much of the language is even now becoming antiquated; and, ere mysons shall be of age to read them, will probably be obsolete. There is, nevertheless, a life in its very roughness, which I am loath to alter, fearing lest, by over−polishing the blade, I may wear away a something of its sterling metal: as it is, I commit it to the hands of posterity; only reminding those who may perchance take it up to kill a heavy hour, that the writer was one in his day more ready with the sword than the pen, and that to him the camp and the court−martial stood in the lieu of schools or académe.

Moncton Hall, Feb. 23, *A. D.* 1683.

CHAPTER II.

"His breast with wounds unnumbered riven, His back to earth, his face to heaven, Fall'n Hassan lies his unclosed eye Yet lowering on his enemy, As if the hour that sealed his fate Surviving left his quenchless hate; And o'er him bends that foe, with brow As dark as his that bled below." *The Giaour.*

The morning lacked a full hour of the time when the cold sun of January should pour its faint rays, as if in mockery, over the chilled and cheerless world, which at that season of the year they can neither fertilize nor beautify. A thick raw mist was drawn like a curtain over the universal face of nature; the skies looked blank and dismal; there was not a cloud of darker hue, not a speck of light, however pale, to relieve the solid wall of dull gray fog, which limited the view to a dozen feet around me. The air was piercingly cold, though perfectly breezeless; and it froze so keenly that the sharp ringing sound of my horse's feet on the hard soil might have been heard at a mile's distance; while the moisture of the atmosphere hung in wreaths of hoary rime, not only on my cloak and charger's mane, but on my eyebrows, and on the floating locks which, at the period I speak of, were cultivated with peculiar care as the distinctive marks of gentle blood. Indeed, so bitter was the morning, and so dreary the prospect that lay before me, that I almost blamed myself for having quitted the cabin in which I had passed the preceding night, although the motives for my expedition were in the highest degree pressing and important. What those motives were, employed as I now am in the relation of an event which, bearing in no single point upon any portion of my past time, produced effects the most striking on my after−life, I am not at present inclined to relate; nor is it probable that my readers would find much either of profit or of pleasure in the perusal of occurrences so intimately connected with facts, which have already become history, as to baffle all

attempts at unravelling them from the skein in which their humble thread is blended. Suffice it to say, I am an Englishman; by birth noble, and by education, association, or prejudice if you will, a cavalier. Yes! with my eyes fully open to the danger and iniquity of those arbitrary doctrines, whether of church or state, which had filled the green homes of my native land with misery and with blood, perfectly conscious of the inability of the king to be a governor of freeborn men, I had yet drawn my sword in every skirmish from the first unfolding of the banners of rebellion to the final triumph of the commonwealth on the scaffold of Whitehall. An ardent adorer of freedom in the abstract, I had lent all the energies of my mind, all the powers of my arm, to establish a tyranny which, at a later period of my life, I should probably with equal zeal have striven to overthrow. Dazzled by the influences of those splendid associations, by that almost religious veneration for ancient institutions, merely because they are ancient, and by that false glare of nobility, of accomplishment, and of chivalrous honour, which served to conceal the injustice of the royal cause behind a halo no less delusive than it was brilliant, I had surrendered my mind to the romantic rather than to the rational. The cry of patriotism was no less alive in the mouths of one than of the other party; and if liberty were the magic sound which swelled the chorus of the victors, there were still many among the vanquished to whom the shout of loyalty appeared to "become the mouth as well." Thus was it then with me; I had fared hardly, fought hardly, and gained small reward save hard blows. I had not, it is true, served through the desperate fights of Naseby and Long Marston without acquiring some reputation, which, if it were not so bright as that of Capel, Rupert, or Goring, was at the least sufficient to obtain for me the appellation of an arch−malignant, and a fair proportion of the enmity of that singular being who, assuredly, at some future day, when the clouds of party prejudice, of envy, and of detraction shall have been dispersed, will be esteemed the greatest man that ever raised himself to a throne. Still, as the party to which I had attached myself had sunk, as it would seem, for many a year, it would, perhaps, have been better for me to possess no character whatever for bravery or talent, than to be notorious as one of the most constant, if not of the most distinguished, adherents of the fallen dynasty. When all was over, and it was evident to men that the star of Cromwell was in the ascendant, and that of the Stuarts obscured, perhaps, for ever, when my master had expiated his crooked counsels with his blood, and his son had preserved himself from a similar fate only by a rapid flight, I found myself so situated, that I had but the choice of dying to no purpose for a lost cause, or of leaving the land of my ancestors till times should prove more favourable. To be brief, I made good my escape to France; and ere long, in default of better occupation, I found myself again in arms, under the direction and patronage of no less a man than the celebrated Mazarin, in whose service I was acting when I encountered the adventures which it is now my purpose to recite.

It was in vain that I endeavoured to banish my recollection of the pinching cold, by indulging in bright reveries of a glorious and happy future; it was in vain that I strove to animate my flagging spirits by anticipating the stirring scenes in which I expected ere long to be engaged, or by picturing to myself the manner in which it would become me to act in this or that emergency; it was in vain that I whistled or hummed some bacchanal or martial tune; the dulness of the time oppressed me; my mind had assimilated itself, as it were, to the colouring of surrounding objects, and I felt as miserable as though I were about to ascend that scaffold, which had terminated the carrer of so many of my brave companions. Yet it could not be the weather only that had cast so deep a gloom over a spirit naturally buoyant and excitable; many a day had I mounted guard in back and breast−piece, when the frost was so keen that it would have been scarcely less painful to grasp the barrel of my musketoon with ungloved hand than to touch a bar fresh glowing from the furnace; many a day had I ridden from dawn to dusk in soaking rain, and after grooming my jaded horse, though chill and famished, jested and laughed as merrily as the most jovial ruffler of a court. But now it seemed as if there were a vast black shadow covering, as with a mighty wing, the whole horizon of my mind. I felt as though I were abandoned by the world, surrendered to sure destruction, devoted, doomed, yet, at the same time, I had no care, no anxiety, no excitement. I, who in times of peril have felt the fiery blood dancing through my veins with the eagerness, the rapture of the strife, I, the enthusiastic, reckless soldier, should have entered the fray, had a cause for fray occurred, in dogged, sullen, calm desperation.

Thus had I ridden onward for some miles, when the gradual brightening of the atmosphere, not in any one quarter of the heavens, but all over the firmament, gave token, not that the fog was about to melt away, but that the hours of night were ended. My road lay over a vast unbroken plain, without an ascent to scale, or a valley to descend,

for miles on miles; the highway stretched, as it were, into interminable distance, bounded on either side by rows of that to me most dismal and monotonous of trees the poplar. The misty state of the morning cut off all view beyond these limits; but it was evident that, had the eye been at liberty to roam over the landscape, there would have been little either of variety or beauty in the view. I had already passed through several extensive tracts of woodland, which bore, however, no resemblance to the lovely woods of my own England, with their bosky dells and open glades, their gnarled oaks and silvery birches, gleaming out from the dark hollies and waving fern; in these forests of France, all is monotonous, tame, and regular. A long straight vista, sweeping right onward through ranks of trees, undistinguished by their individual magnitude, and unbroken by dewy lawn or brooklet, an occasional *carrèfour*, or point of union to several avenues, each as perfect in resemblance to the other as Will Shakspeare's kings of Banquo, with a broken cross or defaced guide−post in the centre, presenting a picture of desolation and dreary sameness, which I am at a loss for words to describe, composed the eternal scene. I had ridden thus, as I have said, for miles; not a human being had crossed my eyes, not a human dwelling had I passed, even the rude huts of the charcoal burners, which are in general to be met with at brief intervals in the *taillis*, which constitute the greater proportion of the French woodlands, were wanting. Nay, more, not a deer or rabbit had hurried athwart my path, not a chirrup had I heard from bird or insect. It seemed as if I were passing through a country buried in profound midnight slumber; the constant clack of my charger's hoofs on the frozen road, waking the echoes as we passed along, had grown so wearisome to my ear, that I should have welcomed a thunder−clap for its variety.

Suddenly my horse pricked up his ears, and though I could hear no sound, whinnied repeatedly, and at length, quickening his pace, gave vent to his impatience in long shrill neighings. Once or twice, it is true, I fancied that an answering neigh was borne to my ears from the remote distance; but if it were so, the sounds were so faint that they might have passed for an echo. Nevertheless, though little confident in the truth of what I had heard or imagined, I suffered Bayard to continue the more rapid trot into which he had struck at the time of his first uneasiness. After proceeding thus about a mile, the full ringing report of a shot came down the road, and ere I could strike my spurs into the horse's side, another and another, followed, or rather accompanied, by the most fearful screams I ever remember to have heard. They were not thee ries of terror, nor of pain, but of the most wild and horror−stricken phrensy. Peal upon peal, volume upon volume, they rang through my brain, till my blood positively curdled in my veins, and I felt the cold creeping over my head with a sensation as though every hair were standing erect, "like quills upon the fretful porcupine." The terror which came upon me for terror it was was not of the body, but of the soul. Not a second, nor the hundredth part of a second, did I pause; my rapier loosened in its scabbard, its hilt brought forward in readiness for my grasp, a long pistol in my right hand, and my reins gathered firmly in my left, I dashed along the causeway at a pace which must in a few minutes have brought me up to any thing not winged; for out of hundreds that I have backed, never did I bestride a beast to match in speed, or blood, or bottom, with that brave horse.

Notwithstanding the rate, however, at which I dashed along the forest road, such was the unusual distance at which the sounds had reached my ear, owing, doubtless, to the peculiar state of the atmosphere, no less than to the almost unnatural silence of the country, that more minutes had elapsed, than I had counted upon seconds, before I reached the scene of the affray.

The spectacle that met my eyes the mist having yielded in a considerable degree to the increasing power of the sunlight was, perhaps, even more singular than terrible, although its horrors were sufficient to have struck a chill to the heart of one less used than I had been to scenes of rapine and of bloodshed.

A travelling−carriage, one of the huge and cumbrous vehicles of the age, lay in the centre of the *carrèfour*, evidently overset by the struggles of the affrighted brutes, one of which was stretched out motionless, unless the fitful quivering of his limbs, fast draining of their life−blood, might be termed motion, while the others kicked, flung, and screamed in all the wild confusion of vice and terror. A little way in the rear of the carriage lay the driver, slain by the passage of a bullet, which had shattered his head almost to atoms with its ghastly wound. His death must have been instantaneous; but had it not been so, the ponderous wheels, both of which had passed over

his body from hip to shoulder severing it almost in sunder, would have been sufficient to divorce the spirit from a giant's trunk. The door of the carriage, forced from within, stood open, and a dark−coloured fluid trickling through the aperture, proved that even more of horror had been wrought than met the eye. It must not be supposed that all which I have here endeavoured to portray, met my eyes in the fearful excitement of that first moment. My quick glance fell upon two men engaged in mortal conflict. Many a time, before and since, have I witnessed the strife of men in every different aspect; on the tented field, "i' the imminent deadly breach," in single duel, or in confused *mêleé;* but never never did I see such deadly hate glare from the eyes of human beings, such desperate contempt of life such fierce determination to kill, as manifested themselves in every look, in every motion, of those two combatants. I had leisure enough to mark them well; for my horse, having almost trampled on the body of the slaughtered servant, swerved so wildly from the carcass, though he had borne me without a start or stumble over scores, ay, hundreds, in many a pitched field, and strove so fiercely against the spur and rein, as I endeavoured again to bring him up, that wellnigh a minute had elapsed ere I could reach the spot. They were both in the prime of life, strong, finely formed, and active; and, even before I could distinguish their features, I had been powerfully impressed by the striking similarity of their forms and general appearance. One seemed perhaps some six years older than the other; but neither did his activity seem so far impaired, or his strength increased, by the difference, as to render him an unequal match for his antagonist. At a glance I perceived that they were gentlemen, and that too of no ordinary rank or station; not by their dresses, indeed, for it seemed that whether for purposes of disguise, or for some other motive their habits were below, rather than above, their situation in life; but by the contour of their heads, the flowing and soft hair that floated down their necks, the smallness of their hands, and above all the general grace and dignity of person, which are as certain tokens of nobility in man as are the clean limbs, flashing eye, expanded nostril, and full vein signs of blood in the I had wellnigh said more noble animal which man so frequently debases to be the minister of his crimes, the instrument of his passions.

There they stood, hand to hand, and foot to foot, glaring in each other's faces with an expression of fiendish malignity, stamping, lunging, springing to and fro, their long bright rapiers flashing at every thrust each, as it seemed, wholly indifferent whether he lived or died himself, so he should slay before he fell. Darting from my horse, I rushed towards them blade in hand with the intent of mastering their weapons; but such was the rapidity and fury of their fencing, that, as I perceived at once, there was more probability of interference on my part accelerating than preventing a fatal result. With two swordsmen nearly equal, and such it was manifest were these, the risk is so great of disconcerting the guard of one, without materially deranging the thrust of the other, that, after a moment's reflection, I judged it wiser to attempt no interruption of their deadly pastime, until weariness or want of breath should render my object more easily attainable. Nor did I much doubt but that this would briefly be the case; for more perfect masters of the fence never crossed blades than those whom I then, for the first time, beheld. I stood beside them, with my rapier ready at a glance's warning to interpose, adjuring them from time to time to cease, if it were only to explain the cause of their encounter; but they heeded me no more than did the leafless trunks which stood around them in the glittering garb of winter. Indeed, I doubt whether either of the two was conscious of my presence. Once I looked around me, in search of some one from whom to learn the meaning of this fearful sight; but, save the murdered groom and a confused heap within the vehicle, which scarcely showed the outlines of a human form, not a creature was in sight. Burning, as in truth I was, to explore the secrets of that charnel−carriage, I could not tear myself away from the wild interest of the strife before me; the rather that, from a vague and undefinable likeness in the features of that pair, so desperately pitted together, I could not but fancy some dread domestic tragedy to be in process. The younger, indeed, of the combatants, was blue−eyed and fair complexioned; while his floating love−locks might have been easily mistaken for the golden ringlets of a girl. The elder was swarthy−skinned, black−eyed, and raven−haired; yet there was a resemblance in the massive breadth of the foreheads, in the curl of the lips, in the flash of the eyes, which at one moment amounted to conviction of their kindred blood, while at the next instant it seemed but a vague and foolish fancy. The swords of both were already dimmed with blood, but not enough had flowed to impede their motions, or to check their animosity. Their wounds had been felt, but, as the spur by the mettled horse, to urge them to renewed exertion. Their breathings came thick they panted, almost sobbed their lips frothed with the violence of their struggles their thrusts were looser and more wild, their parries less deliberate. The moment had arrived when I might hope for success in parting them; my foot was already between them my blade had all but crossed

their rapiers, when the younger, stumbling in a furious lunge, received the weapon of the other in the muscles of his shoulder; the point came out behind his back; but ere his adversary could disengage it to repeat the blow, he had grasped it by the net−work of the guard, and running up it, like a wounded boar, drove his own sword hilt−deep into the bosom of his foe. Quick as lightning I sprang back. I perceived it was too late. I might have given an undue advantage to the one; I could not rescue either. The dark−browed combatant fell back without a word or groan; but the blood flashing from his deep wound, like water from a pump, as his convulsed bosom rose and fell, and his eye, still fixed upon the visage of his slayer in unquenched, unblenching hatred, showed that the spirit was yet alive within him. The other, who had staggered back for an instant, and dropped his weapon in the struggle, now tore the rapier from his own pierced breast, and leaping forward, with a yell more like the cry of a maimed tiger than the voice of a human being, planted his foot upon the chest of his foe, and gazed into his eyes as though he would have perused his very soul.

"What, no remorse!" he cried; "no terror no despair! With your own weapon, cursed, murtherous dog! With your own weapon!"

The spasmodic action of his throat cut short his words, but the point glanced downwards towards the heart of the fallen man. An inch was not between the weapon and its living sheath, when by a desperate parry, I struck it up the maniac rage of the victor was turned at once on me, but little did I reck his anger. I was too calm, and he too furious, even had he been my equal in strength or vigour. But the blood, which gushed from three wide gashes, was beginning at length to tell; his thrusts, though well directed, were feeble; and at the third pass, binding his blade with mine, I sent it, by a single motion of my wrist, twinkling like a meteor through the haze. The shock, which disarmed him, completed his exhaustion. He made one effort more to dash his heel into the features of his foeman, who lay, as he had fallen, with the frown on his brow, the distorted smile on his lip, and the deadly glare of his glazed eye fixed for ever; but, slipping in the effort, he fell beside the dead, the blood from their wounds actually mingling as they lay.

"Dead!" he muttered, "dead Isabel, where art thou? Isabel! beloved!"

His head sank down upon the gored breast of him he had destroyed. I thought the life had left him, but I was in error. With a wild cry he sprang into the air.

"Brother," he shrieked, "brother, we shall meet in hell!"

He fell upon his victim, a dead man ere he struck the ground. I have seen sights of horror a thousand and a thousand times, on the field, on the scaffold, in fire, and on the sea, but never did I know the meaning of the word FEAR till then. I shook like a weak infant, my sword dropped from my hand, a humming was in my ears, my eyes swam, my senses wandered! I stood gazing in motionless awe upon the kindred corpses. Fearful self−accusation rose up against me. I had witnessed I had permitted I had, in not prohibiting, abetted that most hideous and unnatural slaughter. My brain reeled. I was on the point of falling.

A sudden stir behind me a quick rustle as of garments a step and the same wild shriek, which had caught my attention while at a distance, roused me from my stupor. I turned, and there, her delicate feet slipping in the gore, that had already frozen as it flowed from the veins of that guilty, miserable pair her long fair tresses stained with blood, and her white garments dabbled with the same fatal stains, *there* stood the loveliest female form the loveliest even in that moment of heart−rending agony and terror my eyes had ever dwelt upon.

"Dead!" she cried; "all dead! Merciful! merciful Heaven! Spare, spare my senses!"

She started in my face with a vacant gaze for a moment, shook her head mournfully, and with a wild sound between laughter and a groan, would have fallen to the earth, had I not caught her in my arms. The fearful scenes which she had undergone had been too much for her delicate intellects; madness was hovering at the very portals

of her mind, when, by a blessed providence, that timely swoon preserved her. One glance into the empty carriage, it contained the corpse of a young girl! By her garb I judged her to be the attendant of the lovely being pillowed insensibly upon my heart, killed, as it seemed, by a random bullet; for who could have wantonly shed the blood of one so insignificant, so harmless, and so helpless? One glance towards the slaughtered brothers, sleeping side by side as peaceably as though no angry passions, no unearthly hate had ever cast its shadow over them! and, with my precious treasure in my arms, I was again upon the back of my brave Bayard, riding for life, for life, along the road which late had seemed so dull and dreary, now converted into the channel which I felt must guide me to the harbour of my future happiness, or to the eternal shipwreck of my hopes.

CHAPTER III.

" `She is won! we are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur; They'll have fleet steeds that follow,' quoth young Lochinvar. There was mounting 'mong Græmes of the Netherby clan; Fosters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, they rode and they ran: There was racing and chasing on Cannobie Lea, But the lost bride of Netherby ne'er did they see. So daring in love, and so dauntless in war, Have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?" Marmion.

So wildly had my imagination been excited by the strange scenes I had beheld, so completely had I acted under the impulses of sudden feeling, as opposed to deliberate reflection, that many minutes passed ere I recovered the full mastery of my thoughts from the dreamy whirl into which they had been plunged. A mile, or perhaps two, had already vanished beneath the fiery speed to which almost unconsciously I continued to goad my gallant horse, yet no decided sense of my position had as yet crossed my mind; I knew not why, or whither, I was flying at so desperate a pace; I rode on, like one drunk with wine, satisfied with the present and careless of the future. The only feeling which I remember to have entertained, was one of tenderness for the pale creature in my arms; an eagerness to protect her from the slightest harm, to shield her tender frame from the concussions which the high elastic bounds of the hot war−horse could not fail to inflict on a being so exquisitely delicate, and, according to every probability, so tenderly nurtured. It was, perhaps, well for me, at the time, that my mind was partially obscured; it spared me, at least, worlds of anxiety and doubt; and, by precipitating me headlong, as it were, into action, caused me to act on the spur of the moment with a decision, a readiness of heart and hand, which I have ever found in my own case, however it may be with others, more promptly serviceable on sudden, and what might be deemed startling, emergencies, than after hours of mature deliberation. When called upon by the imminence of present peril, I have ever found my thoughts to suggest themselves with the speed of lightning; or, rather, my actions have proceeded with a rapidity that seemed independent of thought, instinctive, if you will. The danger has been averted, and I have sat down, a thousand and a thousand times, coolly to reflect whether my utmost ingenuity could have suggested, had the crisis been foreseen, any mode preferable to that adopted on the instant; and invariably have I found that the first impulse was correct. On the other hand, when, aware of an approaching crisis, I have matured plan after plan, I have determined on one course of action, only to determine in the next moment its utter inefficiency; and, when the time of trial has arrived, it has found me, if not absolutely hesitating or unprovided, less prompt at least, and far less confident of victory. It is a strange constitution of mind yet in every minute circumstance of my life have I been able to trace its prevalence. When a boy, following the winged game in my ancestral woods, the bird which sprang from the brake, unmarshalled save by the whirring of its own rapid motion, invariably fell before the momentary precision of my instinctive aim; while that which fluttered slowly up, from beneath the nostrils of the sagacious dog that had betrayed its lair, escaped unharmed from a weapon levelled in the irresolution of anxiety. So, in after days, when, in the stormy debates of the Lower House, I lent my voice to defeat that which I have since learned to regard as the better cause, I invariably found, when I had passed days and nights in study, when I had arranged my thoughts, marshalled my very words, and sharpened, as it were, the sword of my spirit for the keen encounter, that the ideas so prepared deserted me, and the periods, already rounded for the occasion, fell unimpressively from a faltering tongue. On the other hand, I have repeatedly arisen from my seat unprepared, roused by sudden indignation to confute some calumny, to level some pile of sophistry to the earth; and never yet have words been wanting to express the rapid flow of ideas, which thronged, as it were, with the stormy speed of a torrent from my excited brain.

I have dwelt, perhaps, too long on these peculiarities of my own mental constitution; but it seems to me that those who have thus far followed the course of my narration, will not be wholly unwilling to learn something of that character, which, of course, materially influenced the events that occurred in the progress of this wild adventure.

It is probable probable, did I say? it is certain, that had I been of the cooler and more reflective disposition, which is far more common to men than that which I have endeavoured to portray as my own, I should immediately have perceived the difficulty, not to say the impossibility, of bestowing to any advantage the unfortunate girl, with whom I had so rashly, as some might deem it, encumbered myself. Myself a soldier of fortune, in a foreign land, unknown, nameless, and fortuneless, travelling on a mission of military service through a district utterly strange to me, and in the performance of duties entirely incompatible with delay, and which must remove me yet farther from the spot whereon the present occurrences were proceeding, what should I, what could I, what ought I to do with a tender and high−born female? for such from those distinctive marks of natural aristocracy which I was fond to fancy I could trace in the clear high brow, the silken tresses, the full blue veins, the grace and symmetry of her whole form I at once conjectured her to be. To protect her from immediate peril would be, in itself, an arduous task; to bear her with me, an impossibility; to procure for her a protector in a district which I knew not, and in which I was myself unknown, would have defied the ingenuity of the most wily schemer; and to linger with her myself, a crime, a breach of duty and of honour, from which I should have shrunk with a dread even greater than that of death.

It was, therefore, as I have already hinted, fortunate both for me and for my hapless *protégée*, that I was so completely bewildered by what I had witnessed, and so completely absorbed in the business of the moment in guiding my noble Bayard, and in supporting my precious burden clear of the peaked bow of my steel−bound demipique that I had no time left for reflection. I trust, indeed, and confidently believe, that under no possible combination of circumstances could I have soiled that character of a cavalier and man of honour, which it has been the object of a life to preserve untarnished, by the deliberate desertion, in a situation so horrible, of an unprotected female.

A mile, and perhaps two, as I have before mentioned, had already been passed, without my experiencing any direct sensation, except that of immediate anxiety for my lovely charge. The character of the country was unchanged; the same wide tracts of stunted woodland overspreading a barren and level soil, with the road stretching interminably onwards in dull and solitary sameness. Not a house not a sign of man or beast was to be discovered.

Suddenly I was recalled to myself. At the descent of a gentle slope a sluggish brook crept with an almost imperceptible current over a muddy bottom across the unfrequented road, and, running parallel to the course of the streamlet, a pathway from the forest intersected the highway. I had already checked my horse, and was scrutinizing, with a practised eye, the nature of the narrow ford which lay before me, when; with a loud shout, several men some on foot, some mounted, but all well−armed, and dressed in liveries similar to those of the slaughtered servant I had observed beside the carriage rushed impetuously from the left−hand pathway. Before I had become well aware of their intent, the grasp of the foremost was on my bridle−rein.

"'Tis he! Thank God! Forward, my comrades!"

"Down with the murderer!"−−

"No quarter to the ruffian!" burst simultaneously from the throats of my fierce assailants. Fire−arms were levelled, swords were brandished, and, for an instant, it seemed as if my advance were cut off. It was but for an instant; ere a second ruffian could come to the aid of his fellow, my trusty pistol was discharged within three inches of his ear. I felt by the slackening of the rein, which a moment before had been as tight as a bowstring, that the bullet had done its bidding. Without casting a glance on the senseless clay, which had fallen with a sullen splash into the water, I hurled the now useless weapon full in the face of another of the footmen, and, striking my

brave charger with the spur, lifted him hard and steadily with the heavy curb. He reared almost erect, plunged forward with a short curvet, dashing his fore−feet into the muddy margin of the stream, and, springing from thence with a mighty effort, cleared the dangerous channel, and darted away with a speed hardly inferior to that of the hunted deer. Loud and sharp rang the volleyed reports of a dozen pieces on our track; the bullets whistled round us; a rustle as of heavy wings above me, and my sight was darkened; while, at the same instant, a swerve from his direct course, and his quickened gallop, told me that my noble animal was wounded; the tall plume, with which the fashion of the day had decked my head, was severed, and had fallen over my eyes. Hastily I tore the shattered remnant from my hat; and, eager to escape beyond the range of musketry, rose in my stirrups and spurred fiercely onward. In another moment, the clatter of hoofs behind me told that I was pursued: for this I little cared; for well I knew that not a private gentleman, from Calais to the bright shores of the Mediterranean, could match, with a chance of success, the pride of his stables against the horse I backed. With a grim smile, I turned my head to mark the progress of the chase. A sharp, quick stroke across my forehead, the singing of the leaden missiles, and a second volley! This time I had not myself escaped unscathed. Large gouts of blood trickled down to my beard from a long gash athwart my brows you may see the furrow of the scar to this day but the hurt was superficial; the third part of an inch closer, and my career had been cut short for ever. The object of my glance was however gained; in the point of time, it was no more, before the ball had grazed me, I had taken in, as it were intuitively, all that was passing in the rear. Three of the horsemen had already crossed the stream, two mounted on the large and cumbrous horses of Flanders, which, since the complete panoply of the men−at−arms had fallen into disuse, were now considered fitter for draught than for the saddle from these, as they thundered and already panted along the causeway, it was evident there was but little to be feared; but the third, a cavalier of some pretension in his dress, backed an Andalusian jennet of no mean points or common speed, and he, to my astonishment, was hard upon my heels. Struggling through the miry ford were several other riders, mounted, for the most part, on the active, wiry horses of Brittany, which, from experience, I well knew it might be difficult to throw far behind in a chase, as this seemed like to prove, of long continuance. I also perceived, grouped on the other bank, the fellows from whose musketry I had already suffered, and from whom I doubted not but I should meet yet further interruption. Another report! but this time the direction must have been bad, or the distance though I should not have imagined it so too great, for not only none of their bullets took effect, but I did not hear the well−known hurtling of their passage through the air.

Nothing now remained but to shake off, as soon as possible, the pursuit of the horsemen, without running the risk of bringing my own flight to a speedy conclusion, by blowing my overloaded charger. Again I turned in my saddle, and gazed steadily to the rear. The cavalier, who pressed most closely on my traces, was scarcely three lances' length from my croup; the others straggled on, at various distances, spurring, shouting, and swearing at their jaded brutes, and occasionally, as they pulled up in despair, discharging their pistols, more to the peril of their own comrades than of him for whom their contents were intended. The leading horseman held his naked rapier in his hand as he bent over his courser's neck, in the full confidence, as it seemed, of overtaking his victims in a few bounds more or less of his mettled beast. It was, perhaps, fortunate for us, that he either carried no pistols in his holsters, or had already discharged them; for, at the close distance which separated us, had he halted for a second, he could hardly have failed of disabling me, or bringing down my horse. Husbanding his powers, then, with the utmost care that was consistent with haste holding him at the same time well in hand for I was fully conscious that the slightest stumble must put us at once in the power of our inveterate enemies I kept my brave bay at three−quarters speed. Hill and hollow vanished before us; stunted woodland and marshy glade glanced by us, as though they were in motion; the wind had risen, and, as it blew keen and cold over the bleak country in advance, freshened the courage of the gallant creature, shook abroad his long thin mane, already clogged with sweat, and scattered the foam−flakes from his nostrils like the commencement of a snow−storm, while its chilly breath curdled the blood that had flowed over my features in black and stiffened lines. Our race had at this time lasted above an hour; and, to my infinite annoyance, I began to feel that my horse's gait, if not actually less fleet, was far less springy than its wont. It might be that the double burden which he was bearing had begun to tell; the rather, as, during my journey through that wild and steril region, his provender had not only been deficient in quantity but inferior in quality; or it might be the blood, which had flowed abundantly from a deep though not dangerous wound in his quarters, had impaired his strength. Though not as yet actually failing, I began to be

aware that a few miles farther would exhaust his powers of flight. Our pursuers, though scattered, still held their own. I began to look anxiously about for some place of refuge, or at least of temporary concealment; but, as fortune would have it, even the scanty and imperfect shelter that might have been afforded by the coppices through which our route had lain so long, was now beyond our reach. The forests were already miles in our rear; the causeway, bordered on either hand, as I have before described it, by the eternal poplar, stretched, as straight as the bird flies, over an arable country, now a vast expanse of bare and frost−bound soil, limited, indeed, on the distant horizon by a fringe of wood, but without glen or dingle, cottage or castle, for miles and miles, that could yield a chance of shelter. Before us lay a long bleak ascent, the brow of which, standing in dim relief against the uncertain sky, bounded the prospect. At every stroke I felt my courser's vigour leaving him; at every stroke, I too well knew, our foes were nearing us. The clang of their hard gallop, those hateful echoes, which for the last hour had been lost in the distance, again reached my ears. I dared not by the immortal light of heaven I dared not look behind me. On on the brow of the hill was wellnigh gained, the sound of a convent−bell came faintly up the wind, hope, angelic hope, swept in a flood of tenderness over my soul. I felt a tear−drop it might have been the chilly blast that drew it from its locked recesses upon my cheek. My charge, my adored, though yet unconscious charge, might still be rescued. I breathed a prayer, I strained my eyeballs almost from their sockets, as my head rose above the summit. The sounds came clearer, swelling on the breeze, and with them, in the lull of the gale, I could distinguish the harmony of choral voices, and the deep diapason of the organ. Another stride, and the holy habitation lay before me. At the distance of a short half−league, its gray walls and slated belfry glinted back the rays of the faint January sunshine, which slept in duller tints upon the wide meadows and clustering sycamores that spread their peaceful shades around the house of God.

The first glance was rapture rapture such as perhaps I never felt before or since the second was despair. It was, as I have said, but a short half−league; the road sloped smoothly down a gentle hill, fair, broad, and easy as that which churchmen tell us leads to the abyss of hell; and scarcely could the horror of the wretched sinner, trembling on the pinnacle from which he first discovers the home to which his flowery path conducts him, exceed the blighting chill which numbed my very life−blood, when I beheld, at the foot of that gentle hill placed there to bar me from my paradise a broad and bridgeless river. Dark, dull, and turbid, it flowed along through deep and rugged banks; the best carbine mortal workman ever wrought would have sped no certain death across those sullen waters. A bridge, it seemed, had lately spanned it; for to either bank the loosened joists of the abutments yet partially adhered, though, as the waters sapped their foundations, I could see the white spray leap into air, and hear the heavy roar, as one by one they toppled into the current that had swept their frailer comrades before them to the ocean. In despair, I checked my horse; I stood still, rooted, as it were, to the ground in horror; east and west I gazed over the barren country for aid, but aid was none. I set my teeth, loosened my rapier in its scabbard, and cocked my remaining pistol. Already I had half−wheeled my charger round, determined to remain, dead or alive, the master of the ground on which I stood; but, at the very moment when I was on the point of rushing to the fray, my eye fell on the sweet pale features of her, who lay in my arms as calmly and as still as though the grave had already claimed her for its own. Strangely had her state of insensibility been protracted, although, in the wild excitement of my spirits, its length had passed unnoticed. During the whole term of that long and rapid flight, she had rested, senseless and motionless, on my arm. Not a quiver of a limb, not a flutter of her breath, had announced a return of the suspended animation. Now, whether it was that the sudden cessation of our fleet motion had broken the trance, as the quick stopping of a carriage will oftentimes arouse a sleeper, or whether it was the result of a more evident interposition of Providence, I know not; but those deeply−curtained lids arose, and, ere they closed again, displayed a pair of eyes which, though their bright intelligence was partially obscured, spoke volumes, as I fancied, of languid tenderness. A shudder ran through her limbs, her lips parted, and unconsciously she murmured, in tones of the most silvery music,

"Oh save me for the love of God rescue the wretched Isabel!"

That which has occupied minutes in the relation, passed in the space of a single second. "If I should fall," the thought flashed upon me like a meteor "what will be the fate of her? and if I conquer, what will it profit us?" The tension of my nerves relaxed; the feelings of the gladiator passed; my triumphant pursuer had already raised the

shout of triumph, when I skirred away, as it were, from his very clutches, and, scarcely certain of my own ulterior purpose, dashed at the top of my horse's speed, somewhat recruited even by that momentary pause, down the brief descent.

A dozen bounds, as it appeared to my excited fancy, brought us within a stone's throw of the brink; and, if the river had seemed from a distance dark and dangerous, a nearer approach revealed a thousand terrors, which might well have appalled a stouter heart than mine, had I not been buoyed up by the unnatural phrensy for such I may almost call it of the moment. Again I faltered! not for myself, but for the angel in my arms. Hardly knowing whether she were capable of comprehending my words, I whispered, in the softest tones my agitation would permit "Dare you," I said, "dare you, sweet lady, at imminent peril of your life, brave yon swollen stream? 'Tis but a single chance of safety, a thousand of destruction! Yet must we brave it, or they have you. Command me; I am yours yours to the death!"

"I dare!" she spoke calmly, and without the slightest tremour of voice or form; "I dare! better a thousand times to die! But you "

I tarried not to mark her concluding words. I saw at a glance that the banks of the wintry torrent were lined by a broad margin of ice, although the force of the stream had prevented its formation elsewhere. This we must clear, or perish. I loosed the buckle of my broad buff belt, passed it around her slender waist, and secured it firmly to my own. "Cling to my collar with your hands," I cried, in accents far more cheerful than the bodings of my heart; "but, as you value life, leave my arms free. God aid us, or we perish!"

Rowel−deep I plunged my spurs into the sides of the brave beast that never failed his rider, and nobly did he answer them; brave as a lion, with extended nostril and unblenching eye, he charged the river. The bank was sheer and broken, an abrupt descent of full ten feet, and well for us it was so. Without a pause, he leaped! Deep deep we plunged into the wheeling waters, that closed above our heads; but as suddenly did we rise to the surface, clear of the treacherous ice, dripping and shivering, but as yet unharmed.

Before taking this fearful step, I had marked, about a quarter of a mile below, a spot on the opposing shore, at which the soil was gravelly and shelving while the rippling of the waters at its base denoted a hard and shallow bottom. Had I been alone, my safety was now certain. Confident of my own powers, and of the qualities of my horse whose action in the water was nearly as familiar to me, if not so often proved, as were his paces on the good greensward I should have cared but little for even a longer swim. It was not, however, to be denied, that the season was fearfully against us. Large blocks of floating ice, which had probably destroyed the bridge, came crashing down the tide, and it required all the skill that I could command to steer my course among them. And then the cold the cutting, agonizing cold I felt my own case−hardened muscles shiver, and my teeth jar in my head, with the excessive chill; yet, Heaven is my witness, I thought not of myself, unless it were with scorn, that I should flinch so much as even to *feel* the elements, which that heroic girl so nobly battled with, so manfully overcame. Never, in all my long and turbulent career, never have I witnessed human intrepidity that could compare with the serene holy fortitude with which she made her agony subservient to her will. Her clear bright eye never wavered; her cheek paled, indeed, but trembled not; she would not even permit so perfect was the mastery of mind over matter she would not even permit her limbs to shiver, lest they should interfere with my control over the swimming charger. After running a dozen times, as I thought, upon certain destruction, and a dozen times almost miraculously escaping for, encumbered by his unwonted burden, and overdone by his previous exertion, Bayard swam not with his accustomed vigour, but floundered heavily, so that it needed all the exertions my benumbed limbs could muster, to hinder him from turning tail to the current, and floating head foremost to perdition we reached the landing−place. The struggle was severe, but it was successful. We landed we were saved! My first thought was of gratitude to my God, and my eyes glanced upward to his holy heavens, my second was of my love. I looked on her but she had fainted. The peril she had endured and conquered! The revulsion of ecstasy had prevailed. A short gallop placed us at the convent−gates; my course of action had been decided ere I reached the portal, and was followed up on the instant. Deception it was; but if

deception may ever be forgiven, surely, surely the preservation of an angel, such as she I had rescued, might palliate, might justify the offence. I bore a parchment, a military commission from the dreaded cardinal who swayed the destinies of France. It had been darkly framed, that, in case of its falling into other hands than those for which it was intended, it might neither criminate the bearer nor profit the gainers. Its object being to confer on me the chief command of a large body of troops, at quarters in a section of the country almost surrounded by open or secret enemies, it ran simply thus:

"*On your allegiance, we charge ye, in all things, to obey and pleasure the bearer*.

Signed, "Mazarin."

CHAPTER III.

What would be the final consequences of my misapplication of this powerful missive I knew not, and I recked yet less. But I did know that I had passed the most disaffected districts, and that here it would meet implicit obedience. Nor was I mistaken. Had I been the sovereign himself, I could not have been greeted with more prompt and affectionate loyalty. But for this I cared not. I had learned from the porter, that for many leagues there was not another bridge across the turbulent Marne. I was assured by the chirurgeon that Isabel, though feeble and exhausted, was in perfect safety; and had a thousand hardships borne me down a thousand perils threatened I should have been as I then was supremely happy.

CHAPTER IV.

"Why did she love him? Curious fool! be still Is human love the growth of human will? To her he might be gentleness the stern Have deeper thoughts than your dull eyes discern; And when they love, your smilers guess not how Beats the strong heart, though less the lips avow." Lara.

The flight was over the struggle was at an end the haven was gained; but with present safety there came an almost intolerable dread of future evil. A thousand doubts and fears, unthought of amid the stormy occurrences of the last few hours, crowded, like busy fiends, upon my brain. I said that I was happy; and so in truth I was, exquisitely, supremely happy! Never, in the whole course of my life, have I experienced sensations so thrilling, and so nearly approaching to the delirium of joy, as were those with which I learned that there was hardly a possibility of recapture to be apprehended; and that, after a brief repose, my lovely charge would be so completely restored as to render a renewal of exertions, if such should be required, not only free from risk, but easy of accomplishment. While the brother who officiated as chirurgeon in the convent which had afforded us shelter was yet speaking to me, a full sense of my condition flashed, for the first time, upon my mind. All had before been dreamy, indistinct, and obscure; all was now definite and terrible in its distinctness. That moment of lightning−thought was to my spirit what the sulphureous glare of the tempest is to the midnight ocean, revealing, to the unconscious mariner, terrors of which he had not even dreamed, till they were dragged from darkness into horrible reality by that brief illumination. I saw at once the pinnacle on which I was tottering, and the abyss that yawned below; but the light which showed the perils that environed me, showed no path by which to escape them. So suddenly did this consciousness of my embarrassment gleam upon my senses, and so overpowering were the feelings to which that consciousness gave birth, that I broke off abruptly in my reply to the worthy Benedictine, with symptoms of confusion so evident, that they must have excited suspicion, had they not, luckily for me, been attributed to the effects of over−exertion alike of mind and body. I was aware that I turned deadly pale for an instant, and then again I felt that every drop of blood in my veins was rushing in torrents to my brow; my eye was vacant, and my tongue faltered; my mind was utterly unstrung. To the entreaties of the good friar, that I would suffer myself to be conducted to a cell wherein I might take a few hours of refreshment after the fatigues and perils I had undergone, I returned at first a brief refusal. "Nay," said the kind−hearted old man, "but you are to blame, my son, for suffering the things of this world to hold so tyrannous a dominion over your spirit. To an

active mind like yours, I well know that inactivity is the worst of evils! Yet, bethink you, further speed, how much soever you may deem it necessary, is impossible. Your good horse can do no further service till rest shall have repaired his faculties; you, too, my son, are not yourself. Your spirit, like a bow too tightly strung, has lost its elasticity. Listen, then, to the voice of reason: an hour or two of quiet will have restored you to yourself; your charger is in the hands of our lay−brothers, and shall be cared for. Let me, I pray you, lead you to a chamber."

Urged so warmly, and at the same time so reasonably, I could not refuse; and, after a moment's consideration, I was averse no longer. I was in want of absolute quiet, not, indeed, to reinvigorate my mind, for had its energies been called for, they would have answered, as it were, to a trumpet's note, but to collect my thoughts to deliberate on what I had done already and, yet more difficult, on what I was about to do hereafter. In a few moments I was ushered into a little turret−chamber, narrow indeed, and somewhat scanty in its furniture, but neat and cheerful in its aspect. Used apparently for the accommodation of visiters, its window, unobscured by the accustomed convent−grates, looked over the rich meadows stretching away, with many a clump of shadowy trees and many an orchard intervening, to the wide river, which had lately seemed so terrible an obstacle; though now, in truth, it was the only barrier that saved us from our foes. A bright log, glowing and sputtering on the hearth, diffused a warmth rendered doubly grateful by the rigour of the season and by the state of my benumbed and dripping limbs; the pallet−bed was decked with linen of unblemished whiteness, and the board was spread with dainties, and with a flask of burgundy, whose *bouquet* alone was sufficient to prove that the brothers of St. Benedictaux−Layes were not likely to impair the reputation of monastic institutions, the world through, for hospitality and sumptuous cheer. Promising to summon me whenever the lady should be restored sufficiently to endure the excitement of my presence, the monk, declining my invitation to pledge me in the vintage of his convent, departed, and left me to my meditations. And, in good sooth, they were sufficiently gloomy; nor, when I had disposed my doublet and upper garments before the cheerful hearth, and tasted a single goblet of the old Auxerre, could I find any pleasure, or even consolation, in the aspect of affairs.

I had fallen, as I was fully conscious, over head and ears in love with an errant damsel, whom I had found, like a Bevis or an Ascapart, in a forest, and of whose name, history, and lineage I was profoundly ignorant. This, in itself sufficiently embarrassing, would not have been perhaps wholly untinged with the ridiculous, had there not been sundry most grave realities mixed up with the romance, which rendered it no laughing matter. First and foremost, I was myself no loving character little used to the society of ladies, for the fierce civil wars which had convulsed my own country from my boyhood upward, and, still more than actual warfare, the party−hatred, the heart−burnings, and political suspicions of the times, had greatly circumscribed all social intercourse, I had ever scoffed at the idea of pure, poetical, all−engrossing passion. And if the caprice of the moment, or the fashion of the day, had at times induced me to play the part of *inamorato*, I had never found the cruelty of any fair one to be severely oppressive, or the continuance of any passion to endure much longer than to the next change of the modes.

Such, however, I too surely felt, was not the case now. I was fairly caught passionately in love with an unknown girl, to whom, indeed, I had rendered such services as might be deemed a furtherance of my suit; but who, for aught I knew to the contrary, might have been the mistress or the wife of either cavalier whom I had seen perish fighting, as I judged, for the possession of perhaps a second Helen. It was in vain that I repelled such thoughts. For the moment, indeed, they were overmastered and fled; but they fled only to return, bringing with them too deeper and far more weighty considerations; though to my excited feelings they then seemed as things of little moment, compared to the one engrossing subject of my thoughts. I was yet many leagues distant from the detachment I had been despatched to command. Even were it at hand, I had a hundred urgent duties to perform wild feats of irregular and partisan warfare, the least of which was the cutting my way with three or four regiments of cavalry through a wide and hostile district, forcing the lines of the Frondeurs, and bringing in my command to join the Duke of Orleans and the Prince of Condé, who were then beleaguering the generals of the parliament within the walls of the capital. I had already, in one important point, violated the spirit, if not the letter, of my instructions, in displaying the mandate of the cardinal before arriving at my destination. Nor was this all; I had, it was evident, caused much disturbance in the country by my late adventure; for, from my turret−window, as

I paced and repaced the floor, in the agitation of my thoughts, I could perceive the country people gathering around the banks which had been the theatre of my fearful exploit, wondering, as it would seem, and speculating on the motives which could have prompted any man, not frantic, to so desperate a measure. This excitement, even if it should not lead to my capture or forcible detention at present, must, of necessity, prove highly unfavourable to my intention of conducting a heavy division of horse with any secrecy by the same route; and would, in all probability, if not defeat, at least delay the execution of this project, and give rise to a progress won by hard fighting, and at the sword's point, as it were, instead of a succession of rapid and forced marches. All this to a man of the cardinal's rigid and stern severity would be matter of high offence, and might, perhaps, be deemed worthy of a procession to the Place de Grêve. This reflection, while it added nothing to my comfort, was to be utterly cast aside for the present; highly as I might regard, in other circumstances, military obligations and the approbation of a superior, in a case like the present, where honour and humanity pointed the one path, while discipline called to the other, I felt that I could not pause; no, not for an instant. Inwardly I swore that, be the shame or the peril what it might, before I stirred a foot on my mission I would place Isabel in perfect safety; learn, if it might be so, the state of her affections; plight her a soldier's troth; perform the duties that lay before me; and return to cast my trophies and redeem my pledges at her feet. An hour or two had already elapsed in these meditations, and I began to wax impatient at the delay of the friar. My blood was in a perfect fever; I sat down, I rose, but to seat myself again; I kicked the blazing log in nervous excitement, till the toe of my ponderous jack−boot was wellnigh red hot; I hurled myself on the low pallet; I strode the floor with still increasing vehemence. Suddenly, as I passed the window, I caught a glimpse of a female figure standing at a corresponding opening in a second turret, which projected, like that wherein I stood, beyond the level of the wall. My first impulse was to turn away; as I imagined, from the position, and from a something monastical in the shape of her garments, which had caught my attention even in that momentary glance, that the figure I had seen was one of the sisters of the establishment, for I had already learned that there was a female institution with its abbess annexed to and adjoining the Benedictine monastery. My second was to turn and gaze again, for reflection instantly suggested that none of the sisterhood could be thus free from restraint, and in a part of the building evidently under the control of the other sex. I checked my impetuous strides, returned gently to the lattice, it was Isabel! Her forehead was bound by the simple yet not ungraceful head−gear of a Benedictine nun, but with a single long tress of fair hair that had escaped from its unwonted confinement, wantoning down her long and swan−like neck; which was but partially obscured by the veil and flowing garments in which she was enveloped, until such time as her own dress could be dried and purified from the stains of clay and human gore contracted during the affray and subsequent flight. Her eyes were directed towards the window from which I had just turned away, and there was something like an expression of impatience in those soft and beautiful orbs that had evidently followed my departing figure. A deep carnation glow rushed over her brow and cheeks as my eye met hers; nay, her neck, and the brief glimpse of a snowy bosom that was afforded by the envious veil, were flushed with the same delicate hue: she dropped her eyes to the ground, and her long, long lashes were pencilled in beautiful relief against the bright complexion of her lovely features. Slowly she raised them again to mine; and, as if she had conquered the momentary confusion that had overpowered her, smiled sweetly, and, waving her hand, moved gracefully from the embrasure. My heart, that had throbbed so wildly while she was before me in all the radiance of loveliness and feminine delicacy, stood still. It was as though a cloud had fallen on my mental vision; all had been bright and sun−like, all was now obscure; still, as I sank slowly into my seat, my thoughts were not so wild, nor my hopes so desperate, as they had been before my passing glance at her, whose slightest wish would have been a command more weighty than the proudest monarch's mandate. I felt that she had blushed that she had blushed for me! Was I then loved? "Away!" I muttered to myself "away! It is not possible!" But it would not away! Fixed, fixed as the earth's centre that question sat upon my heart. A step sounded through the corridor; I leaped to my feet paused not to note the features of him whom I addressed for what to me were persons in that hour of strange anxiety? requested him to lead me to the lady Isabel; and, ere I knew my purpose, found myself alone in the parlour of the convent alone, but with one other!

With a smile of ineffable sweetness, yet faint withal and melancholy, she arose to greet me she had been weeping; and the smile, like that of an April sun, gleamed through fast−falling tear−drops. Her hand extended in all the lovely confidence of young, enthusiastic, fearless purity she sprang towards me. "How," she said, in tones

that melted into my very soul like spiritual music, "oh! how can I thank you sufficiently, my noble, noble rescuer!"

The light touch of her fingers shot, as it were, a stream of lava through my frame. I had not power to close my hand on that which she so frankly offered. With embarrassed mien and faltering accents, I murmured something I know not what of hopes, of happiness, and of the slightness of my services. Words empty words the meaning of which I could hardly be said to comprehend, even while I uttered them. None can know none dream save those of stern and passionless natures, and they but rarely with what fierce and flame−like dominion love seizes subdues and becomes the very essence of a soul like mine. Stamp characters upon the soft and sunny sands, and the first tide effaces them; engrave them in the cold and unimpressive flint, and they endure for ever! She looked into my eyes, as I replied, with a singular and almost painful expression of disappointment; and, as she spoke again, her words came forth hurriedly, and with a feverish impetuosity wildly different from the sweet calmness of her former tones.

"You are offended; you regret that you have saved me; you deem me cold, ungrateful, heartless! You have rescued me from misery, deeper, a thousand times deeper than death! From agony pollution heart−break shame; from all that is most loathsome! most appalling! All this you have done, and you reject my thanks you spurn my gratitude! Oh! no, no, no! Miserable I am, most miserable wellnigh mad with misery; but not *not* thankless!"

"Dearest lady!" I interrupted her the instant her vehemence permitted; "dearest lady, think not so hardly of one whose greatest bliss would be the thought that he had served you; and, more than all, think not so humbly of yourself as to deem that aught of human mould could look on the emotion, or listen to the thanks, of such as you, without deeming himself the most supremely blest of men! My object in this intrusion is to learn whether in aught my feeble efforts can avail you; to implore you to command me; to trust in me, to use me! And if there be naught in which I can assist you, to pray that you will favour me with your name; that I may store it in my heart of hearts that I may look back to it from the storms of sin and strife, as to a bright and blessed guardian that I may write, amid the record of my wild and wilful deeds, one act of virtue which may balance all the evil in the service I have done to you. Thrice happy, if, when afar, I may not be forgotten if sometimes," and here I believe the firmness I had assumed deserted me, and my voice was hoarse and husky, "if sometimes you will permit the name of Harry Mornington to mingle with your prayers! Tell me, then, ere we part "

"Part!" she said, "part!" in one of those clear low whispers which pierce the ear more keenly than the trumpet−notes of passion. "And do *you* too forsake me? Have you but saved me that I may be dragged again oh God!" A shudder of almost convulsive violence ran through her frame at the recurrence of what seemed some half−maddening thought: but ere I could have counted ten, she had o'ermastered it; she wiped away a single tear with that long sunny ringlet, and moved yet closer to my side; cold, indeed, and colourless, but firm and unmoved as the sculptured marble.

"You know me not," she said slowly, and weighing her words, as it were, with desperate calmness "you know me not; nor do I wish you should: but *I* know this that you have rescued *me* from horrors of which I dare not even think. Leave not, then, I beseech you, leave not your work unfinished! As you are a man a gentleman a soldier by the soul of the mother who bore you of the father who taught you to be brave, and generous, and good, I do conjure you. Swear that you will grant to me one last request swear it before we part for ever!"

"There needs not, sweet lady," I replied, in tones not untinctured by her own vehemence, "there needs not an oath to bind me to your service. Speak, and were life, liberty, honour itself at stake, to the very letter you should be obeyed."

"Draw then your sword, and strike me to the heart! Better to die by the hand of a friend than to live deserted and dishonoured!"

"Now, by the living light of heaven," I cried, moved beyond all self−control, "I am no slave to Mazarin, that I should tear my heart−strings to fulfil his bidding. Here will I tarry. He can but take my life, and that is worthless! Lady I leave you not while head can plan, heart feel, or hand perform. While you have friends to be righted, or foes to be put down, hence will I depart living never! Command me; I am *your* soldier; yours to the death, yours only!"

"I accept your pledge! most willingly, most gratefully do I accept your proffered aid. I am an orphan," she continued, speaking more calmly, and as if reassured by my promise of protection, "a hapless, helpless orphan. If the gifts of fortune have been lavished upon me, they have been lavished but to render me more wretched. Death and misery have dogged my footsteps from my very cradle. Those who should have been my dearest friends have been my direst foes. All whom I have loved have perished; all whom I have trusted have betrayed, have persecuted, and had it not been for you would have destroyed me! On your protection do I cast myself; to your honour, to your courage, do I confide my all. But wherefore tarry here, if duty calls you elsewhere? Fly from these hateful scenes; to the world's end will I follow you, confidently believing that he who once has saved will never harm an orphan's sole possession, her yet unblemished honour!"

At a single glance I read her character. I saw she was no common woman, to flaunt in the sunshine of prosperity, and shrink, like the withered flower, in the time of trouble. On the instant I resolved to open to her my whole soul. I am not one to crouch before a lady's feet, to play the sighing, sentimental lover. Gently I led her to a seat; I told her of my exile from my native land; of my present duties; of my all−engrossing passion; of my hopes, my doubts, my fears, and my embarrassment. Rapidly I spoke, and fluently. Mastering the passion that was boiling in my blood, I made no wild protestations, poured forth no boyish rhapsodies; but calmly and deliberately, as though I were speaking of another, I showed her the nakedness of my heart; I told her how lightly I had thought of love; how I had striven against its first approaches; how deeply convinced I was of the truth, the singleness, the fervour of my unselfish, ignorant affection. Several times, while I was speaking, she had attempted to interrupt me; but as often, seeing my determination to speak to an end, she had desisted. I understood her purpose; but I saw, by the deep blush that crimsoned her countenance, by the quick heaving of her bosom, and the suffusion of her downcast eye, that if my suit should be rejected, her heart would have no share in the rejection. In conclusion, I entreated her to suffer me to procure for her a temporary abode in our present place of refuge, where she might dwell, as it were in sanctuary, till I could fulfil my present mission, return at the head of my troops, and conduct her openly, and in the face of man and Heaven, to St. Germains, where I again conjured her to become my bride.

When I had fully concluded, she raised her clear blue eye confidently to meet my gaze; there was no tremulousness, no flutter, no affectation of distress or sentiment, all was purity and unsuspecting innocence.

"You know not what you ask," she said, deeply moved, but completely conquering her emotion; "you know not what you ask, nor of whom. Noble, generous−hearted man, think you that I could brook, that I could stoop, even for mine own sake, to practise on devotion such as yours? Never never! There is a mystery, a deep and fearful mystery, around me; and think you that I would cast a shadow, even for an instant, on the name and fortunes of my preserver? There is a cloud of misery, and guilt, and madness upon our fated house; and I, the wretched, guiltless sacrifice, shall I drag down another glorious victim to the abyss from which he fain would rescue me? Let me but follow you your slave your sister what you will let me but follow you, till I can find some quiet grave wherein to lay my aching head. I cannot dare not tell you all; but of this be certain, ere you could reach your place of destination, they would drag me from these walls, as they have dragged me from many a more sure asylum!"

"Ha!" I replied, "is it so? Then is there but one course left; I fear not doubt not seek not to know your mystery; say but that you love me, that you will be mine and I can save you. Thus, and thus only! Become my bride this night. Start not this night, I say. The prior hath the power to protect you, give to me but the right to compel, if needs be, his protection. Speak but the word, one hour will make you mine, the next shall find me in the saddle; and ere a third sun set a thousand trusty swords shall guard my bride. Refuse me and, though I cannot save, I still

can die for you!"

Twenty times, as I pleaded my cause with all the earnest vehemence of a resolved and honest heart, did the shadows sink darkly down upon her speaking brow; and as often did they vanish thence in gleams of transient hope. Twenty times did her lips unclose as if to speak; and as often did her words die on her tongue in low and faltering murmurs. I arose slowly to my feet as I concluded, and stretched my open arms towards her, as to the arbitress of my doom.

With a quick cry, she rushed into my embrace, wound her arms convulsively about my neck "Harry!" she murmured, "you have prevailed; you take me to your heart in doubt, in darkness, and in mystery; but never, never shall you rue this day. Many a fairer, many a nobler bride might you have won; but never one more fond, more faithful, nor thanks be to thee, adored Harry, to thee and ONE besides more pure than Isabel de Coucy."

CHAPTER V.

"*Fri*. So smile the heavens upon this holy act, That after−hours with sorrow chide us not! *Rom*. Amen, Amen! But, come what sorrow can, It cannot countervail the exchange of joy That one short minute gives me in her sight." Romeo and Juliet.

With a heart filled almost to bursting, I hurried forth to seek the superior of the convent; and never, perhaps, did I feel a mightier conflict of principles and impulses, of doubts and hopes, than in the agitating moments which preceded that strange wedding. Anticipating the unwillingness of the worthy Benedictine to give his sanction to the solemn union of two persons to whose characters so much of mystery and suspicion must naturally attach, and that too under circumstances which might call down upon himself the resentment of powerful enemies, and possibly bring upon his community the more deeply−dreaded censure of their common superior, I had tasked my spirit to the utmost to find some plausible solution of the difficulties of my situation, some satisfactory reasons for a marriage so clandestine, so sudden, and, above all, so authorized as that which it was my object now to solemnize. And, strange to say, the very search for a justification of my conduct to the understanding of another, tended to render me dissatisfied, and doubtful of myself. Is it possible, I thought, or rather is it not probable, that I have been the slave of impulse, the toy of sudden passion that I have surrendered my discretion to my feelings, that I have suffered my soul to be lapped in Elysium by the mere beauty and fascinations of an artful woman, and that I shall awake from my dream of paradise to find myself the inmate of a moral Tartarus? And yet her refusal to become my bride suggested my passion, or, as I now am fain to believe, my better genius her manifest reluctance to owe that to compassion, or to the intensity of sudden feeling, which she might have accepted freely, if offered under different circumstances. And might not this be the result of artifice deep−laid and hitherto successful artifice? I felt that I had acted rashly madly, if you will. I doubted the wisdom, I wellnigh trembled at the risk, of the step I had already taken; yet so strangely are our minds made up of opposite and counteracting principles I had not, for a single instant, the slightest wish, the most remote idea, of withdrawing my foot from the verge, how perilous soever I might deem it, whereon it had been planted by my own unbiased will. There were, in my inmost soul, two concurring sensations, which would probably have urged me onward in the teeth of obstacles even greater than those which seemed to bar my progress. The first was one of those wild fancies, those superstitions, if you will, which have been common in all times and countries to intellects more powerful than my own to minds, indeed, of the highest order; one of those creeds not of the head, but of the heart; one of those beliefs which, for ever disowned by reason, for ever keep their place in our bosoms, and exert an influence, not the less potent that it is unconfessed, over our actions, it was the conviction of my own good−fortune. Yes! wild, absurd as such an idea may appear my own inborn good−fortune! The partisan of a fallen cause the soldier of a conquered army the adherent of a dethroned and a slaughtered monarch an exile from the land of my birth the last outcast scion of an attainted title landless, friendless, and alone, I still believed in my own good−fortune; not, perhaps, as relating to connected consequences, not to a series of events, but confidently as pertaining to single isolated accidents. A thousand times, during my stormy and eventful career, had I rushed headlong, as it would

seem, upon destruction; and the very madness of the proceeding had as often worked out its ultimate success. To the metaphysician and philosopher be it to analyze the belief, and to search out its secret causes. They would, perhaps, tell you that my mind had, in truth, by some unconscious operation, balanced the chances and calculated the bearings of every successive step; till that which in every instance appeared the result of fortuitous combinations was, in reality, the consequence of plans matured, as it were, instinctively, and forgotten, though still operating, during the whirl of action and excitement. Be it to them, I say, to reason, to qualify, and, if they can, to explain. I am a soldier, and I know not, and care yet less, whether my thoughts be comprehensible or no. The belief which I then held, which I still hold, was, that, rush into whatever dilemma I might, my own good−luck would bear me out, not scathless only, but victorious. This, then, was the first and leading principle which hurried me onward in despite of my own judgment; the second, scarcely, perhaps, less influential than that which I have just described, was a conviction of the purity, the faith, the excellence of Isabel. It was my cavilling and suspicious mind alone that doubted; my heart was confident, and on that confidence I acted; after−events will tell if wisely, or, at least, if fortunately.

Pondering thus doubting, and debating with myself I strode along the gloomy cloisters; till I found myself already in the presence of him I sought, before I had determined what should be my arguments, or what my inducements to the holy man to minister to my wishes. I had not hitherto seen the father, to whom my application was to be made. Hospitality had been furnished, as a matter of course, and without inquiry; though I subsequently discovered that every circumstance of my coming had been made known to him, who was to be the arbiter of my present destinies. On the first glance at the person to whom I was about to prefer my request, I was resolved. I saw before me a tall, pale, and emaciated man not surely past the prime of the intellectual man but worn, as it struck me at once, rather by the workings of a spirit too subtile and energetic for its clay companion, than by ascetic self−inflictions. His cowl had fallen back from his nobly−formed head; and as he sat facing the narrow casement, the last faint rays of the wintry sunshine streamed down upon his high brow, and almost superhuman features. His temples, perfectly bald and unwrinkled, were not disfigured by the formal tonsure, though a beard of the most intense blackness flowed in long and silky waves far down his bosom. There was a something of severity in the general expression, but a bland and beautiful smile played upon the chiselled lips; while his soft dark eyes looked out from their deep sockets with a mingled brilliancy and benignity, that rendered his countenance altogether the most remarkable that I had ever witnessed. He looked the imbodiment of a spirit; as I gazed upon his lustrous eyes, and wonderfully intellectual features, I forgot that I was looking on a mortal like myself. There was a purity, a truth, a beauty in that face, that seemed to indicate the absence of every earthly passion, accompanied by a divine sympathy for the very feelings which he had himself been permitted to eradicate or subdue, when existing in the breasts of others. I felt as though he had already perused my inmost soul, as though he knew my object, my aims, my motives. I could no more have attempted to deceive or to diplomatize with such a man than I could have lied before the throne of the Eternal. So complete was the fascination of this strange being upon my senses, that I almost started when, in a voice that fitly harmonized with the frame from which it was breathed, deep, melodious, and passionless, he inquired the purport of my visit. At once, and without hesitation, I told him all, the duel in the forest the rescue the pursuit the mystery. I probed my own heart, and told him of my fears, my doubts, my determination. I told him distinctly, and without disguise, who and whence I was; showed him the missive of Mazarin, and explained its real object; and concluded by entreating him to perform a deed of the utmost benevolence in uniting me to Isabel.

As I began to speak, he listened to me calmly, and with attention, though, as it struck me, with a slightly incredulous expression. As I proceeded, that expression vanished into one of intense scrutiny and interest; and as I spoke of my affection for Isabel, of my deep passionate conviction of her purity, and of my certainty that the only chance of rescuing her lay in our instant union, that benignant smile irradiated his whole countenance, and I thought I saw a big tear roll down his pale cheek; but, as I paused an instant from my narrative to mark his features, he observed my glance, and drawing his cowl forward, shadowed himself completely from my further scrutiny. When I had done speaking, he remained silent for some moments, as if buried in the deepest reflection, ere he replied:

"The truth is in your words, my son, and well for you it is so. Had you swerved from the straight path but for the breadth of a single hair, I could not, and I would not, have served you. Well have you acted thus far, and nobly. That in your further views you are actuated by high and honourable motives, I well believe, though it might, perhaps, be rash to term them wise ones. It is singular that you should have thus been led to apply yourself to me; for I and I, perhaps, alone of all men can, and *will* assist you. You have, it seems, yourself well weighed the risks you run in wedding this young person; and are yet willing, if I understand you rightly, to run these risks, not for your own advancement, but for her preservation. Is it not so?"

I signified my assent.

"It is a mighty sacrifice," he muttered to himself, and then repeated it again aloud "it is a mighty sacrifice, my son, and many an ecclesiastic would deem it his bounden duty to prevent it. But I I love the sacrifice of self to honour I love the buoyant, ardent, and unselfish aspirations of youth; enough I will believe, will hope your prospects of felicity less doubtful than they would appear. Something, too, I can gather from your narrative, of whom and what the lady is, and what the oppression from which you would preserve her you know it not?"

"Father, I know it not!"

"It is wonderful " he again spoke aside; and ere he again addressed me, I saw his fingers pass over his beads, and his lips move in silent prayer.

"Then from me you should know it not, even had I the power to explain! Yet, thus much will I tell you; and if, knowing this, you choose to persevere I will I will unite you. If it be as well I am assured it is, this Isabel de Coucy *is* the child of misery *may be* the child of shame and guilt. A dark and fearful mystery dwells over her; one which, if it were divulged, would make her an object of aversion and of dread to all who heed the world's opinion more than their own souls' judgment. Misery there is misery of her own; guilt I say not of her own but of all those whose name she bears misery, and guilt, and shame, such as may never be cleared up; and which, if not cleared up, must make her shunned of men. If, knowing thus much, you dread, as it well may be, the contempt or censure of the world, forget that you have ever seen, and leave her to the protection of Him who, if innocent, never will desert her. But if, knowing this, you dare abide by the dictates of your own conscience, or of your own heart, and be sure, ere you decide, you know which it be that prompts you, meet me an hour hence in the chapel, and I will further your desires. Peril it will bring upon me, and, it may be, destruction; but I see my path of duty, and" he looked upward "*fiat voluntas tua!*"

"Father," I replied, "I had resolved upon my line of action before I sought your presence. I am no more a man to blench from what *I* deem the path of honour, for the scorn of men, than *you* to shrink from the road of Christian virtue, though it should lead to martyrdom! Say but that you will make her mine, that you will keep her from violence till my return, and you shall have the prayers of one who, though his trade be violence and blood, hath not forgotten in his prime the lessons of his childhood, and whose sins have been the sins of weakness not of wilfulness!"

"That I will make her yours, my son, I have already promised; that I will protect her to the utmost of my power, you are now assured! How far I may be enabled to guard her, as your wife, I know not; as a maiden, she would be ravished hence before to−morrow's dawn. We are but men and we can but endeavour. There is One above who may accomplish or annul, and to Him we will submit ourselves in confidence, and in the fear that yet is love!"

The hour passed away like a dream. I had acquainted Isabel with my success, and at her own request had left her alone with her sorrows and her hopes. The hour passed away like a dream, and I was still pacing the floor of my turret−chamber, when a brother summoned me with the information that his superior awaited me in the chapel. I entered the apartment of my chosen one. I found her prostrate on her knees, with lifted hands and streaming eyes, and my name trembling on her lips, mingled with the awful titles of Him to whom she, for the last time, offered

up the aspirations of her virgin heart!

"Come," I whispered, "come, my beloved, the holy father waits us. Banish your tears, sweet Isabel; henceforth you shall shed none, or shed but tears of happiness!"

"O Harry," she murmured; "dearest Harry, there is a cloud of dread and doubt around me, and I more than half repent the promise you wrung from me. You take me to your arms, to your heart your glorious and confiding heart. And what have I to give you in return, a broken spirit, a frail body, a creature rejected and despised of the world, a thing whose very name will be a reproach to you! O Harry! Harry! spare me; release me from my fatal vows. If you knew all, you would release me release me, did I say? would spurn me!"

"Isabel," I interrupted her calmly and gravely "Isabel de Coucy if you repent your promise on your own account, you are at liberty; if not, do me, at least, the justice to believe that I am a man of truth and honour. If you cannot believe this, better, better it were, indeed, for me and you to perish where we stand, than to go forward in this matter. I have in you all confidence all faith. In you I repose my honour as freely and as fully as I trust one day to repose my soul in my Creator's mercy. You have told me that you are innocent of wrong; and had you told me otherwise, I had deemed you still innocent of all but slander on yourself. Did I not believe you pure, and taintless, and single−hearted, sooner would I take to my arms deformity, ay, death herself, than you with all your charms, were they to last for ever! If you believe *me* if you believe that I shall love you ever as I love you *now* that I should but cherish you more fervently, esteem you more thoroughly, if you were rejected, scorned, and hated of the world here is my heart and hand. If you cannot believe this we will part, even at the altar's foot! It is for you to determine. Speak, Isabel! speak for me as for yourself! and bethink you that an error now is an error that must endure for ever that love, devoid of confidence, is but a summer's flower; and that the union of a man and wife must brave the wintry storm as freely as it hails the summer sunshine!"

Without another word, without an instant's hesitation, she grasped my proffered hand, pressed it to her heart, to her lips. "No! no!" she cried, "no, Harry! not for a moment have I doubted aught but my own unworthiness " Before she could conclude her sentence, I folded her in my arms, parted the sunny tresses from her fair brow to press on it one chaste and passionless kiss, drew her hand under my arm, and led her towards the chapel. Conducted by the monk, we threaded the long corridors within the pile; thence through a low−browed arch we gained the outer cloisters, dark, damp, and cheerless. I felt the frame of my companion shiver as we passed along the gloomy cavernous range, and I knew intuitively the thoughts that were working in her guileless heart. In moments such as these, the strongest heart is prone to superstitious terrors; the most skeptical look for omens in the merest occurrences of chance, and pin their faith, as it were, upon a falling leaf or fading flower. I was about to speak cheerfully, when our conductor unlatched a door leading into an inner garden, beyond which lay the chapel, with its tall pointed windows glancing in the moonlight. The contrast between the gloom within and the heavenly brilliancy without was not required to impress the mind with the beauty of the scene. The quiet garden, with its clustering evergreens, its imbowered walks, and its dark foliage, gemmed with the night−dew, and sleeping in the placid moonshine the crystal pool in the centre, with its tall fountain shooting upward towards the clear blue sky, its summit bathed in silvery light, and a thousand prismatic colours playing on its dancing rain−drops, while its base lay steeped in shadow the light clustered columns and pointed arches rich with the florid traceries of the later Norman style the rustle of the gentle west wind among the shrubs for the night was as calm and spring−like as the morning had been wintry and severe combined to form one of the most lovely pictures of tranquillity and happiness I had ever witnessed. Isabel raised her liquid eyes to mine, sparkling through their tears; and I felt that I but echoed the words which they were uttering, as I whispered, "Such has been our course, sweet Isabel through gloom and sorrow; and so to end in light, and peace, and bliss!"

We entered the chapel, and the same tranquillity was there. A single lamp, by the high altar, streamed over the magnificent painting that adorned the sacred spot, glanced upon the massive chalices and candlesticks of gold that stood around the shrine; and showed, nobler than all those works of art and beauty, the high pale form of the Benedictine prior. Beyond the circle of light that emanated from the single lamp, the long nave lay in mellowed

gloom, save where the pure moonlight streamed through the open doorway in its natural hues, or slept upon the marble floor in variegated tints, derived from the stained glass of the lancet−shaped windows. The banners, which decorated the walls, hung silent and unshaken, and here and there some monument of whiter marble, or the panoply which hung in monumental mockery over the bones of some knight of other days, touched by a stray beam, stood out from the shadows in ghostly relief. There was no chanted mass, no pealing of the organ, or streaming of high anthems down the aisle; no plumed spectators, no gay and congratulating friends, no smiling bridemaids, no clamorous crowd without, to hail the happy couple; no witnesses to that most important ceremony in the life of man, but two of the eldest brethren of the order and the superior, who performed the solemn rite. No witness, did I say? There was a witness felt, if not seen, by two, at least, of that small company the One Eternal Witness of every human thought as well as deed; the One who hears and registers, not only every vow, but every word that falls from the thoughtless lip; and who never, perhaps, registered the union of two hearts more single and devoted than those which were joined in that solitary chapel on that eventful night.

CHAPTER VI.

"The health this night must be my bed, The bracken curtain for my head, My lullaby the warder's tread; Far, far from love and thee, Mary! To−morrow eve, more stilly laid, My couch may be my bloody plaid, My vesper song thy wail, sweet maid! It will not waken me, Mary!" *Lady of the Lake.*

The echoes of the convent clock were still ringing through the vaulted cloisters of the ancient building, when the flash of torches, and the impatient neigh and stamp of my charger in the courtyard, announced too surely that the hour appointed for my departure had arrived. At ten o'clock I had resolved, however hard the effort, to tear myself away; and, while in the newness of my feelings I imagined that it lacked at least an hour of the time, the night had worn onwards; and the hateful bells had noted the lapse of minutes, which to me and my young bride had passed unnumbered and unregarded, though never to be forgotten. To one who has gone through the regular gradations of acquaintance, intimacy, affection, love, and wedlock, who has known, perhaps, for years, and courted for months, her who is to be the partner of his weal and wo through time at least, if not eternity, there may, there *must* be rapture indescribable in the hours of intercourse, for the first time, free and unrestrained, in the interchange of thoughts which could not well be interchanged before, in the mutual remembrances of the first dawning of that passion which now is every thing, and, above all, in the sense, the security, of possession. But, perfectly as I can comprehend the intense delight of such sensations, I, at the same time, feel, that being entirely different in their nature, they must also be vastly inferior in their degree, to those which I experienced during this first stolen interview of my wedded life. I had, in the brief space of a single day, gone through all those successive stages which, in the ordinary lives of men, occupy the course of many months thus combined into a single epoch: I had passed at once from utter insensibility to the opposite extreme of passion; I had become enamoured of a few strong points of character, which, as I fain to believe, no less clearly proved the existence of other excellences yet unseen, than do the towering spires that loom above the ill−defined and hazy outlines of a great city denote the position of a hundred happy homes, which will emerge from their obscurity as we draw near. I had set my all upon a single cast. If my presentiment of character were true, I had won that, in comparison of which all other treasures might indeed be counted dross; if I had erred, the happiness of a life must atone for the error. It was not therefore merely the gloating rapture of a lover blessed by a fruition of all his hopes, but the keen and thrilling scrutiny of a miser, weighing the ducats for which he has exchanged his precious wares, the agonizing doubt of a magician, lest the pleasure or the power for which he has trafficked his immortal soul be found wanting in the balance. It was not only the actual bliss that prompted me to hang upon the silvery voice, to gaze on my own features reflected in the clear blue eyes those mirrors of the ingenuous mind; not merely the sense that she was irrevocably and eternally my own but the far loftier happiness of hearing in every tone, of reading in every glance, the intelligence, the brilliancy, the power, the sterling metal of a soul now linked to mine by bonds of more endurance than the adamant of old. So oppressively painful was the idea of tearing myself away from converse fit for the ears of angels, of leaving a bride, and such a bride, in the very hour of marriage, of leaving her never perhaps to return for my route lay through danger, such as at another moment I should probably have

courted for its own sake alone that the glance of anger and vexation which I cast towards the casement was not wholly unmingled with hesitation. I was more than half−inclined to stay to dare, to defy, to endure all things, save the risk of losing her. One look towards Isabel her liquid eye was fixed, dwelling with an unutterable expression of solicitude, upon my features. "Never!" I muttered, "never!" And rising hastily, I made two strides towards the door, determined to countermand my steed; but, ere I could make a third, the soft pressure of her hand upon my shoulder, and her yet softer voice, recalled me. So thoroughly congenial were our spirits, so perfectly attuned our hearts, that she had already learned to read even a motion or a look.

"No, Harry!" she said; "dearest Harry, no! Think you not that it is as hard to me, this cruel parting? Yet, though it were to anticipate the joys of heaven, I would not you should tarry. Too much have you done, too much have you risked already, and for me! It is *honour* that now calls *your* honour, Harry; and can you think so meanly of her whom you have intrusted with your all, as that she would set *that* in jeopardy, and for the vile price of present pleasure? Go! go where duty and your *honour* call you. Go! and may all good angels guard you!"

To an appeal like this there could be no reply. To be reminded of my duty by a girl, to be urged to the sacrifice of all of present bliss, perhaps of future happiness rather than to the loss of honour! If I had loved her before, I adored her now! She was, she *was* the very being I had conceived her from the beginning, fair, and fond, and feminine, yet fraught with a spirit that could writhe up against the pressure of evil, and show itself in all the majesty of heroism heroism not framed on the brute impulses of active courage, but on the rarer and far more noble principles of patient, fearless, and unmoved endurance. I caught her strained her to my bosom "Had all men such a counsellor, earth would have to boast a thousand heroes where now she numbers ten. Heaven Heaven itself hath given thee to me, Isabel, to be my guardian genius, my good angel; to repress each ill desire, to confirm each nobler purpose; and Heaven will preserve to me its gift. Farewell farewell, beloved one. What though my body leave thee my soul remains behind. For the first, for the *last* time, fare thee well my own my only Isabel!"

Many a bitter pang, many a chilling separation had I endured. I had parted from a father, a murdered corpse beneath a blazing roof−tree; from a noble brother, gored by the roundhead pikes and trampled beneath the hoofs of his own charging squadrons, which he still cheered on to glory; from a mother the mother who had soothed my froward infancy, and taught me to bear up against the oppression of manhood's wo perishing, slowly and miserably, by that worst of human ailments, a broken heart; from a country, for which I *had* lost all but life, and for which I would have lost *that* also, and how gladly! From all these had I been severally rent asunder; and, at each several parting, though I bore it as a man should bear, I had felt as though the very strings of my existence were strained to breaking! But now and I shame not to write it tears, hot tears stood in my burning eyes, and my throat swelled till it had wellnigh choked me.

It was over! I pulled the hat upon my brows, strode slowly, and without daring to look back, through the echoing cloisters. Again and again I charged the prior, as he valued the approval or dreaded the rebukes of his own conscience, to protect the bride whom he himself had tied to me, in that most hallowed bond which death alone may sever. I paused not for his reply; his *benedicite* was uttered, perhaps for the first time, to regardless ears. I cast myself into the saddle, struck the spurs deep into the charger's side, as if distrustful of my own resolution, and dashed at once into that fierce and rapid motion by which, despite the ancient adage, men fancy they can outstrip the pursuit of care.

All night long I journeyed onward; not, indeed, at the furious pace which must have soon exhausted both horse and rider, but at the steady measured trot, which, though to the eye it seem a laggard's gait, accomplishes a distant course with the greatest speed and certainty. For a brief space, my feelings were, I know not how, benumbed by the shock of parting; then, gradually, as this insensibility wore away, my spirits were depressed, beyond all that my experience had ever felt of despair: I dreamed for my state of mind was more similar to sleep than waking a thousand fearful things, among which, perhaps, eternal separation was the least tremendous. After a time, however, the free and somewhat chilly currents of the night air, the inspiriting sensation of quick motion, and the

increasing necessity for care and vigilance, overpowered such gloomy fantasies. I fixed my thoughts steadfastly upon the work before me, and I soon perceived, that, when they did revert to all which I had left, their train became less gloomy, and tended, with an easy and gradual transition, to confidence and hope. Before the night had passed away, and while the stars were still shining in the wintry sky, I found myself humming the burden of some lively song, and guiding my horse, if not with the thoughtless buoyancy of former times, with cheerfulness at least, and even gayety of heart.

The east grew pale, the morning broke brightly, and, like a harbinger of happy tidings, the great sun heaved his rim above the horizon, shooting his slant rays over field and forest, which glittered, in their frosty garb, as if they had been sprinkled with diamonds. It was a season and a scene to cheer the most despondent, and to wake reflection in the most worldly mind. At this instant, however although their influence was not without its effect in still further dispelling the gloom which had a little while before so completely veiled my mental horizon I was called upon to give my attention to things of a more important, if less exalted, nature, than mere reflection on the beauties of nature, or the mercies of its Great Architect. I had already completed twelve leagues of my route, and, although my own mind was too deeply interested to permit my feeling sensibly the wants of the body, I was not one to neglect the necessities of the faithful brute that bore me, and that lately had acquired so heavy a claim on my gratitude. A small hamlet, lying at a short distance from the main road, imbosomed in a wide tract of woodland, afforded me, in its snug hostelry, all the appliances of simple comfort, with the additional advantage of that secrecy which was so all−important to the success of my mission. At this place, wherein I rested till the sun was fast declining, I gained, for the first time, certain information of the troops I was hastening to command. They lay in garrison, I was told, at the town of Pont à Mousson, about ten leagues distant, consisting of three full regiments of well−appointed cavalry. With these good tidings, however, there were mingled rumours of a nature far less agreeable. The troops, it was whispered, were in a state of ill−discipline approaching to the very verge of license, unchecked by the officers, who were, for the most part, gay youths, fitter for the *salons* of the metropolis than for the austerities of a winter's campaign. Nor was this all: disaffection, it seems, had been creeping darkly, but not therefore the less certainly, among the population of this remote district; and the party of the *Fronde* had gained many partisans, though not yet avowed, among the surrounding peasantry nay, it was even hinted that secret levies were now in progress, and that the position of the troops might, ere long, be critical enough. Such was the intelligence which I easily elicited from the garrulity of mine host; and which availed, yet more than the alteration of my state of mind, to render me alert and self−possessed. The shadows were already cast in lengthened lines from every object that intercepted the light of the setting sun, when I departed from my resting−place; and it was not long before my path lay through the total obscurity of a moonless wintry night. I did not, however, as before, pass all the hours of darkness on the road, but paused, when two−thirds of the distance were accomplished, to prepare myself for the first interview with my new followers. Nor, in truth, did I feel by any means over−confident of the result. The character I had lately heard of the men and officers whom I was about to meet, and the rude and weather−beaten state of my own person and accoutrements, would, I apprehended, be too little in unison to harmonize on a very brief acquaintance; while I felt, at the same time, that the ordeal, to which we should in all probability be exposed together, was one that would require the utmost energy and vigour in the commander, and the most implicit obedience and unity of action in the subordinates.

Of myself I have hitherto said little; but a brief sketch of the person with whose inmost thoughts he is becoming acquainted, may aid the reader to form a better judgment of the position into which I was now thrown. I was, at this eventful period of my fortunes, somewhat past my thirtieth year, although from long exposure to war and weather, and from having been cast very early upon the world under circumstances such as form the character and ripen the mind I looked several years older. Not unusually tall, or bulky, in my person, I was both strongly and actively framed; and constant exercise and hardship had indurated my muscles to a degree that would have rendered me more than a match for many a heavier antagonist than myself. My features were irregular; not so much so, however, as to amount to ugliness, much less to vulgarity. My eye, though sunken, or, to speak more properly, deepset, was quick and clear; and my brow now surrounded by a black fillet broad and fully developed. My lip was shaded by a thick mustache, and, as I have elsewhere observed, I wore my hair in the long flowing curls at this time peculiar to the cavaliers. If, in addition to these, I mention, that the lower part of my face

was bronzed to almost Indian redness, while my forehead retained its natural fairness, that my arms, though not so long as to appear unsightly, or deformed, were of unusual reach, and that, from long practice, my motions were easier, and my general appearance far more graceful, on horseback than when on foot, no description can be more accurate. On my departure from St. Germains, my dress had been carefully selected, for other qualities than richness or display; properties which, however admirable in the court, would have been of no small disadvantage under existing circumstances. A strong, but plain, buff coat, with none of the rich silken loops or fringes of Flanders lace with which it was then the mode to deck the sternest habiliments of war; a gorget and cuirass of steel, which, although highly polished, and of the choicest metal, were neither chased nor inlaid with gold or silver; heavy jack−boots, extending far above the knee, and equipped with a pair of massive spurs; gauntlets of buff, protected on the outside by iron scales; and a slouched hat, provided with jointed cheek−pieces, and an inner lining of the same material, such were the accoutrements of a well−appointed trooper, and with such, for the support of that character, I had furnished myself. Plain, however, and unadorned as they had appeared, when I sallied, some three weeks before, from my head−quarters, they were then at least in the highest state of order; which was more than could be said of them when I halted for the night at Beaumont. The leather of my doublet was sorely chafed, and splashed with specimens of every different soil through which my road had lain; the steel of my breastplate was curiously ingrained with rust of every hue, from the deep black of a fortnight's growth to the red stain of yesterday; my boots, guiltless of the brush, were gray and mildewed; while my castor, that Corinthian capital of a gentleman's architecture, had been shorn of its feather, and knocked into every various shape of which a Spanish beaver is susceptible. It was in vain that, during my last halt, I stuck a new feather of the loyal colours into my weather−beaten hat, and flung a bright scarf of the same die across my shoulders: I could not cheat even myself into the belief that I bore the slightest resemblance to a *chef d'escadron* for such was the rank I bore in the service of the most Christian king. The result was as, indeed, it mostly is that all my labour and anxiety were utterly thrown away; accident providing me with a far better introduction than the most *martinet−like* appearance, or the most ample letters of credence, could have afforded.

It was on the second morning after my parting from Isabel, that I rode through the humble suburbs of Beaumont, into the open country which lies between that place and Pont à Mousson, now but a few miles distant. I had already journeyed, it might be for an hour, through a rich and fertile country when a distant shout riveted my attention. It was not the deep and regular hurrah of charging troops, nor yet was it such as could be raised in any of the ordinary chances of rural labour or pastime, but a hoarse savage roar, as of an angry multitude. Immediately afterward I heard, though very remote, the blast of trumpets, and the booming of a kettle−drum. I paused, and, listening in breathless eagerness, fancied I could distinguish the heavy onward tramp of charging troops. My suspicions were confirmed by the roll of a volley of musketry, and the varied sounds of a battle−field, distinctly audible in every lull, but again lost in every freshening of the breeze. Loosening my weapon in its scabbard, I rode hastily forward, and, on clearing the brow of a small eminence, perceived below me the scene of the disturbance. A small body of cavalry, not apparently exceeding a single regiment, with royal colours displayed and music sounding, was on the point of charging for the second time, as it would seem, since the ground was strewed with dead, and chargers were running masterless, a large concourse for it merited no other name of men, whose motley costumes and irregular array betokened any thing rather than soldiers. These rustics were, however, posted with considerable skill, their front being protected by a ditch, and their right wing covered by a marshy wood, while their extreme left occupied a churchyard abutting on the high−road, and surrounded by a lofty wall. The insurgents were destitute of cavalry, and, as far as I could see, entirely unprovided with fire−arms. I had scarcely time to observe the relative position of the hostile parties, before the trumpets of the horse again sounded a charge, and they rushed headlong against the centre of the line, through ground which I now discovered, by the hampered movements of their chargers, to be little better than a morass. On arriving at the verge of the trench, which they did, not with the regular front of a well−ordered regiment, but in a broken and scattered mass, the cuirassiers poured in a heavy volley from their petronels, throwing their adversaries into some confusion; but, on their attempting to improve this slight advantage, and cross the ditch at a deep and miry ford, the peasants broke down upon them with pike and sword, while entangled in the broken ground; mingled with the horsemen, meeting them resolutely, hand to hand; and finally beat them off in total disarray, spearing many, both officers and privates, ere they could gain the firm ground; on reaching which they were with some difficulty rallied, while the

victorious countrymen retired slowly and sullenly to their main host.

Such was the crisis at which it was my fortune to fall in with the outposts of my command. They were collected, when I came up to them, on a small knoll, or rocky hillock, on the very edge of the marsh, and were engaged in loud and wordy argument concerning the propriety of another attack upon the *Frondeurs;* which counsel was strenuously advocated by some, while others as violently demanded that they should wait the arrival of a reinforcement, which had been already summoned from Pont à Mousson. To all the evils arising from want of discipline and insubordination I had been well inured during the miserable civil wars which had, during so long a period, rent the bosom of my own fair island; but never, in all my experience of camps, had I beheld so wild and tumultuous a council as that which now met my eyes. So completely were they engrossed in their stormy debate, that I actually rode up to within ten paces of the party unchallenged, and might probably have mingled with them unnoticed; but such was not my present intention. I called out, therefore, in a clear loud voice, demanding to be conducted instantly to their commanding officer. Strange and scrutinizing glances were cast upon my dress and accoutrements as I approached, but my request was unhesitatingly complied with, and, in another moment, I was presented to a very young officer, in a splendid uniform, with a burnished casque and corslet, whose bloody brow, and arm suspended in a scarf, proved his gallantry as clearly as did his ruffled mien and angry exclamations his inability to command.

"If, sir," I said, so loudly that all might hear my words, "if, sir, as I presume, you be the commander of the garrison of Pont à Mousson, I have the honour to present to you a mandate from his highness Cardinal Mazarin, requiring your immediate march, with all the forces at your disposal, upon the capital, whither I am authorized to conduct you. At the same time, that you may not remain ignorant of him who now addresses you, I shall although it be not absolutely called for display to you my commission, from the same hand, as major−general and *chef d'escadron*, during the pleasure of our glorious monarch Louis le Grand." As I concluded my harangue with a well−known claptrap, which, as I had fully expected, called forth a loud shout of approbation from the licentious troopers, I perceived that the missives were considered satisfactory, and that the officer was slightly embarrassed. Determined, therefore, to anticipate his inquiries "And now, sir," I cried, "why do I find you here, with so small a command, and I regret to say it in so great disarray before a peasant foe? Why, too, this evil discipline? Fy! sir, fy! let your subalterns get the men into array at once this matter must be amended. St. George! but ye resemble more a band of robbers than the gallant cavaliers I trust I soon shall prove ye! Methinks I heard ye speak of reinforcements send out videttes to reconnoitre their advance push forward a picket of cavalry in front, to mark the motions of that *canaille*, with whom, God aid us, I will soon take order! And now, sir I await your answer!"

Briefly, yet not without manifest embarrassment, the Comte de Charmi for such, he informed me, was his title explained that he had been detached by the officer in command, with orders to disperse a body of malecontents assembled in the marshes of Beaumont; that on his arrival he had found the enemy vastly his superior in numbers, and had immediately despatched an *aide* for reinforcements; but that, unwilling to dishonour the corps by a palpable retreat, he had made two efforts to dislodge them, and had been repulsed in either attack with considerable loss. Scarcely had he finished his report, before the vidette returned with the intelligence that no reinforcements were in sight, although he had galloped to a height which commanded the whole line of route up to the very walls, and that consequently none were shortly to be expected. I perceived at once my opportunity it would not do to retreat before the *Frondeurs*, or our march to Paris could never be accomplished it would not do to risk my own character, either for courage or decision. The greatest hold a leader can possess over his troops is in their estimate of his abilities; and I saw at once that I could gain the confidence of mine. On even ground the enemy must prove mere chaff before the mettled horses and perfect arms of our cavalry. Their position was their only safety my practised eye had already found its key, and I was resolved myself to carry it by a *coup de main!*

"Accompany me to the front, Monsieur de Charml;" and, turning my horse's head, I rode slowly along the line. If there was much to blame, there was yet more to admire, in the detachment. The men were for the most part active hardy−looking youths, admirably mounted and equipped discipline alone was wanting and discipline, I well knew, beneath the eye of a strict and intelligent officer is soon acquired. "Gentlemen," I cried, in high but

courteous tones "it is the pleasure of your king that I should lead you. I have found you in retreat but I never retreat, by St. George, *never!* We must beat these fellows, and that too on the instant! Monsieur de Charmi, call volunteers to the front I have need of two score men for desperate service, and I myself shall lead them!"

The young officer rode forward, and addressed a few spirited and well−chosen words to the soldiers, who were already on fire to retrieve their reputation, and then fell back a pistol−shot from the front; the bugles flourished, and, to my utter astonishment, the whole corps rode out three paces, like a single man. Highly delighted, I dashed the rowels into Bayard's flanks, and wheeled, hat in hand, to the front of their files at a gallop.

"Gentlemen, and gallant comrades," I cried, checking my horse from the top of his career so suddenly that he stood at once still as a lifeless sculpture "words cannot tell how deeply I appreciate your confidence nor is your confidence misplaced! Often and again, I trust, I shall experience the courage and prompt devotion of all! at present I have but need of forty and where all are brave, a leader can have no choice let every tenth man leave the ranks!"

The movement was executed; I dismounted, and passed on foot from man to man, examining, with my own hand and eye, the state of their arms and the condition of their steeds, and, this done, gave the word to mount.

"My object, Monsieur de Charmi," I continued, "is to carry, sword in hand, you churchyard, which forms the *point d'appui* of their left wing. This will I execute myself. You, with the main body, will advance in column upon their centre, slowly, and keeping your men well together. When you shall reach the dike, let your first and second troops deploy, covering your passage with the fire of their petronels, till you shall hear my bugle. Then charge! Cut your way to the rear! Wheel to the right, and you shall find me near you. Be steady, and success is certain! Forward, and let your shout be Glory!"

Without another word, I rode to the head of my volunteers, and, putting them in motion, proceeded along the highway, while De Charmi was moving on a parallel line across the marshy meadows to my left; the force of the enemy lying, as I have before described it, at right angles to the public road. As I advanced I lost sight of De Charmi's division, behind some clumps of timber−trees which lined the causeway; and, I confess, I was not a little anxious during the interval; for I shrewdly doubted the prudence of the leader, and the steadiness of his command. At this moment the sharp report of a petronel rang from the left, and was followed by the continuous rattle of a well−sustained fire. "On! on!" I shouted, and at a rapid pace we reached the angle of the churchyard, protected by walls of solid masonry at least four feet in height. The trees became thinner, and then broke off entirely. I caught a glimpse of the affair in the meadows. De Charmi's leading troops were spread out to the right and left of his main body, keeping up a beautiful and most destructive volley upon the enemy's centre, while files after files were passing the trench under the cover of the cross fire, and taking up their position with all the steadiness of veterans. "Forward!" and we dashed on, till the head of my little column was parallel with the extreme rear of the enemy's lines "Halt, Gentlemen of France! Left face!" and on the instant our heads were turned against his flank. The churchyard had been occupied by those of the peasantry who were the least perfect in their equipments, and who were destitute of musketry. They were already wavering at the mere sight of our front. Still the mode of attack to which I had determined to resort was perilous in the extreme. It was to leap my whole detachment, boot and thigh, into the enclosure! With the well−trained hunters of my native island would it have been a matter of everyday occurrence; but with the comparatively ill−trained horses and unpractised riders of France it was a desperate risk.

Before giving the word to charge, I cast one last glance to the centre. De Charmi's corps had passed the ford, but, strange to say, his fire was slackening, and the enemy was bearing down on him in overwhelming force.

In ten words, I explained my object to my men; a loud shout was the reply. The bugler was already handling his instrument. I took my post three horses' lengths in front. I looked to my troopers every face was grim and resolute, every sword levelled to the charge; with tightened rein and ready spur, they waited for the signal. "Charge!" the bugle flourished, and I dashed my good horse fearlessly against the wall. Steadily, with a long and

swinging leap, he cleared the obstacle. I pulled upon the curb; he reared erect, and, ere his fore−feet touched the earth, was motionless. Towards the craven foe I never turned an eye a thought; my whole soul was in the attack. With the rush of a whirlwind they came on; as if it were with a single motion they rose; they swept over the high masonry; they landed safely in the area; a single bullet might have grazed the bosom of every rider, so beautifully even was their advance! Unity of spirit had effected, in a single instant, that which it is the pride of the disciplinarian to bring about in the course of years. Not a horse stumbled; not a rider swerved in his seat. "Halt! Ho!" they were a line of statues. "Charge again! charge!" but the victory was bloodless. Not a single second had they paused; *sauve qui peut* was the word, before a single trooper stood beside me. Ten minutes more, and we had joined De Charmi the peasant foe scattered, cut down, broken, dispersed, without a hope of rallying. An hour before, I had been a stranger, doubtful of my reception, and the men whom I commanded a mere armed mob. Now I was adored; exalted to the skies; a leader, like Bayard, *sans peur et sans reprôche;* and the meanest trooper of the regiment confident in his own prowess and in his general's skill. It was indeed a victory in its results.

Ere the sun set, we were in Pont à Mousson. Rumour had played her part. I was the idol of my division. The regiment I had seen in action was a fair sample of the whole; well−armed, well−mounted, fearless, and full of that belief in their own valour which renders men invincible. All this was well; and, above all, we were to march TO−MORROW.

CHAPTER VII.

"*Sab.* Herding with the other females, Like frightened antelopes. *Sar.* No: like the dam Of the young lion, femininely raging And femininely meaneth furiously, Because all passions in excess are female Against the hunter flying with her cub, She urged on with her voice and gesture, and Her floating hair and flashing eyes, the soldiers In the pursuit." Sardanapalus.

The morning was as dark as midnight; the moon had set two hours before, and not a star was twinkling in the firmament, when our bugles sounded the *reveillé*. Yet, unaccustomed as they were to early risings or forced marches, so perfect was the influence I had gained over the spirits both of men and officers, during the occurrences of the preceding day, that they mustered on that torch−light parade, not only without complaint or murmur, but with alacrity and glee. It was with a degree of pleasurable excitement which I cannot well describe, that I listened to their reckless exclamations, mingled with the clash of spur and scabbard, as they fell into their ranks beneath my casement; and as I descended the creaking stairs of the rude hostelry, I felt that I was no longer a homeless, helpless fugitive, but a leader well prepared to do battle if that battle were for a crown.

A more brilliant spectacle has rarely met my eyes than that which presented itself as I passed through the low doorway, and stood upon the village−green: the skies black as a funeral canopy above the massive architectural front of the Gothic abbey on the right, its salient angles splendidly touched by the red light of the torches; and, in the foreground of the picture, three thousand gallant horsemen marshalled in one long line their casques and corslets throwing back the glare of the flambeaux borne by their orderlies the subalterns wheeling rapidly through their files, the restless chargers stamping and tossing their proud heads, and the banners waving in the night−wind.

Scarcely, however, had my foot pressed the threshold, ere the scene was altered. As I first beheld them, all save a dozen figures were motionless as steel−clad statues; not a sound was heard but the occasional clash of armour, or the kick and scream of some vicious steed: but when I stood before my followers, not, as on the previous evening, in the rough garb of a mere mercenary trooper, but wearing, in addition to a bright helmet and breastplate, the full uniform of the corps furnished for the occasion by the officer next in command a shout, that might have been heard at a mile's distance, broke the silence again and again it pealed louder and louder yet, till the affrighted martins, fluttering down from their nests on the minster−towers, circled, with startled wing and short shrill cry, above our heads in the lurid torch−light.

Words cannot depict the sensations of that moment independent of all the gratified feelings of the man, all the military pride of the soldier, a load of care was lifted from my heart by the sincere expression of that clamour. Till I had heard "all hearts and tongues uniting in that cry," I had been plunged in a sea of doubts, almost of fears. I had, it is true, introduced myself, and successfully, to troops bearing a character of the wildest license; I had found them, in the main, orderly and well affectioned, and had gained, in an incredibly short period, their good opinion at least, if not their love. But I had yet a harder task before me. Whether my credentials would have been deemed satisfactory, had they not been backed by a fortunate display of the bearer's prowess, was far from being a settled point; and although it had become evident to me, in the course of the preceding evening, that the men were willing, and perhaps eager, to follow a leader who was likely to afford them a fair chance of gaining both repute and plunder in the regular routine of duty I was, till that moment, doubtful how far they might be trusted in a matter of such delicacy as the escort and protection of a lady, whose presence might, moreover, impose a check upon the celerity of their movements and the license of their manners. But with that honest shout my hesitation vanished. Tell me not of the expression of countenance, of the flash of the eye, or the wreathing of the lip: the stoic can freeze *their* living language into icy indifference the man of the world can mould *them* into the semblance of a smile but let me hear the voice the human voice I care not whether in the familiar sounds of my childhood, or in the unknown accents of a foreign tongue and I can read the feelings which give birth and being to those tones, as clearly as though they were written in the pages of a book. In the softest whisper or the deepest roar, I can detect I have a hundred times detected the lurking devil; but in that shout, although I listened as the criminal listens for the footsteps which may bear to him his reprieve, I could not catch a single note but of unanimous and heartfelt greeting.

In a brief speech, pointed, and eloquent of thought, if not of words, I tendered them my thanks spoke cheerily of success, and confidently of danger hinted that I might, perchance, have occasion ere long to prove that loyalty which they so freely proffered leaped on my good charger, wheeled the long line into column gave the word to quench the torches, and to march and in an instant all was gloom and silence, except the heavy onward tramp of the squadrons, and the lights of the town, which soon vanished behind us as we rode briskly forward.

Before the morning dawned, we had already passed the scene of the preceding day's engagement; and as we filed along the causeway, I could hear the stifled merriment and whispered conversation of the soldiers, recounting to their comrades the various incidents of that brief conflict. It was evident that they were all in the highest spirits, full of emulation between themselves, and of ardour against the foe the men who had already fleshed their swords, eager to maintain their place in my opinion, and those whom fortune had not yet favoured, burning to achieve an equal reputation.

At noon we halted to refresh our horses, and to dine the men, in the hamlet at which I had paused during my upward march; and great was the surprise of mine host at recognising, in the leader of a gallant squadron, the weather−beaten and neglected trooper whom, two short days before, he had treated with scant courtesy. Here it was that an event occurred which, although in itself of little moment, had the effect of bringing down my spirits from the pitch to which they had towered, and of rendering me miserably anxious during the remainder of our march. On going out, after a brief repast, into the inn−yard, for the purpose of inspecting the horses of the troopers, and seeing with my own eyes that no means were left untried for maintaining their condition, I was struck by observing a fresh horse−track, which certainly had not been there when we filed an hour before through the arched gateway. I know not why it was, but at the instant of my discovering that some one had left the inn since our arrival, a deep presentiment of coming evil crossed my mind. I actually shuddered at the idea which, with the rapidity and nearly the force of lightning, flashed upon my soul.

"Sergeant le Vasseur," I cried, to a fine young orderly busily employed in rubbing dry the fet−locks of a vicious charger "Sergeant le Vasseur, has any one gone hence on horseback since the troops marched in, or whence this hoof−track?"

Two or three voices were raised at once in reply, that a servitor, apparently of a noble family, who had been in the hostelry when we entered, had immediately proceeded to the stables, saddled a fine and highly−blooded jennet, with marks of extreme haste, and ridden away on a hard gallop.

"Ha!" I exclaimed, more deeply annoyed than I was willing to admit; "ha! but it matters not! Let the men get to horse we have yet a long day's march before us, and the sun has already passed the meridian. To horse sound trumpets!" and, for a space, all was confusion, noise, and bustle.

During the tumult, I returned to the hostelry, and, calling for a measure of the best, took the opportunity of inquiring concerning the stranger. What I learned was far from quieting my apprehensions. It was, to the best of his recollection, the landlord said, on the afternoon of the day which I had passed beneath his roof, that the servant had arrived. He had questioned him closely concerning the travellers who had passed that way lately; and I could easily judge from the speaker's manner, that he had acquired all the information concerning me which could be derived from the limited knowledge and unlimited garrulity of mine host. Here he had remained, living of the best, and paying with lavish liberality, until our approach had scared him from his roost. When, in addition to this, I learned that his liveries were tawny, guarded with blue lace, my fears wanted no further confirmation: that I had been tracked was evident; and I was painfully apprehensive that some deadly evil was meditated, in the only quarter where evil would be intolerable. Still there was no remedy; I was pressing on as quickly as was consistent with certainty, and a few hours must bring about a solution of my terrors.

"Monsieur de Charmi," I cried to my second in command "it was my original purpose to have halted for the night at Bar le Duc, but we must on to St. Dizier, though we trespass on the hours of darkness. Our route is noted, and I have fearful reason to press forward. Think you the horses of the third regiment can hold out? they are somewhat jaded even now."

"I doubt it not, sir; they are well−blooded and in good condition, though somewhat under−sized; but should the worst occur, Colonel le Chaumont's regiment is fresh, and, if you deem it good, can march with ease to St. Dizier, and accomplish the distance in two hours less time than the division;" he paused for a moment; but, seeing that I offered no reply, continued, though not without some hesitation "and if a single regiment might serve your turn to−night, I dare be sworn to join you with the rest ere daybreak."

"It shall be so, sir," I replied, eagerly grasping at the idea "see Chaumont's regiment equipped at once, and in their lightest marching order: let St. Agreve's regiment bring their baggage up to−morrow; and, hark ye, sir I trust all to your prudence, and a heavy trust it is. On no account delay. There must be no fighting that can by any means *by any means* I say, sir be avoided. If you must fight, tarry not for pursuit or victory cut your way through whatever shall oppose your advance, though it be ten times your force. Join me, if possible, to−night; but I leave it to your discretion to halt, if so it must be, at Bar le Duc, or even at Villotte; but, at the latest, I shall look for you before to−morrow's noon! Farewell, sir, fare ye well; be prudent, and be fortunate!"

And, clapping spurs to Bayard, I led the freshest regiment of my division, at a pace which I should hardly have ventured to adopt, had I not been fully aware that night was fast approaching. It was nearly four o'clock in the afternoon when we reached Bar le Duc; but my horses were so fresh, that, after a brief halt, I hurried on towards St. Dizier, about three miles to the right of which lay the convent of St. Benedict aux Layes.

In this manner we continued to advance, as fast as prudence and the state of the roads would permit; still, however, the shades of evening were closing fast around us, as we entered the woody country which lies on all sides of the little village of Saudrupt, on the river Saulx. The road, for the most part, ran between high banks of reddish sand, clothed on either hand with a stunted undergrowth of ash and hazel, mingled with a few still verdant hollies, and with dark patches of the prickly furze; it was, in parts, overflowed with water, which by the rigour of the season had been converted into broad sheets of ice. Wherever these occurred, I had continually observed the horse−track which had caused me so much uneasiness, deeply dinted into the smooth surface. The horse had been

shod with a bar−shoe on the near foot before, so that I had not the least difficulty in distinguishing the prints from those of the country garrons which had occasionally crossed or followed the highway. We were just entering one of the deepest of those sandy gorges which I have described, when the report of a musket rang, with its oft−repeated echoes, through the woodland; and after a moment's pause, the horse of the vidette who had preceded us galloped madly back upon our main body, with the rein dangling loose from his head, and the carcass of the unfortunate trooper, who had bestridden him a few seconds before in all the pride of vigorous manhood, dragged by the stirrup, and leaving a long trace of gore upon the frozen road. My resolution was taken on the instant. Shrewdly suspecting an ambuscade, and perfectly convinced of the importance of forcing the obstacle, I dismounted three or four files, spreading them out as skirmishers on either flank, to clear the woods by the fire of their petronels. I then put myself at the head of my best troop; and pressed steadily forward, keeping my front, however, a few paces in the rear of the skirmishers, who performed their duty with intelligence and activity, darting from tree to tree as they advanced, and beating every covert that could conceal a lurking foeman. In a few moments the flash of the right−hand flanker's petronel, sending its bright stream of flame through the increasing darkness of the coppice, announced that the enemy was discovered. A more beautiful effect I never witnessed than the brilliant running fire that ensued: but little time had I at that moment to think of sights or sounds; for, the object of their advance having been effected, the skirmishers were already retiring to their horses, while the troopers whom they had dislodged, dashing into the open path, and discharging their pistols at the head of our column, fled furiously along the road. At a glance I recognised the liveries of the hindmost rider, and the figure of the Andalusian jennet on the instant I comprehended the object of the attack. The small number of the assailants proved at once that no check upon the column could have been intended murder my murder was contemplated. The villain had observed, on the entrance of our squadrons into the courtyard of the inn, that I had ridden foremost. His aim had been unerring, although the gloom of the evening had prevented his discovering the features, or even the accoutrements, of his victim with sufficient accuracy.

My blood in my veins, as I whirled my good rapier from its sheath, and, dashing the spurs into my charger's flank, charged with a fierce shout full on the retreating ruffians. Ere I had overtaken the little group, which I did, as it appeared to me, in a dozen bounds, the servant, whose capture was my principal inducement to pursue, had outstripped the whole of his party. The first man I reached, seeing that he had no hope of safety in flight, attempted to wheel his horse and face me; but the attempt was his destruction. I was too close to his haunches when he commenced the manoeuvre, and, before he could complete it, I was upon him. In full career, the broad chest of Bayard struck the flank of his charger, as he turned; over he went, and over, regaining his feet only to be cut down by the troopers who followed me, while I, unmoved by the slight shock, held onward. One other, as I passed him standing in my stirrups, I struck full on the head−piece with my rapier's point; and the heavy clang of his armour, as he fell, alone told me the consequences of the blow. Scattering to the right and left, as I drove through them, the rest avoided me, to perish by the weapons of my men; for, unwilling to waste time upon the mere accomplices, I spurred hard upon the traces of the principal. Fiercely, however, as I rode, I soon perceived that I gained nothing on the fugitive; and that there was no option but to suffer him to escape, or to desert my troops with scarcely a possibility of again effecting a junction. I was therefore compelled to pull up, and to gaze upon the wretch, to secure whose capture I would have sacrificed willingly the sum of all my earthly goods, carrying off the news of his frustrated effort, and of my approach, to those who, I too well knew, would profit by the intelligence.

Words cannot express the misery I endured, as I was compelled to creep along at the slow pace of the troops; while my mind, darting over the well−remembered road, had already arrived at the place of my destination. Miles appeared to my excited fancy leagues, minutes dragged along like hours: the attempt to describe the images of evil that crossed the horizon of my excited mind would be a mere absurdity; words cannot describe them. By my honour, I shook in my steel−bound saddle at every shadow that fell across my path; I started at every howl of the wolves from the near forest; I grasped my ready weapon a hundred times at the sight of some gray pollard−tree, decked with the glitter of the rising moonbeams, and converted, to my heated fancy, into the guise of an armed foeman. At length we reached the brow of the last hill, from which the land slopes, in a gradual and park−like sweep, down to the banks of the Marne. About midway of the declivity stood a small hamlet, bosomed in its

orchards, and at its foot the well−known convent of St. Benedict aux Layes. The moon had risen brilliantly, the firmament was cloudless, and every object lay for miles bathed in a radiance as pervading as the glare of daylight, though far less gorgeous in its hues. The population of the district, quiet and happy rustics, had long since sunk upon their careless pillows. Not a light glanced from the windows, as we passed the cabins on the outskirts of the village; not a sound was heard throughout the wide expanse of country that lay before us, buried, as it were, in dreamless slumbers, save the long howl of a mastiff swelling upon the gale, as he bayed the queen of night, or the wailing cry of the night−owl from his ivyed tower. So calm was the scene beneath my eyes, so free from every sound or sight of danger, and so nearly had I reached the haven of all my hopes, that I had already begun to deem my previous terrors the mere wanderings of an excited fancy. We reached the little green before the village inn, and, in ten words, I gave the orders for the night to the officer next in command. The convent was but a bare mile distant. Outposts were to be detailed upon our flanks and rear, a picket to be pushed forward to the river's brink, and connected, by a chain of sentries, to the convent, and thence to the *corps de garde*. Subalterns were selected for the various duties of the night; the freshest men and horses were drafted for service; and then, accompanied by the files which were to guard our front, I bade a cheery adieu to my bold lieutenant, and cantered on my way with a heart almost at ease.

So completely had I recovered from the temporary depression of spirits into which I had been thrown, that I was occupied as I rode along, not merely in looking forward to the delight of clasping in my arms the form of her whom I as yet could hardly call my own, but in building up gay edifices in the dark futurity, edifices soon to fade into sorrow and desolation. I did not, however, in the exhilaration of the moment, forget to apply the means necessary to the maintenance of my happiness. At regular intervals I posted my sentries, exercising to the utmost the military fore−sight which, acquired by long and hard experience, had at length become almost intuitive. On the crest of every hillock, in the slack of every valley, did I dispose one of my trusty followers; so that eye might answer to eye, and voice to voice, along the entire chain. The last guard I left at the fork of the road leading from the highway, through two deep meadows, to the conventgate. The non−commissioned officer and dozen men who had been detailed to perform the duty of videttes saluted, and rode forward. All was at last accomplished. I stood within a stone's throw of my bride; friends were around me on every side, watchful, well−armed, and trusty; the silence of security and peace brooded upon those holy walls. I breathed a heartfelt prayer of gratitude to the Giver of all good; dismounted from the noble beast, which had in truth suffered all and won all for his master, flung his rein to the orderly who had accompanied me, and strode with light steps and a happy spirit towards the temporary dwelling of my Isabel. I could hear, as I pursued my way, the receding clatter of the hoofs, and the successive challenges of sentry after sentry, as my servant hurried to rejoin his comrades; and so still was the night, that the guargling of the river sounded distinct and near. It was already long past midnight; and the lamp which burned before the patron saint above the gateway was already waning in its socket: just as I raised my hand to strike the wicket, it leaped brightly upwards, fluttered for a moment, flashed up again yet higher than before, and expired. Was it an omen? My heart, at least, acknowledged it as such; and the hot streams that had been hurrying thither in the fierce eagerness of expectation, ebbed coldly. I shrunk back, dismayed, I knew not wherefore! It was by heaven! I believe it, firmly, faithfully, as I believe the Gospel that sudden chill *was* ominous! Ere I had rallied from the momentary start, a voice, a shrieking voice that I had heard once, only once before, and never can forget rang, like the blast of the eternal trumpet which all must hear and answer, in my trembling ears. I sprang backward from the untouched gate, firm and collected; for not from that direction came the fatal clamour. Again again from the rear of the building again it pealed, clearer and nearer than before; harrowing up my nerves, and driving my blood, now boiling with tenfold heat, through every vein and artery. "Harry!" it cried, "Harry! Save save me now or never!" A wall was on either side, some five feet high, but ivy−grown and time−worn. With a single effort of hand, foot, and eye, I reached the summit of the right−hand boundary; for that way was the voice. There was a ditch below me a wide, yawning ditch. I saw it not heeded it not for, scarce thirty yards distant, I beheld a ladder propped against a turret window; at its foot there was a busy, silent group; and half−way from its summit, two armed figures their corslets glittered in the rays of light that streamed from out the open casement bearing with forcible yet careful grasp a struggling, shrieking female.

Tottering, as I stood on that frail summit, I discharged my pistol, aimlessly, as I thought for my object was but the recall of my soldiers; yet as I saw even in that instant of dread anxiety it took effect. At one bound I cleared the trench, alighted firmly on my feet, and, sword in hand, rushed to the rescue. My signal had reached wakeful ears: I heard shout answering to shout along the line; and then the gallop of the nearest picket came thickly up the tremulous wind. "Isabel!" I shouted, "Isabel! fear nothing it is I!" I was within a spear's length of the spot whereon she stood, struggling in the sacrilegious grasp of the same cavelier who had so closely pressed our flight three days before. My muscles were braced, my weapon raised for the death−blow, when a bright glare was shot into my very eyes. I felt two sharp quick strokes, on my sword−arm and my left side; a deadly sickness a swimming of the brain and all was darkness. Faintly, and as it were in a dream, I heard a cry, a struggle, and a shot no more! I had no note of time. I half−unclosed my eyes; I turned them upward, and, bestriding me, I saw her blue eyes flashing, her lip curling, and her nostril dilated that tall fair girl. Her light brown hair the fillets which had restrained it rent asunder streamed on the night−wind. Erect she stood and fearless, as a Judith or a Jael, braving the armed oppressor. In her hand, her delicate white hand, a pistol my own pistol shone to the clear moonshine. I gazed upon her, wonderingly, in my delirium, and I knew her not yet it was SHE. For a moment the dark figures shrunk from before her, cowed like base and carrion vultures in the presence of a royal eagle. There was a rush, a shouting, and a tumult; yet my eyes were fixed, fascinated, as it were, upon that form of superhuman beauty. Another flash and my eyes closed, my brain reeled, sicker and more dizzy than before. I strove to rise, fell, and to all knowledge of myself or consciousness of things around me was dead for many days.

CHAPTER VIII.

"*Adam*. Master, go on; and I will follow thee To the last gasp, with truth and loyalty. From seventeen years till now almost fourscore Here lived I, but now live here no more. At seventeen years many their fortunes seek; But at fourscore it is too late a week: Yet fortune cannot recompense me better, Than to die well, and not my master's debtor." *As You Like It.*

It was long before I again awoke to any distinct consciousness of my situation, or even of my personal identity. Senseless, indeed, I was not if by that word is meant the utter oblivion of all external things, the total absence of thought, even in its most dreamy form, the entire suspension of every mental faculty, such as we occasionally experience in that deep and unrefreshing slumber which follows extreme exertion and consequent lassitude both of mind and body.

Widely different from this was the state in which I lay, as I have been since informed, for the space of seven days and as many nights. During this time I was tormented by an unskilful chirurgeon, who nevertheless succeeded in extracting two bullets which had lodged in different parts of my frame was transported from St. Benedict aux Layes to St. Germains, a distance of many leagues, over rough and perilous roads, in such rude vehicles as could be pressed into service was nearly captured in several instances by Guerilla bands of the *Frondeurs* and was at length, after much danger and actual suffering, deposited in my own quiet lodgings, at the pretty town which was at that period the abode of the court.

During the whole of this time, although entirely incapable of recognising individuals, or even of comprehending what had befallen me, I was keenly sensible of pain,and,even worse than pain if such a seeming paradox can be understood of my own insensibility. There was a dizzy swimming consciousness in my mind, a knowledge that all was not right with me, and a constant struggle, as it were, to arouse myself from the unnatural stupor which I could perceive to have fallen upon me. At times I would catch a glance of unforgotten faces, and hear the sounds of familiar voices at times the words would reach my understanding, and I could discover myself to be the subject of discourse; but ere I could concentrate my thoughts, or fix the floating fancies, the impressions themselves would pass away. At times it seemed as though I were communing with persons whom, even in my mental aberration, I knew to be no longer dwellers on earth; yet, whenever I would endeavour to reflect, to argue

my senses into reason, or to deduce effects from causes, all became at once a whirling chaos, a deep unfathomable void. Then would events which had occurred long years before mingle in strange and horrible confusion with the scenes and deeds of yesterday: yet was there a method in my madness a connecting link between each terrible delusion a continuous thread in every delirious dream. Now I was fighting hand to hand in that last charge on the red field of Marston, when Cromwell's iron−sides retrieved the half−lost fight now was I gazing on the slaughtered body of my father, out−stretched, as when I saw it last, upon his own extinguished hearth, the thin gray hairs clotted with blood, and the sword, faithless in his utmost need, shivered in his lifeless grasp now I was struggling in the eddies of the wintry Marne, the sullen waters gurgling above my head; yet still in every scene one form was present, one countenance for ever stamped upon my soul now pale as death, with eyelids closed, and with dishevelled hair, as when I bore her in my arms on the morning of our eventful meeting now smiling sadly through her tears now radiant with the happiness of hope now cold, distorted, sprinkled with gouts of blood! Rather, a thousand times rather, would I brave the most abhorred realities, than again pass through that fearful twilight of the mind, that dark struggle between reason and madness, those "doubts more dreadful than despair." Fever and delirium were at work with my enfeebled body and shattered spirit; while, through all, and over all, the consciousness of real misery, remembered when its cause was all forgotten waking or sleeping, night or day hag−rode my senses, a companion as inseparable as the dark avengers of Orestes.

Never shall I forget the morning on which the clouds were rolled away from my eyes on which reason began to dawn faintly at first, but with a gradual and increasing light on which I became aware, first of the visible objects around me, then of my own existence, of my own desolation.

The earliest sensations of the change were exquisite: a freedom from pain a calm voluptuous languor an absence of all excitement a perception of sweet sounds, and of the blessed daylight. It was, I believe, a casual strain of music beneath my windows, the chance melody of some wandering Switzer, an exile, like myself, from his far father−land, that aroused me from the lethargic sleep in which I had been plunged. I unclosed my eyes, aimlessly and unconscious of myself; and the mild radiance of the early morning fell, tempered by a veil of sea−green silk that had been drawn across the casements, full upon their dazzled balls. I shrunk back and closed them for an instant, dizzied and drunk with the excess of light, although in truth it was hardly more than a summer's evening twilight that found its way into that shaded chamber; cautiously I opened them again, and, avoiding the quarter from which the unusual brightness had before annoyed me, suffered them to wander carelessly around the well−known room. They had not, however, roved far or for a long time over their little circle, before they rested upon objects which, had they been presented to me at a time when I had less reason to doubt the accuracy of my senses, would have tempted me to question their reality at the least, if not my own sanity.

It was, indeed, my own humble home my limbs were stretched on the same lowly couch the same carved rafters were above my head around me the same well−remembered hangings of Cordovan leather, quaintly embossed and gilded the same narrow casements, with their diamond panes and heavy freestone transoms the same grotesquely sculptured arch of oak yawning above the ample hearth. There hung my Milan corslet, an honorary gift of the unhappy Charles! there my plumed morion and trusty petronel! there the good sword which I had wielded to no purpose against the iron veterans of the Parliament, never to be unsheathed again, or wielded in a less noble cause! there stood the brass−bound chest, which had conveyed the relics of my shipwrecked fortunes from the land of my fathers above it the tattered standard I had rescued in the last skirmish of the cavaliers from a stern fanatic, who lost his trophy and his life together! and there, upon the oaken trivet, with its crimson velvet binding and its clasps of massive silver there lay my mother's Bible! Dreamily, and as yet but half−awakened, I surveyed these familiar objects with that indefinite sense of pleasure which attaches to the humblest abode we have hallowed with the name of home; when suddenly a brighter gleam shot through an opening of the ill−adjusted curtain, and fell in a line of rich lustre on the opposite wall; my eye, as it became accustomed to the increase of light, followed the moving beam. It rested on a picture a bright, glorious, almost breathing portrait it was the portrait of my mother. Oh, what a charm there dwells about that holiest of names a mother! The pale and somewhat melancholy face, the dark and liquid eye, the braided hair, the faded flowers in the hand, it was the same dear picture which I had compared a thousand times with the still more dear original, rendered, as it were,

immortal by the rich pencil and unfading colours of Antonio Vandyke. Before I had found time to wonder at its being there, fresh cause for wonderment flashed on me; for, below the picture, there lay extended on the oaken floor a superb English bloodhound of enormous size and muscle, jet−black, except a tawny spot on either side his brow, and a broad patch of the same hue upon his chest; his head was couched between his lion−like paws, which themselves were half−concealed by the long sweeping ears that marked his breed. Faint as I was and feeble, I recognised the noble brute at once old Hector, the choicest leader of my father's staghounds. I made an effort to arise, still doubtful whether the objects before me were not the coinage of my distempered fancy; but hardly had I set my foot on the uncarpeted floor, before a strange sense of sickness seized me my head grew dizzy my eyes swam round, and were obscured. I had misjudged my own powers, and the weakness still remaining upon me, after the fever which had given it birth had departed, conquered both mind and body I had fainted.

I did not, however, on this occasion continue senseless for any length of time; the last sound which caught my ears, ere my mind was utterly bewildered, was a slight rustle, as of a person rising, from a more distant corner of the chamber, to which my attention had not as yet been called; and although my subsequent dizziness prevented me from discovering the figure of him who had caused the noise, I did not on that account the less profit by his exertions in my behalf.

It was but a moment ere I became sensible of a grateful coolness on my brow, and of a strong aromatic perfume; then I felt the pressure of a hand, which, though hard in its texture, yet moved tenderly over me, trembling as it were with the exertions it made to be more delicate and gentle than nature had intended, as it chafed my hands and bathed my burning temples. Just as I was becoming fully master of myself, though my eyes were still closed, a long low whine rose upon my ear, accompanied by the peculiar sound of a dog's tail striking the floor as it is wagged heavily to and fro in some strong emotion of the animal. At once I raised my head, and saw although I could not for a while believe my senses the face of one whom I had long considered as numbered with the dead whom I had seen borne out of his saddle and trodden down, as I imagined, beneath the hoofs of a routed army an old and faithful, though an humble friend my father's foster−brother, and my own most trusty follower old Martin Lydford! Years have now passed away since that hour of recognition years have passed away since I laid his bones beneath the very yew−tree which he himself had designated in the remote and rural churchyard of his English birthplace; yet never have I ceased to bear the old man's countenance engraved on the very tablets of my heart, as when it met my bewildered gaze on that unforgotten morning. He was an aged man even then, though many years younger than his patrician foster−brother: his hair and heavy eyebrows, as well as the thick short mustache upon his upper−lip, were white as the driven snow; though his strong decided features were still richly coloured with the hale and healthful tints that might have well beseemed a man some dozen years his junior. Pleasure and anxiety were struggling for the mastery in his lineaments; but when he perceived that I had recognised him, the more powerful emotion conquered; the firm muscles about his mouth worked convulsively. I could see his bare neck swell and choke, as it were, with the violence of his struggles to repress the exhibition of feelings which his habitual self−restraint had taught him to hold womanish and trifling: but it would not do; the big tears gushed thick and scalding from his aged eyelids, he threw his arms about my neck, and as his gray head sunk upon my shoulder, he lifted up his voice to use the simple and affecting words of Holy Writ he lifted up his voice, and wept!

"My master," he sobbed out at length, "my dear, dear master have I then found you once again? Never oh never will I quit you more! Promise me promise your old faithful follower, that he shall never quit you. Old I am, indeed, and wellnigh worthless; yet well, I wot, can love and prompt devotion supply the place of strength ay, and of youth itself. Let me but be about your person, and I will bear your banner in the field, where greener limbs and hotter hearts would flinch from charging. Never did vassal follow lord as I will follow thee; never did woman wait upon her lover's eye as I will wait on thine, my master and my son!"

Weak as I was from the effects of my long confinement, the old man's vehemence, and the violent excitement it produced on my shattered nerves, were almost overpowering. I sunk back upon my pillow exhausted for the moment, but with a calm and painless exhaustion.

"Fool, fool that I am!" he cried, "I have slain him with my madness."

"Fear not, Good Martin fear not," I faltered forth "I shall be well anon 'tis nothing."

But the sudden revulsion had been, in truth, too much for me, and, despite the utmost attentions of the old man, I again relapsed into insensibility; nor did I awaken from it till the blood was flowing freely from a vein which had been opened in my unwounded arm. As I was gradually returning to my senses, I saw, through my half−closed eyelids, a tall figure standing beside my pallet, supporting in one hand my arm, while with the other he replaced the lancet he had just been using in a small case at his belt. His features were strange to me, but, by his dress and accountrements, exhibiting a ludicrous blending of the mediciner and martialist the boots, cuirass, and long rapier dangling from his thigh belonging as clearly to the latter, as did the dark uncurled periwig, broad linen band, and chirurgical apparatus to the former, character I knew him at once for the surgeon of the regiment. Around him were collected a group of noble−looking men, all clad in the half−armour of the day, and wearing the scarfs of white and gold which had been assumed by the court−faction, in opposition to the blue colours of the *Frondeurs* . In several of these I recognised familiar faces; but it was with absolute astonishment that I discovered in the principal personage no less a character than our general−in−chief the gallant Prince of Condé.

"Good, good!" were the first words I heard uttered by the strange figure at my side "he revives; the danger is past, and in another week, your highness, we will set this gallant in the saddle."

"Pray God you may pray God you may," replied the prince, "for we are short of men and officers already; and if this news be true, that Turenne has declared against us and if he march to aid these cursed *Frondeurs*, as they say he will, with twenty thousand Switzers from the Rhine ay, or with half the number we shall be hardly set to hold our own. Besides, De Charmi tells us wonders of this Mornington a pupil of hot−headed Rupert, and better than his tutor in a charge. *Tête gris*, we have no such overstock of leaders that we can spare a good one; but, silence! he awakes! How fare you, sir?" he continued, perceiving that I looked about me; "how fare you now? We thank you for your gallantry, young sir, and shall rejoice to see you once again at the head of those brave fellows you have brought up to us so happily."

"I hear your highness's words," I answered, "but hardly catch their meaning. Am I then at St. Germains and are the troops come up? Methinks I led them not I pray your pardon but I am somewhat forgetful!"

"You are, sir, at St. Germains for which we thank your valour and your skill. What you had so successfully begun, De Charmi as successfully accomplished your division is attached to our command. You must recover quickly once more on foot, and we shall find you work enough to warm you! And now, sir, we shall leave you *Monsieur le Médecin* here frowns on us even now for trespassing so long on his dominion. To horse, fair sirs, to horse and let us see if Noirmoutier will drive us, as he boasts to have done yesterday. Allons! to horse!"

And with his glittering cortège the gay prince passed onward, equally prepared to fight or to intrigue, in that strange spirit of levity which was no less the characteristic of these civil wars of France than stern fanaticism had been that of the more sanguinary struggles in my native land. The surgeon lingered behind for a moment to whisper some directions to old Martin, who, with affectionate pertinacity, had constituted himself at once my squire of the body and sick−nurse poured some dark−coloured fluid into a goblet of tisanne which stood beside my pillow pressed my hand with an assurance that I should be a new man on the morrow, and left the chamber. I could hear the scabbard of his rapier rattling on every step as he descended, and the clatter of his horse's hoofs as he galloped away to join the general and his mercurial train, probably with the avowed intention of balancing the cure of one wounded man by putting a dozen others *hors de combat*. After they had all departed, my head at once became more clear my memory of events returned in nearly its accustomed power, and with my memory an all−engrossing desire to learn my fate the fate of Isabel.

"Martin," I whispered, in a low hoarse note, "come hither! I know that they have charged you to keep me in ignorance and in quiet; but I I charge you, by the love you bear me as you would wish to see brighter and better days in company with me I charge you, tell me all! How came I hither? how long since? where is the Lady Isabel?"

"God be merciful to him!" I heard the old man mutter to himself; "the fit is on him again; the fever has settled on his brain."

I saw at once that he knew nothing of what had passed I saw at once that Isabel was lost to me. Yet, sudden as was the shock, I was calm I was determined to be calm I was determined to live to recover speedily, that speedily I might devote myself to the rescue of her for whom alone I cared to live at all.

"You think me mad," I continued, after a moment's pause, and in more composed and natural tones; "but it is not so. Listen to my words attentively, and fulfil my bidding! Nay," I cried, with a raised voice, as I saw him about to interrupt me with some trite caution "nay, I will speak! I have been ill! I know it desperately ill, and wellnigh frantic! but now my pulse is steady, my head cool, my senses perfect. I see my mother's picture, which you, I know not how, must have brought hither I see old Hector, who has likewise followed you; lastly, I see and know yourself, whom I have long thought dead my oldest, my truest, and my only friend! Judge now if I be mad, or fever−stricken. You know that I am neither. Then choose whether to obey my bidding, and to be, what I have ever deemed you, my second father, or to give up the man whom you have followed from his childhood upward to betray me, at my utmost need, to utter misery hopeless despair!"

"Say not oh, say not," he cried, "such heart−rending words! Obey? I will obey you to the death! To your death and mine own I will obey you doubt me not, only doubt me not, and I will obey you ever ever!"

"Then hear me I am wedded wedded, though none know it but the priests who made us one and He from whom naught can be hidden. I was compelled to leave *her*, while I went on this accursed mission I returned I found them tearing her from the asylum to which she was committed. I fell, pierced with these fatal wounds I know no more! Whether she be lost to me for ever immured from my love in that dark prison−house, from which no mortal arm can win her; or severed from me by the violence of ruffians, from whose power my own good blade may rescue her I know not but I *will* know though all the leeches all the *monarchs* upon earth forbid it! I *must* know, and shortly; or madness will relieve my misery! Speak out, old man, and truly: hast thou heard aught, or canst conjecture aught of this? I charge thee speak!"

"Nothing be Heaven my witness nothing!"

"Thou knowest De Charmi him who, I doubt not, bore me hither hath he said naught nor hinted? what, nothing? Go, then, and speedily tell him that I would speak with him this night this very night let him not say thee nay! tell him, an he refuse, that he shall pay the penalty of his refusal, on the same hour that Harry Mornington shall leave the bed of sickness! And, hark thee seek out the subaltern who was about my person on that accursed night do this speedily do this, and secretly so wilt thou perform more to further my well−being than all the leeches in the universe. Away! but hold give me to drink I will lie down and try to sleep so shall my mind be keener and my body stronger, when they have room for action!"

He handed the goblet to my grasp and, with the thirst of lingering fever and of strong excitement, I drained it to the very dregs. It must have contained some powerful and soothing opiate; for scarcely had I removed it from my lips, before a strange voluptuous dizziness seemed to steep all my senses in forgetfulness. First I lost my sorrows and my fierce anxiety; then I sunk into a sweet dreamy state of happiness a rich confusion of luxurious thoughts and blissful fantasies my ears were filled, as it seemed, even to intoxication, with angelic harmonies; my nostrils with super−human perfumes; my vision was bathed in a flood of lustrous but undazzling radiance: one by one these delicious sensations seemed to glide away from me, yet left no void behind all vanished, and I was buried,

for the first time in many days, in the deep repose of unconscious and oblivious slumber.

CHAPTER IX.

"In this trust, I bear, I strive, I bow not to the dust; That I may bring thee back no faded form, No bosom chilled and blighted by the storm; But all my youth's first treasures when we meet, Making past sorrows, by communion, sweet." *Records of Woman.*

So powerful had been the soporific contained in the beverage I had quaffed so eagerly, that, far from being able to receive and interrogate the persons I had summoned to attend my bedside on the same evening, I did not awake from my heavy repose till the sun of the succeeding day was high in the heavens. The promise of the chirurgeon had, moreover, been fully borne out by the improvement I already experienced; for scarcely had I raised my head from the pillow, before I was sensible that the fever had entirely departed. My pulse was cool and regular; the burning heat of my limbs had been replaced by a healthful moisture; and, above all, that fearful dizziness of the brain which had come upon me on the preceding day, after every exertion, whether of mind or body, how much soever I struggled against it, had yielded to the unruffled calm which has ever been the character of my mental habit, when undisturbed by powerful excitement.

I was not now, as when I had awakened from my stupor on the past morning, entirely alone; for one of the first objects which caught my eye was a tall casque of highly−burnished steel, with a nodding plume, standing upon the oaken table; an embroidered glove and sheathed sword lay beside it. The next instant showed me that they belonged to the Count de Charmi, who was sitting by the hearth, playing with the long ears of my bloodhound, as he waited till my protracted slumbers should draw to an end.

The slight rustle I caused in changing my position had already attracted his attention; and his eyes were turned upon my countenance with an expression of sincere pleasure, such as I could hardly expect to see manifested by one who had so lately been a stranger.

"By my faith!" he cried, "I am right glad to see you look thus cheerily again, De Mornington! You will be yet in the saddle time enough to share the *honours* of this most ennobling war." And the young man laughed with an air of reckless contempt, as though the very idea that citizens and burghers should presume to wield the weapons of a soldier were in itself absurd. "How fare you now?" he continued; "your wounds are healing, as old Martin tells us, and your eye, this morning, looks almost as brightly as its wont; yet is your brow grave your countenance downcast. Your good old servant told me, too, last night, that you would speak with me on matters of great import. Say, is there aught in which I can assist you? If it be so, I do beseech you to command me. I am not I assure you, sir, I am not one to proffer services to every new acquaintance, nor to make vaunts which I intend not to perform; but you, I know not how it is, have won our hearts. Nor is there in our ranks a common trooper but would support your honour with his life. Contrary to my allegiance or my good fame I know you never will require me to act; and bating these, there is nothing that man can do but I will do it."

"There is no need," I replied, more cheerfully than I had spoken before, for sympathy is ever a sure key to the affections "there is no need of such a pledge, Monsieur de Charmi; nor am I about to ask aught at your hands, save some slight information concerning subjects the nearest to my heart. I do beseech you to deal with me plainly and freely in this matter, as you would yourself be dealt with by another. And, firstly, saw you aught of a lady, or heard you aught from the soldiers, on the night when I received my wounds at St. Benedict aux Layes?"

"You forget, sir, I imagine," was the prompt reply, "that I was left in command of the rear−guard on that unlucky evening, and halted, according to orders, at Bar le Duc. When I arrived the next forenoon, I found you senseless in the hostelry, under the hands of the leech; and the regiment which had marched with you, in arms to avenge your injury on all and sundry. But to reply directly to your query, I have seen nothing of any lady, nor, I fear me much,

have the troops heard any thing concerning her. I have, however, brought with me the orderly who accompanied you to the convent; he, perhaps, may give you some satisfaction."

"By all means let him enter," I replied; "at the worst, it will relieve me of a fierce and gnawing anxiety: but I foresee already that all is lost."

He quitted the chamber for an instant; and, before I should have deemed it possible, returned with a young non−commissioned officer, whom I at once recollected for him to whose hand I had flung Bayard's rein at the convent−gate, some ten minutes before my accident. I addressed him at once by name, well aware that nothing is more flattering to an inferior than to be remembered by one placed far above him; thanked him for the ready aid he had afforded me, as I had since learned; and desired him to recite briefly all that had occurred, from the moment of my leaving him at the avenue to the period of De Charmi's arrival with the remainder of the troops. I had, it is true, little expectation of discovering any thing satisfactory; it was already nearly certain that the villains had succeeded in their purpose: yet I listened as he spoke; I weighed his words, and watched his features with the keenest scrutiny to the double intent of detecting him, should he attempt the slightest equivocation, and of learning more surely from his manner than from his language his own impressions on the subject.

"I had," he said, "ridden off very sharply on leaving you, being somewhat weary, and anxious to rejoin my comrades. I had already passed the brow of the little hillock whereon you had posted the third sentinel, and was descending with more caution into the deep woody glen beyond it, when methought I heard a cry, as if of a female. I paused, and, listening attentively, distinctly caught the sounds again; for the night was, as you will recollect, unusually calm and silent. I turned my horse's head at once, with the intention of returning to ascertain the cause, as I more than suspected that it might arise from some license of our men; but I had barely time to draw the reins, before a shout your shout I fancied it to be, monsieur came up the wind, followed by a pistol−shot. I did not pause or hesitate for a moment; I fastened your horse to a tree, and galloped fiercely back to the convent, calling on every sentry, as I passed his station, to follow; so that, by the time of my reaching the turn of the road at which I had left you, we were four armed men. Three minutes could not have elapsed from the first alarm ere we had reached the avenue; yet in that brief space we had heard at least a dozen shots; some, as we imagined, of petronel or musket, rather than of a smaller caliber, accompanied by all the tumult of a fierce and sudden fray. As we halted, to be sure of our direction, the front of the convent was all in shadow and in silence, but in the windows of the northern wing lights were glancing to and fro, and voices sounding in uproar. We easily cleared the low wall, galloped furiously across the meadow, and as we wheeled around a turret, beheld several bodies three they were in number, as we found afterward, and yours, monsieur, one of the three stretched motionless on the trampled and bloody grass; while a superior body of horse was galloping from the southward to meet us. Our petronels were levelled on the moment, and I had barely time to beat them up again, on recognising in the new comers the picket which had been detailed in front upon the river−bank. Two or three of our men immediately dismounted, while the rest I led them myself made a wide sweep round the north−western side of the meadows, quite down to the river, hoping to cut off the perpetrators of the crime but in vain! The night had suddenly become cluded, and we could discover nothing. Ere our return a heavy detachment had been sent down from head−quarters, under Captain Villeroy; you had been already conveyed to the hamlet where the troops were posted; and four files of men slept on their arms before the convent, with orders to seek out the traces which must have been left by the marauders, as soon as there should be light enough to distinguish a hoof−track. At my own request I was allowed to remain with the scouting−party; and, as soon as day began to dawn, we proceeded in open files to survey the ground. It was not long before we found the deeply−dinted tracks, running directly westward, of six horses. One, I remember well, was smaller than the rest, and had a barshoe on one foot before. After following them a short distance, they entered a small open grove, or rather a large clump of trees, in which, to our surprise, we found two horses tied to the branches. These I at once conjectured to have belonged to the men who had fallen, and to have been led thus far by their comrades, lest, running loose, they should cause their discovery and capture. From the grove, the traces of the four remaining riders were plainly visible, running north−westerly down to the river−bank, which they struck at a point at least two miles beyond the limits of the circuit made by us on the preceding night. I do not, however, doubt but that we must have been within a hundred

yards of the party when they were concealed among the trees, I mentioned so that, had there been light enough, we must have taken them. We could plainly see that two boats had been secured to the roots of the trees at this spot; one of them a light sharp−keeled skiff, the other, as we judged from the marks on the sand, a large flat, for the conveyance of the horses. They had evidently been short−handed, and fearful of pursuit; for they had left a cloak, a petronel, a glove, and some other trifles on the bank. Further pursuit of course could not be made, as the river was unfordable; nor, had it been otherwise, should I have ventured to advance without orders from my superior. On our return to head−quarters, the regiment was got under arms by Colonel le Chaumont; and we were about to march, with the intent of crossing the river, when Monsieur de Charmi came up with the main body, and the marching orders were at once countermanded. This, sir, is all I know. Ihave, however, brought with me the glove I told you of; it is, I think, a lady's."

And as he spoke, he handed to me a delicate white glove of chamois leather, curiously wrought with silver arabesques. I knew it at a glance for Isabel's. The die was cast, and I could have no further doubts; all were sunk in dark and, as it would seem, irremediable despair. Keenly and calmly as I had listened up to this time to his least details, my strength of mind my coolness, whether assumed or real at once deserted me; I bowed my head between my hands, too proud, even in my mortal misery, that the eyes of man should witness that affliction which I had not the power to control. I could not for a moment hesitate to give my credence to the soldier's tale; it was too connected in its details, too probable, and, above all, too consistent with what I *knew* to be truth. There was, moreover, no faltering of the voice, no embarrassment of eye or manner, as he went straight−forward to the point, although I was reading his every motion all the time, with a fixed eagle glance that might have well confused a speaker even conscious of his own veracity. Had I been one prone to deceive myself with the lingering flatteries of hope, I could not have done so in this instance; but such was never the habit of my mind. Once certain of any calamity, whether impending or already fallen, I never strove, as some men do, to disbelieve it; on the contrary, I nerved my soul at once to avert, to remedy, or, at worst, to *bear* it bravely.

The first thing that recalled me from my gloomy meditations was a whisper of De Charmi to the subaltern.

"You had better leave us now; Monsieur de Mornington is as yet weak both mind and body. You had better leave us, but wait below for orders."

"Not so," I broke in suddenly; "I would ask him a few more questions but no," I again interrupted myself, "it matters not: and you are right, De Charmi. You, sir, shall leave us for the present: but you shall *not* leave my mind, I promise you; nor shall your gallantry and quickness fail to procure for you speedy promotion somewhat in the hand the while."

The gratified orderly received the gratuity I tendered him, and with a bright smile and deferential salute quitted the chamber.

"All is over, De Charmi," I continued "as bright a dream as ever gladdened the heart of man has vanished from mine with his recital. Yet would I learn from you what are our chances of discovering the perpetrators of this infernal villany; for I will not deny to you that I am interested in their recapture, almost beyond the powers of expression. Of this will I speak to you anon. But satisfy me now. Saw you these horses of which he told me? Saw you the corpses? For, God be merciful, it is most marvellous! I slew but *one* before I was myself stricken to the earth; and it would seem that no one else had reached the scene of action ere they left it. Were there no marks upon the housings naught in the liveries of the troopers by which they might be traced?"

"We have the horses with us two heavy Norman blacks. They were accoutred in plain demipiques and dark serge housings; there was no crest or bearing on any portion of their trappings; nor did the men wear liveries. They seemed to me banditti, or, at best, countrymen recently pressed into service. One wore, methinks, a leathern cassock, the other a blue cloth jerkin, with a corslet and buff gauntlets; both had fallen by pistol−shots. I fear there is no clew by which you can discover the wretches, unless it be that you have private cause for suspicion."

"Cause enough," I replied, "cause enough; but little prospect of succeeding. One question more, and I will explain to you this mystery, on promise of strict silence. Had neither you nor any of the officers an interview with the Benedictine prior?"

"Doubtless we had. He showed more sorrow at your accident than we could well comprehend; for though the hurts were painful, and your convalescence owing to your high state of fever slow and tedious, we have never apprehended danger. Yet did he seem most anxious. I remember well one expression of that most singular and noble−looking man `Better it would have been for him had he lost the best limb of his body at another time, than to have been thus crippled now!' The remark at the time struck me as somewhat unusual, and I earnestly pressed him for his meaning. Once I thought he was about to tell me, but he checked himself; questioned me of the duration of my friendship or acquaintance with yourself; and, when he learned that it was but of some two days' standing, broke off abruptly. We left with him your titles and address, and he assured us he would write: to what intent, or when, he said not. And now, De Mornington, believe me, I entreat, to be as it were your second self. I f I can assist you, I will do so; if not, it is ever a relief to disburden your mind to one who will not betray you. Something, I well suppose, I have already gathered from the incoherent ravings of your fever. You are married is it not so? and lately?"

"To an angel, De Charmi; to an angel, whom I never may see more. Never see more!" I broke forth, as if challenging the bold assertion of a third person. "By Heaven I will see will rescue her and that, too, shortly; or I will lose that which is but dross vile rubbish in the scale when weighed against her recovery!" I then, as shortly as the subject would allow, related to him my encounter with the brothers in the wood; my rescue of the lady; my flight, escape, and marriage. "And now," I said, "yourself have seen the rest. Speak, have I acted in aught wrongly or unworthily of the name I bear, or see you aught that we may do to further her recovery?"

"By Heaven, Mornington!" he cried, in high tones, which yet quivered with excitement "by Heaven, when I first heard your trumpet−voice, and marked your bearing in the saddle, I knew you for a cavalier, despite your rude disguise. When I beheld your prompt celerity of eye, and hand, and mandate in the field, I knew you for a general of God's own making; but now now and truly do I thank you for the knowledge I know you for the best and noblest gentleman your own brave country hath to boast of. You had my good−will from the first; lately you have possessed my sympathy and friendship; but now you hold my veneration and my heart. Lead on, whither or when you will; unquestioning, undoubting, I will follow you. Follow you, were it possible, even to disgrace."

"Calm yourself, my friend, calm yourself," I replied, grasping his proffered hand; "I were base, indeed, to doubt you, and unthankful. But there needs not this. Naught have I done in this unhappy matter, but what the commonest gentleman must at once have executed; but now, what can I do? what must be our plan of operations? I ask not, wholly, that I would learn myself, not being overwont to seek advice from any save my own heart but that I would gladly learn how our ideas jump."

"If it were peace," he replied, shortly enough "if it were not for this cursed Fronde, which after all is the most frivolous rebellion the world ever witnessed, it were easy enough. But now, Turenne, they say, is moving from the Rhine, and probably hath ere this overrun the districts about Bar le Duc and St. Dizier with his Swiss rabble; besides, there is hot fighting here; no chance of obtaining leave of absence "

"No chance!" I almost shouted "no chance, say you? I *will* have leave of absence ere a month be flown, or I will at once resign my sword and my commission!"

"To achieve your wife's deliverance by a brief sojourn in the dungeons of Marcoussi; or, if we take Paris, as I think we shall, perchance in the Bastile. No, no, sir that plan is naught. You must win Condé's friendship another week will see you in the saddle. You will of course acquire renown in every skirmish; yours is the only cavalry we have and you its sole commander. We have work enough here daily win Condé's friendship and when these silly jars are ended, I doubt not we shall win her back as lightly as you lost her: and,

hear me, sir, say naught to Mazarin about this marriage. If she be noble and an heiress as I hold it probable she will prove to be you have committed high offence in wedding her without the monarch's signature you will lose at least the lands.

"Perish the trash!" I exclaimed; "what should I do with lands? But you mean well, and, I believe, judge rightly. Nothing will I do rashly but, hark! what mean those trumpets?"

He listened for a moment "I deemed not it had been so late," he said, looking towards the window; "yet is the sun fast verging towards the west. It is the evening parade, and I must leave you. Adieu!" he continued, pressing my hand warmly "adieu, my friend; I shall be with you early on the morrow; keep a good heart adieu!" And the gay young officer left the room evidently under strong excitement. Yet such is the buoyancy of the national constitution, that he had not descended five of the creaking steps ere I could hear the burthen of some merry air which he was humming to himself, and which, as he reached the outer door, broke into a snatch of song.

Scarcely had the sounds of his departure died into stillness, ere I was again disturbed by a heavy step without, immediately followed by a short quick stroke upon the door; I had to raise my voice a second time before the new−comer entered, it was the orderly officer of the day, bearing in his hand a large packet, addressed "à Mons. Harry Mornington, chef d'escardron, et commandant des chevaux légers." It had been delivered to the soldier on duty at the gates, on the preceding evening, by a muffled horseman, who had ridden off at a gallop the moment after he had disburdened himself of the despatch, regardless of the threatening summons of the sentries, and even of a shot or two which were sent after him, though without effect.

The direction of the cover was in bold and somewhat dashing manuscript; evidently the writing of a man, and one not literary in his habits. I gazed on it in mute curiosity, while the subaltern was delivering some complimentary message from the troopers, unwilling to open it in the presence of a witness, yet to the last degree anxious to know the contents. I thought the man would never have finished his preamble; and then, when that was ended, he had a long story to tell illustrative of his own attention and activity of my good horse Bayard, who, it seems, had been committed to his keeping since my illness and of a charger which had been sent by the equerry of the king, as a token of the royal approbation, to my somewhat scanty stables. At last, with a profusion of hopes, and fears, and wishes, he withdrew. I crawled out of my pallet−bed secured the door, by drawing one and another massive bolt across it severed the band of floss silk which secured the packet with the edge of my dagger a weapon never far distant from my hand tore off a blank wrapper and within it, to my almost terrified astonishment, beheld a letter beautifully superscribed, in a small and delicate female hand, with the one word "Harry." It was bound, not with flax or silk, but with a long tress of lovely light−brown hair I could have sworn to the sunny gloss that played upon it amid ten thousand fastened in a slightly artificial knot by a small drop of virgin wax; and on that wax was stamped the impress of my own signet the ancient crest and heir−loom of my family with which, in default of a more fitting ring, I had wedded my matchless Isabel. Besides the letter, which I clutched with an eagerness hardly inferior to that of the condemned felon snatching at his reprieve, there was a large enclosure, endorsed on the outside covering "Isabel *le bon temps viendra*." This, however, for the moment, fell unnoticed from my hand for eye and heart alike were riveted upon the smaller letter. With trembling fingers I broke the wax, and read as follows:

CHAPTER IX.

"Harry my beloved Harry

"They have prevailed, and we are torn asunder when, oh when to meet? They dragged me from your bleeding body they bound me on a horse they bore me Oh God! Oh God! that I should not dare to tell you whither! No, my beloved, I dare not such is the sole condition on which the miserable satisfaction of writing these few lines is granted. They tell me that your wounds are slight that you will have regained your strength ere

this shall reach you; they tell me that you will again be in the field of glory: but they tell me that I shall never see you more they tell me that death your death, Harry, shall follow on the slightest effort at my rescue and they tell me truly! You know not oh! may you never know the boundless wickedness, the wellnigh boundless power of my persecutor. Never have I done aught, planned aught, for my deliverance, but it has been revealed to him, and blighted in the very bud, almost before I had conceived it. And he this fearful and malignant being he has sworn an oath, which I have never heard him break, or bend from, that you shall not have well put foot in stirrup to search out my prison, ere the assassin's knife shall reach your heart! Oh, my beloved, mine is a hard, a miserable duty my heart overflowing with deep unutterable love, I am compelled to hide myself from him whom to see were the very acme of imagined happiness. I am compelled I am *compelled* to pray you, as you value not life, for what noble spirit ever thinks of life save as of a loan that must be one day repaid but as you value all that is more dear than life all that ennobles it, and makes it holy as you value your ancestral name your own untarnished fame ay! and I will write it, though it chokeme as you value *me*, I do beseech you to forget Oh never! never! think not I meant to say *forget* me! but to forego me to be patient to bear, as I now bear, in silence and in hope! Were there a chance a possibility, however slight or desperate, of your success I would write, Gird yourself up for the task like a warrior for the battle−field and follow me to the very ends of the earth; but now I know that so to do could not in aught aid our hopes aid them, did I say! aid! them!it would sever them for ever by the pitiless steel it would bury them in the darkness of an untimely tomb.

"You will blame me I know that you will blame and scorn my cautions, as vain and woman−fears that you will not comprehend my feelings that you will doubt oh never doubt your Isabel; but if it must be so, blame doubt desert despise me but oh, in this obey my bidding. Spies are about your table and your bed spies who note your every action, hear perhaps your every word spies as unscrupulous as they are crafty. It is not that I fear your safety in the open field my brave and beautiful it is not that I doubt your prowess. No, God is my judge and witness dearly as I regard your safety wildly as my heart might throb and tremble even now, in the open field, I would commit *my* fortunes and *your* life to your own keeping; I would send you forth, if it were a contest hand to hand and sword to sword with mine oppressor, I would send you forth anxious, indeed, and spirit−shaken yet in all hope, all confidence, all joy! But now no contest will be offered, no open weapon brandished at your head: poison will lurk around your cup knives will be at your throat when you the least expect them. Promise me then promise me, beloved Harry, that you will make no vain and frantic effort; that you will not, like the silly fly, entangle yourself yet deeper in the maze by your own useless efforts that you will not madly dash away the single barrier that parts you from destruction! Think reflect one moment, what it must cost a girl, an ardent and warmhearted girl ay, Harry, and a wife, a newly−wedded wife, to write these maddening words! Reflect on this, and will you not believe that I possess some deep and certain cause for my dark warnings? I do I do! Certain is the fate to you certain the misery the heart−break and worse, oh worse, a thousand times, the foul pollution which, you alive, they dare not heap upon me from which the name of wife the name, if not the hand, of Mornington can yet protect me. All this will follow if you stir but one pace's length to aid me.

"I know it has been said, `Who would win greatly must venture greatly;' but so it is not now. Oh! by the love that you bear me, by the friends whom you have lost−−nearer, perhaps, yet not more dear than she who weeps as she addresses you" and the paper, blistered and soiled with the big drops, spoke volumes for her truth "by all your hopes on earth or after the dark separation, I do conjure you, be prudent and be patient; and, above all things, neglect not nor scorn my caution.

"Think you that I have any deeper wish, any more cherished feeling in the tabernacle of my inmost heart, than the one desire to be yours wholly, inseparably, eternally yours? And think you, that if action, enterprise, peril however deadly, agonies however terrible, could bring us once more together think you that I would shun to expose myself think you that I would shrink from exposing even you, my better and more valued self, to the risk of these? But I will say no more. Harry, you will grant my sad, my wretched boon; you will *must* grant it.

"And now will I tell you of myself. I am well in the body ay, and I force myself even to be cheerful. I suffer nothing but confinement, in a situation not of itself devoid of charms but, oh! what matters it to the poor bird

whose bleeding bosom throbs against the bars, whether those bars be gilded or of a meaner metal? nothing but confinement and absence from you, not even the presence of my persecutor. I said, I force myself to be cheerful; and I am cheerful cheerful and happy in a high and holy hope, a certainty that the motto of our family will be fulfilled `Merci, O merci Dieu le bon temps viendra.' It will come oh, believe it, Harry, believe it as I do, and pray for it, and be happy the good time will come, when we shall meet again, never, I trust, to be grieved or parted more. The good time will come, when you shall fold to your heart your own unchanged, unchangeable. It is in this hope that I am cheerful; in this hope, and in the fixed resolve if it be the will of Him that I shall be restored in his good day to your affections, that I will be restored to them, not a pale, care−worn, prison−broken wretch, but still rich in whatever little I may have of youth or beauty; not a timid, aguish, and disappointed spirit, sick with the hope deferred, but a full and buoyant soul buoyant with love and rapture. In this hope I tune my long−neglected harp; I sing the old homemelodies of my fresh girlhood; I pore over the poets and the philosophers of your green island, and I love them, not that they are rich and beautiful and how pathetic! but that they derived their being from that same spot of earth in which my Harry first saw light, but that they speak the same heart−language, and breathe the same proud sentiments of chivalric piety and love, which I have heard him utter. I have found a little song, a simple song written, they say, by one, like me, imprisoned, and afar from the object of her soul's worship. Is it not sweet, and is it not prophetic? I will−−I will believe it: ` 'Tis past! I wake A captive, and alone, and far from thee, My love and friend! yet fostering for thy sake A quenchless hope of happiness to be; And feeling still my woman's spirit strong In the deep faith, which lifts from earthly wrong A heavenward glance. I know, I know our love Shall yet call gentle angels from above, By its undying fervour; and prevail, Sending a breath, as of the spring's first gale, Through hearts now cold; and, raising its bright face, With a free gush of sunny tears erase The characters of anguish; in this trust I bear, I strive, I bow not to the dust; That I may bring thee back no faded form, No bosom chilled, and blighted by the storm, But all my youth's first treasurres when we meet, Making past sorrow, by communion, sweet.'

"And now, Harry, I must say farewell,−−farewell, my own, my all−beloved. I send you that long ringlet you admired when first we met. I have bathed it in many tears, and kissed it, and envied it, Harry envied the senseless, lifeless hair; for well I know that it will be pressed to your lips, and worn where I *should* be worn in your bosom. And now, may all the blessings that I can devise, or pray for, fall upon you, so shall you be rich indeed! May the great glorious Comforter be with you; may He take from your heart the bitterness, from your soul the sting; may He fill your thoughts with patience and with hope; and, oh! above all, may he in his own good time when we are weighed and found not wholly wanting may he bring about the accomplishment of all our hopes in one delicious meeting. Harry, farewell; Harry, beloved Harry! farewell; and remember

`Merci, O Merci Dieu le bon temps viendra.'

"Ever, ever for ever your own

"Isabel."

CHAPTER X.

"Guilt is its own avenger! Ancient sin Is but the parent to a younger crime, That must be born, in fulness of its hour, Itself to be prolific and its seed Is evermore the dark unholy fiend, Insatiate of insolence and wrong The single fury with a thousand names Phrensy, or fate, or vengeful wrath divine." *The Agamemnon.*

It would be madness to attempt the portraiture of my feelings, as I read the fatal intelligence contained in that wild but powerful letter, love admiration impatience anguish I know not which was strongest. At first I felt inclined to rebel against the prohibition it contained; to doubt the justice of her conclusions; to ascribe the whole as she herself had written it to her woman−fears. Then, again, when I thought of her, as I had seen her the last time, fearlessly protecting with the mortal weapon my own forfeit life; when I considered the fearful accuracy

with which my motions had thus far been tracked out the unrelenting and unscrupulous malice with which my death had been meditated, and all but executed; when I looked upon the frequency of opportunities for the commission of this or any other crime, in the present confusion of parties, and in the distracted turbulence of the whole realm, I began to feel that I had no right to ascribe a weak and womanish vacillation to one whom I had seen so nobly displaying qualities the very reverse of these, under circumstances the most trying! I began to feel that I was, indeed, standing on a precipice's verge, and that my only hope of safety or success did lie in caution.

At once, therefore, I resolved that I would not for a moment be wanting to myself; that I would not for a moment be wanting to her who had so wonderfully manifested the depth of her devotion to me, by the self−denying control with which she had bound up her feelings, and compelled herself to silence, when a word, a syllable might have wrought deliverance or utter desolation! I saw, as it were intuitively, that the only game which could be crowned with good results was one of deep, thoughtful, and well−executed artifice. I saw that I must both deceive and divide, ere I could hope to conquer. The first step to such a result must clearly be a thorough concealment of my own thoughts, motives, character! I would shake off all the semblance at least, if not all the reality, of care! I would be foremost in the feast as in the fray! I would no longer shun the deep carousal for, of a surety, there is truth in wine! I would be all things with all men! I would wind through thorns and flowers alike carefully, noiselessly, stealthily as the snake; that, like the snake, I might, when certain of my distance and of my prey, strike once and fatally!

As I revolved these things in my mind, a doubt a terrible doubt crossed me! De Charmi! Had I not rashly, like an idiot, given full confidence, and on the merest impulse? "De Charmi" I repeated his name musingly "can it be that he is treacherous base leagued with the enemy? Fool, fool!" I cried aloud, "henceforth will I speak nothing; no, not even to myself. Henceforth will I watch every motion of his eye, every quiver of his lip, every light and every shadow that plays upon his face; henceforth will I read his very soul. If he be false He that knows all things, knows that I will stab him to his lying heart at the court of his king; in the arms of his mistress; at the altar of his God!"

As I moved, vehemently, on the bed, in the violence of my excitement, I disarranged its draperies, and something fell to the ground with a slight but distinct sound it was the larger packet; which, in the warmth of the feelings conjured up by what I had already seen, I had forgotten. It was not an instant before I had dragged its contents to daylight.

"It is but fitting," thus ran the superscription "it is but fitting that Harry Mornington should learn somewhat of *her* early fortunes whom he has taken to his heart. Read these, my beloved, and you will know that, if most miserable, I am most innocent! You will see and judge, better than from any words of mine, how desperate is the hope of succour from violence or rashness. Read these, and, oh! remember!

`Merci, O merci Dièu le bon temps viendra.'

Will it will it indeed come? Heretofore has my life been one long term of sorrow. A friendless, homeless, persecuted orphan! Oh, that the good time would indeed come, before my spirit shall be broken, and my body worn away by the very weariness of wo!"

"I said that my life had been one long term of sorrow. I I alone, have no sweet recollections, no hallowed memories of old home−faces of happy childish hours, when tears are but as April showers, smiling even while they fall. I have none such. My childhood is a blank, a starless night, with here and there a dream! There is a vision of a mother in my soul; of a soft, beautiful, but ever melancholy mother of one short summer day of love and fearless confidence. Of one whom I called father. I say wrongly; not of himself, but of his eyes−−deep, dark, unfathomably tender. I can see those eyes looking down upon my infant sports with a calm and chastened affection. I can sometimes fancy that I see them, even now, gazing down from the far firmament, when the hush of night is heavy over the multitudinous world. Yet are these but vague and, perchance, false imaginings, scarcely

more distinct than the reflections on a midnight lake. They may be real they may be, and probably are, but the blind yearnings of a fanciful and affectionate spirit pining for sympathy and love, and finding none!

"At the furthest period to which I can recur with certainty, I was the inmate of a noble castle a little wretched child; the orphan niece, as I was told, of the dark lord of that demesne. But never did I meet even the passing attention, the slight affectionate notice, which the coldest heart must lavish at moments on the sole remaining image of a departed sister. Never was I permitted to lisp the name of uncle. I was abandoned to the care of menials; and even by them was rebuked, slighted, chidden, taunted! ay, taunted with base blood and infamy of origin. My heartless kinsman had three sons; one but a few months my senior; and him I saw him daily; not as an equal, not as a cousin, but as a lord. The others were absent from their father's mansion pages in some proud family. I will not write a name; for my object in writing at all is to deter you from pursuit, not to afford a clew. When I was a girl, perhaps of thirteen years, I was sent to a convent, not as a novice, but to receive a finished education. Though stinted in all things else, even to miserly closeness, in this respect money was profusely lavished. Embroidery, painting, music, languages, dancing every trivial grace was to be cultivated, every accomplishment to be acquired. Yet, with all this, the same insults pursued me the same harsh coldness. My superior frowned me into silence; my teachers instructed me in chilling, heartless negligence; my young companions shunned me, as a creature under the ban of infamy. I have sometimes imagined, since, that all this was done with a view to breaking down my spirit, to rendering me pliable, soulless, and passionless. If so, how strangely have they erred who so misjudged my character. Tenderness kindness could have moulded me to aught; oppression and severity, and the strong sense of bitter wrong, of cruelty unmerited, have made me what I am resolute and firm to resist immoveable of purpose, unless my heart be touched, and then all softness! I grew up a child of poetry: the secret places of my mind were my sole storehouses of bliss; and in them I was happy I created, I dreamed I became a solitary creature of impulses and imagination.

"Time fled and I grew in years, and in stature, and, they said, in beauty. My companions, who had wronged me from the first, now hated for they envied me; and I, whose whole soul was a desire for affection who had but one wish to love some living being who should love me in return grew to maturity without a friend!

"They led me back to that old mansion and all were altered: I was courted, flattered, cringed to in humble admiration. I was to be the heiress of that wide demesne of those rich woodlands, in which I had run almost savage as a little child; of those fair lawns, which I had from a distance witnessed thronged with the noble and the gay; of those superb galleries, which I had never been allowed to enter. I was to be the bride of my uncle's first−born: a dispensation had been obtained from the pope; and, as is usual in such cases, my will had not been consulted.

"I was called to an interview with my dark kinsman, and positively informed of the honour that awaited me which I as positively declined. My uncle was furious. He reviled me as the child of infamy the child, almost, of incest his sister's daughter, born without the sanction of the holy church my father a wretch, a villain, a seducer of his own kinswoman within the prohibited degrees. At once, shortly and impetuously, I cast the falsehood in his teeth! Harry it must be it is a falsehood. No man, however base, however grasping, could wish to bind a child of infamy like this to his own son! I offered to take the veil to submit myself to an eternal dungeon; but never I swore−−never would I call husband the son of him who had slandered my parents, and robbed their child of her good name! I was remanded to my chamber, imprisoned, half starved, scourged. Yes, Harry−−by the holy heavens that are above us! I, a woman, a helpless woman, was bound and beaten like a dog, by orders of my own mother's brother. It was their pretext that I was mad! I was intrusted to the charge of hags of fiends fiends in the shape of women. Chance gave me to overhear a conversation and the secret of my fate is here. My mother was the eldest of her family; and by a settlement a deed of entail so ancient that the Salique law of France affects it not the descent is vested in the female line. She was sole heiress to all the titles, lands, and privileges of an old and noble race. My mother wedded young, and contrary to her father's and to her brother's consent. Her father's was withheld from mere caprice; her brother's, from foul unnatural avarice for, failing that one sister and her race, the fair inheritance would fall to him. He forged the lie; he brought false papers perjured

witnesses to prove their consanguinity; he broke his sister's heart slaying her with the sword of her own outraged feelings, of her own murdered reputation. My father was seen no more. Whether he fell beneath the murderer's knife; whether he fled beyond the sea; whether he languishes in eternal chains none know. I was dragged to my uncle's dwelling; there was no security but in my death, or in my union with his first−born.

"The brothers returned to their father's hall well−nurtured, courtly, beautiful, and brave! And me wretch that I am they *both* loved *me*. The elder was dark−haired, dark−eyed but why should I describe them? You have seen, you have witnessed you well know the horrible reality. He was grave, but passionate, and full of devoted sentiment and rich romance, even in his gravity: he was a man whom any girl might worship! I know not but I with all my resolutions, all my vows against it might have been wrought upon to yield him my affections; for he was gentle full of the melancholy vein of poetry I loved, yet not without its brilliancy attentive even to devotion! Thanks be to the Eternal, the misery of loving him was spared me; for I learned no matter how I learned, in time to save me, that another, a gentle being buried in a living grave, could claim him for her own. I charged him with it face to face, eye to eye I charged him with his atrocious villany! And, by that holy strength that dwells in innocence, he quailed before me! His swarthy cheek reddened, and his features writhed as if with agony yet still he persevered. The younger I loathed him from the first, for he had dared to whisper guilt to me to tempt me *me*, whom he considered as the unwilling bride of his own brother to tempt *me* to illicit love.

"When first I saw them on the lawn, methought two nobler or more gallant gentlemen ne'er walked the world in company. Their tones were low and pleasant, their eyes looked mildly on each other. With all their faults, they were as yet brothers brothers in heart, as in their birthright. A brief month had elapsed, and they were deadliest foemen. Heart−burnings, envyings, and secret malice had blazed out into fierce, open, and uncompromising hate: all knew it, and all knew the miserable but most guiltless cause.

"Again and again I implored permission to retire to a convent, to surrender all my earthly rights, to go forth on the wide world an outcast and a beggar! Again and again I was denied this meed of mercy. Had I received the veil, the convent would have claimed my fortunes as an appanage: had I gone forth alone, however friendless, and however humbled, I might yet marry; I might yet be the mother of wretches like myself, who would in turn be claimants of their mother's heirdom.

"At length I was told in human words by kindred lips I was told `To one of these my sons must you be wedded, or you must die.' `Then will I die,' was my unalterable answer; and, I doubt not, ere long the poison or the *oubliette* would have brought a close to my afflictions, had not the guilt of those most abhorred, yet most miserable, brethren precipitated a catastrophe, fatal alike to us and to themselves.

"One dark and silent midnight the midnight of that morning on which we for the first time met my solitary chamber was violently entered by the emissaries of my elder lover foul profanation of the word! my elder persecutor. That wretched girl whose end whose terrible, but surely not unmerited, end you witnessed, was the foremost. Ere I was well awakened, I was blindfolded, bound, gagged! With the silent expedition of guilt they arrayed me hurried me by private ways into a coach two persons entered with me, and we were whirled away as fast as the speed of horses could move the ponderous vehicle whither I knew not.

"In an agony of horror and dismay I listened to catch whatever word might fall from my companions, whose identity I could well conjecture; but for many miles they uttered not a syllable: only by the thick breathing of one did I know him to be a man! On on we went now over smooth and level roads, now across country over banks and ruts sometimes the branches sweeping the roof and panels and anon the wheels imbedded in the tenacious clay, where, as I judged, we crossed the beds of streamlets which had resisted the severe and biting frost. The day was already breaking as I could discover even through the bandage, which pressed tightly on my eyes when we stopped for a few seconds: the weary horses which had conveyed us thus far on our frightful journey were removed; a fresh relay was at hand, and in a few instants we set off again, and with redoubled fury. We had not driven far at this fierce rate, before my hands were unfettered my eyes and lips unbandaged! It was as I

conjectured it was the elder who sat beside me, with a fierce smile of triumph on his swarthy features and she, the tool and minister of his atrocities! I spoke not I moved not I looked not to the right or left a stupid, dull insensibility had fallen on me.

"I could judge from the words of that guilty pair, for they now spoke freely and without concealment, that they deemed all danger of pursuit to be over. A party of armed servants, commanded by the third and youngest of the brethren, had escorted our flight till we had taken our relays, and then had left us. I could see that there was now but one armed horseman riding beside the window.

"Suddenly we stopped with a shock and heavy jerk one of the horses had fallen; and ere the motion of his fall was ended, the loud report of fire−arms announced the cause. From a pathway, source ten yards in front, that light−haired youth rushed forth; he hurled the musket he had just discharged full at the heads of the terrified horses, which had made a motion to dash onward; they fell to plunging, and in an instant the carriage was overturned. He snatched a pistol from his belt with either hand, discharged one at the outrider, who instantly fled into the dense forest, and escaped; then, as his brother dashed the door of the carriage to atoms with his foot, and sprang out, sword in hand, he levelled the second full at his head, with a smile of devilish exultation `Die,' he shouted `die, *dog* , in the moment of your triumph! ' The flash was so close that I involuntarily closed my eyes; I heard a whistling sound rush by me, and, with a succession of the wildest yells, that miserable girl fell forward, and dragged me to the bottom of the coach. She clasped me with her convulsed arms she tore my very garments with her teeth her hot blood streamed over me! Oh Heaven! Heaven! I know not how I held my reason yet I did hold it; and all the time I heard the shivering clash of their swords, and the stamping of their feet upon the frozen soil. I heard the quick clang of a horse's hoof as you drew nigh and struggled violently to get loose, but I could not. Though speechless, and convulsed, and evidently in her last agony, she still held me with a gripe of steel. Suddenly her grasp relaxed she was stone dead. I extricated myself, tottered out of the fatal carriage beheld the kindred corpses, and a stranger gazing on those corpses a stranger now no longer I fainted Harry, you only know the rest!

"It was on the third night from your departure I had not yet retired to my couch, though it was already two hours past midnight, for you had promised me and well I knew you would perform that promise, cost you what it might you had promised to return on the third night. I sat by the window, gazing out upon the moonlight scenery; the air was beautifully calm and clear, and the night wonderfully silent; I could hear the rushing of the distant Marne in every lull of the light breeze. Suddenly methought I heard a stealthy footstep beneath the window I listened it was not repeated. For a moment, I thought of flight, or of calling for assistance, but an instant's reflection reasoned me into security fatal security! At this moment the shrill note of a trumpet came to my ear from a distance I gazed steadily to the road by which I knew you must return I saw your squadron reach the summit of the hill their steel caps glancing one by one as they crossed the brow, and sinking into obscurity as they entered the shadow of the orchards; I could even mark the heavy onward trampling of the march; I missed them amid the low roofs of the hamlet; I lost the sound of their advance! my breath came thick my eyes were filled with tears my heart was too full for my bosom. I was then safe, indeed safe! I had scarcely nurtured such a hope; I had felt throughout the day a deep oppression on my spirits an overshadowing presentiment of evil had weighed me down yet now all, all was forgotten! I breathed a prayer of thankfulness to Him that is above; I looked forth again upon the night, and I saw a little company of horsemen emerge from the village, and ride briskly down the moonlit slope. Filled, almost to choking, with gratitude and love, I flung the casement open, and leaned out to mark your coming; I saw you reach the avenue I lost you as you entered it I leaned yet farther out at that moment that very moment of intense pleasure the tall frame−work of a ladder rose suddenly between me and the light, and, ere I could spring back into the apartment, fell with a jarring sound against the sculptured window−sill. Rapidly as I darted towards the lamp, with the hope of extinguishing it, and so escaping in the gloom more rapidly had three ruffians scaled the ladder; they seized me ere I could reach the door, and though I screamed and struggled with almost superhuman power forced me through the narrow aperture, and bore me down the steps. One of the party was left watching the door within, to prevent rescue from that way ere his comrades could descend. I knew that aid was close at hand I shrieked your name, and, not to *my* astonishment,

you came; your shot struck down one of the party they were taken by surprise the ladder fell, leaving the ruffian within entrapped in his own snare. I saw you rush forward oh God! I saw you fall I saw that foul assassin rear his coward blade to pierce you then all glory be to Him who gave me power! I snatched the pistol that had dropped from your hand I stood over you and he dastardly no less than cruel he cowered before me. It was but a second ere they tore me from my station, and the weapon was discharged in vain; but that second was your safety, for, on either hand, the clash of stirrups and the shouts of your followers came loud and near. At this critical moment, the wretch within called to his master to rear up the ladder for his escape he was answered by a short and sullen oath. As he saw them mount to fly, he fired first his musket, and then both his pistols in the despair of vengeance, at his own treacherous companions; the ball from the last weapon grazed the face of my persecutor, who had bound me before him on his horse; with a savage execration he turned in his saddle, levelled his own carabine with deliberate aim called on his men to fire! I saw the miserable victim plunge headlong from the window! I heard the soft, dull sound of his fall! and the whole party dashed away, bearing me with them, at the top of their horses' speed. We paused for a moment or two in a clump of trees, I know not wherefore, for the night had become gloomy and overcast yet I heard the jingling of armour, and the tread of managed chargers sweeping around our hiding−place. I raised my voice to cry aloud for succour; but in a moment, ere one tone had found its way to the air of heaven, a scarf was forced into my mouth, and folded over my head, close almost to suffocation.

My tale of wo is ended I cannot, dare not write another word. Seek me not, Harry seek me not now I do beseech you, even if you shrink not aghast from the idea of reclaiming one who would be but a reproach to your good name! Of all things, seek me not where first we met that, *that*, indeed, were sure destruction! I am not there I am not in that horrible vicinity. Would, oh would that I dared reveal to you my dwelling−place! would that I dared reveal to you the means by which you will receive this letter! But I am bound bound by a fearful oath, never, by word or deed, by sign or letter, to reveal or hint the place of my concealment the names of my tormentors. I swore it, Harry, with a bursting heart and burning brain I swore it by the bones of my mother by my love for you by my hopes of heaven hereafter by the life of Him who died that we might live! I swore it and wherefore? that you might be safe, my beloved, from the dagger or the bowl. They dare not break their faith with me in this I know they dare not but how, I may not tell you. Be you prudent and cautious; seem to the world seem but oh, let it be but seeming seem to have forgotten, even while you most remember, your own Isabel. Gird yourself up with the armour of cautiousness and craft so, and so only, may we meet again! Oh that I could see you, my beloved, oh that I could look upon your lordly brow, and hear your blessed voice oh that I could hold you in my arms, were it but for one short hour, though death itself should follow! Would, oh would we were together together even in the tomb for the tomb knows no further separation!"

CHAPTER XI.

"Bacchus, ever fair and young, Drinking joys did first ordain; Bacchus' blessings are a treasure, Drinking is the soldier's pleasure. Rich the treasure Sweet the pleasure Sweet is pleasure after pain." *Alexander's Feast.*

It was about a fortnight after the receipt of these letters−−a fortnight during which, although nothing of import had occurred, I had completely regained my strength, and had so far, at least, matured my plans of future action as to be thoroughly master of my mind and conduct that I was summoned late in the evening to a council of war at the quarters of the commander−in−chief. I had on the preceding day resumed the command of my troops, who were quartered somewhat in advance of our lines, in such places of shelter as could be found between St. Germains and the bridge of Charenton. They had been almost incessantly engaged since the formation of the blockade, being the only corps of cavalry attached to the royal army, in covering the advances of the infantry, in patrolling the ground, and, above all, in cutting off convoys of cattle and provision, to introduce which to the beleaguered city was the continual aim of the *Frondeurs*. The men were nevertheless in high spirits, and were gradually acquiring a very respectable degree of discipline; while the horses, considering the harassing nature of the service, were in good condition, and fit for action. I had just returned from visiting the outposts, and had in the afternoon repelled, in a

brilliant charge, a sally intended to cover the entrance of a considerable number of wagons laden with stores of all kinds, when the summons was delivered to me, with a further injunction to make no long tarrying, as the council was already assembled. I did not, therefore, even dismount from my horse, much less pause to make any alteration in my dress, but rode directly to the quarters of the prince. It was already quite dark, but there were collected about the door a score or two of grooms and lackeys, besides the sentinels on duty, with lanterns and flambeaux, by the light of which they were leading to and fro about a dozen chargers fully caparisoned for war. Throwing my rein to one of these fellows, I entered at once the chamber wherein the council was debating. It must be observed that the court had quitted Paris at a most inclement season, and at so short a notice that not only the army, but the leaders, and even the royal family itself, were in want of all the common conveniences of life. The palace of St. Germains was not half large enough to accommodate those who had a claim to quarters in the royal residence, in right of birth or station. Notwithstanding this, however, the Prince of Condé was undoubtedly one to whom, under any circumstances, the best apartments must have been tendered; but he was too old a soldier, and too good a general, not to be aware that a leader, in order to share the affections, must also share the hardships of his soldiery. He had, in the present instance, taken up his residence in an old rambling *métairie,* which might have originally belonged to some small proprietor, but which had long been used only as the abode of the bailiff, who continued to manage the demesnes. This rude dwelling had been hastily and imperfectly put in order for the reception of the prince and his suite. The large kitchen had been converted into a hall of entrance; the walls were hung with splendid arms, and rich mantles of fur and velvet; in the corners stood several stands of regimental colours; and on a slab against the wall lay, in splendid confusion, plumed caps and glittering helmets, riding−cloaks, spurs, and swords, as they had been laid aside by the officers who composed the council. Several esquires of the body, and gentlemen some in civil attire, but more in undress uniforms or armour lounged round the ample chimney, in which was blazing a tremendous fire, rendered not a little acceptable by the unwonted severity of the season. Opposite to this glowing pile, and in the full glare of its red light, two halberdiers of the Swiss guard stalked to and fro, their bright head−pieces, massive partisans, and long beards offering a strange contrast to the superb freshness of the silk and embroidery which adorned their habits. I passed without hesitation or delay through this apartment, receiving the whispered greetings of several among the officers, and the silent salute of the guards, into the inner chamber, which had been originally the saloon of the building. A dozen lights of common tallow were flaring and streaming from candlesticks of massive silver; and a covering of Genoa velvet had been spread over a table of unpolished deal, supported by rough trivets. Throughout the whole room a similar mixture of regal display and abject poverty was visible. The floor, of plain red bricks, was partially covered by a three−piled Persian carpet; the chairs, of country manufacture, were decked with damask cushions; and, to crown the whole, the mantling wines of Auvergnât and Sillery, which stood upon the board among maps of the adjacent country, plans of fortifications, muster−rolls, commissariat accounts, and unsigned commissions, were poured from flasks of gold and silver into old−fashioned Flemish glasses, or mugs of the vilest earthenware.

The debate, as it would seem if there had indeed been one was at an end when I entered. The prince was seated at the upper end of the table, in close but apparently trivial conversation with the dukes of Châtillon and Orleans, who were placed on his right−hand and on his left. Below these sat a dozen gentlemen holding commissions in the royal army, among whom I at once discovered the maréchals de Meilleraye, de Grammont, and de Duplessis−Praslin, who had come together from their various posts of Lagny, Corbeil, and St. Cloud, for the purpose of deciding on the mode of attack for the morrow.

"You come somewhat late, Monsieur de Mornington," cried the prince, gayly, as I entered; "late, too, for our council as well as for our supper! Seat yourself, sir," he continued "room there for our gallant comrade! We are told, sir, that we are again indebted to your activity. Gentlemen cavaliers, a health to Monsieur Mornington we are his debtors; if not for our suppers to−night, at least for to−morrow's breakfast! *Ma foi,* it would be cold comfort to break one's fast on naught save gunpowder and pike−heads. Fill up fill up."

The health was drunk by acclamation; and in five minutes all was mirth and revelry. Amid the clang of beakers and the fun, that soon waxed furious, I made out, however, to learn that the movement of the Parisian army, on the preceding day the Marquis de Chanleu having occupied the hamlet and bridge of Charenton with a strong

force of infantry and a tolerably well−ordered park of artillery had determined the commander−in−chief on carrying the post by storm on the next morning; as it was, in itself, a station of great importance, commanding the junction of the Seine and Marne. The troops destined for the assault were Chatillon's division of veterans, the best men in the army; Condé himself intending to occupy the heights of St. Mandé with a strong reserve, for the purpose of intercepting any reinforcements which might be sent out from Paris, or preventing any diversion which might be attempted on the attacking party.

"You have heard, doubtless, sir," cried Grammont, turning suddenly to me, "that Rochefoucauld has joined the *Frondeurs?*"

"Doubtless he has; but not, perhaps, the cause. The couplet, I confess, might almost palliate the treason," cried Condé: "have you heard his last, sir?

`To gain one smile from Longueville's lovely eyes, I war against my king would war against the skies.'

The game is worth the candle, I confess."

"*C'est selon*," laughed out De Grammont "I am rather for D'Hocquincourt. `Peronne to the fairest of the fair!' Oh, Montbazon for me!"

"Nay, but they say there is a nameless beauty, brighter than all or any," chimed in De Meilleraye "a captive beauty of young De Chateaufort. He entered Paris some three days since with five hundred musketeers, two hundred head of cattle, and a devilish pretty girl in a close−curtained litter!"

"How! What, saw you her, De Meilleraye? What like was she? *Tête Dieu!* why seized you not the convoy?"

"De Chateaufort," said I; "is it that I am myself unknown, or is it permitted to be ignorant of this De Chateaufort."

"It is not permitted, sir," replied De Grammont, with infinite gravity, "to be ignorant of any man who hath a pretty damsel in a close−curtained litter hey, De Meilleraye?"

"Nevertheless," cried Condé, "I fear that, in this instance, we must pardon the young man his crime. Yes, sir, crime," he continued, in a tone of affected indignation, as he saw me stare "what, know you not that it has been decided, long since, in our high Parliament of wits, `That a mistake is worse than a crime?' But, crime or blunder, I fear, gentlemen, that we must overlook it, as I well believe we all are guilty in the same degree! How say you, Grammont, Duplessis who is De Chateaufort?"

"He is, so please your highness," answered Grammont, so gravely that Condé looked for a reply "he is a young man, with five hundred soldiers, two hundred *swine*. Is it not so, De Meilleraye? two hundred swine and one fair lady?"

"A truce to jesting," began De Meilleraye

"Treason, monseigneur, treason," shouted the other; "I do beseech you call a guard for the maréchal: we shall next have him crying, `Peace with the *Frondeurs*!' "

"In the mean time let us drink a health to Chateaufort's fair lady!"

After a mighty pledge had been quaffed to this most sapient toast, the maréchal, not a little vain of his supposed discovery, recommenced, before any of those present had recovered their breath,

"Monsieur de Chateaufort is third son of the Marquis de Penthiêvre. Though why he should have sent his youngest with his regiment I cannot conceive, when he has two sons who have seen service."

"Let them go hang," cried Condé, growing weary of the subject "let them go hang, the marquis and his sons, be they three or thirty! One cup more, and to bed: we have work for to−morrow, gentlemen, sharp work; pray God it be successful. Monsieur de Mornington, you will have your men under arms one hour before the daybreak; occupy the heights of St. Mandé with your three regiments, and hold them till we can bring up our infantry. Hold them, despite the devil! De Châtillon, no bed for you to−night; you must march at midnight en avant sweep all before you, but do not charge till daybreak; and then we shall be there, God willing, to cover or support you! Fill up! fill up! and then good−night!"

Excusing myself from further potations on the score of health, and of the necessity of seeing immediately to the movements of the cavalry, I bowed and withdrew. In the outer hall, most of the officers, worn out by the continual and harassing service on which they were employed, were sleeping, some in their chairs, some wrapped in their mantles on the floor; and the Swiss guards themselves were nodding as they leaned upon their rested halberds. Without the doors a watch−fire was blazing, and in its ruddy light the horses of the officers were picketed, while the grooms were slumbering or carousing by their sides, mingled with pedlers, courtesans, and countrymen, and all the rabble whose presence was connived at, if not permitted, in the quarters of the royal army. As I drew near, which I did silently and unannounced, I thought I caught the sound of my own name; it was repeated, and, despite of the old adage, I stood still.

"That is a gallant horse of his, that bay," cried the first speaker; "will he ride him to−morrow in the field?"

"I judge not," replied a second voice it was that of the groom to whose charge I had committed Bayard "this charger has had hard work to−day."

"And hath he others, then? Methought he owned but one, this English officer."

"He had but one till his return from Pont à Mousson, when his majesty's equery sent him another, as a reward of honour. *Ventre St. Gris!* A charger of ten thousand; white as the winter's snow, with jet−black mane and tail."

"And he will back the white to−morrow?"

"*Saint Dieu!* how should I know or if I did, what matters it?" returned the groom. "Drink up your eau−de−vie; and let the horses look to themselves."

Finding that I should hear no further, and marvelling somewhat with myself what these inquiries could mean, I hurried up to the fire,

"My horse, sirrah!" I exclaimed rather shortly, as if ignorant of all that had passed, "my horse! why dally you?"

It was not a moment before the animal was brought to me; but in that moment's space I cast my eye over the circle, which had for the most part risen to their feet at my approach, to see if I could not detect the inquirer. It was not long before I found him, or at least one whom I concluded to be the same. He was a dark, sallow−complexioned man, broad−shouldered and strong made, though somewhat undersized. He wore a suit of common blue homespun, with a thick riding−coat of shaggy felt thrown loosely over it, and a huge bonnet of uncut plush pulled forward over his eyes. There was, indeed, little or nothing peculiar about the man, unless it were a slightly military bearing, which was but partially disguised by what seemed to me an affected boorishness of manner. Yet there was something about him which excited my attention; a sort of undefinable resemblance to some person I had seen before, and that, too, at no very remote period. I looked at him steadily, and he met my fixed gaze as firmly, and with an air of utter unconsciousness. I could not recall time or place, yet I felt certain

that I had caught his eye before; it was a feeling, too, that gave me some disquiet, as though I had some lurking cause of apprehension. Nothing, however, was to be done. I mounted my horse and rode slowly to my private quarters, pondering as I went on the conversation I had heard that evening. There was indeed much food for meditation: the mysterious lady; the youngest son of three leading his father's vassals; and, above all, the unaccountable absence of the elder brethren! To say the least of it, there was a strange coincidence; and I was hard set, as I rode homeward, to discover some mode of gaining, without appearing to desire it, more certain information on the subject. Still, notwithstanding all this, the countenance of the stranger was uppermost in my mind; and the more I considered it, the more singular did the pertinacity of his inquiries appear. I determined, at length, though perhaps I could not easily have explained the cause of my determination, that I would on no account ride White Majestic for so my grooms had named him on the morrow.

"Martin," I cried, as I entered my little dwelling, "we shall have work to do right early! Go find the orderlies of my three regiments forthwith, and let them come to me at once for orders; and, hark you! bear Monsieur Mornington's good wishes to Colonel St. Agrêve, and ask the loan of his black charger for to−morrow. Bayard is overdone, and it lists me not to ride Majestic. I await not his reply to−night; but see that a horse be it the black or no be fully harnessed for the field three hours before the daybreak. You, Martin, if you will, shall bear my private ensign; I hold a warrant from the prince of your appointment, and here I have an order on the colonel of the first regiment for a troop−horse and housings. See that you be well accountred, and on foot before the hour. Perform this speedily, and then get thee to bed at once; 'tis late already."

In half an hour's space I had despatched the subalterns of every regiment with marching orders; for half an hour more I mused till my head grew dizzy with the fruitless toil; then threw myself upon my lowly bed, and, over−fatigued alike in body and in spirit, slept heavily, till I was aroused by the wild flourish of our trumpets as they sounded the *reveillé*.

END OF VOL. I.

VOL. II.

CHAPTER XII.

"I watched him through the doubtful fray, That changed as March's moody day, Till, like a stream that bursts its bank, Fierce Rupert thundered on our flank, 'Twas then, 'mid tumult, smoke, and strife, Where each man fought for death and life, 'Twas then I fired my petronel, And Mortham, steed and rider, fell." Rokeby.

Hastily springing to my feet, I had already donned my clothes, and was buckling on my Milan corslet, when old Martin entered my chamber, fully equipped as a supernumerary subaltern of my regiment. It was one of those customs of the day, which has, since the time of which I write, fallen completely into disuse, that every corps, independent of its regular stands of national and regimental colours, was distinguished by a smaller standard, bearing the coat−armorial of its commanding officer. This usage which had probably originated during the civil wars, wherein each regiment was, for the most part, raised by its colonel from among his own territorial and feudatory dependants I was particular to maintain in my own instance the more scrupulously, as being a stranger in a foreign land, and of course conscious that, unless asserted by myself, my personal dignity would not be much regarded by others. It was partly with a view to this, as well as to secure to myself a bold and trusty follower in the field, that I had solicited for the foster−brother of my father an appointment which certainly would appear more suitable for a far younger man. But no one, who had seen Martin Lydford on that morning, would have deemed it possible that nearly two−thirds of a century had passed over the head of the erect and powerful veteran, who unfolded, with a smile of daring exultation, the tattered and time−honoured banner of my ancient house. He wore a heavy antique helmet, with breast and back−pieces of bright steel; immense jack−boots, and high buff gauntlets reaching nearly to his elbows. A long broadsword of English manufacture which, by−the−way, had

done good service in its time on many a stricken field with a poniard of formidable dimensions, completed his personal equipment. But in addition to these he carried, slung transversely across his shoulders, my petronel, a choice piece of Spanish workmanship, with an exceedingly small bore, and an indented, or, as it is now termed, a rifled barrel. It was not the fashion for officers to carry so cumbersome a weapon, but I was, at the same time, unwilling to lose a friend that had in several instances served my turn, and perhaps saved my life. The old man's eyes were full of tears as he unfurled the colours, which had not floated for many a day in action; but a sunny smile played on his lips.

"Thank God, and thee, my master, that I have lived once more to see the argent bugles on their field of vert displayed amid the merry trumpets!" he said. "Now could I die in peace, that I have seen my lord again the leader of a host worthy his name and country."

"I would not wish that they should wave in trustier hands than yours, old Lydford," was my reply. "But did you get the charger of St. Agrève last night? or what am I to ride this morning?"

"I got him not, sir; his chestnut steed is lame, and he has none for his own service, save the black. Colonel le Chaumont's, too, and the count's chargers, are all worn out with duty. Bayard is overdone with last night's skirmish a murrain on those rascal grooms of the commander! they let the good horse stand till he was wellnigh perished after a hot gallop. There is naught for it, sir, but you must ride Majestic."

"I could not ride a better; and, indeed, 'twas but a foolish fancy that made me hesitate. But reach yon flask of Auvergnât, and that old cheese from the Swiss pastures. We have scant time, indeed, but we are too old soldiers, Lydford, to ride forth without our breakfast. Old man, I pledge you Good fortune to the argent bugles!"

Our light repast was finished almost as soon as begun; and I was opening the door to go forth, when the veteran, looking steadfastly in my face, suddenly exclaimed,

"Surely you go not forth in such gay habits! You cannot but be marked. That scarlet cassock and rich armour, with the white scarf and plumes, are fearfully conspicuous. Best don the old buff coat you wore at Marston; it stood you then in stead, I well remember."

"A truce to your fears, good fellow," I replied; "conspicuous or not, thus I go forth to−day. What! want you that the French cavaliers should say, we men of England are more chary of our lives than of our honour? Fy on you, man! I thought I had in you a better counsellor."

I descended the staircase, followed by my true retainer; in another instant I was in the saddle. The troops were already mustered; and, though the skies were still all dark and cheerless, I well knew that it could scarcely lack three hours of daybreak.

The word was given the trumpets sounded and we marched steadily, but briskly, to our position. We had reached the heights of St. Mandé before the slightest streaks of dawning day were to be seen on the eastern horizon, but not before our indefatigable leader had commenced his preparations. As I rode up the ridge of the hill, one of the videttes fell back to me with the intelligence that the summit was already occupied by men and horses! For a moment I fancied that the enemy had been beforehand with us; and, on the instant, wheeled my leading troops into line for a charge. Having done this, I rode forward myself, and was agreeably surprised to find that the group which had created the alarm consisted of a score or two of artillerymen, with three light field−pieces. The captain in command handed me a note from Condé, containing further directions than I had received on the preceding night, and a promise that he would be on the spot in person soon after the commencement of the action. I had scarcely completed the arrangements necessary for the maintenance of my position, if attacked, and for displaying my little force so as to give it an appearance of the greatest possible numerical force, when the day began to break; and, almost simultaneously with the first dappling of the east, I

heard the sullen tramp of the infantry under De Châtillon, as they advanced upon the post of Charenton. In a few minutes a single musket−shot rang from the enclosures below; and immediately afterward the rattling fire of the skirmishers, as those of our army attacked and drove in the pickets of the *Frondeurs* . Gallantly was the struggle maintained by both parties; nor did the enemy's outposts retire upon the main body till they were literally crushed back by the solid columns of our advances. Then came the deep hoarse roar and the wide glare of cannon after cannon the long rolling volleys of the musketeers the deafening clang of the tocsins, pealing the alarm from many a village steeple and the shouts of a furious contest. Nearly at the same moment, the great glorious sun peered up above the distant hills, and bathed the whole country in broad light.

To our left, and immediately before us, lay a long stretch of meadow−land, partially broken by coppices and small enclosures, with the blue Seine rolling as calmly through its rich landscape as though human strife had never approached its quiet borders. To the right lay the orchards and enclosures of Charenton, the narrow streets protected by powerful barricades, the avenues enfiladed by heavy cannon, and the whole position skilfully fortified, and manned by an immense garrison, under as bold a leader as ever buckled steel blade to buff belt. Below us lay the road, leading through Vincennes and Picpus to the metropolis, at the distance of some five miles, by which we expected ere long to see the Parisian forces advancing to support their comrades. An hour passed, and nothing was to be made out of the fortunes of the day, though it was evident that the strife was desperate, and nearly balanced. It was in vain that I directed my glass, with the utmost anxiety, to the immediate scene of action; for the morning was damp, and somewhat misty the frost seeming to be on the point of yielding so far misty, at least, as to cause the smoke to hang in heavy wreaths upon the low grounds, and to obscure the conflict with a dense veil; which was never moved entirely aside, although it was at times sufficiently agitated to enable us to discover the dark masses of men who were engaged, unseen and undistinguished within its folds, in the desperate game of war.

The battle had raged incessantly for the space of nearly two hours, ere the commander−in−chief rode up with a gallant staff. He was in high spirits, having just learned from an aid−de−camp that the first barricade had been gallantly carried, though not without severe loss the enemy fighting to the last, and succeeding in the removal of their artillery to the next line of defence. The prince highly commended my dispositions; but, having brought up with him a brigade of veteran infantry, directed me to lead two regiments of cavalry one being that under my own peculiar command somewhat lower down the hill, and to mask their position entirely from the high−road which, as I have before said, ran below us, across the open meadows, lying between our position and the Seine by a small plantation of young timber, that grew about midway of the slope. I saw the object at once; and a masterly disposition it was. From the extreme left of the wood, a hollow sandy lane ran transversely down to the main road, between two high straggling fences, which, though leafless, were thick enough to cover our movements. By this lane a column of troops, to almost any extent, might be made to debouch upon the flank of whatever force should move along the road, with scarcely a possibility of their being discovered till within five hundred paces of the enemy; and I, of course, perceived that a well−executed charge would cut off any succour that might otherwise be thrown into the beleaguered village. I had scarcely executed this manoeuvre to my own satisfaction, and resumed my place beside the prince, ere a vidette galloped in from the direction of Picpus, with intelligence that the Parisians had marched out of the city thirty thousand strong the heads of their columns having actually reached Vincennes before their rear had left the Place Royale; that the generals had announced their intention of giving battle; and that the coadjutor, De Retz, was with the army in person, mounted on a war−horse, with pistols in his holsters, and impetuously demanding an immediate advance.

In the mean time, the action to our right became even hotter than before. Another horseman dashed up to the general from Charenton a second barricade had been carried, but Châtillon had lost above one−third of his men, and required instant reinforcement, and a fresh supply of ammunition. While he was yet speaking, a third rider came in, spurring his jaded horse furiously onward from the opposite direction, De Chateaufort was advancing with sixteen or eighteen hundred men arquebusiers and pikemen having crossed the river nearer to Paris, and hoping to fall upon the flank and rear of Châtillon, and to cut him off from the main army. It was a desperate crisis, but Condé was superior to it. I saw his eye flash, and his lip curl, as he issued his complicated orders with

the most perfect coolness.

"De Grammont, my good friend, lead down your gallant infantry, at once, to the support of Châtillon! Champfort, spur thou to Meilleraye; spur for thy life, and bid him advance with the reserve! Thou, Mornington, down with thee to thy men! get them, at once, into close column in yon hollow way I leave the rest to your own good judgment; but drive De Chateaufort into the Seine! Away, sir! I can see the heads of his advance even now! Away!"

And down the slope I went, driving the spurs into the conspicuous white charger, and riding straight across the enclosures to my command. In ten minutes, we were moving in a direction nearly parallel to the line of De Chateaufort's march; but still edging so much towards it that we were certain of commanding his flank and rear, unless he should, by some unforeseen circumstance, detect our ambuscade.

I will confess that, as I rode down, the thought occurred to me, at least a dozen times, that this De Chateaufort might well be the persecutor of my beloved Isabel; and the thought fired my heart, and nerved my arm! But little time was given me for thought or speculation. When we had arrived within a hundred paces of the debouchure of the lane, I halted my men; and, dismounting, stole forward on foot myself to reconnoitre. On came the enemy a powerful brigade of pikemen in the van, led by a mounted officer; then a brief interval two field−pieces a regiment of musketeers and then another corps of pikemen bringing up the rear. They were marching gallantly forward, with their drums beating, and their colours displayed, evidently quite unprepared for the reception they were about to meet. They had no flanking−parties no advanced guard; and were hurrying on, looking neither to the right nor to the left, towards Charenton, whence the din of conflict which had slackened for a while, from the want of ammunition, as I concluded came louder than ever, satisfying me that our reserve was already in action, and that our affairs were going on successfully.

I had barely time to get back to my men, and to explain my plan to the officers, ere I saw the van of the pikemen defiling past the mouth of the lane; but so completely were we favoured by the ground, and by the carelessness of the enemy, that we were still undiscovered.

"We will charge," I said to De Charmi, who commanded the second regiment, "as we are, in column, full upon the flank of the musketeers; cut our way through, or over them; and having broken their column, wheel into line to the right and left, and charge at once on both divisions of the pike−men. No shouting, men−−trumpets, be silent till we clear the lane; then shout, and sound, till the welkin rings!"

As I finished my command, the field−pieces passed the lane, and the front files of the musketeers began to show themselves. We charged, silently and steadily, till we were on the open meadow; then kettledrum, and trumpet, and the united voices of a thousand men, whose souls were on their tongues, burst forth at once. The enemy was surprised, it is true, but he strove nobly to retrieve his error. The musketeers wheeled promptly into line, and gave us one close volley; but their column of march had been too open, so that their line was necessarily shallow, and their front was unguarded by pikemen. A score of our saddles were emptied, and twice as many horses went over; but ere they could reload we rode them down. So far we had done well; but the hardest part was yet to come. We wheeled both regiments into line in opposite directions; De Charmi's front facing the flank of the vanguard of pikemen, and mine the flank of the reserve. We charged at once, and I was again victorious; we dispersed then cut them down we drove them to the devil in an instant but again with heavy loss. Then, as ill−luck would have it, my men, who had behaved steadily enough up to this moment, maddened at the sight of blood, became for the time unmanageable, and pursued the fugitives clear off the ground, making a fearful and almost unresisted slaughter. In the mean while, De Charmi had been checked by a brilliant manoeuvre of Chateaufort himself, whom I had not yet seen, as he had been from the commencement of the action on the extreme right of the vanguard. Finding at once that his musketry and rear−guard were annihilated, he had contrived, with admirable skill, to form a new front to his vanguard, which consisted of nearly a thousand fresh men, where his flank had been, by simply facing every man half to the left−about on his own ground; so that, when De Charmi charged,

instead of coming upon a naked flank, he was received by a steady phalanx of bristling pikes, and by a discharge of two field−pieces, which made fearful havoc with his men.

Such was the state of affairs, when I was enabled to look round; my own troops in partial disorder, and De Charmi halted, and cutting up the pikemen, to the best of his power, with the petronels of his troopers. His fire was imperfectly returned by an occasional volley from the few arquebusiers who had escaped our first charge, and taken refuge among the pikes. Urging my subalterns to hurry to their duty, and to recall the men with all possible speed, I joined De Charmi with two troops. While galloping forward, at the head of my men, I distinctly heard a cry among the enemy's ranks.

"Mark him! mark the red cassock and white horse!"

And at once half a dozen pieces were discharged, and with a pretty good aim, two of the bullets rattling against my breastplate; but thanks to the good Italian armourer glancing off like hailstones from a castle−wall. At the next moment, I observed my friend, the querist of the preceding night, mounted on a tall bay horse within the pikemen, who were now formed in a hollow square and instantly recognised him, in his martial attire, for the servant who had waylaid me on my march to Bar le Duc. He was reloading a long Spanish−barrelled musket, as I doubted not, for my own private benefit; and not being particularly anxious that he should have another chance of trying his skill on me, or that my men should receive another point blank discharge of the field−guns, which were nearly reloaded, I gave the word for a simultaneous charge on their front and flank; myself executing a lateral movement, which enabled me to take them at a disadvantage. This was in our favour; and, more than this, that the enemy were already disheartened by the defeat of their comrades, and by the certainty that they should receive no further aid, while they could see a regiment of infantry already moving down to our support. We dashed upon them gallantly; and, before we were within ten paces of them, I could see they would not stand our charge: they wavered broke off and received the shock of our swords and chargers on their backs it was a massacre! Just as the pikemen turned, I caught sight of De Chateaufort; and though splendidly equipped in a frock of orange−tawny velvet, with brass inlaid armour and the blue scarf of the *Fronde* I knew him, at half a glance, for the THIRD BROTHER. He saw me, too; and, as if by common consent, we spurred our horses forward to end our controversy by the sole true arbiter the mortal sword. But, as I struck the spurs into his flank, my charger bounded nearly erect from the ground, plunged forward, and fell over and over in the death agony. Instinctively, I cleared my feet of the stirrups; but was still thrown so heavily upon my head, that for a second or two I was stunned. As I went down, however, I saw to whom I owed my fall. It was the self−same murderous slave who again drew the trigger; but again my good−luck baffled him. As I rose to my feet, sorely bruised and shaken, I saw old Lydford who had been at my elbow throughout the whole day deliberately levelling my petronel, which he had unslung, at the servant, whom he believed to be the slayer of his lord; and who, having joined De Chateaufort, was galloping off the ground with him, as hard as their steeds could carry them.

"Not him!" I shouted "not him, Martin. Down with the other!" But it was too late; the piece flashed; and, ere the sound of the report reached my ear, I saw the scoundrel reel in his stirrups, and, in a few more bounds of his horse, fall heavily to the earth! De Chateaufort himself, though hard chased by some of my troopers, reached the Seine, took water gallantly, and, swimming well across, gained the other side, and made good his escape.

Mounting a fresh horse, I rode about the field, collecting my men, and putting an end to the slaughter; the rout of the enemy being too complete to allow even a possibility of their rallying. I drew my rein over the body of the servant, who had twice so nearly cut short my career. Though desperately hurt, he was yet alive and sensible; but, having no time to devote even to that which was next my heart, I directed two or three of my troopers to carry him carefully to my quarters; and then led back my regiments, sorely diminished in numbers, but exulting in their victory, to the commander−in−chief.

Condé himself rode out to meet me. "'Fore God," he cried, "you have done masterly and well! Louis de Bourbon thanks you, sir! Ay and, by Heaven, the cardinal shall hear of this! The King of France shall thank you.

Charenton is ours; De Châtillon has won it bravely; and Chanleu as bravely lost it dying like a noble gentleman on the last barricade, which he held to the last, and refusing to survive his glory though, Heaven knows, that is deathless. Yes, sir," he continued, "Charenton is ours; for which before these gentlemen I say it for which I hold myself mainly indebted to your intelligence and valour. But for you, Chanleu must have been relieved; and had it been so, we could not have won an inch of Charenton; and now all Paris cannot rob us of it!"

CHAPTER XIII.

K. Hen. He dies, and makes no sign; O God, forgive him! *War*. So bad a death argues a monstrous life. *K. Hen.* Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all. Close up his eyes, and draw the curtains close; And let us all to meditation.

King Henry VI.

It was barely noon when the brief action of the day was concluded, and although no person in the royal army entertained the slightest fear that Charenton could be retaken by any force the Parisians could bring against it, now that it was once fairly occupied by our veterans, and strengthened by much of our own artillery in addition to all that of the *Frondeurs*, which, with their colours, ammunition, stores, and a considerable number of prisoners, had fallen into our hands, still it was not judged prudent to withdraw our reserve entirely from the heights of St. Mandé; as it was scarcely credible that the enemy would abandon a place of so much importance without a single struggle for its recovery. Indeed, we had further reasons for expecting the immediate advance of the parliamentarian generals than what arose from a mere calculation of the chances; for so nearly had they advanced towards our lines, that we could hear the hoarse rolling of their drums, and the rattling and groaning of their wagons and artillery, as they were dragged slowly over the roads, already broken up by the operations of the blockade; while ever and anon the heads of a column would appear above the summit of the opposite heights. These parties of observation, for it seems they were no more, did not, however, attempt to maintain themselves in the position, which we could not but suppose it was their desire to occupy; continually pressing forward with a considerable show of alacrity, till they had come within point−blank cannonrange, they as continually fell back with precipitation, and in some disorder, whenever the fire, with which our artillerists from time to time saluted them, became in the slightest degree galling. This trivial and unsatisfactory warfare was continued till it was nearly dusk; unsatisfactory, I call it, since, although it cost the enemy some lives, and us some ammunition, of which we were already apprehensive of falling short, it did not tend in the least to alter the relative position, strength, or ultimate superiority of either army. So aware was our noble commander of the useless waste and evil effects of this distant cannonade, that he had almost determined on seizing the opposite brow, with such a body of horse and foot as might be expected to deter the enemy from any further demonstrations in that quarter, unless, indeed, he were desirous of hazarding a general action, which, for more reasons than one, appeared improbable. I had already received orders to put myself at the head of St. Agrêve's regiment, which, not having been engaged in the affair of the morning, was fresh, and eager for service; to assume the command of a strong column of musketeers, which were already moving to the front; and to advance promptly, and secure at all hazards the contested summit. I had not, however, as yet completed my arrangements, when messengers arrived with the intelligence that the Parisians were in full retreat the generals having come to the deliberate conclusion, in a council of war assembled at Picpus during the continuance of the storm, that although it would be easy to relieve Charenton, and even to drive Condé from his position, such a proceeding must nevertheless cause the loss of many a bold citizen, and draw tears from many a fair widow! This notable decision, being quite in accordance with the feelings of the burgher guard, who constituted the *corps d'armee*, was received with acclamations so boisterous, that, reaching our ears, they were deemed to be the symptoms of an advance *en masse*. The preparations which we were making for their reception was, in consequence of this report, shortly changed into preparations for withdrawing our forces, all to a single regiment, which was encamped upon the ground, more for the purpose of guarding against any possibility of a surprise, than of being actually called upon to sustain an attack.

The wintry twilight was closing rapidly over the scene of our operations, as I rode homewards in the rear of my regiment, which was in itself the rear−guard of our little army. Ere long the moon rose broad and cloudless; and her soft light, contrasted with the red glare of the watch−fires which were burning on every side, was reflected in the pure waters of the wide river at our feet. It was a landscape of exceeding sweetness and repose. The troops, fatigued with their duty of the day, were little disposed for merriment or riot; and were, for the most part, outstretched beneath such temporary shelters as they had found or erected in the deep slumbers of forgetfulness. The only sounds that arose from the broad valley were the occasional challenge of a patrol, mingled with the murmurings of the river, the shrill neigh of a war−horse, and, at rare intervals, a shriek, or burst of laughter from the post of Charenton. The only living things engaged in active motion were our retiring squadrons; nor did many hours elapse before they too were safely housed for the night, in their old quarters around St. Germains, and all was still as death.

It must not be supposed that I was, during this time, forgetful of the wounded prisoner whom I had ordered to be carried from the field to my own lodging; and from whom I could not but hope to gain some tidings concerning Isabel. So burning, indeed, was my anxiety to question the man ere he should die, that the slow pace of the troops became wholly insupportable to me; and, when we had marched so far on our route as to render a surprise nearly impossible, I left St. Agrêve, with a brief injunction to be prudent, and with directions where he might find me, should needs be. I gave the spurs to the miserable jade I had backed after my own good steed had been killed under me, and galloped, at the best pace I could extract from him, to my own abode. I saw at once, by the horses standing about the doorway, and by the unusual concourse of attendants, that the object of my solicitude had been brought in, and had moreover excited some attention among the soldiery. Indeed, I afterward learned that the indignation of the troopers had been so great, on their discovering that he had brought private malice to aid his murderous intentions, that they would have shown him yet more decided marks of their disgust had they not been sternly checked by their officers than the groans and execrations with which they greeted his arrival.

As I was ascending the stairs I met De Charmi. He grasped my hand, and whispered to me hastily that the ruffian I had sent in was recognised instantly by Sergeant le Vasseur as the servant who had left the inn−yard near Villotte on the arrival of our troops; and was probably the same fellow who had murdered our vidette in the woods of Saudrupt.

"Ha!" I cried, as if unconscious of the fact "ha! it may well be so. That indeed would account for his kind intentions towards myself this very day. But does he live, sir, and is he sensible? I fain would question him."

"He is alive, although the leeches give no hopes of his recovery; and we believe him to be sensible, although he has not spoken since his removal. I doubt you will make nothing of him."

"We will try, sir−−we will try," I answered, and passed onward; but perceiving that he was accompanying me, and being somewhat anxious that our interview should be without witnesses, I gave him some trifling orders to execute relative to the disposition of the cavalry; and requesting that I might see him as early as possible on the morrow, wished him a good repose, and left him.

I was, however, doomed to yet another interruption ere I reached the chamber, as I met the surgeon−general with his staff; who, hearing that one of his subalterns had been called to my quarters, concluded that I was myself in want of advice, and had ridden up to tender me his own assistance.

"Good good!" he cried, when he saw it was me; "I heard of you to−day, and feared you had over−exerted yourself; but you are well, hey! well?" and before I could reply, he went off again in his rambling way "A pestilent rogue you have up there, Monsieur de Mornington; a pestilent rogue! I can't conceive, for my part, why you did not let the scoundrel bleed to death where he had fallen; unless, indeed, you want to keep him for the gallows, for which, I confess, he would make a pretty tassel. But it is too late, sir; he will never live for it; the more's the pity! My boys have stopped the hemorrhage; but all his viscera are cut to pieces, and his stomach

ruptured, by that bullet. It must be an uncommon piece that sent that bullet, by−the−way! They tell me it is yours. But you will hold me here all night, an I look not the sharper" Heaven is my witness, I had not spoken a syllable "and I have half a score of wounded to look after. Châtillon has got it sharply, but not desperately and De Meilleraye and Villeroy, I fear, past hope. Adieu! adieu!" and he left me for a moment; but had not gone down five steps, ere he called after me "That fellow cannot live five hours; and as you cannot hang him, *mon cher*, it would be as good just to let him die at once, for he is suffering the torments of the damned! Adieu! once more, adieu!"

When I got into my apartment, there were no persons in it but the wounded man who had been hastily laid on my own couch by the bearers and old Lydford; who, well aware that I was solicitous about the fellow although I conclude that, like the worthy surgeon, he was somewhat in the dark as to my motives was bathing his head from time to time, and moistening his parched lips. For these kind offices he was rewarded by a brief and bitter curse; which was, indeed, the only sign the scoundrel gave of life or consciousness.

His eyes were closed; his teeth firmly set; and the black dews of death were already clogging the pores of his swarthy brow. A fearful convulsion would ever and anon shake his whole frame, and his broad chest would rise and fall with a horrible spasmodic action, that was scarcely less terrible to look upon than it must have been agonizing to endure. He was, indeed, the same fellow who had dogged me from the very first, and was, I felt but little doubt, the same horseman who had attended the carriage of Isabel's tormentor, and who, on the attack of the second brother, had fled, only for the purpose of bringing up the other attendants, who had so nearly intercepted my escape. So fearful were his agonies, that I could hardly bring myself to torment the dying wretch with questions; but the stake for which I played was of a value paramount to every other consideration. I felt that this was perhaps the only opportunity I might ever have of learning the place of Isabel's concealment; and in that feeling I addressed him without compunction or delay.

"My friend," I said, in a low and placid voice "my friend, I grieve to say to you that your career on earth is wellnigh ended. We soldiers have but a brief space to make our settlement; yet have we all much cause to wish for time. Would you not see a priest?"

He had not perceived my entrance till I spoke; and, unclosing his eyes instantly, he gazed upon me with a mingled expression of disappointment, wonder, hatred, and, perhaps, a touch of fear, such as I never have seen before or since on any mortal features.

"Can the dead speak?" he gasped "Dead! fool, fool, that I am! I have again missed him. I shall go down to hell! to HELL! with all the sin of murder on my head, and none of its advantage! A priest?" said you "a priest? ha! ha! ha! a priest!" And he laughed in bitter and fierce derision, till the unnatural mirth was checked by a spasm that threatened to put an end to his existence.

"Think better of it," I replied calmly, and smothering my anxiety "think better of it; we have all much cause for prayer and for repentance; and you, I doubt not, have no less than others, the hatred the causeless and most unrelenting hatred you have displayed towards myself is somewhat "

"Causeless!" he almost screamed "causeless! You lie! Was it not cause enough that I should hate you, when you slew them both both the brave boys I nurtured from their childhood?"

"A rare nurture, truly," I replied, some of my accustomed irony breaking out "a rare nurture, truly and a fair tutor you would seem! Nevertheless, I slew them not by their own hands they fell."

He glared up into my face with a wild expression of mingled malice and contempt "And you, poor dupe! you carried off their Lindabrides, as though she was no *bona roba*, but a demoiselle of honour. Ha! ha! ha! and you wedded her they tell me wedded her! What fools are these same cavaliers ha! ha!"

"Peace, with thy vile and lying ribaldry!" I exclaimed in a deep stern tone "Peace! or, dying as thou art, will I cram the falsehood in thy teeth wretch sinner miscreant! Speak! tell me of Isabel de Coucy tell me of my bride; or, by the heaven, which thou shalt never see by the eternal hell, on whose dread verge thou art tottering even now I swear that we have means to wring the truth from thee, and we will use them!"

"Use them!" he replied, bitterly but resolutely, as though he were in the fullest possession of all his mental and corporal powers "Use them! and see if they can profit thee. Use them, I say, and free me from this agony so will I thank thee use them!"

"Nay," returned I; "hastily I spoke, and therefore wrongly. Not for the universe would I apply the question to my deadliest foe, were he in all his manhood and his health; how should I then to one like thee? But listen to yourself can I now offer nothing but have you none whom you yet love? whom I can aid, whom I can further, or enrich? Say but one word, one little word, and it shall be a source to them of measureless content!"

"Plague me not, sir fool plague me not! ten thousand curses on your head ten thousand curses on mine own! for had my hand been steady, as its wont, you should not have been here to add gall to torments heavy enough, the fiend knows, already!"

"Oh!" I cried, almost wildly, for anxiety was fast conquering my assumed calmness "oh, die not thus! I I whom you deem your foe, and justly I would not see you perish soul and body thus. Oh, I beseech you, if there be aught of man about you if you ever loved, or were beloved by woman by all your hopes of heaven, which even *you* may gain by prompt repentance by all your fears of an eternity of wo! tell me, I do beseech you! You are not cannot be all heartless all villain none are so! There must be in your heart some vein of human kindness. Oh! for the love of the Eternal, die not thus harming so long as breath and body hold together, one who has never wronged you do not so needless, so thankless, and so black a crime, as to sever those whom God has joined together."

"What!" he said, looking into my eyes with a malignant leer "what, the cold Englishman can feel! I shall not die then unavenged!"

He closed his eyes for a moment, his lips moved quickly, but sent forth no sound. When he again looked up, the bitter expression left his brow, his muscles were smoothed and tranquil; there was a languor visible in all his countenance, such as I have ever noticed on those who die of gun−shot wounds. He even smiled pleasantly as he met my eye.

"I am in the wrong," he said "I am in the wrong; but ere I die I I will yet be righted! You have wedded her, you say have wedded her, and love her?"

"More than my own soul!"

"Ay! it is ever thus. So loved I myself once in my boyish days before I was no matter! And you will pardon me, if I will tell you of your love will pardon and will thank me?"

"Will bless you despite all your wrongs will bless you!"

"Ay! it is good so to die better to go hence blessed than banned. Well! it shall be so; hark thee, now! closer yet hark, in thine ear!"

Totally unsuspicious, and deceived by the alteration of the fellow's manner, I leaned over the bed; and, in compliance with his request, bowed my ear down, almost to meet his lips. I felt his left hand pass around my neck, but in my eagerness to catch his words, for I believed his breath was failing, I did not regard it. In an instant

he had grasped my collar; and drawing from his bosom a short stiletto, he sprang like a hurt wild−cat at my throat. "She is in hell!" he screamed "in HELL where you and I will meet her!" and with all his might he struck. Well was it for me that I wore a coat of Milan plate; for the weapon, aimed surely at the collar−bone, and driven home with the force of vengeance and despair, alighted on the very rim of the breastplate; pierced it, stout as it was, like paper; rent the strong buff coat I wore beneath my cassock, and inflicted, even then, a trifling wound. Had I been less strongly fenced, that blow had been my death!

As it was, I staggered under its force−−he thought that I was sped. Once more the wild and sneering laugh burst from his lips, but it was soon fearfully drowned in the death−rattle−−one spasm, more violent than any that had preceded it one long shiver he stretched out his limbs he was dead! dead, with his glaring eyes fixed in disappointment on my face for he perceived that he had failed and with the sneering smile still curling his pale lip. He was dead; and as I then surmised, with dread almost akin to terror with him all chance had perished of learning the fate of Isabel de Coucy!

CHAPTER XIV.

You, Lord Archbishop, Whose see is by a civil peace maintained; Whose beard the silver hand of peace has touched; Whose learning and good letters peace hath tutored; Whose white investments figure innocence, The dove and very blessed spirit of peace; Wherefore do you so ill translate yourself, Out of the speech of peace, that bears such grace, Into the harsh and boisterous tongue of war? King Henry IV.

I was yet gazing, with a strange complication of feelings, upon the countenance of the dead man, when a summons to attend the Prince de Condé disturbed the tenor of my meditations. There is always something terribly fascinating in the features of the dead something which rivets, even while it disgusts, the eye. The utter absence of thought, of action, of animation! the void! the nothingness! the eternity! I never looked upon a corpse, even though it were the corpse of a stranger, without being sensible of intense interest what then must I have felt in contemplating all that remained of one who had left no means untried to work my evil! In truth, I know not how I felt. No man can be indifferent to the removal of a deadly foe and such assuredly had he been who lay outstretched before me, as pale and rigid as though his cheek had never flushed with the crimson hue of fury; for how brave soever one may be how careless soever, at least to all external show, of the enmities of men it is nevertheless no pleasant reflection to know that there exists anywhere, within the limits of the universal world, a being who, were his power equal to his malice, would hunt him to destruction. There was then a something of stern gratification in my heart, but there was mingled with it a strain of disappointment, almost of sorrow. I had, absurdly enough, calculated on gaining some information concerning Isabel from the lifeless clay at my feet; and now that he was gone for ever gone to his everlasting home a link was severed a thread that had, at least in the imagination, connected me to my lost love, was broken. I could have wellnigh wished that he might live, even though a renewal of his life would have been but a renewal of his machinations against my own happiness. I was fast falling into gloom and despondency when the messenger entered, and, by compelling me to act at once, dispelled the melancholy train of thought which had all but taken possession of my soul.

Casting a dark watch−cloak over my armour, and replacing my heavy morion by a cap of martin's fur, I walked forth quietly and unattended into the moonlit village. I reached the prince's quarters just as that indefatigable leader was dismounting from the third horse he had wearied out that day.

"Ha! Monsieur de Mornington," he exclaimed, on seeing me "on foot and unattended! How falls this so? methought you were too keen a horseman ever to walk three paces!"

"I am, so please your highness," I returned; "but in default of those four feet of the quadruped, I am compelled to bear myself less swiftly, but perhaps not less surely on mine own. Of my two horses, one the gift, too, of his majesty was shot beneath me in this morning's skirmish; while the other has been so shrewdly tried of late, that I

must needs be chary of his strength, or I may want him when to want were fatal!"

"What, was the white charger killed? he bore *you* nobly, and you backed *him* bravely! But this must not be, sir; we must not have an officer so useful to us as yourself deprived of wherewithal to serve. A poor prince's charger is but a profitless exchange for a great monarch's gift; but if you will receive him, as a slight tribute to your valour, black Rocroi shall be yours and Condé will feel honoured by your acceptance! He will befit you too, for he affects the front ranks in a charge! Lead Rocroi straightway to the quarters of monsieur," he continued, turning to the groom who held his stirrup "and you, fair sir, enter with me I would have some words with you!"

Expressing my gratitude in a few strong phrases, I followed him into the chamber in which we had been assembled on the preceding evening. "You have supped, Monsieur de Mornington?" he cried, as he threw himself into a huge oaken settle by the hearth "you have supped, or no? What, have you eaten nothing since the morning? *Tête Dieu!* but we will order this forthwith. I snatched a mouthful as I left the field and in truth but a mouthful for I was called away to attend a meeting of the council at St. Germains. So ho! there, gentlemen, without!−−Bring here some food and wine quick! quick! and lights why tarry you?"

In a few moments supper was served, and, in truth, we did ample justice to the huge joint which smoked before us in all the rude magnificence of camp cookery. During our hearty meal the prince conversed gayly and without reserve, but on topics of small import, arising for the most part out of the occurrences of the past day; but, when the servants had withdrawn, he filled a large goblet of wine, and, motioning me with his hand to follow his example, spoke with strong emphasis, though slowly, and without any manifestation of much feeling.

"It was not for such idle talk as this, Monsieur de Mornington," he said, "that I have requested your company. I wish to know, sir, if there be aught in which I can advantage you my influence is at this moment high, both with my royal cousin and the cardinal, and well I think that nothing I am like to ask will be denied me. To you I owe a most deep debt of gratitude nor is it my wont to let my gratitude grow mouldy by long keeping. Speak out, I pray you, sir, and fully. Is your rank equal to your wishes? or is there aught else in which a prince's word may serve you?"

My reply was of course a disclaimer of all merit which could entitle me to reward, or more than ordinary consideration; and, while expressing my satisfaction at having been so fortunate as to gain so valuable a reward as the approbation of De Condé, I positively refused to advance any request, or, indeed, to receive any remuneration for that which was but the execution of my duty.

"This shall not serve your turn," he exclaimed, fervently "'fore God, it shall not; nor do I hold it altogether generous in you, Monsieur de Mornington, to deny me that which would be doubtless far more gratifying to me than to yourself. If you will not that I hold you, for the hereafter, proud and thankless promise, sir, that whenever you stand in need of aught that Louis de Bourbon can procure or execute for you−−promise me that you will apply to me forthwith."

"Most gratefully do I undertake the obligation: and believe me, prince, if I be proud, it is that any deed of mine should be deemed worth the gain of "

"My friendship! Sir, you have it! Would you were not too cold to prove it on the instant!"

"To show your highness," I replied, "that I am neither cold, nor proud, nor thankless, I will tax your grace's friendship even now" and without further delay I plunged into the narrative of all that had befallen me all that had raised me for an instant to the summit of felicity, and plunged me thence to the abyss of misery. I did not conceal a thought, a word, an action my hopes, my fears, my doubts, my agonies, were all laid before him, "and now," I concluded "now that I have bared my very heart to your highness's inspection, may I hope for your advice for your assistance?"

He had listened with deep attention throughout, the varying expressions passing over his noble features like the shadows of autumnal clouds flitting across some sunny landscape: two or three times in the course of my narration he set his teeth, clutched the hilt of his sword, and muttered the word "*villains*" with fierce energy; but as I finished my tale of sorrow, he started to his feet, paced the floor rapidly, taking short turns, and stamping so heavily that the decaying timbers creaked beneath his stride.

"Wild work!" he said, at length "wild work! and most atrocious villany! Fear not, however, sir or rather doubt not for fear, if I mistake not, is no inmate of your bosom doubt not but I will see you righted. It is nevertheless a delicate, and perchance a dangerous experiment. Mazarin is ever, though he may employ them, jealous of foreigners, and thrifty of the states' possessions. This demoiselle, on her own showing, is a ward of government if free; and you have erred in wedding her erred in the strict eyes of the law, I mean−−not so in honour or humanity. One thing is clear nothing can be done till she be rescued from these dogs: that you must effect yourself, and in that will I aid you to the uttermost. It is well that this De Chateaufort is with the *Frondeurs*, for so will he gain naught but bitterness and wrath from Mazarin. Him you must not lose sight of De Meilleraye said something of a lady too! *Tête Dieu!* it well may be that she is even now in Paris! It is indeed a tangled knot this to unravel; but if we may not find the clew, we can at the worst but sever it with the sword! Hold! hold! I have it! A herald will be sent to−morrow with letters to the generals, to the Parliament, the provosts, and the echevins of Paris. You shall go with him I will see to it forthwith. You must learn where they have concealed her, for without that we can do nothing; that once discovered, trust me to bring about the rest. Be silent, only, and be prudent in counsel, as you are bold and ready in execution, and you must succeed! Good−night, sir−−speak not of this to any man, nor seem to know that you have aught of duty for to−morrow I will see to it, and you shall so receive your orders, that no man shall question their propriety."

With a spirit somewhat lightened, though by no means free from anxiety or care, I left the prince's quarters, and hurried, with quick steps and a throbbing heart, to my own apartments. It was evident that I might fully count upon his good offices, whenever they could be brought to bear; but it was no less evident that I must depend principally on my own sagacity and my own exertions. This was, however, all that I had ever looked for, and in gaining this I had gained every thing! I plainly fore−saw, that if I could by any means discover the place of Isabel's confinement, the prince would contrive some method for placing me in a situation that would enable me to effect her release; and further, that if I should recover her from her open enemies, he would make the remainder of our course easy and direct. A weight, which had hung like a millstone about my heartstrings, was lifted up, as it were, by this discovery. Used as I had been from my childhood upward to every species of stratagem ready and expert in ferreting out and profiting by every kind of information, I entertained little doubt of being able ere long to learn as much as would suffice for all my objects as would be a pretext for the use of open force in her rescue! If I should fail in all else, I was determined to obtain possession of the person of De Chateaufort, and either to tear the secret from his heart, or to keep him as a hostage, in close confinement, till the old duke, his father, should be willing to buy his release by the unconditional surrender of my bride!

Full of these wild fantasies, or such as these, I threw myself upon the couch; but, contrary to my wont, I lay for many hours disturbed and sleepless. It was to no purpose that I tried every change of posture, that I used every expedient I had ever known or heard of, to compose my mind and "steep my senses in forgetfulness." Hour after hour the chimes of a distant bell smote on my ear; hour after hour the challenges of the sentinels, and the heavy trampling of the patrols going their rounds, found me awake and listening to the varied cadences. The gray light of early morning was already stealing through my uncurtained lattice, when I sunk into a deep but perturbed slumber; from which, however, I was almost instantly, as it appeared to me, aroused by the voice of Lydford.

"Up! up, sir! up! it is high noon," he cried; "there waits a herald with his company beneath the windows, eager to set forth to Paris. A troop of your own regiment has been ordered out by the commander, and Bayard is even now saddling for your service."

It occupied but a brief space to array myself but this time in garb of peace. Without rapier and dagger no gentleman goes forth, nor were my holsters ungarnished by their accustomed pistols; but, excepting these, I descended the staircase as if preparing but for a morning's ride. Lydford, according to previous orders, did on his liveries of forest green; and, with the small round target on his shoulder, which affixed on English serving−men the term of swash−bucklers an appellation which has already shared the fate of all things sublunary, and been forgotten the national broadsword on his hip, a badge on his right arm, and a cap of black velvet upon his time−blanched locks, followed to guard his master, whether from secret assassination or from open violence. When I reached the door, I found the herald to escort whose person I had, ostensibly at least, been ordered out in his gay coat−of−arms and quartered tabard, awaiting, somewhat impatiently, my appearance. Behind him sat two pursuivants, in doublets of rich purple taffeta, thickly adorned with fleurs−de−lis of solid gold; each with a trumpet of the same precious metal in his hand, to which had been appended banners of spotless white, free from blazonry or fringe of any kind whatever; and at a little distance from these, a gallant troop of horse, fully equipped as if for action, were drawn up motionless as statues on their managed chargers; the cornet at their head bearing a plain white flag of truce, and their captain, like myself, unarmed.

Waving my hand to the king−at−arms, with a few brief words of apology, I vaulted into my saddle, and we rode at a brisk pace towards the metropolis. It is a lovely ride up the rich valley of the Seine from St. Germains through Ruel to Paris; and as we rode along, for the most part at a light hand−gallop, we were not long in getting over the twelve miles of distance which, strange as it may seem, were all that separated the head−quarters of the court from those of the parliament. We met with no interruption, although at one moment I almost anticipated that our sacred and heraldic character would scarcely prove efficient as a protection. For when we had arrived within two leagues perhaps of the barriers, a large detachment of cavalry came wheeling down the road; and it did not require a second glance to discover, in the partisan officer who led them, my mortal foe De Chateaufort. I fully expected, as our two parties met, to hear him give the word to charge; and even passed the word along my scanty lines that the men should look to their petronels, ere I rode forward to address the commander in my official quality; which I did with a degree of reluctance that must almost have been obvious to my old antagonist.

I spoke, however, shortly, and with an air of cool hauteur, which was intended and which, I doubt not, was so taken to express that my courtesies were directed, not to the man, but to the officer.

He smiled somewhat sneeringly as I spoke, but answered civilly enough, and furnished me with the necessary passwords; apologizing for his inability to attend me through the outposts in consequence of his duties elsewhere. His official reply concluded, he pointed with his left hand to the white ensign which was streaming above our heads, and, with a glare of hatred lighting up all his features, tapped the hilt of his sword. "The time will come!" he said; "fear nothing; but it will!"

"Would God it were arrived even now!" I answered. "But, as you say, the time *shall* come, and that right speedily, when *my* peculiar character shall be no protection to *your* villany!"

I doffed my plumed bonnet, and rode coolly forward the files of the enemy opening, as we advanced, to give us passage; and I could hear the muttered comments of the soldiers as they recognised us for the men who had cut them up so fatally on the preceding day.

Scarcely had they passed over the brow of the hill behind us, ere I called old Martin to my stirrup. "Ride back," I whispered, "to the coppice on the summit of yon eminence I marked it as we rode by it commands a wide prospect over the neighbouring country conceal your horse among the underwood, and watch the motions of yonder cavalry as you would watch a wild−cat on the spring. Tarry there till we return, and take good heed you be not taken."

The old man nodded assent, and galloped back on the instant; but hardly was he out of sight, before we came upon another party of horsemen! They were a dozen servants, in the blue and tawny liveries of my enemy,

well−armed, and leading with them several baggage−horses equipped as for a journey. It was not without some apprehension that I saw them following the route of the cavalry; for I could scarcely hope that Lydford would have gained the covert, before their arrival on the spot.

Nothing, however, could be done; the event was in the hands of Him to whom alone the past and the future are as one. We continued to ride sharply forward, and, in less than an hour, stood before the gates of Paris. Our trumpets flourished loud and shrill, but in the well−known cadences of a friendly summons: the sentinel on guard received our message, and proceeded to make his report to the officer of the watch; but the gates were not unbarred! We were detained thus at least three hours; during the whole of which we could hear the sounds of a loud and tumultuous concourse in the streets, thronging, as it would seem, towards the Hotel de Ville, wherein the leaders of the *Frondeurs* held their sittings. At the end of the time I have above mentioned, it was signified to us briefly that we could not be received "as heralds were but the means of communication between belligerents, and as our admission would be tantamount to a confession that the Parliament were at war with the king!"

"*Saint diable!*" muttered the cornet at my elbow "had yon grumbler been in the fire of the lines at Charenton, he would not deem such an acknowledgment a matter of much import!"

"You are right, sir," I replied; "but I can read his eminence the coadjutor's handiwork in that reply: believe me, somewhat more is meant than these same words betoken! But our duty is at an end, monseigneur, is it not?" I continued, turning to the herald; and receiving his assent, gave orders to my men to march being further informed by the guards upon the half−moon which had been recently erected in front of the gates, that if we should be found within the lines after another hour, we should be dealt upon as spies, according to the laws of war.

I feared that, as far as my own projects were concerned, my mission would this time result in nothing; but I clearly saw that the refusal to admit the herald was a mere manoeuvre of the wily De Retz, who, scandalously in defiance of his sacred character, was at this period the sole fomenter of a war with which all other parties had been long ago disgusted. Nothing, however, remained but to hurry homeward as fast as possible, leaving all future negotiations to the will of our superiors.

When we had ridden some three miles towards St. Germains, we again met the same regiment of cavalry; but, to my surprise, De Chateaufort and a single troop of regulars, besides the party of servants with baggage−horses, whom I had noticed in the rear, were absent. This time we passed each other in silence, and, as it seemed to me, with some of that good feeling which ever arises between enemies from the knowledge of each other's strength and valour.

As soon as we were clear of their rear I gave the word to increase the speed of our motion, and we advanced at the gallop till we had attained and risen over the brow of the hill which I had indicated to old Lydford. Barely had we shown ourselves above the ridge ere he crept out of the brushwood, leading his horse by the bridle−rein. I dropped into the rear, to converse with him freely, giving orders to my subaltern to advance steadily, with a promise that I would overtake him ere he should have gone a mile.

"Now, Lydford," I cried, "'twas he! Didst mark him? Didst hear aught of their words or mark which route they took?"

"I did, I did but hist! till yonder loiterers have passed! This have I learned from the whispers of those scoundrel servants in the rear, when they thoughtnone heard their villain conversation: The dwelling of De Chateaufort lies somewhere east of Bar le Duc, upon the river Blaise; they set forth thence some two weeks since, and brought a lady in their train."

"Ha! By St. George, but this is news well worth the gaining! Didst gather from their words if she be yet in Paris?"

"They brought her not to Paris," he replied; "they sent her, ere they reached the barriers, to some place in or nigh the Spanish Netherlands, I reckon, by their words but where I learned not, for they spoke low, and I am far from perfect, as you know, in their accursed gibberish!"

"Good! good!" I cried, clapping my hands in ecstasy; "you have preserved me once again, old man; you are my better angel! But whither," I continued "whither rode De Chateaufort? We met the soldiers, as it seemed, returning, and he is not among them!"

"They hold themselves, I doubt not, proper men, and marvellous crafty," was the old forester's reply; "but they must have more wiles than e'er a fox in the West Riding, an they can cheat old Martin! See you that tall ash−tree in the centre of the coppice? from its summit I saw their motions as clearly as I see the features of your face! The march of the cavalry was but a blind. I watched them as they filed along that sandy lane, by the white cottage yonder, and by the vineyards. All the rustics whom they met they carried forward with them, till they were all concealed in that dark mass of woodland. There I lost them; but ere an hour had flown, I saw a party with led horses cross an avenue or alley in the forest, riding in the direction of Epinay. Once having caught the clew, I kept casting my eye forward to whatever breaks I might discover in the woodlands, and I saw the same party cross four different *carrèfours*, and at last emerge into the open country there, far away to the north−west, they forded a large stream in a valley lying beyond that ridge of hillocks, still marching steadily in one direction. Scarcely had I lost sight of them, before I heard the sound of trumpets, and beheld the rest of the cavalry come out of their hiding−place; which they had kept, I doubt not, till such time as would give their comrades a fair start. You might have noticed, sir, that they rode in looser order, and by subdivisions of troops, the number of intervals in their line of march being the same as when we met them first past question, to conceal the alteration of their numbers; the officer, too, who led them, had exchanged casque and scarf with that De Chateaufort."

"By heavens, he had!" I shouted, as the recollection flashed like a ray of inspiration on my mind; "but we will mar their plottings! Hark! you know already how great is my stake in this matter! It is a mighty risk that I would ask of you; and certain death if you should be discovered! Nevertheless, your stratagems are such, your wiliness so great, I should not fear for you in even greater perils! Speak will you aid me in this matter?"

"Will I will I aid you? obey you should have said obey you to the very death!"

"Loosen your badge, then, from your arm, and throw the buckler far into that thick underwood. Here, take my pistols; they are better, far better than your own. Is that my petronel that hangs across your shoulders? Right, right! I am glad of it! And now change horses with me. This is the gift of Condé; but he will pardon me the use I make of it. You must be mounted well, or my scheme goes for naught! Take my purse, too: would it were better furnished. And now attend my words with all your senses! De Chateaufort hath set out, beyond all question, upon some secret mission secret and dangerous! Secret for it is evident that he hath wasted much time and pains in order to conceal its mere direction! Dangerous for we know the man! You must pursue him. Hang upon his traces as our own north country blood−hounds cling to the scent left by the wounded deer! You must discover the point for which he journeys; and, if it be possible, the very place wherein that lady of whom you heard them speak is now confined! My own conviction is, that he journeys on a mission to Turenne; and that my wife remember *that*, my wife, old man is captive in some fortress or some convent nigh to the frontiers of the Pays Bas! But tarry not for over−close information. The moment you have learned his destination, return to me, with all the diligence of man and horse, here to St. Germains; and, above all things, be secret, and be careful of your proper safety! Heaven knows, if thou wert sped I might long lack a friend like thee! Farewell! farewell!"

I turned hastily from him to conceal the emotion which I could not repress, on parting thus from one who had followed me with the fidelity of a dog, who had loved me with a love surpassing that of woman! Ere I had ridden ten paces he called after me. "Tarry a moment, Master Harry," he said; "over−haste at starting brings but a blown horse to the winning−post. He that would ride far and fast must ever ride warily! These fellows I must follow by the *slot*, I trow, as I was wont to hunt the Scottish thieves upon our northern borders in my boyhood; and I *must* be

certain of their track at starting!" I looked back, before I turned my horse's head, and observed the old forester poring intently over the hoof−marks left on the soft surface, wherever the frost had yielded to the mildness of the air. "Here are many tracks, easy enough to follow, and right good to know again, an I could but tell which were his! Here, now, is one it must have been made by the horse of an officer, for it is the print of a thoroughbred, and it is somewhat away from the line of march."

"Hath it a bar−shoe?" I cried, well remembering the Andalusian jennet which my foeman had invariably ridden, or employed in mounting others for desperate service; and which, though not perfectly certain of the fact, I fancied he had bestridden in the morning when we met "hath it a bar−shoe before?"

"On the near foot!" was the prompt reply. "'Tis a sweet track to follow: I would it might be his. I hunted out a duller mark than this, ere I was sixteen, from Hexham upon Tyne far into Eskdale and brought back the booty!"

"Be easy, then, old man! That is the track of Chateaufort himself! I have good cause to know it!"

"Then, before three days have passed, you shall know more of it!" he cried, cheerily, as he sprang upon the horse he had heretofore held by the rein "ere three days are past you shall know *all* of it; or call me no true man, but an old knave and braggart!"

He waved his hand, and, spurring his horse smartly, galloped forward on the route taken by the cavalry three hours before; and, before I had rejoined my company, was concealed from my observation by the dense woodlands.

On reaching head−quarters, I found that although my embassy had produced little advantage to myself, the court were not wholly dissatisfied with its result as concerned themselves. Their object was to bring on a negotiation; and this, they doubted not, would be accomplished: nor were they, indeed, far wrong; for on the ensuing morning an embassy arrived from the parliament, composed of the leading lawyers of the day men of learning, equalled only by their perfect integrity and fervent patriotism. Among these were the President de Mêsme, De Nesmond, and Coignieux, with the Advocate−general Talon than whom, I well believe, no truer men or better counsellors ever conducted the policy of a great nation.

These men had embarked, heart and soul, in the rebellion of the *Fronde*, with the sole view of curbing the inordinate power of the monarch, of repressing the insolence of a hated minister, and of establishing constitutional liberty on the most righteous and permanent foundation! They had learned, however, during the contest, that their partisans, their generals, and, above all, the principal mover of the whole sedition, the Archbishop coadjutor of Paris, cared not a *dénier* for the liberty of the people, for the common weal, or, in short, for any of the principles which they affected to avow; but that, having merely handled these as weapons to cut out their own paths of personal ambition, they were on the point of embroiling the country in a war with Spain, and of entailing on it the immediate horrors of a foreign conquest, and, perhaps, the lasting misery of a foreign sway, rather than submit to the destruction of their own schemes for individual advancement.

The negotiations which followed, and which lasted for several days in succession, were conducted solely by Condé and the Duke of Orleans, the deputies refusing to treat, personally, with Mazarin; against whom they, as leaders of the parliament, had not long before issued an *arrêt*. These princes, being well aware of the miserable state of the metropolis perceiving that the grand rebellion was already splitting itself into factions, and thence arguing that it was about to be dissolved at once, insisted upon hard conditions. Too hard, the deputies insisted, to be endured! They were one day dismissed; and were already mounting their horses to depart, when I heard Orléans whisper to the prince they had walked out together to do honour to the deputies,

"My good cousin, if these folks protract the business to the spring time, they will unite with the archduke; and then, believe me, it will be our turn to humble ourselves! Let not pass this present occasion, or, trust me, you will

rue it. Let us have peace at once. All good men, of *all* parties, must desire it!"

The deputies were recalled; articles prepared; and they at length set forth for Paris, confidently promising to return on the succeeding morning to sign them, and to conclude a permanent peace.

On that same evening, as I was returning to my quarters, somewhat downcast in spirit, and judging, by the length of time elapsed, that some evil had befallen Martin Lydford, I found the sentry, who had been just relieved, with a man who had ridden up to the lines inquiring for me; and whom, being ignorant of the pass−word, they had sent in with a guard.

It was not, indeed, easy to recognise the person of my old gray−headed vassal in the figure who stood before me; but it was, nevertheless, he! He had cut short his long gray locks, and tinged them, as well as his eyebrows and mustache, with some dark mixture which he had procured at the first town he had passed on his route. He had got rid of his trim livery of forest−green and his velvet bonnet, wearing a coarse leathern doublet and slouched Flemish hat; nay, he had contrived to disfigure the very horse he rode, by platting his long mane, tying up his tail into a short thick club, and actually colouring him with patches of some white trash or other, which, unless on an unusually close inspection, gave him the appearance of a piebald!

Procuring his release on the instant, I led him to my chamber; and found that, if not wholly successful, he had, nevertheless, performed his duty with his wonted activity and circumspection.

He had dogged De Chateaufort and his party for two days, at a prudent distance; and found, as I had anticipated, that they continued to journey in a north−easterly direction, and nearly in the direction of Turenne's head−quarters. Tired, however, of this slow progress, he had disguised himself and his horse, and had actually mingled with the inferiors of the party, as they sat at their evening potations around the fire of a village hostelry. Here he had learned that their destination was, indeed, the camp of Turenne; and that from thence they were to proceed to Valenciennes; but wherefore, he had not been able to ascertain. On the following morning, he had attempted to join their line of march; but, having by some means excited their suspicions, they had attempted to detain him, whereupon he had taken to the woods; and, in the running fight which followed, shot down three of his pursuers; and, finally, made good his escape! This was the amount of his intelligence; but this was something. Furthermore, he positively asserted, that, though they had become distrustful of him, it evidently was as of a spy to some of the freebooting bands which were ever on the rove about the frontiers, and not as of an emissary from the camp!

Immediately, on receiving this intelligence, I hurried to the presence of Condé, and informed him of all that had occurred; adding my own surmises, that Chateaufort had been sent with orders to persuade Turenne to march on Paris without delay; and that his intended progress to Valenciennes must, of necessity, relate to Isabel!

"Ha!" he cried, as I concluded my narration; "must I ever be in your debt, Monsieur de Mornington? but never heed it! the time will come when I may well repay them. I will not conceal it from you that these news are of vast import. We have to−night advices that the generals have withdrawn with some ten thousand men from Paris, and have taken a most strong position over against Charenton, on the point between the Seine and Marne a position from which, Heaven knows, we have not men enough to drive them with a declared intention of maintaining themselves there until the archduke and Turenne upon whose movements, though as yet unavowed, they seem to reckon shall join them with succour. Chateaufort has doubtless gone, as you conjecture, to hurry *him* even now; and if this junction be effected, not the royal cause only, but France herself is lost; and this, too, through the base ambition of a priest! a minister of peace! Out! out upon him! I must straight to Mazarin! To−morrow, sir, you shall hear more from me; and it shall go hard with Louis de Bourbon, if, out of this, he work not something that shall profit Henri de Mornington!"

CHAPTER XV.

K. John. Nay, but make haste; the better foot before. Oh, let me have no subject enemies, When adverse foreigners affright my towns, With dreadful pomp of stout invasion! *Bast*. The spirit of the times shall teach me speed.

King John.

On the succeeding morning while I was yet lingering over my solitary breakfast, and playing with old Hector, whom I had, in every interval of leisure, been training with the greatest assiduity to recognise and take note of the recovered glove of Isabel, in the hope that his sagacity might at some time aid me in the recovery of the precious owner the trampling of horses without called me to the window. Not a little to my surprise, it was caused by the party of the deputies, who had already returned from Paris. They must have set off before it was well daylight, for the sun was not yet two hours high, and they had accomplished the full distance of twenty miles at a pace unusually rapid for men of peace and civilians, as was apparent from their soiled habiliments, and from the foam and sweat with which their panting steeds were liberally besmeared.

If I was surprised at their arrival, much more was I astonished at receiving a message from one of the royal chamberlains, that my presence was required by his Eminence of Mazarin immediately after the conference with the deputies; and further, that I should do well to hold myself in instant readiness for a journey of distance and duration. Dressing myself at once, with as much attention to decoration as my war−worn and weather−beaten wardrobe would allow. I hurried to St. Germains; was immediately admitted by the Swiss guards on duty; and ushered through a succession of vast halls imperfectly furnished, and evidently taxed to the uttermost for the accommodation of the various personages of the court into the anteroom of the council−chamber; in which, as I could easily hear without indeed wishing to do so, an eager and excited debate was in progress on the question of peace. They at length as I conjectured by the rustling of their feet as they arose, and by the sound of their steps approaching the door concluded the business, when I caught the words of the President de Mêsme, pronounced clearly and as if in continuation of what he had before been saying. He must have been close to the folding−doors when speaking; for I, who was standing at the farther end of the antechamber in whispered conversation with an officer of the Swiss guards, heard every syllable, as accurately as though it had been addressed to myself.

"Since, then," he said, "such is the position of affairs, *we* must *personally* be sacrificed that the *state* may be preserved! *We must* sign to this peace! For, after the restrictions laid upon us by the Parliament last night, there is no other measure left us: perchance we shall ourselves be recalled to−morrow! We will therefore hazard all! If we are discovered, they will exclude us from the gates of Paris; or, admitting us, will question our powers will deal on *us* as traitors. It is for *you*, therefore, to give to us conditions which may justify our conduct! It is *your* interest to do so! If they be reasonable, we can sustain our policy against the base and factious! if they be not it is no matter! Be they what they may, I will sign all and any thing; and I will say to the first president, such is *my* opinion such the sole expedient for the safety of the realm! If he agree with us, we shall have *peace!* If not still we shall have weakened the faction; and the evil will be on ourselves, and on ourselves *alone!*"

These noble sentiments called forth a proper answer. The subdued hum of applause and approbation reached my ears, and then the clear, high voice of Condé

"We thank you, Mr. President we thank you for his majesty; and, which is of less importance, for ourselves also! You may add to your noble declaration to the first president thus much from Louis de Bourbon that the conditions *shall* be such as one good and brave man may proffer, and another may receive, in confidence and honour! Else will they *not* bear the seal and signature of Condé. Gentlemen, adieu we hope that to−morrow we shall see you here, or at Ruel, with full powers to conclude!"

The doors were immediately thrown open the guards stood to their arms, and saluted as the princes entered the deputies passed onward, Condé remaining on the threshold of the council−chamber, and bowing deeply, his right hand laid upon his heart, as the presidents made their salutations as if to the monarch in person. His quick eye glanced round the apartment, as if in search of some one, and caught mine he nodded familiarly.

"Ha! ever at your post, sir come with me. His eminence awaits you!" Then, in a lower voice, as I approached his elbow, he continued "Falter not in his presence he is well inclined towards you even now, though he may affect hauteur falter not, therefore; speak boldly and frankly as is your wont! Crafty himself, and subtle beyond even Italian wiliness, he yet can prize and honour frankness! But naught of yourself or of HER naught as you value both or either!"

He led me through the council−chamber to another anteroom, in which there were a couple of monks, occupied in writing at a central table covered with documents and books, and a delicate pale boy, with a timid look and bashful demeanour, widely different from the usual forwardness of court pages.

"Here I must leave you!" he said; "and you Remember!"

I gave my name to the page, and was introduced at the next moment to the presence of the fearful man who wielded by dark intrigues the destinies of kingdoms, and warped the will of princes at his pleasure.

It was a small but pleasant apartment the walls being hung with crimson velvet, and decorated with the finest pictures by the choicest masters my unpractised eye at once fell on a score of which even I could recognise the authors. The rich gorgeousness and flowing groups of Rubens the stately forms and rich tinting of Vandyck the heavenly female shapes, and most natural fleshhues of Titian the exquisite madonnas of Raphael and Carlo Dolci, were mingled with battle and hunting pieces, alive in all the truth and spirit of Wouvermans; with drinking−bouts and Flemish boors by Teniers and Ostadt; and last, not least, with the black shadows and the brilliant lights of Rembrandt. These pictures dearer to the cardinal than his life, or even his power in the hurry of the court's departure from Paris, he had caused to be removed with the nicest care; and his first task, on reaching St. Germains, was to see them tastefully disposed upon the walls of this his new apartment.

My attention was not directed to these for a second's space, nor even to the monkeys another of the minister's strange, yet ruling fancies of which at least a dozen, from the huge baboon of Pondicherry to the smallest and most delicate species from Brazil, or the southern provinces, were gibbering and quarrelling, or playing with each other about the floor and tables, clambering over the backs of the chairs, soiling the rich furniture, and offering hideous foils to the noble works of statuary and painting with which every nook and angle of the chamber was filled.

The cardinal himself, a fair slight man, of courteous address, and almost hypocritic affability, with a set of smiling and inexpressive though chiselled lineaments, of which a bright eye was the sole redeeming feature, sat in a chair of crimson damask, contemplating, with an air of satisfaction, his darling pictures, and sipping at times some of the fragrant chocolate at that period a newly discovered luxury which stood at his side, in a beautiful equipage of antique silver; or at times caressing with his hand, and pampering with dainties from the salver, a tiny ring−tailed lemur, of the rarest kind, which was perched on the elbow of his chair, and which, if too long neglected, would slap his arm with its diminutive hand, and look up into his face with a strange mixture of malice and affection. Monsieur le Tellier, the friend and trusted confidant of the minister, was writing at a cabinet of tortoise−shell, rich with buhl and marquetry, his back towards me as I entered, nor did he move his head or alter his position in the least degree while I remained there.

"Monsieur de Mornington, I believe?" asked the minister, with his simpering smile of condescension.

"At the service of your Eminence!" I replied, with a profound obeisance.

"So we are told, sir so we are told! ever at our service! His highness of Condé gave us last night some information of your obtaining, which would have been most valuable mark me, sir *would have been* had *we* not been quite aware of the destination of this emissary two days before." This, by way of parenthesis, I knew to be utterly false, no idea having been entertained of the matter till I had spoken of it to the prince; but I was careful not to shock the minister's vanity, and answered only by an assenting bow. "This, however," he continued, "is no detraction from your merit, as you, of course, were ignorant of our information; moreover, your tidings were confirmatory of what we before knew, as they have been since confirmed by the presidents of the Parliament! Also, we are informed that you distinguished yourself at Charenton; and we are, of our own knowledge, aware of your good conduct in the secret expedition to which you were in the first place appointed! Answer me not," he continued, seeing me about to speak "I know well what you would say these things are but of little moment; and so indeed they are, considered of themselves but we are rather fain to hold them earnests of what you *shall* do hereafter! Now, Monsieur Mornington that is, I fancy, your title we are disposed to further you in your profession! You will doubtless marvel at our favours, but you will remember, that though lavished, perhaps too freely, upon one whom men might call *roturier* and adventurer "

"'Fore God! your Eminence," I broke in, with show of real indignation, "'fore God, *you* may call me aught it lists you, but did a man with a beard, and without the tonsure, so presume to style me, I would thrust my rapier through his body, were he my own father's son!"

I was, perhaps, imprudent in not restraining this outbreak of my naturally reckless temper, but this time it served my turn; showing me at how large a value the cardinal must hold my services, that he should brook so sharp a retort from one so far beneath him. His brow contracted, and his pale cheek was flushed for a moment, but a smile chased away both flush and frown, as he replied, not unkindly

"You are warm, young sir warm and hasty! but we like you not altogether the worse for that. We will resume our subject. Monsieur Turenne has, you perceive, consented to march and join the *Frondeurs;* and the archduke has already, as we are strenuously advised, advanced wellnigh to Rheims. This may be troublesome! Now, sir you can be silent, and are not over−scrupulous?"

"Silent as the grave in your Eminence's service; and how should a poor soldier, like myself, be scrupulous of executing aught, which a learned and holy churchman may deem it right to order."

"Well, sir," he continued, "we will be brief. This Turenne is one of those wrong−headed idiots who stickle for conscience as though soldiers had aught to do with conscience! Were he a man of sense, himself would I convince; and that, too, with most cogent reasons. But he is of invincible obstinacy which he deems, perhaps, invincible integrity and which all *wise* men must hold egregious folly!"

Seeing that he paused as if for a reply, I answered, fully perceiving his drift

"And in that case if I be not overbold, to thrust my poor opinions on your Eminence it were perhaps well to convince his soldiery."

"Right!" he exclaimed, with another smile of approbation "right! to convince his soldiery! That is the very matter about which I would employ you. Clearly you are a youth of some discretion. To convince the soldiery! Well, sir; once more: his highness of Condé has recommended you most strongly to our notice for this very duty. It is somewhat perilous; and might, to men of squeamishness but, *bah!* you are not one of these! In short, it is our will that you should go at once to the maréchal with a flag, the bearer of certain proposals from the court to the general he has not as yet declared himself, you know certain proposals, which we well know will effect nothing; the bearer, also, of certain letters to D'Erlach, chief of the Swiss troops, and to the Comte D'Harcourt, which *may* avail much; also of certain arguments to the soldiery which, we are confident, *will* succeed! This done, and the troops gained over, you will send us advices, remaining yourself as second in command under the Comte

D'Harcourt, who may be induced, we imagine you comprehend us! may be induced to assume the office of general−in−chief of Turenne's army, and, as such, to act against the archduke and him of Lorraine, on the frontiers of the Pays Bas."

With another profound inclination, I expressed my sense of the *honour* to which I was destined, my willingness to accept it, and my determination to effect it if mortal skill could do so.

"Not so quick, monsieur!" he cried; "not so quick! You will understand, that though there be honour, and profit, and so forth in the duty, there is also not a little of peril! You will go under a false name for I shall give it out that *you* are despatched elsewhere! you will also be a spy, and, as such, answerable to the laws of war. *Ma foi!* Turenne would scruple little about sending a hundred such as you to the gallows on a mere suspicion! Furthermore, touching Turenne himself" and he hesitated a little, as if willing that I should again help him out; but, not much relishing the course which the matter seemed to be taking, I remained silent; and he was obliged, however reluctantly, to speak out "touching Turenne himself he must be secured! secured, and, if possible, sent in to us, at St. Germains or at Paris, where we hope to be ere then."

"Not by me!" I replied, resolutely, but at the same time deferentially "not by me, your Eminence, though you would make me king of France for the same deed! So far as regaining the affections of the soldiery to his most sacred majesty, that shall I do right willingly; for it seems to me that Turenne hath somewhat swerved from the nice path of honour in turning them aside. In that, therefore, shall I serve your Eminence, by *all* means and at *every* hazard! But as to debasing myself so far as to bribe the soldiery, in order to consign their leader to bonds, perchance to death that, please the Almighty, I shall never do! I am, your Eminence, neither a minister of police nor a hireling spy, but a major−general in the service of the most Christian king, and a very proud, although a very poor, gentleman of England. With deep and fervent thanks must I decline your Eminence's offers; but otherwise than in the open field and with the sword of honest warfare never will I act against the person of Turenne!"

"You say well well and nobly!" replied a sweet calm female voice from behind me, ere the cardinal could express the anger which I shrewdly suspect he felt. I started, and to my astonishment beheld the commanding form and beautiful pale features of Anne of Austria, the regent of the realm during the minority of Louis, thereafter styled Le Grand.

"You say right well, sir," she continued, as I sunk upon my knee before her, "and we doubt his Eminence thinks with us, howsoever he may have tried your honour and your principles, before intrusting you with an arduous and a delicate duty. We had learned from the Prince de Condé," she said, turning to the cardinal, "that you, sir, were in conference with Monsieur Mornington; and we were on our way hither to express our satisfaction, that you should employ him on this duty; and, further, to give him our thanks, and those of our royal son, for his distinguished conduct heretofore. We were unwilling, however, to interrupt your converse; and, pausing in the corridor, heard through the tapestry your latter words. Well knowing that your Eminence would be no less loath than ourselves to harm a man so noble, and to whom France owes so much, as Mar échal Turenne although he now unhappily have turned against us we doubt not but you spoke darkly to prove the integrity of this true gentleman! This *we* should have ourselves considered needless; but we rejoice that *you* thought otherwise, since it has procured for us the pleasure of knowing that the sentiments of our officer are no less pure and noble than he has proved his hand to be strong and his heart fearless! Go on," she continued, again turning to me "go on, sir, as you have begun. Hold honour in your eye, and interest beneath your feet. Hedge not aside from the straight narrow path, though it be for never so little. Do this; and Anne of Austria tells you that fame, and wealth, and honour *will* follow, though you seek them not! That you will be one, whom men will delight to honour women to love and monarchs to retain as the brightest ornament they hold about their thrones!"

A majestic smile played upon her bright intellectual features, and, though long past the flower and flush of womanhood, I thought, at the moment, that I had witnessed nothing more femininely I had wellnigh said

divinely noble! Reverentially I bowed my lips to the hand she extended to me, and whispered as I touched it

"Such were the lessons my mother taught me in my boyhood."

"Forget them not, young sir; oh! forget them not," she said, in a voice of considerable emotion; "and ever bless the mother who lessoned your tender years so truly and so well."

"Her grace," said the cardinal adapting himself, I fancy, rather to the tone of the queen's sentiments, than obeying any generous impulses of his own "her grace has but forestalled me; nevertheless, what she has said so well, it needs not that I should mar by repetition. My language shall be deeds! Monsieur de Tellier will send the letters, of which I spoke, this evening to your quarters, with such credentials as may be needful, and with full instructions. You will start at midnight! The other necessaries have been already provided, closely stowed in the demi−piques of your escort, who will be themselves unconscious of what they carry. We doubt not but you will be successful in your present mission; and we trust that, in the further duties which present success will lay upon you, you may so comport yourself as to confirm our auspices, and to merit future recompense, and the proud gratitude of kings!"

I understood myself at once to be dismissed; and, with a fresh expression of gratitude, retreating from the chamber, I hurried homeward with a lighter heart, and a fuller confidence that I should ere long clasp my lovely one to my heart, than I had felt in many a day. I could perceive the handiwork of the prince in the whole business; and, in a brief interview which I sought with him ere my departure, I hinted as much with thanks.

"None of that, sir!" he said "none of that! We had need of a good officer to perform an arduous duty, and I honestly recommended you. I know you are not a man to suffer private affections to interfere with public duty. Nevertheless, I think you are not likely to forget that it is a part of the latter to secure this De Chateaufort, if possible. He is, it seems, traitor as well as villain, having accepted a commission under my cousin of Orl éans. If you succeed in gaining over the troops, send back your old esquire with the tidings. Check the archduke, if possible, and be sure you crush Lorraine. You will want cavalry; and the moment I can learn that you have thriven in your first object, I will detach two regiments at least to join you. We shall have no more fighting here this season, if you can overreach Turenne turning his troops to account against the Spaniard; and though you be too few to cope with the archduke, he scarcely will dare march into the country with so powerful an army in his rear. D'Harcourt is, in good sooth, long since gained over. D'Erlach is likewise true not to Turenne, but to the court. So much for promises! Money will do the rest, and money you will take with you. D'Harcourt will be the nominal commander; but, I will so order it you shall be nearly independent. These letters from me will gain you his good−will and good opinion. Adieu, sir; be fortunate, and I need not say it brave!"

CHAPTER XVI.

"We do believe thee and beshrew my soul, But I do love the favour and the form Of this most fair occasion, by the which We will untread the steps of damned flight; And, like a bated and retired flood, Leaving our rankness and irregular course, Stoop low within those bounds we had o'erlooked, And calmly run on in obedience, Even to our ocean, to our great King John." King John.

The moon was shining coldly, and the stars twinkling in the firmament, when we got to horse. In profound silence and in secrecy we mounted; no trumpet was blown, no leave taken. The troop of picked men, which had been detailed as my escort, had marched some hours before; men and officers ignorant alike of the real purpose for which they were employed, and of their ultimate destination. Nothing remained but that I should join them at St. Denis with my own personal attendants, and press forward as fast as possible towards Landrecy; near which place, according to our last advices, Turenne was encamped with the army, which it was my object to seduce from its allegiance. At one hour after midnight I therefore sallied forth, mounted my brave Bayard, and, accompanied by my constant friend rather than follower, bearing a white flag, furled for the present closely to its staff, and

leading my second charger, laden with such baggage as was indispensable to an officer of standing, rode slowly through the lines, avoiding, as much as possible, both patrol and sentry, and travelling by the roughest and most secret roads. Gradually, as we advanced beyond the farthest outposts, we quickened our pace, and, reaching the Seine at about a mile's distance above the bridge of Besons, were ferried across it by a trusty servitor of the prince, who had been stationed there to wait our arrival. The horses were too well trained to give us any annoyance, swimming peaceably across the wide river by the side of the skiff which bore their masters; but, to my utter astonishment, when we had performed about two−thirds of the distance from bank to bank, I discovered a large dark object following in the wake of the boat. For a moment I mistook it for a human being; and was on the point of whispering to Lydford that we were dogged already, when the moon, shining brightly out from a passing cloud, which had, a moment before, veiled her glories, revealed to me the real nature of the intrusion. It was old Hector; who, discovering, by that strange instinct which in some points would seem to be even superior to reason, that he was forsaken by his master, had crawled along behind our horses prudently keeping out of sight, however till such time as we had proceeded too far on our journey to permit of our returning, even had the matter been of greater import than the presence or absence of the best hound that ever opened on a scent.

I cannot say that his pertinacity did not give me some anxiety; as the expedition on which I was employed was not likely to be much advanced by my fourfooted companion. I could not, however, find it in my heart to speak harshly to the faithful brute, as he crawled to my feet on landing, and looked up into my face as though perfectly conscious that he had transgressed, and deprecating the punishment which he probably considered due. A single cheery word, and he leaped almost to my face with a sharp shrill bark, widely different from the deep musical baying which was his wonted tone. After a few minutes' consideration as I rode along, I did not so much regret that he had followed me; for as whatever might be the ostensible and incidental motives of the expedition my real object was the discovery and rescue of Isabel, I could not but feel that the old hound's sagacity might, not improbably, be turned materially to profit.

At a mile's distance from Genevilliers the highway passes through a little wood, in the thickest part of which there is a meeting of four roads, diverging, as nearly as possible, towards the cardinal points of the compass. Here it was that my escort had been desired to meet me, as at a point from whence we could proceed in almost any given direction, and the adoption of which could furnish no clew to the discovery of our subsequent movements; and here I found them, the horses picketed to the trees, the petronels neatly stacked, the men wrapped in their heavy watch−cloaks, sitting or lying around a small watchfire which they had kindled in a grassy nook by the wayside, and a sentinel walking to and fro with his arquebus shouldered and the match ready lighted. I was greatly rejoiced to see by these dispositions that I had steady and intelligent men to deal with; for, having purposely omitted to bring with me any officers of higher rank than corporals and lance−speisades, or sergeants, as it is now the mode to call them, lest I should have been compelled to be more confidential than I deemed expedient, I scarcely looked for any thing beyond courage and obedience in my escort.

The sentry challenged as I approached, and alert was the word; for ere I had time to answer him a dozen men were on foot, and as many pieces were thrown forward, with an air of activity that promised well in case of future need. I was not, however, by any means anxious to put their skill as marksmen to the test; but, giving them the countersign, and commending their celerity, ordered them to get under arms and to mount as speedily as possible. The men had not, it seemed, expected that I should assume the command in person, and although they were evidently a little puzzled, they were no less evidently pleased; for I had, by some means or other, I know not how, become exceedingly popular with the soldiery; and the consequence of the surprise was an unusual degree of alacrity, not only at the first, but during the whole of our march, which was not only well conducted, but extraordinarily rapid and successful. The horses had all been carefully draughted for the purpose, and were in admirable wind and condition. I doubt, indeed, whether, for their limited number, a more perfectly well−appointed troop could have been brought into action at that day in any part of Europe. The men carried nothing but their arms and the gold, of which they were entirely unconscious, secured in the hollow pommels of their demi−piques half a dozen baggage−horses being loaded somewhat ostentatiously, in order to divert suspicion from other quarters, with a few spare stand of arms, a small quantity of ammunition, and an abundant

supply of clothing and provisions.

During the three succeeding days we travelled onward at a uniform and easy pace, avoiding the larger towns as the districts through which we passed, though not occupied by large forces of regulars, were known to be disinclined to the royal cause and, for the most part, halting for refreshment, and even bivouacking for the night, in unfrequented places forest glades, or solitary commons, far from any human habitation.

On the fourth morning, when in the neighbourhood of St. Quentin, we found frequent evidences of the recent passage of an army, in deserted hamlets, cottages, and, in one or two instances, even defensible chateaux reduced to ashes, cattle and horses lying dead by the wayside, and, more than all, by the state of the roads themselves, rutted and rendered almost impassable by the motion, as I instantly perceived, of heavy ordnance. From a peasant, whom I contrived to capture notwithstanding his violent exertions to effect an escape, I learned that the archduke had crossed the country on the preceding week in the direction of Rheims; near which place the man conjectured he must at this time be posted, unless he had already advanced upon the capital. The Spanish soldiery, he said, had committed the most out−rageous cruelties on the unoffending peasantry wherever they passed; and I judged, from his manner, that the effect of this had been to bring the party of the *Fronde* into some disrepute in these districts. I learned, moreover, that a party, about equal to my own in numbers, though far superior in bravery and show which I concluded to be that of De Chateaufort had passed by the same route two days before. Finding that I could gain no further information from the man, who was both terrified and stupid, I dismissed him with a small present, and an assurance that the object of my mission was to take instant order with the Spaniards, and to protect the country effectually from foreign invaders and from domestic enemies. The same evening we fell in with the outposts of Turenne's army, which had marched nearly twenty miles from Landrecy in the direction of the capital, and was now encamped for the night near the little village of Landernat. As my good fortune would have it, the picket to which I sent my trumpet consisted of a party of Switzers attached to the division of D'Erlach, who was captain of the watch for the night, and to whom I was accordingly passed in with my men, after a short examination by the subaltern in command. This gave me an opportunity of delivering a secret despatch to him, even before my introduction to the marechal; and, although he hastily thrust it unread into the bosom of his doublet, I saw plainly that he understood and was prepared to act upon its contents. No words, however, passed between us, nor indeed was there at that moment any opportunity; for my men being placed under strict surveillance, and the baggage−horses having been rigorously examined, I was at once conducted to the pavilion of Turenne. It was already dark when I reached his quarters, but the encampment was brilliantly illuminated, and the men seemed to be in a restless and uneasy mood. There was no gaming, no carousing, and though a forced march had been made that day no sleeping. The Switzers, I observed especially, were conversing together earnestly in small knots of ten or twelve, with knit brows and stern murmuring voices; while the yet more numerous troops of Weimar seemed to be brooding sulkily over some real or imaginary wrong. I had not much time wherein to observe all this; for D'Erlach, clearly to save appearances, hurried me swiftly and almost rudely forward; openly avowing his opinion, that I was no flag, but an accursed spy!

A council of war was in session when we reached the general's tent, as I could easily hear through the canvass−walls; for D'Erlach, though he cautioned the two sentinels who accompanied me to look well to the prisoner, placed me as if inadvertently within earshot, while he entered to announce my arrival.

"March march!" The words were uttered in an impatient tone, which I at once conceived to be that of Turenne. "It is easy enough, methinks, to urge me thus; but why, in the name of God, why do they withhold the means? Bouillon knows well enough my situation; knows that I have not wherewithal to pay these fellows at the rate of two *sous Parisis:* and he continues urging me as though naught but the will were wanting! I tell you, sir, that I have neither money, food, nor clothing for my men; and the knaves crying `*Gelt! gelt!*' in their high Dutch, whenever I go the rounds, or show my face to my own regiments! You must back, sir, at once, and tell them so."

"Under your favour, no," was the reply; and the voice was that of Chateaufort. "My orders are most special on that head from Monsieur D'Elboeuf and the Prince de Conti. I must to Valenciennes to the Duke of Lorraine. I am the

bearer to *him*, likewise, of a most pressing requisition "

"To march, doubtless!" Turenne interrupted him shortly.

"Also, I have some private matters of my own which call me thither," continued the other, as if unconscious of the maréchal's *brusquerie!*

"To the foul fiend with your own matters!" cried Turenne again, almost fiercely; "what reck I of them! Ha! D'Erlach what, is it *you*, man? speak! Aught from thy Switzers? How act the men of Weimar?"

I did not catch the words of D'Erlach, for he spoke low; but I easily conjectured their import from the answer.

"A messenger from Mazarin! A spy! ha! like enough like enough admit him notwithstanding. And you, Monsieur de Chateaufort, you may withdraw; best that this spy, if so he be, of Mazarin, know not of your arrival!"

I was immediately ushered into the tent, wherein were assembled nearly a dozen officers of rank; among whom I instantly recognised the Comte D'Harcourt, by the quick glances interchanged between him and my conductor. Turenne was the plainest, but at the same time the noblest, looking man of the group; for though by no means handsome, he was admirably well−proportioned; and there was an air of native worth and inflexible integrity in his features, that to my eye was a thousand times more attractive than lineaments, which might have afforded a model to the chisel of Praxiteles.

He was evidently suspicious of my object; but he nevertheless treated me with all due courtesy. He read the letters of Mazarin and Condé with a supercilious smile; and handing them to the other members of the council, observed, quietly, that they were too direct to merit credence from such a minister. "Nor," he continued, "do they in truth require an answer; though I shall furnish you with such at daybreak, when you will quit our camp at once. It may be, sir, that you have no such motives as we must impute to *all* the agents of the cardinal; if so, you will pardon us, or rather you will know how to impute our conduct to the rules of war! You must consider yourself, sir, as under arrest. My friend D'Erlach will accommodate you in his quarters; and will save me the regret, and you the inconvenience, we should feel, were I compelled to place you under ward! You will be ready to depart at daybreak!"

"You are correct in all things, maréchal," I answered; "nor am I so young a soldier as to question your prerogative to act as you propose; though with regard to his eminence the cardinal "

"He, sir, is *your* employer, and we are *his* opponents; and therefore further words I pray you pardon my abruptness further words can answer no good end. I wish you pleasant dreams!"

He bowed haughtily as he spoke; and though I could have wished for a longer space, seeing that it was hopeless, I obeyed his signal and withdrew!

D'Erlach took me by the arm, as we left the pavilion, and conducted me in perfect silence to his quarters! "Send Winkelbach to me forthwith," he said to the sentinel on guard, as we entered the rude tent which formed his temporary residence; "we will speak more anon," he continued, looking intelligently towards me. Then, as his stout Swiss lieutenant entered, clad in half−armour, with a spontoon in his hand, as an officer on duty "Winkelbach," he said, "we would be private: set me two trusty men just out of ear−shot on the watch, and let them challenge *loudly* whosoever may approach *loudly!* You comprehend me? And whisper to the Comte D'Harcourt, as he retires for the night, that I would speak with him. And till he come, sir, *we* can confer together. I have found time to look through that epistle, and have found in it good store of promises promises *only*. Now, I will not deny that our men mislike this service; that they might be wrought to action, I well believe; but of this be certain, without the gold they will not stir a foot's length in the matter. Now, sir, we must come to the point sooner

or later; if you have brought the gold, we can and will effect this thing, short as is now the time; if not, your plans are naught!"

"Colonel D'Erlach," was my reply "such is, I believe, your rank I *have* the means. Let me but have your written pledge to action, and I will discover them. I bear also with the power to produce and use them, if the army can be won a promise of a maréchal's bâton for the Comte D'Harcourt, and a major−general's commission for Colonel D'Erlach!"

"You are too prudent, sir too prudent altogether; but here comes D'Harcourt."

The conversation was retailed to the new comer; and, after a brief consultation, each gave me his signature to papers committing them completely with Turenne, if they should strive to play me false, and I delivered the commissions, duly signed by the hand of Louis himself, which had been concealed in the barrels of my pistols. D'Harcourt was apprized of the situation of the gold, and went out himself to superintend its present distribution. In about an hour's space he returned.

"All works," he cried, with a smile of exultation, "as we would wish it! The officers have, to a man, come in to the conspiracy; the privates are half−gained already. I have promised to them present payment of all claims due to them by Turenne, and a future bounty of one *livre Parisis* per man, if they shall assume the royal colours at the dawn. A present largesse I have distributed throughout the ranks in wine and *eau de vie;* and that, an I am not deceived, will close the matter. For you go forth at daybreak as though to quit the lines. 'Tis like, when they shall see the royal standard hoisted, you will be straight arrested; resist the officers who shall attempt to seize you, and we will be near you!"

"Hold!" I interrupted him "hold, sir. I fear you have done rashly in giving the men liquor. St. George! I fear it shrewdly. We shall have wild doings, an we look not the sharper. Having gone thus far, it will not do to sleep on it; trust me, a counsel, once known to so many, can by no means continue unsuspected; the news must reach Turenne, and we shall be seized privately and in detail. Hark to that distant tumult: 'fore God! they are at it even now!"

As I spoke I seized my weapons, grasped the pistols, which I had re−loaded after delivering the papers they had contained, and brought the hilt of my rapier forward, to be ready to my hand in time of need.

"Hark ye!" I cried, "messires; there may be treachery in this! Now, mark me *alive* will I not be taken, to die the death of a dog upon the gibbet; and, further, I never miss my aim! Now should I see the slightest sign I say not of treason, but of doubt or wavering I will not threaten; *but* you see that I have arms! Nay, gentlemen, reply not. In times of strict emergency men may not dally to cull forth holyday−phrases. Take up your weapons; go with me to the men; at once I will address them and leave the rest to fortune!"

"Not so quick, gentlemen not so quick," a stern voice broke in upon us from the entry of the tent, and De Chateaufort strode in with his sword drawn in his hand, and followed by six or seven gentlemen, whom I knew for personal friends of the maréchal. To these, in lack of other trusty agents, he had assigned the duty of arresting us. "Monsieur de Mornington," he continued, with an exulting sneer, "you are a spy *a villain!* flags protect not such! Gentlemen, close up! D'Erlach and D'Harcourt your swords! Resistance is in vain! The charge is treason!"

"Villain in your teeth!" I shouted. "Liar and slave! thrice have you 'scaped me but, by God and by St. George, you cross me not again!"

And I lunged with my drawn rapier full at his breast. It was well for him that he wore beneath his doublet a *segrette* of twisted mail; for, despite a weak and ill−directed parry, my thrust took full effect; and so great was its violence, that, although unwounded, he fell headlong to the earth, as one thunder−stricken I thought him slain.

Three or four blows were made at me by his comrades, but I eluded them by a swift spring to the side; and, striking the canvass wall of the tent with the point of my sword, I split it from the ceiling to the earth, rushed through the opening, and shouted at top of my powerful voice "France! France for the king and Mazarin!"

In a moment I heard the cry repeated by the lips of Lydford; and then from the whole of my little troop cheerily it rang and high "France! France for Mazarin!"

While the echoes were yet lingering in the air, D'Erlach stood beside me; and D'Harcourt, following slowly, held in check the pursuers with his single blade! They were both true! The former raised his bugle to his mouth, and wound a long, sharp blast.

"Unterwald!" he shouted, "Unterwald and Uri for the king and Mazarin!"

The effect was like the application of a linstock to the ordnance, that was before but a dark and silent tube, useless, and void of terror! With a wild yell, the Switzers rushed to their arms torches were waved aloft the brandished partisans flashed in the ruddy glare the discordant horns of the wild mountaineers blended their notes with the tumult! Muskets were discharged, startling the echoes of many a midnight hill; and ever and anon the war−cry pealed "France! France and Switzerland for Mazarin!"

Our success was perfect; of twelve thousand who were encamped around us, there were not as many hundreds faithful to the *Fronde* , or even wavering in their allegiance. The blow had been stricken while the metal was at the hottest to receive its impression; and the result was a total and bloodless victory!

For a moment, indeed, I feared that the fierce passions of the men, stimulated almost to phrensy by the added excitement of liquor, would have defied control. There was a rush to the quarters of Turenne, accompanied by oaths and execrations, blended with the wildest threats of vengeance! Torches had been hurled to and fro, and half a dozen tents were already in a light blaze; but the officers opposed themselves undauntedly to the torrent striking at the mutineers with the shafts of their halberts, and menacing them with the broad blades. D'Erlach, well seconded by his huge lieutenant, hurried through the ranks, exhorting threatening and screaming at the soldiers in his Teutonic jargon. D'Harcourt brought up his steadier and more phlegmatic men of Weimar, and, throwing them between the Switzers and the burning tents, extinguished the flames briefly and effectually. Still I saw, at a glance, that D'Erlach had but partially succeeded, and I ran forward, forgetful for the moment of De Chateaufort dead or alive I scarce knew whether to lend him my assistance. At the very moment when we had brought the fellows to reason, and convinced them that there were no enemies on whom to waste their ardour, a distant shout arose from the pavilion of the maréchal, followed by a dozen pistol−shots, and the quick clash of steel!

"D'Erlach," I shouted, "cut down, or shoot the *dog* who quits the ranks I go to save Turenne!" And I darted rapidly forward, followed by old Lydford, and a dozen of my troopers, who had resumed their arms on the first outbreaking of the mutiny, and had since done good service in seconding their officers. Not a man of the Switzers moved; their wonted discipline was restored; and the violence, into which their passions had so suddenly been stimulated, subsided, almost as rapidly as it had commenced, into their usual grave and self−restrained demeanour.

It was but a moment ere I reached the tent of the maréchal, yet was I scarce in time; another second, and the career of the great captain had been ended in a base broil, and the fair escutcheon of my fathers had received a blot, that not the blood of ten pitched battles conquered could have erased.

Turenne, with the gentlemen who had fled to him after their vain attempt at our arrest, had stood to his arms, and fought with the resolution of a man who well knew that he must die or conquer. Several of their assailants lay dead, or in the agony of death, beneath their feet, while hitherto their skill or fortune had preserved them from

injury. It was not possible, however, that such could be the case much longer. A dozen Alsatian arquebusiers were in the very act of blowing their matches for the purpose of giving them a volley which must have proved fatal when I rushed before them with my little party, and beat up their levelled pieces. One, bolder than the rest, drew his trigger, but it was in vain for with the whole force of my arm I struck him in the face with my steel−plated gauntlet; the blood gushed from eyes, ears, and mouth; he fell stunned and senseless to the earth; and the bullet whizzed harmlessly over the head of the gallant gentleman for whom it was intended. Another of the mutineers I seized by the collar, and whirling him forcibly around, flung him into the hands of a couple of my troopers, bidding them be answerable for him with their lives, as I destined him for the gibbet on the morrow, as a mutineer and an assassin.

"Finish your work, sir!" said Turenne, when he recognised me, speaking as calmly as though he were issuing orders to his own followers "finish your *noble* work! it is begun bravely; and murder will well execute what treason has so admirably planned."

"I regret, though I cannot remove, your misconceptions of me," I replied, compelling myself to be cool and unmoved, though I felt the hot blood rushing in torrents to my brow; "but I should vainly consume the time, which is most needful, were I to argue with you now! Suffice it not for the wealth of a universe, not for a monarch's title, would I see one hair untimely severed from *your* head. Get you to horse, sir, if you would not peril that life to no purpose which I dare prophesy will, ere long, be needed by your country! Get you to horse, you and your friends, and not a sword shall be raised to let or hinder you! You have done all that man may do; you cannot retrieve matters, although, by the sacrifice of yourself and of these brave gentlemen, you can convert a check into a ruin that will be irreparable. I, whom you deem your enemy, *I* do beseech you, on my knee, to mount and ride it lists not whither! Quick! quick, my lord! Up to this moment I have been successful. Heaven only knows what fate the next may bring to me or you!"

"I will to horse," he said, after a short pause "I will; ay, and I will be grateful, if not just and deem your conduct less atrocious than it seems to−night." He turned towards his comrades in defeat "Come, gentlemen," he said, "this officer of Mazarin is in the right, and we must profit by his interference for which, I trow, his saintly employer will return him but scant thanks! To horse! to horse!"

I had given Lydford his directions as we hurried to the spot, and he had obeyed them with his wonted alacrity. As Turenne spoke, some six or seven chargers were led forward. Myself I held his stirrup as he mounted, and, with my hand upon his rein, led him along the ranks he had so lately deemed his own, till he had passed the outposts of the camp! "God speed you, sir, and send you if it may be so reason to doubt the justice of that ill opinion you may well have formed of Harry Mornington!" I spoke with an air of earnest yet proud humility, uncovering my head in respect to the character and talents of him I addressed, and was but little astonished at his reply.

"By Heaven! it were base in me to hold it, had I formed such an opinion as you mention. Henceforth I will think of you as of one "

"Think of me not at all," I interrupted him "think of me not all, unless you can think of me *nobly!* Ride now, my lord, ride for your life!"

CHAPTER XVII.

What, 'scaped again again to work me wo? Now, by my father's soul! you deadly plotter Will give his scheming brains no holyday, Nor halt nor swerve in his unholy purpose, Till the one arbiter the mortal sword Shall end his mischiefs and his life together. *The Ulysses.*

On the morning which succeeded the revolt of the Switzers, and the consequent flight of Turenne, I despatched,

according to promise, old Martin to the minister and prince, with advices of the happy result of my mission, accompanied by most pressing requisitions for cavalry, an arm of which we were entirely destitute, while, for the species of warfare in which we were about to engage, it was as entirely indispensable. I doubted not that the mutiny of the army would already be widely spread throughout the country, and that, in consequence, there would be but little fear of interruption or peril to my messenger; I therefore took a bold step, and furnished him, on my own responsibility, with powers to press whatever horses might be necessary for his rapid progress into service as a royal courier. In acting thus, however, I was instigated mainly by my knowledge of the extreme discretion of my agent, and by my anxiety to receive the succour which was so highly important to all my future views.

After preparing the papers, and seeing my messenger depart on his journey, I passed to the quarters of the Comte d'Harcourt; who had, by virtue of the commissions brought by myself, assumed the chief command after the flight of Turenne and his staff. On entering the pavilion, in which, on the preceding night, I had found myself in so different a presence, I heard a loud and earnest conversation between the commander−in−chief and D'Erlach, who was, besides myself, the only general officer with the army, and of consequence third in command.

The latter immediately addressed me

"I am right glad to see you, General Mornington right glad to see you! We were debating, even now, on the propriety of our first movements; and, I regret to say, there is a difference of opinion already between the commander and myself. I flatter myself, however, that we shall be able to convince him of the inexpediency of laying siege to Cambrai!"

"Of laying siege to Cambrai!" I exclaimed, in unfeigned consternation; "surely, Monsieur le Comte, surely such cannot be your intention!"

"Such is my *determination*, notwithstanding!" he replied, with a strong emphasis, and somewhat of a sneer; "may I inquire in what respect it seems not good to your wisdom?"

"For fifty reasons! Good!" I exclaimed; "it will be ruin, utter, irretrievable ruin! Here we are here at Landernât with some twelve thousand infantry, but not three troops of cavalry to cover our retreat, if such be needful!"

"Retreat!" he replied, quickly "who speaks of retreat?"

"It will be well if we have not to *do* it, much more speak of it," I replied, coolly; "but I pray you let not my words offend you. Look here, monsiegneur," I continued, pointing to a map which lay before me on the table; "here, at Rheims, scarce thirty leagues distant from Cambrai, lies the archduke, twenty thousand strong all Spanish veterans; and here, at Valenciennes, the Duke of Lorraine, with a force not much inferior to our own. The archduke, when he shall hear of our success, dare not advance on Paris unsupported, leaving us on his rear he must fall back! If he effect a junction with Lorraine, believe me, we are lost; if we sit down before Cambrai, he must effect a junction! Now, on the other hand, if we advance at once on him of Lorraine, I pledge my life, we can if not defeat at least drive him across the frontier. The country hates the Spaniard; Lorraine disposed of, the peasantry will rise *en masse;* we may recruit ten thousand men; and then, if we be fortunate, the archduke may find his march to Rheims far easier than his retreat shall be! Thus shall you gain yourself great glory, and deliver the king and country from a most fatal scourge!"

"All this is vastly good, sir," he answered, stubbornly "vastly good; but I am advised that we can hardly cope with Lorraine in the field once within the walls of Cambrai, we can hold it till we receive such reinforcements "

"Reinforcements!" I interrupted him; "whence look you, in the name of Heaven, for reinforcements? Condé and Orleans are hard set, even now, to cope with Elboeuf and the generals; they cannot send a man, barring,

perchance, a corps of cavalry, which will be here before we can open our trenches, much less take such a town as Cambrai!"

"Nevertheless, such is my pleasure! we shall besiege Cambrai. I have not the command of twice six thousand men to learn the art of war of any Englishman."

"Pray God you may not have to look to an Englishman to save you from destruction!" I answered, coolly, and turning on my heel left the tent.

It was, in truth, too much to be endured. There was a field of glory open to us, such as we could hardly have failed to reap gloriously; there was wellnigh a certainty of my discovering the prison−house, and compelling the release of my lost bride; yet all was marred by the invincible obstinacy of the old dotard who commanded us. Still was there nothing to be done; I had but fifty men at my own bidding; and although D'Erlach and his Switzers a stout and veteran band of some four thousand musketeers and pikemen would have joined me had it come to an open rupture, I dared not venture to supersede my commanding officer, without more evident proofs of cowardice or incapacity. Nor, indeed, had I been disposed to do so, could I by any means have succeeded, as the troops of Weimar were more numerous, and entirely devoted to D'Harcourt who, though slow in judgment, and not capable of extended views, was a soldier in the field, and a popular leader with his soldiery. I therefore determined to remain with the army, though assuming no command, save of my own immediate followers, until the arrival of the regiments from St. Germains. The three following days were consumed in moving the army from its position at Landrecy to the neighbourhood of Cambrai; and it was in the course of these that I discovered, greatly to my annoyance, that De Chateaufort was not, as I had imagined, slain by my hand, but had actually effected his escape while I was rescuing Turenne, and fled alone in the direction of Maubeuge or Valenciennes. On the fourth day the men were set to work at opening trenches; on the sixth, the first parallel was completed, and on the morning of the seventh our batteries began to play upon the town, but at a distance which rendered it evident to me that weeks must elapse before the works of the enemy could be carried, even if the town should not in the mean time be relieved by the archduke. As I had fully resolved that I would take no steps whatever in measures so desperately foolish as those in which we were now engaged, I absented myself almost entirely from head−quarters, merely reporting myself at stated periods, and occupying my time in patrolling, and in reconnoitring the country in the direction of Rheims, from which I was hourly in expectation of the arrival of the Spaniards. Nor was I disappointed; for on the evening of the tenth day from the seduction of Turenne's forces during which little or no progress had been made in breaching the walls of Cambrai being myself scouting with twenty men as far as the village of Le Cateau, an intelligent soldier, whom I had sent out several days before to ride in the direction of Lâon, and strive to gain some information of the archduke's movements, came up with the intelligence that he had seen the vanguard of the Spaniards in full march on the preceding day, within six miles of Vervins; and that they could not be farther from us at that present time than nine or ten leagues distance.

With all the speed of man and horse I hurried to the lines before Cambrai, conveying the intelligence of an event which, if foreseen, might easily have been averted, but which I now feared would be wellnigh fatal. It was, however, with a feeling almost of rapture that I perceived, on approaching our encampment, that the three regiments of cavalry which Condé promised me had already arrived! With such celerity had Lydford executed his commission having performed the distance of nearly sixty leagues, by means of relays, in two days and a single night. On opening the letters which he handed to me from the prince I did so previous to my interview with D'Harcourt I found yet further cause for gratification, inasmuch as I was thereby appointed to an independent command of a division, to be constituted of my own cavalry, D'Erlach's Swiss infantry, and a brigade of field artillery. I at once rode to the quarters of the general−in−chief, displayed my commissions, and required him to give directions to the troops designated to place themselves at my disposal. He did so, although reluctantly and I readily perceived that I had gained a deadly enemy; but for this I cared little.

"May I inquire, sir," he said, as he surrendered the documents to my charge "may I inquire how you propose to employ these troops at present?"

"It is my intention, my lord, to withdraw them, as speedily as may be, from the trenches."

"By Heaven," he cried, "you dare not! to what end? you dare not do it!"

"You little know the man to whom you speak," I answered, still with perfect courtesy, "that you should suppose there to exist the thing he *dares* not! but pass for that! I shall withdraw them from the trenches to cover *you*, if possible, from the archduke, who is advancing at this moment, and who sleeps to−night some leagues on this side Vervins!"

"It is impossible!" he replied, stubbornly, and stamping his foot violently on the ground.

"It may be so, but it nevertheless is *true!* and I go to repel or check his van, if it be possible! I have already so contrived that he shall intercept a letter written to the Duke of Lorraine to the end that it should fall into his hands as though he had joined our faction, and were on the march to join us. This, and a demonstration on our part, may cause the Spaniard to avoid an action, and to hurry towards Ypres or St. Venant; and if he do so, I trust your lordship will co−operate with me in crushing Lorraine at once, before he shall discover his mistake."

"I do not believe it, sir; I shall *not* draw off my men, nor raise the siege, till I shall *see* the archduke's van."

"Then will you never raise it!" And I left the tent hastily well aware, however, that he would be compelled, ere long, to come fully into my plans. Taking D'Erlach into my counsel, I immediately drew off my own division, and occupied a strong position with my infantry and guns to the north of the road from Landrecy to Cambrai, by which, I was well aware, that the archduke must advance. I kept my cavalry well on my right flank, so as to preserve a communication with the Weimarian soldiery under D'Harcourt, as being pretty confident that I should be able to cover his flank, and so enable him to take ground in the rear of my position, as though for the purpose of communicating with Lorraine, concerning whom, I felt sure that the Spaniards were in doubt. All the livelong night I never left my saddle; but, till the gray dawn was at hand, I heard nothing to justify my apprehension! Just after the second cock−crow I heard a distant rumbling sound it was the groaning of the artillery−cart; a few moments later the shrill notes of a distant trumpet reached my ear; and, ere long, the clash of armour, the trampling of horses, and all the varied confusion of a march. On the first alarm, I got my men, who were sleeping on their arms, into line; drawing them up on the ground which, as I knew, afforded us the only hope of safety. In the mean time I sent out scouts to reconnoitre the enemy, and others to warn D'Harcourt of the close vicinity of the Spanish army; and to entreat him to draw off his troops from the trenches as steadily as might be, and to fall steadily into my rear, as a reserve. The former soon returned, with intelligence that the archduke was advancing in three columns, parallel to the high−road of Andernât; that he had been apparently ignorant of our precise situation, and had halted, on discovering that my position completely commanded his line of march.

D'Harcourt had sat down before Cambrai on the north−eastern side; the road, which was deep and hollow, though the country was for the most part level, actually intersecting his lines, so that the advance of the Spaniards, if unchecked, must have entirely cut him off on the south−east. The heavy batteries of the town, which, by−the−way, had been admirably well served, were on the north−west, and a deep and unfordable stream on the south. My little army was drawn out on a succession of gentle heights the only elevations of land for several miles' distance sloping evenly, though somewhat steeply, down to the causeway, at every point save one, where the hills were rugged and abrupt, covered with a thick growth of thorny shrubs, and having a branch of the same stream which I have mentioned above wheeling close beneath their cliffs. This was the end, or cape, of the eminences towards the east, and consequently nearest to the Spaniard, and would have been in itself a sufficient covering to my left wing; but I had strengthened it yet further by a slight field−work, masked by the coppice, and mounting a few light guns; while my principal batteries were on my front, so disposed as to sweep the whole road

and meadows beyond them, quite down to the river−bank.

In about an hour it had become so light that I could see the archduke's van, chiefly composed of his celebrated black Walloons. The artillery and pikemen had not yet come up; and they had halted to await them, under the protection of the orchards and enclosures of a nameless hamlet on the line of the high−road.

I did not, it is true, feel much apprehension on my own score, for I knew my position to be such, that it could hardly be carried by any superiority of force. The country on my left flank and rear was broken and swampy, and, indeed, almost impassable for guns; so that it was difficult, if not impossible, to turn me. My only fear at this time arose from the obstinacy of D'Harcourt, who had as yet shown no symptoms of evacuating his trenches. So strong, however, was my conviction of the utter madness of fighting a pitched battle against the archduke, under the walls of a hostile garrison, and within some ten leagues of another army, that I believe I should have stood by inactive, and suffered him to be crushed without moving from my heights, had he persisted in his folly.

As it became fully daylight, I had, however, the satisfaction of seeing the old count ride out with his staff, and with a score or two of light horsemen, to make a *reconnoissance* in front; while a slight battery was in progress of erection, mounted with six heavy battering cannon, so placed that it must enfilade the road, and, with the aid of my cross−fire, render it perfectly defensible. At the same time, though his batteries were still playing against the town, I could see by the bustle in the lines that he was preparing to abandon them. As he reached the front of my disposition, I galloped down to join him, and, without adverting in the least to any disagreement which might have occurred previously, rode forward with him in person.

"You were right, sir, and I was wrong," he growled out sulkily as we met; "we must abandon the siege; but we can hold these dogs of Spain at disadvantage till I may extricate my men and guns."

"Spike your battering−guns, my lord, if it be needful. The Spaniard thinks of nothing but securing his retreat to his own frontiers; and as we shall offer him no opposition, I hold it certain that he will avoid us on our show of preparation. The moment he shall have passed Cambrai in the direction of the north, we will, if it so please you, fall upon Lorraine by forced marches, and cut him off by surprise. He is weakly posted near Valenciennes, and that, too, with scarcely eight thousand men. He conquered, and the archduke fled, the cities must at once surrender; and we shall need no heavier guns than our field ordnance."

"Well! sir, well! we shall see. Ha! the archduke is moving!"

And so indeed he was. A heavy column was filing down into the meadows, shunning the road with the evident intention of avoiding our cross−fire, and forming to assail our front. In doing this, however, they had overlooked the batteries on my flank, or widely miscalculated their range. I saw at a glance that they would be raked by their fire, if they advanced a single quarter of a mile farther.

"Now is our time!" I cried; "if you, Monsieur D'Harcourt, will fall back to the intrenchments, and, evacuating them with all speed, occupy the ground on my right flank and rear, I will draw down a regiment of cavalry by yon ravine, and charge these Walloon dogs, when disordered by an unexpected fire!"

He answered not, but rode away hastily, and I saw by his countenance that he would profit by my suggestion. I galloped back to my own lines.

"D'Erlach," I cried, "send six more field−pieces to the left flank redoubt, and quickly! These Spaniards march so slowly they will reach it time enough an they use diligence!" Before the words were well uttered the artillerymen were in motion. "De Charmi, wheel your regiment down by the deep ravine; mask it, if possible, behind yon coppice, and when you see an opening, charge on the flank of those black swine. But beware, sir, of involving your men, or of losing your retreat; one brisk charge and no more! Away! My signal shall be a single trumpet

from the redoubt. Then charge; do them what hurt you may, but take no prisoners; spike their guns and fall back at once!"

He nodded intelligence with a bright eye, and rode away briskly to execute my orders. I galloped onward to the bastion, and getting a regiment of arquebusiers under arms, awaited the result. Before I gave the word to my artillerymen to fire, I swept the country with my glass, and lingered for a moment to gaze on D'Harcourt's movements. He had taken my advice. His troops were filing off leisurely, and without interruption from the town. Three regiments had already gained the upland.

I gave the word; and some eighteen guns belched forth their volumes of white smoke, with a roar that carried dismay to the hearts of the Spaniards. They had been heavily loaded with small bullets, and the havoc they produced was fearful. So rapid was the service of my men, that the guns raked them four times in less than fifteen minutes!

"Let the smoke lift, that we may see them hold your next fire!" and with an eager eye I scanned the enemy. They were cut to atoms; but still pressing onward, though in much disorder. They were within a hundred paces of De Charmi, whom they had not discovered.

"Now, trumpet!" and a single blast rose shrilly and almost painfully upon the ear; it was answered, and, with a shout, De Charmi wheeled into line upon the trot, charged, and cut his way like a thunderbolt right through the Walloon column!

"Brave, brave De Charmi!" I shouted, as though he could hear my orders at a mile's distance; "back! back! wheel to the left, and give it them again!"

Even as I spoke, the manoeuvre was performed. So completely had he cut his way through them, that his regiment was actually between the pike−men and the enemy's position. But, wheeling promptly, ere they had recovered from the confusion of his first charge, he rushed upon their left flank, as he had before fallen on their right, and again cut his way through them, and without material loss. As he retreated on a hand−gallop, the battery gave them a fresh salute, and when the smoke cleared off, we saw them straggling back, as best they might, to their main body, their colours lost, their cannon spiked, broken, overturned, and the earth cumbered far and wide with the dead and dying.

That day the archduke made no farther movement. At night he lighted his fires and planted his pickets along the front of the hamlet, before alluded to; but, ere his fires had burned low, or the moon had sunk the breadth of her own disk below the horizon, I caught the sound of a suppressed bustle a guarded motion in his lines. Without the slightest tumult I got my own men under arms, and sent an express to D'Harcourt to give him notice of the alarm; yet, though I listened with my whole soul, I caught no repetition of the sounds. The morning broke clearly and the lines were deserted; while, from the commanding height on which I stood, I could see the baffled army winding away through the causeway of Ypres, which it had gained by a well−executed countermarch during the hours of darkness.

It was with feelings the most agreeable that I witnessed the rapid departure of the enemy, who, it was evident, was still in apprehension of our pressing on his rear, and interfering with his retreat. All day long we held our position, sending forth scouts in every direction to ascertain that the flight of the Spaniard was as complete as real; and at a late hour of the night they returned to a man, bearing the glad tidings that not a straggler was to be seen throughout the country, save those who yet lay in front of our position, cold, stiff, and lifeless, all their wars ended for ever, all their hostility cut short by the omnipotent hand of death.

Fortunate was it for me, and for the prosecution of the plans which I had devised, that, in the bustle of his removal from the trenches, the count had been compelled to spike the greater part of his battering train, thereby rendering

it impracticable to renew the interrupted siege. Fortunate it was, I say, inasmuch as I am wellnigh convinced that the obstinacy of the commander−in−chief would have prompted him again to sit down before Cambrai, notwithstanding the danger of a second surprise, had it been possible to do so. Being satisfied, however, that he could not by any earthly means accomplish this, I chose rather to await his orders, which I was certain must tend to an advance against the duke, than to suggest any movements myself; which, I was no less certain, he would disapprove, however excellent, or likely to be crowned with success.

Accordingly, on the day following the archduke's flight, I was summoned to a council of war, the result of which was a determination to fall upon the army of Lorraine, by a succession of forced marches; a determination started in this instance by the count, and, of course, warmly seconded by myself and Major−general D'Erlach.

It would be useless, and moreover tedious, to enter into details of the manner in which this movement was executed; suffice it, that in somewhat less than a week we found ourselves in the presence of eight thousand men, under the command of Lorraine, encamped along the eastern side of a rich valley, at about four miles' distance from the town of Valenciennes.

Resisting my arguments in favour of a sudden and impetuous onslaught of all our forces, which, our coming up at this time being wholly unexpected, could hardly have failed of success, D'Harcourt proceeded at once to fortify his encampment on the heights forming the western boundary of the same valley. This he did skilfully enough; but I saw with pain that it was his intention to resort to the old−fashioned style of protracting operations, and moving, as it were, foot by foot a style of warfare which was even then becoming obsolete, as it has since been utterly forgotten, except in the presence of a superior force.

I fully believe that at this time the dearest wish of the commander was to see me fall in some of the skirmishes which were daily taking place on the outposts, and in which, as leader of the cavalry, I was necessarily much exposed. In one of these fierce little struggles I was, indeed, so nearly entrapped by my old foe De Chateaufort, that nothing but my good fortune and his folly saved me. I had charged down upon a small party of horse, convoying some forage or provisions, had taken the latter, and, pursuing the former with rather too much of impetuosity, was driving them directly into an ambuscade of infantry, which had been designed to cut me off. Nothing, indeed, could have rescued me from destruction, but the inveterate and over−active malice of De Chateaufort, who, at the full distance of a hundred paces, and before the body of my men were in point−blank shot of arquebuse, rose from his cover, and, firing at me with deliberate aim, disclosed the position of his ambush; thus enabling me to bring off my troopers without receiving the smallest injury, beyond a dint in my cuirass from the bullet, which was nearly spent when it struck me.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Of this be sure: not all that mortal hate By open violence or craftiest fraud Can execute, with devilish will intent To sever those whom God hath linked together, Shall ever part the true, and strong of heart, Knit by the adamant of mortal love!" *The Helen.*

After the second attempt on my life, devised and frustrated as I have related it above, the two armies remained inactive for several days. During this time I more than once observed a movement, which I had at first some difficulty in comprehending, in front of Lorraine's position. On his extreme left lay a large tract of forest land, running back for many miles, so dense of underwood, and so swampy of soil, as to be an admirable cover to his flank. In advance of his lines the continuous woods broke off into clumps of straggling trees, with here and there a marshy spot, or open glade of velvet turf. In one of these glades or grassy meadows for they were large enough to merit that title I had discovered some days before a large building of gray stone, surrounded by a courtyard, wall, and fosse; I had supposed it the chateau of some proprietor, deserted by the owner, and perhaps occupied as a depôt or hospital by the enemy. To this building I observed that a small party of horsemen were in the constant

habit of resorting early in the morning, or late in the evening, while the shadows lay long and heavy on the forest, and the gray light of the gloaming was insufficient to penetrate its deep recesses. Gradually, for want of better occupation, I began to watch the recurrence of these visits, to wonder what they could portend, and finally to determine on the discovery of their object. This, with the aid of a powerful glass, and an advanced place of observation, I soon accomplished. The leader of the party was De Chateaufort. A ray of hope shot into my bosom. The building was evidently of monastic form; the thin smoke curling from its chimneys, and the unshuttered casements, proved, to a closer inspection, that it was not deserted; although I could not account for the absence of the matin or vesper chimes, which I was certain had not reached my ears. Was it possible that this then was the prison−house of Isabel, and that I had been for a week's space within a cannon−shot of her abode and knew it not?

"But I will know it!" I muttered to myself, "and that, too, right speedily. Lydford what ho! saddle me Bayard, and detail a score of troopers I go to reconnoitre on the outposts; and hark ye! let them carry their petronels; last time we were wellnigh expended for the want of them."

Evening was already closing rapidly around when I put my foot in the stirrup, yet it wanted a full hour of the time when he should pay his next accustomed visit. Cautiously I wheeled my men around the verge of the camp, and, gaining the cover of some fields of tall yellow mustard, through which ran a deep sandy lane, rode towards the building on a smart trot, secure that my motions could not be discovered from the camp of the enemy, and little fearful of interruption from their foragers, whom we had so often and so invariably beaten that they hardly dared show themselves against us, except in the proportion of three to one. As I rode along the lane, I suddenly observed that the hound Hector had accompanied the horses, and was trotting lazily along by my stirrup. I almost hailed the trivial accident as an omen!

"How comes it, Martin Lydford," I cried, "that you unchained the dog? We may have fighting, and I would not for my life the faithful brute were injured."

"Injured!" he replied, with a smile, "he will be a right stout and a cunning soldier who shall hurt old Hector! But, in truth, the beast was so uneasy as I was saddling Bayard, and whined so piteously as I led him out caparisoned, that I could not resist his dumb language. So I deemed it slight wrong to loose his collar; but if you think otherwise, I can return with him even now."

"It matters not it matters not, good Martin," I replied; "and see, here is the convent; a most defensible tenement, by St. George! We will on, and reconnoitre it more closely."

Twice I rode around the walls, without discovering any human being. Some casements of the main building were open, but even these were strongly secured by bars of crossed iron; while in the outer walls which were not, however, above seven or eight feet in height there was no opening save a single massive gateway in the front, bolted and barred with jealous care, and a small postern leading into a walled orchard and thence into the forest on the rear. At both these gates I thundered for a time in vain; but was at last answered by the croaking voice of an aged female, the porteress of the Carmelite nunnery, for such I speedily learned was the establishment. She dared not, she said, and would not, draw a bolt, while armies were contending in their peaceful fields; the superior could not be seen; they had no novices within the walls; and when I spoke of prisoners, she uttered an exclamation of disgust, and I could obtain no further answer. By forcing my horse alongside the wall, and standing erect on the saddle, I was enabled to overlook the court; but I gained nothing by the survey, and was compelled to abandon my search for the present almost in despair. I was, however, determined that, as I might not again find so apt a chance, I would reconnoitre the forest up to the enemy's flank; for it struck me that by occupying the court and orchard of the nunnery with a body of musketeers, and, if needs were, with a few falconets and culverins, and by passing a column of attack through the woodlands, the position of the duke might be turned. As I cantered round for the last time to the rear of the building, I thought in passing a large turret, which projected at an angle of the building nearly to the outer wall I thought I heard a whisper; but, though I raised my eyes quick as the lightning, I could only see a lattice pulled hastily together, and hear a smothered cry and a slight bustle within. My

suspicions at once returned in all their force. I felt a conviction, amounting almost to a certainty, that Isabel was within those gloomy walls; still I could do nothing. I resolved, however, that for the moment I would proceed according to my previous intention, and, if possible, occupy the nunnery on the morrow, as if for some military end, thus hoping to gain evidence which might enable me to act promptly and with decision.

With this intent I galloped forward for a space; till, finding that the woodlands continued open up to the very lines of the enemy, I determined on withdrawing for the moment, that I might strike securely on the morrow. It was now almost dark, and, without perceiving it, I had come within the range of the enemy's pickets. If I had been in leading of a sufficient force, I might at once have beat up the duke's head−quarters; but now there was nothing for it but to decamp immediately, and with every precaution against alarm. All, however, would not do. As we passed the last outpost, at a hundred paces distant, a charger snorted and neighed; the sentry challenged, fired his arquebuse, and ran in. With the speed of light the alarm spread; but my resolution was taken on the moment to charge, and capture or kill, the whole of the picket which had discovere us, and to retreat before assistance could arrive. This I did, not wantonly for I have ever deemed it a grievous sin to shed one drop of blood, even in the fiercest strife, that is not absolutely necessary to victory but to prevent, if possible, the number and the nature of our force from being ascertained.

It was done in an instant. We cut down two or three, captured the rest, before they could untether and mount their horses for they were cavalry and, compelling them to accompany us at the gallop, were soon beyond the reach of pursuit or discovery; though, for an hour after I had reached my own quarters, I could perceive, by the rolling of the drums, the wild sounds of the bugles, and the occasional shots of the sentinels at whatever object their fears might construe into an enemy, that the encampment of the duke was fully on the alert.

It was unlucky, most unlucky, that we had been discovered. For, although our numbers and the direction of our attack were still unknown, the enemy could not be ignorant that we had been within their very lines, and that we had penetrated them under covert of the forest, which I now shrewdly feared they would occupy with the early daylight. In this, however, I resolved to be beforehand with them; and having communicated to D'Harcourt that I had discovered a pass by which I was confident of turning the enemy's left flank, I received immediate orders to march at daybreak with my whole division, for that purpose, with a promise that he would himself second me by a *reconnoissance en masse*, and, if opportunity should offer, by a direct attack on the front of the duke's position. Having made all the arrangements which were deemed necessary, I returned, somewhat fatigued, and exceedingly anxious and excited, to my tent.

Scarcely had I entered it, when I saw, by the faint light of the lamp suspended from the tent−poles, that the old hound whose manner I had observed during the whole evening to be peculiar, although I had neither felt the inclination nor had the leisure to seek for the cause was bearing something in his mouth with unwonted care. As I threw myself on the pallet−bed, which was my only resting−place, he stalked up to me with that singular demeanour by which a sagacious dog will often indicate his consciousness of bearing an important trust, reared himself on his hinder−legs, and placing his forefeet on my knee, dropped into my lap a glove. It was of chamois leather wrought with arabesques of silver it was the glove of Isabel! My first idea was that he had found the same which had been given me by Le Vasseur, and which I had since preserved with the most jealous care. I sprang from the couch, snatched up the small valise which served me at once for *garde robe* and *escritoire*, unlocked its most secret compartment, and there lay the other. They were then a pair the dog must have received his charge during that very night.

My heart throbbed so fiercely, that I could hear its beating. I seized the newly−gained token of her presence; the mouth was secured by a silken thread; it contained something bulky a note a brief but all−sufficient note!

"Harry" it ran thus "once more, my own, *own* Harry!

"The time hath come! the time when you *may*, when you *must* rescue me! I have learned his more than fiendish wickedness. I have learned, from his own lips, that he has broken the condition on which alone I hold my voluntary oath to be binding. He has again compassed your assassination. Thanks be to the Almighty, that he succeeded not in his fell purpose!

"Therefore I am *here!* here, in the nunnery of the Carmelites, scarce three miles distant from your station a guarded prisoner! Thrice have I seen you at a distance, when you, perhaps, thought *not* of Isabel; but no, no, I believe it not 'tis the mere waywardness of love and sorrow I believe it not, that you ever have forgotten, ever will forget!

"I know not whether I may find means to convey this to your hands; but I trust that He, who hath thus far preserved, will now deliver. When you receive this be it at the banquet of your monarch, or at the altar of your God leave either, and leave *all*, for THE TIME is come! Concealment is at an end. Their names are known to you why should I longer affect secrecy. From one that never hath deceived or failed me, I have it, that the old duke my savage kinsman hath gone to his account. De Chateaufort is now Penthiêvre. Base, treacherous, malignant, desperately wicked as he is, he yet lacks the craft that ever winged the arrows of his father's hate, unerringly, and to the mark! I say it once again the time is come, when you may strike and win! And oh oh, my beloved! make no long tarrying; to−day is our own, but who knows what may be the burden of to−morrow.

"Ever, ever,

"Isabel."

CHAPTER XVIII.

My mind had devoured the contents before my eye had perused a tenth part of the letter. God of my fathers, what were then my sensations! my gratitude to thee my hopes my maddening anxiety!

"Be it at the banquet of your monarch, or the altar of your God leave either, and leave ALL!" I repeated the stirring words aloud. I sprang to my feet, buckled my rapier to my side, inspected my good weapons, with a deep and joyous satisfaction. I rushed out into the nightly camp. It was already long past midnight so long a time had I passed in consultation with the general. It lacked scarce an hour of the time appointed for the movement of the troops. They were already stirring. I hurried to the quarters of D'Erlach; commanded him to hasten his arrangements. I passed among the men with a word of encouragement a word of heart−stirring praise to each and all. My very being was set upon the cast, and, win or die, it should be played for nobly!

Not a torch was kindled, not a trumpet blown; the orderlies of the arquebusiers alone bore darkened lanterns, whence to distribute fire for the matchlocks when the time should arrive. Silently, steadily, but cheerily withal, did the men meet and muster. The very horses seemed to trample with less sound than usual on the bruised and broken turf, as if they too were conscious that there was need of caution!

For the last time before I mounted I returned to my quarters. I steeped my burning brow in the pure element. I threw aside my doublet, and bathed my strong arms shoulder−deep, till they were wellnigh numbed with cold; for I felt that, contrary to my wont, my nerves were shaken, and I was resolved that nothing should be left to chance which might be secured by care. I renewed the flints in the newly−invented locks of my best pistols; I passed my poniard, ay, and my rapier, once and again across the hissing whetstone; I bound a strong spiked collar on the neck of the stanch bloodhound, and, in the ardour of my feelings, I apostrophized the noble brute. I conversed with him as though he were a rational and thoughtful being; I told him that he should follow me to the field that he should fight in the strife of men for his master's bride! and, by the heaven that is above me! I believe he marked and understood my words. His full bright eye read my features as I spoke; and, as I ended, he feathered

his long stern, stooped his nose to the ground, as though he were tracking the game, and then, throwing his head aloft, uttered a deep full−mouthed bay, longer and louder than I had heard him give when hard upon the haunches of the wounded stag.

"Silence! Ha! silence!" I cried, "forward, old hound, but silence!" And not again, though he led our advance running straight and hard towards the nunnery, did he so much as whine throughout that night.

I despatched an officer to D'Harcourt as I left the camp, requesting him to allow me a full hour's space wherein to reach my ground; and then, with all the noise and demonstration possible, to charge in column on the centre of Lorraine. I waited not his reply. For his own fame and honour I doubted not he would advance, and my own duty admitted no delay.

CHAPTER XIX.

"I have thee by the throat! and by His life Who made the beautiful and blessed world, In which thou art a black and plague−like spot Thou sinnest not again! Mercy! for thee? Mercy to murtherers is a deeper murther Murther to justice! homage paid to hell!" *Old M.S.*

In an hour's rapid but silent marching, we gained the outskirts of the forest. The moon was setting, but her light, faint and uncertain as she waded through the fleeting clouds, came and went in fitful gleams over the dense woodlands and the grassy glades. There was no sound or stir, all seemed peaceful and at rest.

It was my object fully to occupy the woods in the rear of the nunnery, before giving any alarm, in order to cut off the possibility of flight to, or succour from, the army of Lorraine. This done, I had resolved to invest the building on every side, and to obtain admission peaceably, if possible, but if not, by any means. With this view I halted two regiments of Switzers, armed with their heavy halberts, but without firearms in front, and wheeling around the right side of the building with all my cavalry, arquebusiers, and pikemen, entered the skirts of the wood beyond the low walls of the orchard and gardens, which I have before mentioned. Just at the angle of the building on this side, I posted Lydford with four troops of cuirassiers their petronels ready and their matches lighted, charging them to let no one enter or pass out of the building.

Scarcely had I turned the corner, when I heard the heavy tread of disciplined men; and in the uncertain light beheld a long line of infantry filing into the enclosures of the convent from the rear. Five minutes sooner, and I should have cut them off, but it was now too late. Two regiments, at the least, had entered the gardens, and even now occupied the building itself, while several columns were marching steadily from the left flank of the duke's army through the woods, so as to form a line of communication between this important position and his main army. There was but one course left: to isolate the convent and its defenders, and, occupying the forest, to drive back the *Frondeurs*, and to maintain the position against all odds, until I could reduce the convent.

In a solid mass of horse and foot I charged, reserving the fire of my muskeeters till I could see the features of each file−leader of the enemy. Then, platoon after platoon, we gave it to them in the most tremendous running volley I ever heard. We swept them before us like a torrent back back to the thick woodlands, a full half mile in the rear of the gardens. There they rallied for a moment under cover of the trees, fighting well, and keeping up a hot fire *en voltigeur;* but by a charge of pikes, I forced them through this thicker growth of coppice in which I immediately set my foragers to construct a rude breastwork of felled trees and, bringing up half a dozen field−guns, was at once master of a position which I was well aware the duke could not carry without concentrating all his powers against it; while I was well aware, by the heavy cannonading from the front, that he could not do this. Having secured the position with a strong reserve, I directed D'Erlach to press steadily on, driving in the enemy's advance till he should reach the skirts of the wood covering the duke's left flank, and thence to cannonade him with as many of the light falconets as he could force through the woodland this I had

already found far more practicable than I expected, as the soil was sound, and the *taillis*, except at intervals, very young and scattered in its growth but not to advance a yard till I should join him.

I was now confident of success. Retreat for the occupants of the nunnery was impossible. In front I had stationed a party as large as that which held it, with flank parties on either side; and in the rear, between the defenders and their comrades, was a force of full five thousand veterans under an excellent and trusty leader.

My first step was to clear the gardens and orchards. In this I succeeded, after a short but desperate conflict, under a cross−fire from the walls of the main building; the enemy, at last, throwing down their arms and surrendering at discretion.

Knowing that escape in this direction was hopeless, and anticipating a desperate effort on the part of De Chateaufort who, I doubted not, was in the convent to cut his way through my Switzers, I had already drawn off all my men save a small picket, which I left as a post of observation, and was hurrying to the front, when a rapid fire of musketry, mingled with loud shouts, announced to me that my expectations were realized. I clapped spurs to my horse, dashed forward over wall and fosse at a rate which quickly threw out my infantry, summoned the cavalry I had left at the angle to follow me all save Lydford, whom I ordered to the picket in the rear; and reached the scene of action in time to see the sallying party handsomely beaten back within the walls.

With the reinforcement I had brought up, we were strong enough to storm the building; but I was unwilling to resort to so desperate a measure, well knowing the horrors that will ensue where females are the inmates of a place taken by an assault of fierce and lawless soldiery.

Something, however, was to be done, and that right speedily; for it was necessary that I should move forward, to act on the flank of Lorraine. In this emergency, I fastened a white neckcloth to the staff of a soldier's pike, and, advancing to the portal, sounded a parley, and summoned the garrison; assuring them of their hopeless situation, reminding them of the fate denounced by the laws of war against the defenders of an untenable position, and offering honourable terms to all. The answer was the shot of a musket, loaded with three bullets; one of which grazed my right cheek, cutting it to the bone, a second glancing innocuous from my head−piece, and the third entering the brain of my war−horse the prince's gift. I fell heavily to the ground, with, and partly under, the slaughtered beast; and, as I fell, I heard the infuriate yell of my Swiss soldiery, as they hurled themselves at once against the gate and walls. I rose to my feet in an instant, and dashed forward sword in hand; but, ere I could make myself heard or understood, the strong gate was shattered to atoms by the axes and halberds of my men. A desperate fight succeeded, blade to blade and hand to hand; but their superior energy, and the fury excited by what they believed to be the murder of their general, gave a vast superiority to my Switzers. Foot by foot they forced their way in, and every step was planted on the body of fallen friend or foeman. The courtyard was crowded almost to suffocation, but the pressure was fast diminished by the unsparing sword. Not a shot was fired after the first rush; for my men had no firearms, and the *Frondeurs* were prevented by the throng from using them. The main building had fortunately remained unoccupied, and at its doors, as fast as I gained them, I set strong watches of men, on whose fidelity and firmness I could depend, for the protection of the helpless females within. While the hellish strife was going on which I was well aware could only end in the destruction of every life of the defenders, who by their own madness had drawn their fate upon themselves I caught a glimpse of a kerchief, waved from a window at the farther end of the quadrangle. I heard a wild and well−remembered shriek. Madly, desperately I pushed forward, dealing around me blind and sweeping blows, and cutting my path through friends and foes alike; but, ere I reached the place, I saw a lower casement violently thrown open from within, and the fiend De Chateaufort leaped out, bearing HER in his arms! He made for the postern−gate, reached it, and, passing forth, locked it deliberately behind him; thus cutting off every chance of safety from his miserable followers, who had, I conclude, been prevented from availing themselves before of this escape, by the idea that the building was no less closely invested in the rear than it was in front.

A moment a single moment after him I gained the spot; with a desperate leap I darted at the wall, not, perhaps, exceeding eight feet in height; I caught the cope−stone with my hands, and, by main force of my arms, drew myself to the summit, threw myself over without marking the depth of the plunge, and, fortunately alighting on my feet, came off unhurt. He had mounted a horse whether his own or a chance charger I knew not and, bearing her in his arms, was spurring desperately, and taking wild leaps over the enclosures. With a speed scarcely inferior to his own, although on foot, I followed him we neared the spot where I had posted my picket.

"Lydford!" I shouted, in a voice of supernatural power "Lydford! ho! rescue!"

A loud whoop answered me a jovial hunting halloo and the full−mouthed bay of a hound. De Chateaufort cleared the last stone wall, and for a moment I lost sight of him. Again I heard the deep cry of the hound; it had changed into a sharp and savage treble the peculiar note of the creature as he views his game.

I leaped the fence, and, at some twenty paces distant, I beheld the progress of a fearful struggle. The charger, bearing away my deadliest foe and most beloved bride, was at his speed; but, as he toiled along, the bloodhound dashed full at his head, seized him by the gullet, and bore him to the earth. At the same instant Lydford snatched Isabel from the villain's hold, and was, in the same point of time, himself hurled to the earth as it seemed lifeless by a tremendous sword−cut which De Chateaufort dealt him as he fell. As the latter recovered his feet, the terrified girl was borne off in the arms of one of my subalterns, who, with a dozen followers, had come up in time for the rescue, and *I* I was upon him!

"Quick, quick!" I shouted "quick, Le Vasseur, to horse! All of you, to horse! Protect the lady with your lives; she is my *wife* . Away! Make a wide circuit to the left; avoid both friend and foe; rest not an instant, till she be in safety at my quarters. And thou, Lydford," I continued, as I saw him too rise, stunned, perhaps, but unwounded, "after them. Away! I am enough to reckon with this miscreant!"

Our blades had already crossed, and in silence we aimed desperately at each other's life. For a few moments I was almost unconscious how I was engaged. My mind was flying with my recovered angel; my eyes were fixed on her departing form. A smart wound in the sword arm admonished me of my folly.

"Have at you now!" I shouted; "there! there! there!" and at each word I lunged with my whole strength and activity at his face, for, all beside, he was sheathed in steel. Steadily and well he parried the thrusts; his teeth hard set, his eye glaring on mine with deadly and terrible, because cool, malignity. In the third lunge my foot slipped. I could not recover myself. I felt the point of his weapon enter my buff−coat on the left side for, madly enough, I had come out into action without my corslet, forgotten in the wild tumult of my feelings instinctively I writhed my body sideways, I know not how, from the cold blade, which passed right out behind, grazing my ribs with a slight wound in its passage. I clutched his hilt in my left hand, and, dropping my own sword, dealt him a heavy blow in the face with my gauntlet, at the same moment tripping him with my foot from behind. He fell headlong, as if shot; and in an instant my gripe was in his throat my knee upon his chest. "Dog!" I whispered hoarsely from excitement, "what have you to say that I should spare your life?"

"This!" he replied; and, suiting the action to the word, levelled and snapped a concealed pistol almost in my face. But I was too quick for him; I struck it aside, and it was discharged harmlessly. In a second's space my poniard was in my hand; I reared it high, high in the air, grasped his throat yet more tightly my soul was on fire the impetus was given, and the blow must have been fatal, when my arm was arrested from behind! It was D'Harcourt himself!

"Pshaw!" he muttered, contemptuously, "tarry you for such a dog as this? Put up your dagger; for shame! What! strike a fallen foe!"

"I do not need your teaching, sir," I answered, as I rose; "but let him reserve his worthless life for the axe or cord, to which it is a forfeit! And look to it, Monsieur le Comte D'Harcourt, that you hold him securely. The Prince of Condé's orders are most positive, regarding this same traitor. But why do I see *you* here? How goes the battle in the front?"

"Bravely, sir, bravely," he replied; "but in consequence of the protracted struggle here, I galloped down in person to see if aught of ill had befallen your command."

"I might not leave this garrison behind me," I answered; "but now, if you will to the front, I will advance on the left flank, which is even now hard bestead with our cannonade, and my life on the issue."

"Well, sir; away! But how is this? you bleed are you much wounded?"

"Not so much but that I can do *my* duty. Will it please *you* resume the leading of the centre?"

We parted, and but it needs not to relate the fortunes of that day my fight was won already; and, though I still led on for name and honour, my heart was absent from the field. It is enough we conquered; and although Lorraine, with consummate skill, drew off his shattered army to Maubeuge, where he was taken some weeks later, we remained the masters of the field, with all the stores, artillery, and baggage of the enemy, and all the honours of the day.

CHAPTER XX.

"I saw her upon nearer view, A spirit, yet a woman too! Her household motions light and free, And steps of virgin liberty; A countenance in which did meet Sweet records, promises as sweet; A creature not too bright or good For human nature's daily food; For transient sorrows, simple wiles, Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles." Edgeworth.

I SAID that we conquered, and so in truth we did; but, so desperate was the resistance of the enemy, so strong his disposition to rally on every vantage−ground, and so evident his unwillingness to be dispossessed of the position from which he had been forced only at the sword's point, that not until a very late hour in the evening was I permitted to sheath my weapon and turn my horse's head homeward. Indeed, I observed more than once, after I had joined D'Harcourt's division, subsequently to the retreat of the duke, a strange pertinacity in his manner of directing me to lead the cavalry against remote points, and a heartless unwillingness to suffer me to return to the camp, although I felt assured that he must have gathered something of the causes which existed, independent of two or three undressed scratches, to render me anxious and eager to hear the sounds of the recall. At about six in the afternoon, his trumpet sounded to collect the infantry, some of whom had pressed too hotly forward in pursuit: but my toils were not ended; and it was not till nearly eight of the clock that I assumed the responsibility of drawing off my two regiments of cavalry, leaving Lorraine in full and direct retreat upon Maubeuge. This I should have done, had I attended to the promptings of my hot blood, some hours before, and had I not been conscious of having already, in several points, stretched my military powers to the utmost, in order to render them subservient to my own purposes. I was, moreover, aware that I had in D'Harcourt a jealous and observant enemy; one who would not hesitate to do me the last disservice with Mazarin or Condé, should he find a fitting chance; and who had already, as I well believed, sought for such an opportunity in hinting at the necessity of my leaving the field, as a consequence of the trivial wounds I had received in the commencement of the action.

It was therefore with a constancy of purpose, which I confess myself to have estimated at the time as scarcely inferior to Roman self−denial, that I checked every rising murmur, every expression of dissatisfaction, at the needlessly protracted requisition for my services. So well, indeed, did I succeed in assuming the guise of frank and fearless alacrity, that I had a speedy opportunity of gaining a slight confirmation of my suspicions from the

evident chagrin of the commander at my self−possession and activity; nay, I am almost convinced that he hoped to force me by his unreasonable commands into open mutiny! Nor was he, indeed, without cause both to fear and hate me. He knew that it was in my power, and probably doubted not that it was in my purpose, to expose his obstinacy and false measures, while in the trenches at Cambrai. He further knew that his escape from the archduke then, and his brilliant victory now, were owing the first entirely, and the latter in a high degree to my advice and action. I was determined, therefore, that, cost me what it might to keep down my almost choking passions, I would not now mar my bright hopes in the very moment of fruition; that I would not, by a childish eagerness to snatch the prize too soon, suffer it again to be dashed untasted from my lip: and, although I say it of myself, I do feel that it was no slight victory of principle over impulse in a man situated as I then was, to plod along in the dull and hard routine of duty.

It was not only love burning, passionate love that urged me at every instant to defy the hoary dotard, and to gallop back on the spur to our encampment, but doubt and agonizing anxiety. Probable it was indeed *most* probable that Isabel had reached the camp in safety; no force, that I had heard of, lay in the direction I had indicated the men whom I had ordered to protect her person with their lives were bold and often−tried adherents. Still, what lover ever paused to reckon probabilities? It was enough that she might have again been carried off, that the villain Chateaufort, whose power and malignity, so long as he should draw the breath of life, I had learned almost to *fear*, that he who had so often stricken at the root of my heart's happiness, might have again effected his own escape and my utter ruin.

Never, in the whole course of my life, before or since, have I endured a tenth part of the torments which I felt that day. While the period of my happiness was seen but in a dim perspective, I could philosophize, I could be tame and patient, as the old and feeble−minded, who dignify their want of energy to do or to resist by the high name of patience. But now, *now*, with the cup actually courting my grasp, to be unable to secure it to feel that a thousand thirsty enemies might be even now winning it from my uncertain hold; to think that I might well return home full of ardent hope and joyous expectation; to find the home desolate the hope but a dream the expectation frustrated, and for ever! To endure all this, as I endured it, manfully and without repining, is indeed a task which none could hope to execute, but those who have by long self−discipline rendered their passions the ministers, the slaves, the weapons of their intellect. I felt that by delay I might by precipitation I *must* lose her; and for once, if my calculations were sound, they were also fortunate.

It was, as I have said, wellnigh eight of the clock when, drawing off my regiments, I mounted a fresh horse, the third I had tired out since the dawn, and galloped at a furious rate across the now lonely battle−field.

It is a mournful, ay, and a self−debasing sight, a recent battle−field. The cold and senseless dead charger, and he who reined him outstretched side by side, in the long sleep that knows no earthly waking! The miserable wounded wretches, groaning and struggling in their great agony! The very instruments of music, and the standards, that lent their paltry aid to make this havoc wear a glorious seeming, broken and voiceless, torn and gory! The very weapons, mute ministers of all this carnage, still reeking with that red witness, though no longer wielded by the strong hand, at the bidding of the high heart! If a man can look unmoved on such a sight, assisted by the consciousness that he himself has edged the blade of the immortal Azrael, that his intellect has been perverted, his hand turned aside from its legitimate purposes of benevolence and mutual good, to the destruction, the temporal, ay, and perchance the eternal destruction of his fellow−sinners if he can look upon this sight, can grapple with this thought, and doing so feel nothing, or feel *proud*, he is no man! Oh, conquerors! conquerors! ye have been called the scourges of a God; but it is at the instigation of a DEVIL!

As I rode fiercely across the weltering field, such were my self−accusing reveries, I felt the sin of murder on my soul. For what had I or mine of accusation against these, that I should wield the blade of extermination, weaponing, as it were, the will of others against men innocent to me! I felt as though some deep and sudden desolation would be hurled upon *my* head for the deed. I fancied, in the feeble wailings that loaded the slaughtertainted air, the muttering of the vengeful thunder! "Never, never again," I cried aloud, in the vehemence

of my over−excited spirit "never again, O Sword! shalt thou leap from thy scabbard, save to do battle for the feeble, and to strike against the tyrant! Never shalt thou blaze in the van of battle, unless it be on English ground, and in the cause of England! Thy fight is fought; thy prize is won! Grant it oh grant it, Thou whom I have on this day so grievously offended grant it, Eternal Ruler and Creator, that not in HER I may be punished for this foul commission!"

"Stand, ho! Stand, or I shoot!" I was interrupted in my wild soliloquy by the fierce challenge of a sleepy sentinel, and the rattle of his heavy arquebuse, as he levelled it upon the rest.

"A friend, ho! A friend and officer. The word is Victory. Good−night!" And, without checking or swerving from my gallop, I dashed past the astounded soldier without heeding the salute with which he atoned for the abruptness of his challenge. But the incident brought down my spirit from its soarings, to that which was immediately before me, without shrinking from or shunning the thoughts that had suggested themselves. I soon was able to appease them by the reflection that, if the victims were innocent of individual wrong, they were not so in lending themselves as tools and instruments of havoc to the guilty great, to the ambitious and needy adventurer that rebellion against a lawful ruler, and without a lawful cause, is sin that I, whatever might be the morbid self−accusations of the moment, had been striving in the cause which I deemed honest; and was, if guilty, guilty of misapprehension only, not of stubbornness or wilful wrong.

The scene, too, harmonized with my change of feeling; it was now bright and pleasant. The month was that sweetest of the year, young April; and as the winter had been of unusual severity and gloom, so had the opening of the spring been early and most genial. The woods were bursting into the tender verdure peculiar to the season; the herbage was already deep and richly fragrant. The country through which I rode was undulating, and of exceeding beauty; and over all a brilliant moon was pouring that flood of sweet and tranquil lustre which, so much lovelier than the glare of the pervading daylight, softens every asperity of nature, and, making its very shadows soft and hazy, acts as a gauzy veil to the features of a faded beauty, concealing all that is unlovely, and charming the eye in proportion as it excites the fancy.

No painter's glance or poet's heart could have selected a more lovely or romantic spot than that which chance had selected for our rude encampment. It was a long and gentle hill, subsiding greenly and softly into a wide stretch of fertile meadow−land, through which a broad rivulet lingered, as though its nymph were enamoured of some neighbouring faun or sylvan, and were therefore loath to quit his beautiful abodes. A shadowy wood on either hand, and frequent clumps of forest−trees still bare and leafless, or at the most in early bud, but interspersed with the fresh foliage of the willow and the hazel spotting the hill−side, gave a park−like air to the untrimmed scenery. Along the summit of the hill, and through the imperfect screen of the woodland, hundreds of white tents were glimmering in the moonlight; while here and there the rays flashed back in keen reflection from the armour of some passing sentinel, or were contrasted by the ruddy glow of some terrestrial fire. The sounds, too, which floated on the night−air, were blended and harmonized into sweetness by the effect of distance; the hum of conversation, the merry laugh, the quaint song of the campaigner hoarse, doubtless, and indelicate upon a nearer hearing came pleasantly on the ear, and were mingled with the hooting of the owls, crying to each other, like answered sentinels, from their wind−rocked fortresses; and with the remoter barking of the household dog.

It is the peculiarity of such a scene and time to soften and subdue the soul, to win it from the storm and strife of humanity, to attune it to holier thoughts, to render it pensive, affectionate, and melancholy; and, if its effects upon my spirit were not precisely these, they were not, at least, widely or incongruously different. From bitter anxiety concerning the future, and jealous doubtings of my own purity of deed and purpose, I fell into a confiding and a peaceful mood of hope! I slackened my pace; not that I was less eager to join my loved one, but that the rush of the horse, the current of air created by his speed, the very sounds of his swift motion, were painful and uncongenial. Still, I did not, as may be well believed, linger or hesitate upon the road; and, as I began to ascend the first pitch of the hill, I struck into a light canter, that brought me speedily to one of the entrances in the breastwork nearest to my pavilion, and guarded by the faithful Switzers of D'Erlach. I did not pause to enter into

converse with the officer of the night, beyond the exchange of military watch−words, but rode at once in the direction of my quarters, while again I became anxious almost to suffocation. I felt as though every vein in my body was filled to bursting, as though every pore were alive, and tingling with fierce excitement. Again I drove the spurs into my horse's flank, and dashed forward, flinging the cut turf far behind me; and startling the carousers round many a watch−fire as I careered along, resolved on gaining an instant solution to my hopes or terrors.

I reached my tent; with mere anxiety I trembled to a degree which to describe would be absurd and useless. All was silent and dark; not so much as a groom was there to receive my horse, or a sentinel pacing his nightly rounds. I sprang from the saddle, secured the reins of my charger to the stem of a young oak−tree, which grew before the entrance of my pavilion, and, with a staggering and uncertain gait, as of one under the influence of wine, I reeled into my dwelling−place. It was a plain campaigner's tent, merely affording a shelter from the inclemency of winter, and almost wholly unprovided with the comforts even of a soldier's life. It was, however, divided into two compartments; the outer of which I had allotted to my faithful adherent, while retaining the inner chamber, if it may so be called, for my own purposes.

As I rushed through the opening which served for a door, the first object that caught my eye was the form of Lydford, leaning in an erect position against the tent−pole, but buried in the deepest slumber. The ghastly light of a lantern, kindled, as it would seem, in order to furnish a light for the match of the heavy arquebuse which he still grasped, as though he were a sentinel on duty, flickered over his snowy hair, bronzed features, and glittering armour; while the regular and heavy breathings of the veteran showed that his present sleep was but an involuntary tribute rendered by the spirit to over−wearied and exhausted nature. Somewhat reassured by this sight for it was evident that the old man had posted himself there to secure the privacy or safety of some inmate, until my return, although his strength had been inferior to the task somewhat reassured in spirit, and relieved from my wild doubts, I stole into the interior of the tent. Before me was a picture that would have tasked and been superior to the powers of the mightiest master that ever limned the human form divine. Through a wide aperture in the canvass roof the calm soft moonlight streamed down gloriously, filling the small apartment with a sweet and mellow radiance; but it was upon my pallet−bed that the broadest pensile of light was flung, and upon the calm angelic features of her who lay there, forgetful of all her sufferings, of all her sorrows. She was dressed, as I had seen her on that morning, in a plain robe of spotless white, the close corsage splendidly setting forth the symmetry of her person, and the long train falling carelessly over the edge of the couch. There was, however, one guardian, one vigilant and faithful guardian, watching over the safety of her whom he had so much contributed to rescue the bloodhound Hector. Erect upon his haunches, he sat beside the bed, his head reaching far above the level of the pillow on which Isabel reposed, and his bright eyes glancing in the moonlight like coals of fire, as he rolled them to and fro in search of foeman or intruder. It was indeed a lovely group. Her beautifully chiselled features; the snowy lids closed, and the long lashes pencilling her pallid but transparent cheek; the profusion of sunny hair freed from the restraint of the novicial head−dress which they had compelled her to assume, and which now lay beneath my feet glancing like threads of gold among its own dark shadows; her bosom rising and falling in the deep security of innocence; and, above all, that still and almost terrible expression, that absence of all intellectual expression, that likeness to a longer and a colder sleep, which has often pressed so chillingly on my heart, while gazing on the slumbering countenance of one I love. Her left hand fell easily across her lap, and the right was cast around the muscular and shaggy neck of the dark hound, as though she had sunk into repose while in the act of caressing her canine preserver.

There has always been to me a reluctance, almost a fear, to awaken any person, even a child, from placid and sweet−seeming slumber. Like taking mortal life, it is the destroying of that which, with all his glorious intellect, all his sublime endurance, all his godlike intellect, *man* never can restore! It is the breaking of a dam, behind whose happy barriers the wild mill−stream of human thoughts and actions is suffered for a while to linger in unvexed and motionless tranquillity! It is the calling forth of the spirit from total absence of volition, from the insensibility of wo, or, perhaps, from the abysses of imagined happiness, to care, and toil, and sorrow, to the blending of all that is most sweet and most bitter, most low and most sublime, most vicious or degraded, and most high and holy, to that blending which men call life!

We know not, we never shall know, what bright hopes we may have severed, what pleasing visions we may have interrupted; visions a thousand times fairer than reality! We know not whether we may have cut short the converse of the sainted mother, come from the land of the departed to pour strange teachings into the ears of that sleeping child, whom she no longer meets, save thus in the still midnight! We know not whether aught that we can offer can equal, nay, compare with, the imaginary luxuries of that state, which a single touch of ours, a word, a kiss, a breath more deeply drawn than common, will scatter to the winds of heaven!

Always, from my childhood upward, have I felt thus; always have I loved, yet feared, to gaze upon the calm unruffled sleeper always have I shunned to sever those mysterious chains. And never, perhaps, were these sensations more vivid in my breast than now, as I stood watching, no longer in anxiety or bitterness, but in hope and rapture, till the time would come when she, who was *my* world, should raise her curtained lids and know me. Nor was it on myself alone that this strange influence was manifest; the very dog, the dumb irrational dog, ever wont to greet my coming by his joyous yelpings and his high bounds into the air, now sat as quietly by the couch−side as though he knew that his slightest motion must arouse the lovely creature over whose rest he, and *he* only, had watched in self−denying faithfulness. Only by a slight motion of his feathery tail, and by a bland and smiling expression of his up−turned eye, did he now indicate his joy at my approach; and as I stood gazing on the lineaments of my long−lost bride, he also turned his head, as though he too felt pleasure in the sight.

Long I stood motionless, and holding in my very breath, lest it should arouse her, though at the same time I would have given worlds, had I possessed them, that she might be awakened. But longer might I have stood watching, had not a single motion of the sleeper decided me. I saw a bright beaming smile steal gradually over those fair features, animating them as does the first ray of sunlight the face of nature, meaningless before and dull. Her lips parted, and in accents of the most silvery music, she murmured forth my name. I could contain myself no longer. Respectfully, purely as I would bend before the shrine of my patron saint, I bowed over the low pallet; lightly I touched her lips with mine lightly as the dew falls upon the flower; yet she sprang from her trance as though the sovereign thunder had rolled above us!

"Harry!" she cried, recognising me at a glance; "beloved Harry, is it is it *indeed* you?"

"My own, *own* angel!" I clasped her to my heart; her arms were about my neck; our bosoms beat together; our lips were mingled in one *first* long delicious kiss. If ever the rapture of a moment may repay the misery of months or years, it is of a moment such as this.

Side by side we sat for hours, my arm encompassing her fairy waist, her head, with all its unbound tresses, leaning upon my iron shoulder. We had no note of time no care for persons. We were united united, as we trusted, never again to part! And what oh what did it reck us of the strife of monarchs or the fate of empires! Our monarch was the bright imbodyment of old Praxiteles, the Grecian Eros of unmingled beauty; our empire with all its mine of treasures, all its unfathomed depths our empire was the heart the human heart.

But as there is nothing permanent here nothing enduring, nothing that hath not its appointed end so was our dream of love brought to its conclusion suddenly and rudely snapped asunder. There was a clatter of armed footsteps in the vestibule a dash of weapons, and the jarring tone of angry voices. I heard old Lydford's mingling fiercely with the tumult. "Fear nothing, sweetest one," I cried; "I will return to you upon the instant. For my sake, fear nothing, Isabel."

"Let me then follow: for *without* you I fear all and every thing; but *with* you nothing!"

But the brawl grew louder, and I caught the dull sound of a blow!

"It cannot be, beloved. I *must* forth, and alone! but in ten seconds' space I will return. Bless you adieu!"

I snatched my sheathed rapier from the table, and, placing it under my arm, rushed forth. The faithful hound gazed wistfully after me with a short surly growl, but never offered to move from the feet of Isabel, to whom he had attached himself, as if knowing that his master valued her at a rate a thousand times higher than the universe, with all that it contained.

CHAPTER XXI.

"My life, my honour, and my cause I tender free to Scotland's laws. Are these so weak, as must require The aid of your misguided ire? Or, if I suffer causeless wrong, Is then my selfish rage so strong, My sense of public weal so low, That, for mean vengeance on a foe, Those cords of love I should unbind, Which knit my country and my kind?" *Lady of the Lake.*

Scarcely had I passed into the outer tent even then unsuspicious of aught beyond some trivial disturbance of the men, elevated, perhaps, by their late victory, beyond the sobriety of discipline ere I was overpowered by a sudden rush of many soldiers; and, although not disarmed or mastered, was borne violently backward into the apartment I had just quitted.

On finding myself standing in the centre of the tent, opposed to at least a score of men, whom I recognised at once as the sergeants of the provost−marshal, my first sensation was of sheer astonishment the second prompted me to snatch my pistols from the table, on which they lay in readiness to my hand, and to raise my bugle to my lips.

In that moment of confusion and surprise, my eye turned instinctively to Isabel. She stood, as I had left her, with hands clasped and pallid features; but her eye was bright and calm, nor was there aught of weak or womanish terror in the expression of her noble countenance.

"No nearer on your lives, no nearer, villains!" I whispered, sternly and audibly through my set teeth. "What means this insolent intrusion?"

I covered the leader of the band with my levelled pistol, as I spoke, apprehending any thing of lawless mutiny rather than my deliberate and legal arrest.

"We regret, fair sir believe me, we regret, while we must execute, our duty," replied the young officer who led the party. "I have a warrant here from the commander, to secure the person of Major−general Harry Mornington, on charges of neglect of duty, of murder, and of the abduction of a royal ward! You must give up your sword and follow us peaceably, if you will; but follow us you *must!* We would be courteous in pursuance of our duty, as far as is consistent with our own security and your safe−keeping."

"And at whose say what *villain's* say am I, a general of division, thus felon−like arrested? or at whose lawless warrant?" I exclaimed, fiercely, and without withdrawing my aim from the person of the speaker. "Go, learn your duty better, sir provost, or sir hangman! For me, you take me not alive, save by the sign−manual of my true superior. An I but blow one call upon this bugle, ye are all dead men one call to the Swiss troops of D'Erlach! Look to it, sir; withdraw your scoundrel sergeants, and that, too, on the instant, or, by the ashes of my fathers, you shall die the death!"

"That you may have the power," replied the other, calmly, "to resist us, to your own safety and to our destruction, I will not gainsay. How far such a proceeding will be to the honour of your name, it is for you to balance. We have already weighed the chances; and it likes us better to fall in the performance of our duty than to die like dogs for breach of it. I do beseech you, sir, put us not to the need of offering violence to an officer of your distinction, and in the presence of so fair a lady! If there be aught of pleasure our courtesy may yield you, command us."

Almost for the first time in my life I was undecided. The man who stood before me was, indeed, innocent of aught, save the performance of his duties his distasteful duties to his superiors; and would it, as he said, be a deed fitting the name of Mornington, to slay an honest servitor for the fault of the bad master? Would it be wise or seemly to provoke a deadly brawl, in which mortal weapons would be wielded by resolved and skilful hands, and that, too, in the very presence of my recovered bride? And yet, how might I quit her with the certainty of meeting her again? While I was yet revolving these wild questions in my brain, she threw herself between me and the provost of the guard, flung her white arms around me, and, turning the fatal weapon from its level,

"For my sake, Harry, for my sake," she cried, "do no such madness. Is it that you *fear* is it that you are conscious of your *guilt*, that you would shun the proof? For shame! for shame! Go forth, my noble husband, trusting in the strength of your own pure nobility, of your own spotless innocence! Strike but one blow against the officers of justice strike but *one* blow and you are lost for ever condemned beyond redemption! Guiltless though you be spotless of sin or shame yet, if you do resist the mandate of the law, you shall be judged as guilty. Go forth, and challenge the bold man who has spoken treason on your name challenge him, not to the arbitry of blood, but to the proof of judgment go forth, and tremble not! Go forth, and let the guilty shudder!"

"It is for you," I cried, moved almost to tears by her enthusiastic speech "it is for you alone that I would strive "

"For me!" she interrupted me "for me! and wherefore? Think you that I would not deem it better to follow you, a man proved innocent, but guiltlessly condemned to follow you to the dungeon, to the scaffold, to the grave! than to sit beside you on earth's proudest throne, if shielded from the power of law by lawless violence?"

"Isabel," I answered "Isabel, you have prevailed!" and turning to the officer, who had waited with patient sympathy, and with somewhat of disgust against his employers working in his features, I addressed him: "On one condition, sir, and on one only, will I follow you. This lady is my wife, my lawful wife. She by the villany of one who was my prisoner some hours since, and who is now, an I misjudge it not, my foul accuser she has been torn from me, and immured, these months past, in a convent−jail! *Her* will I not leave unprotected, and liable to *his* new outrages, though you, and I, and France herself should perish! Let one of your men summon hither D'Erlach, that to his trust I may commit her, and, be it to my death, I follow you without inquiry or resistance. I pledge to you a word unbroken a name immaculate!"

"It is enough, sir. You, Croquart, summon hither instantly the leader of the Switzers; and the rest of you withdraw, but wait without. Your honour, sir, that, rescue or no rescue, you escape not?"

CHAPTER XXI.

"My honour."

Slowly and wearily did the moments creep along. The excitement, which had nerved the lovely girl to such almost unnatural courage, had, with the cause that called it forth, departed. She had sunk down upon the couch, sobbing like one whose heart was already broken; and *I, I* gazed upon her in mute, icy, speechless despair! The revulsion from the summit of hope and joy to the depths of misery had been too sudden, not to be felt overpoweringly by a spirit which, though self−disciplined, was yet so excitable, and fraught with passions sensitive and violent, as my own. I thought the messenger would never have returned; yet was it but a scant half−hour before the veteran D'Erlach stood before me. He gazed about him as he entered in evident surprise, which, as I spoke, gave way to fiercer feelings.

"To you, sir," I said, "as to one whom I deem honest and honourable, whether as a friend or foe, I have a request to offer. I am arrested, by the warrant of the Comte D'Harcourt, arrested as a traitor, murderer, and "

"Ten thousand devils! that shall never be," cried the choleric old Bernois; "never! while there be a Switzer in the camp can wield a halberd!"

"Ay, but it shall," I interrupted him, coolly enough, though not, in truth, unmoved by this sudden and unexpected sympathy "ay, but it shall, and *must!* Guiltless I am, and guiltless will I be *proved*, before my peers! But here is the pinch of this matter. This lady my most unhappy bride hath for her unworthy cousin that *dog* De Chateaufort! would God I had but stricken one good blow, this morning, when I held him by the lying throat! For love of her estates, hath he persecuted her as man nor devil ever persecuted woman! For love of her estates, hath he torn her from the arms of me, her lawful husband, and immured her in a dungeon! For love of her estates, thrice hath he sought my life by the assassin's weapon; and now would seek it, murderously as before, by the perverted sword of justice! 'Twas but this day I rescued her. Now, D'Erlach, for her for her I shame not to confess it I am a COWARD! But swear to me that thou wilt shield her to the death! Swear to me by your own and country's honour by the God of your fathers, and your hopes of life hereafter swear that you will place her, as soon as may be, under the protection of the great Condé, swear this, and I fear nothing!"

"That shall I do," he answered "that shall I do, by God!"

"Isabel," I cried, in tones which I struggled hard to render calm "Isabel, I commit you to the charge of this true gentleman, to the protection of Him who only can protect. Farewell! D'Erlach, to you I give my sword; keep it, as you would keep your honour, bright and untarnished. Farewell, and remember!"

The provost−marshal passed his arm through my own, his men fell into close array before us and in our rear, and we proceeded swiftly through the moonlight camp towards the pavilion of the maréchal.

"This is a painful duty, sir," said D'Harcourt, as I was brought before him, with an affectation of candour and sympathy, although a sneer of self−satisfied resentment played over his saturnine features. "The prisoner whom you sent in this morning hath brought such charges against you such *clear* charges that, by my soul, it is my duty to hold you in security to answer them!"

"At your will, sir!" I answered. "To *you* shall I make no defence, knowing you my enemy! Thus much, however: this prisoner, whose word you dare ay, *dare*, sir *dare* I said and when my arms shall be unfettered by the verdict of my peers, you shall right strictly answer for this *daring!* this prisoner is an attainted traitor! this prisoner is, by the laws of war, amenable to instant penalty, as the defender of a position grossly untenable; and further as the attempted murderer of a herald! Five hundred eyes beheld me fall, this very day of Jesus, beneath his shot, a flag of truce in my hands, and a friendly summons on my lips! Look to it, count, how you shall answer for your present actions to the prince, hereafter!"

"Best think of your own defence, sir," was his reply; "for, by my soul, I deem it will go hardly with you else!"

"You dare not," I answered, "hold me to trial here: the charges are not such as fall within the jurisdiction of a court−martial; and if they were, you have no *peers* of mine, whereof to call one! I claim to be sent into Paris, with the dawn, to make befitting answer to mine equals; and, it may be, to call *you* to a heavy reckoning!"

"In this respect, sir, I shall pleasure you," he again sneeringly replied; "retaining the lady "

He was interrupted by the sudden entrance of an officer, pale and terrified, with his sword drawn, and garments much disordered.

"My lord, there is a movement in the camp the Switzers have rushed to their weapons, and are in fierce rebellion; the cavalry, too, with all their officers, are getting under arms we *fear* violence!"

"*Fear*, sir!" shouted D'Harcourt "*fear* is no word for men much less for officers! if the Swiss dogs rebel, we will right shortly send them howling to their kennels! Beat the alarm! sound trumpets! let the troops of Weimar get into their array! Look to the prisoner, provost−marshal!"

The trumpets sounded to arms, and were answered, throughout every quarter of the camp, by the heavy tramp of disciplined men, the clash of weapons, and the shouts of officers and orderlies. But over all, and through all, rang the hoarse roar of the Switzers, "Unterwald and Uri!" and ever and anon the bugles of the cavalry, pealing in their wild symphonies, were mingled with the cheery shout of, "France Mornington for France and Condé!" Before the troops of Weimar could be assembled and half of them were averse to action the Switzers, in spite of D'Erlach, had seized the magazines, imprisoned the officers, and turned the ordnance from the breastworks upon the quarters of the maréchal. In ten minutes' space the same officer rushed in, accompanied by a dozen others, all dismayed, and evidently hopeless of resistance.

"How now, sirs! are the men of Weimar ready? Let them advance, and, if it needs be, fire; justice shall hold her own!"

"They are not ready, sir; nor will they stir a foot, much less discharge an arquebuse, in this same matter. Your own body−guard are alone faithful!"

"Then let *them* fire on the mutineers!"

"'Twere madness, sir, rank madness! They number scarce five hundred, and the mutineers as many thousands!"

"Do you dispute my will, sir? Before God! an you do not my bidding, you shall first share the punishment of mutiny! Away, sir, to your duty!"

But it was in vain; for the next instant the red glare of a thousand torches gleamed through the canvass walls; and the hoarse cries of the mutineers came close and terrible. I saw it was the moment to interpose I stepped a pace forward, and with a steady eye addressed my enemy:

"The time is come," I said, "when I might triumph, were I what you have dared to name me! But *I* at least will fill the duties of a soldier and a *man!* Let me go forth, and speak with these unruly men; and, by mine honour, the mutiny shall cease!"

"So deal not *I* with traitors sooner will I die!"

"Death! Death!" shouted the mutineers without "Death! or De Mornington!" and the remnant of D'Harcourt's guard was actually driven into the presence of its commander disarmed, and utterly defeated.

"Slay me this ringleader!" shouted the count, maddened by obstinacy, and rendered desperate by his defeat "Up with him to the tent−poles; let his followers see the meed they have brought on their *general!*" The terrified guards of the provost in vain remonstrated the field−officers protested and at length positively refused obedience. In the next moment the canvass of the pavilion was rent into a thousand pieces; the tent−poles broken; the cords severed by the sword and halberd! We stood prisoner and judge accuser and accused in the centre of a circle of twice two thousand men, desperate and successful mutineers! D'Harcourt unsheathed his rapier had one blow been stricken every officer must have perished. With a light spring I vaulted on the table, which fortunately had not been overset in the confusion.

"Hear me," I cried, in high, clear notes; "hear me, ye cavaliers of France, and ye free Switzers! You have mistaken, not yourselves, but me *me*, whom you would thus rescue! Think you so basely of me, then, my fellow−soldiers think you so basely of the man who has already led you led you I *will* say the words to

glory, as that he could shrink from justice! There is no safety to the innocent, but in the law; and in the law put I my trust! But I speak not to men of reason nor plead I to my equals! Soldiers! I do command you `ground your arms!' Down with those rebel pikes! Now, let me see the *slave* that dares to disobey me!"

From the moment in which I first spoke to them there had been a dead silence a breathless pause. I was listened to with the deepest attention: and now, though from the farthest crowd there did arise a cry of "Save him, despite himself! Rescue for Mornington!" the pikes of the front ranks were lowered, and the butts of a thousand arquebuses rang heavily, as they were grounded at my bidding.

"Now, men and soldiers," I continued, "since, as men and soldiers I may *now* address ye, will I speak to your senses; now will I plead for you with my friend the Maréchal D'Harcourt, that ye may be restored, without disgrace or punishment, to your old standing in his favour pledging myself and my *own* honour, that ye offend not in the like again! For myself, at my own pleasure go I to Paris, under honourable ward, to clear my good name from the calumnies of a false traitor; and here, before you all, I take the time to thank our common leader, the noble Côtmte D'Harcourt, that he hath given me this prompt occasion to prove my innocence! I doubt not, he will grant the escort of a troop of mine own cavalry, to assure mine and my lady's safety; and that, with the same party, he will pledge his stainless word to send in my accuser! I speak not this for my own satisfaction for, by St. George, I doubt not, nor fear any thing but to show you men misguided as ye are, and maddened the terms on which we stand I and the Côtmte D'Harcourt!"

The popular mind was touched the proverbial fickleness of mobs was proved once more! The very men who, but a few short moments before, were brandishing their thirsty weapons thirsty for the blood of their commander now answered my rude eloquence, if eloquence it were, with a full−mouthed and hearty shout!

"Live! live! our noble leaders live, Mornington and D'Harcourt!"

The tumult was already at an end; and, making a virtue of necessity, my obstinate old enemy, who was nevertheless, despite his rankling hatred, more moved by my forbearance than he would have been willing to admit, offered me his hand, as I descended from my elevated station, with some show at least of cordiality; pledging himself, in the most unreserved manner, to all which I had promised in his behalf; thanking me for my noble conduct; and expressing himself fully confident that my trial must result in full and honourable acquittal!

Nothing further remained to be done: the mutineers dispersed peaceably to their several quarters; the heavy ordnance was restored to its proper situation; the officers were released from their temporary restraint; the night sentinels hurried to their posts; and all around seemed eager, by their alacrity and prompt obedience, to efface the remembrance of their late misconduct.

As far as I was myself concerned, nothing could have fallen out better; for, although I expected much future inconvenience and annoyance, I could not anticipate much of *peril*, from charges so absurdly unfounded as those on which I stood arraigned. For the rest, I was assured, by my knowledge of D'Harcourt's fears and policy, if not of his probity, that his faith would be strictly preserved; that I should be sent, in company with Isabel, to Paris, where all disputes and doubts would be brought to a speedy and just solution; and that my enemy would be under the same restraint with myself and so prevented from any further machinations against my life, my happiness, or my honour.

For that night I was kept, indeed, under honourable arrest in the quarters of the commander. I was allowed to see my old servant, whom I had fixed upon as one of my own escort, and, through him, to communicate with Isabel; and, although by no means free from care for the future, contrary I believe to the common course of things, I slept calmly and soundly till the morning's dawn.

With the break of day I was informed that the detachment, consisting of an entire regiment of D'Harcourt's German cavalry, was in readiness. I was permitted to select the officers, and even privates, of my own guard of honour; and, having pledged my sacred word for myself and escort, that I would not attempt either to escape or to communicate with Isabel for whom a horse−litter had been provided received my sword from the hands of D'Harcourt himself, with a compliment of far more neatness than sincerity; and mounting my good Bayard, rode forth as a prisoner from the lines in which I had so lately commanded, accompanied by my wife nominally as a hostage for my safe−conduct and by the captive of my own sword, and an attainted traitor to boot, as my accuser! So much for popularity and power so much for the stability of mortal things!

CHAPTER XXII.

"I therefore bring the tribute of my praise To your severity, and commend the justice That will not, for the many services That any man hath done the commonwealth, Wink at his least of ills." *The Fatal Dowry.*

Although we spent many days on the road to Paris, nothing beyond the wonted changes of the vernal weather, from rain to sunshine, or from calm to storm, befell our party. We plodded onward in dull and monotonous silence. Night after night we halted at some petty town, or solitary hamlet, where guards were set and countersigns exchanged with as much regularity as would have become the purlieus of a beleaguered camp; and, morning after morning, we resumed our wearisome march. Through storm or shine, through the chill dews of the evening and the already oppressive heats of noon on! on! still onward! No martial music, cheering the hearts of man and beast alike no fluttering of banners no song or shout rising from the ranks, and relieving the tedium of the day no merriment round the nightly fire!

For a stern disciplinarian, a martinet in camp and on parade, though perhaps no first−rate leader in a stricken field, was the old German who commanded the detachment. To me, indeed, he acted with all the courtesy that could be looked for in my doubtful situation; towards Isabel whom, but for a moment, as she mounted or dismounted from the Spanish jennet, which she preferred to the confinement of a litter, I never saw, or spoke with, from the time of our departure till we reached the gates of Paris he bore himself with the deferential yet distant politeness that was perhaps the most proper line of conduct he could have then adopted; but to De Chateaufort or De Penthiêvre, as he should now be called he was, as I have subsequently learned, short and abrupt in his demeanour, to the very verge of insult; keeping him constantly beneath his own eye, causing two files of troopers to ride with ready arquebuse and lighted match beside his bridle−rein, and constantly reminding him that the slightest attempt at evasion or escape would be followed by a close and certain volley. Me, on the contrary, he permitted, having at the first accepted my parole of honour, to ride in whatever part of the column it listed me, with the sole restriction that I should seek no communication with my wife; who, attended by Lydford, and by a peasant maiden lately pressed into her service, rode somewhat apart from our line of march, escorted by De Charmi and the troop of my own cavalry, for which I had stipulated with the maréchal on the night of my arrest. So painful, however, was the restraint, so torturing the suspense, and, above all, so exquisitely miserable the sensation of constant vicinity to the idol of my heart, accompanied by total exclusion from her sweet society, that no shipwrecked mariner, upon his lonely isle of ocean, ever looked forth more anxiously to spy some gliding sail upon the far horizon, than did I to see the gate even of my dungeon for such, I was too well assured, would be my next abode.

While we were yet distant many leagues from the metropolis, we learned that the court and the *Frondeurs* were engaged in constant and friendly negotiation; and that there was scarcely a doubt to be entertained but that we should find Mazarin reinstated in the Palais Royal, on our return, in all the plenitude of his power and greatness. And so indeed we did. It was on a calm and lovely evening in the earlier part of May that we arrived at St. Denys: the sun was fast sinking below the horizon; and, as we entered the suburbs of the little borough, the report of the evening−gun announced that the watch was set, and the gates of Paris closed till the morning's light. Here then were we compelled to wait another weary night; and that, too, under more of restraint than I had heretofore experienced. A sentinel was actually posted within the chamber in which I slept, and all communication, even

with Lydford or De Charmi, thus effectually prevented. For this, however, I cared the less, that I had already furnished both of these trusty friends with full instructions as to their proceedings in my behalf on reaching the metropolis; and had even provided the former with letters to the Prince of Condé, possessing him of the features of my arrest and accusation, and eagerly claiming his unforgotten promise of friendship and protection.

At a very early hour of the ensuing morning I learned that a courier had been despatched to Mazarin on the previous night, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour; and that he had returned with despatches to the colonel of the regiment to whose custody I had been delivered; and with directions, the purport of which was explained to me ere long, in a way far more summary at least, if less intelligible, than words. My sword was taken from me; I was even ironed, heavily and disgracefully ironed submitting to all indignities with a patience caused only by a desire to conciliate and seated in a carriage between two tall and gloomy−looking Germans armed to the teeth. It was in vain that I inquired what would be my destination; that I passionately entreated that I might be permitted to have an interview with my wife, if but for a moment, and in the presence of twenty witnesses: it was in vain! the door of the carriage was secured, the blinds drawn closely, and we were whirled along at the utmost speed of six strong Flanders mares; while the clang of hoofs and the jingling of spurs and scabbards announced that we were accompanied by a powerful escort. After driving at a rapid pace for the better part of an hour, we stopped suddenly; and I could hear, although indistinctly, that some military formalities were taking place between the leader of our escort and an officer on duty. In a few moments we were again in motion; and I could readily perceive, by the hollow sound of the horses' feet and the deep rumbling of the wheels, that we were in the act of crossing a drawbridge probably one of the barriers of the city; another moment passed, and the rattle of the wheels over the rough pavement announced the truth of my conjecture. For half an hour more we proceeded at a slower and more cautious rate; we again stopped; we crossed another drawbridge, passed beneath an archway so deep and gloomy that I was sensible of an increase of darkness even in the dim twilight of the closed carriage! the door was opened! the truth the fearful truth flashed on my mind I was a prisoner in the horrible Bastile. Around me were the truculent officials of that dark prison−house; above me its gigantic towers, bristling with culverin and cannon; and beneath my feet, beneath the massive pavements of the court in which I stood, were the dark subterraneous vaults, to which perhaps, even now, *letters de cachet* had consigned me, never again to look upon the light of day. I gazed around me anxiously, but my eye fell not upon a single face of sympathy or friendship. There was no insult, no rudeness, but no commiseration! There was a business−like air in the proceedings of the military jailers, a calm, every−day insensibility in their demeanour, which was perhaps more fearful, because less exciting, than would have been the most violent outrage, the most vile indignity. There was, however, no room for appeal or for resistance: to have complained or reasoned would have been undignified; to have contended with such things as those about me, alike unsoldierlike, unmanly, and degrading.

"Lead on!" I said, folding my arms upon my breast; "lead on! to the scaffold, if you will I am prepared!"

"Not yet, sir not *that* yet!" was the ruffian−like reply; "though, for aught I see, 'tis like enough to follow! But come, sir, we will show you your abiding−place; 'tis stronger, I assure you, if less lightsome, than the Palais Royal!" and he would have laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Back, dog!" I cried, my fierce passion mastering my better judgment; "the like of you I touch not, save with the riding−rod or with the sword!"

"Somewhat too ready with the latter, methinks," the warder sneered again "for the safety of your neighbours, or, for that matter, of yourself! and, after all, there is not so much difference between a murderer and him who turns the key on him *Sacristie!* "

"Beware!" I cried, now moved beyond all bounds of temper; "beware, low fellow! my imprisonment can be but of short duration, and you shall answer to the Prince de Condé right shrewdly for this outrage on his officer."

"To the prince? outrage?" The man absolutely laughed aloud. " *Ventre St. Gris!* 'tis at the prince's order you stand thus committed; and, for the shortness of your durance, methinks your shrift is like to prove yet shorter, and your life most short of all! Here," he continued, "Bernhard and Jeanneton, here, lead this gallant to the cell of old Balue! I had designed him for a turret lodging, but he waxes malapert, and by my faith shall pay it with his person! Away with him!"

Perceiving at once the folly of suffering myself to be annoyed by the insolence of a fellow like this, and the impolicy of irritating one who had evidently the power of rendering my condition even more insupportable than it was at present, I bridled my indignant passion, and, without another word, quietly followed the steps of the chief warder.

Through many a winding passage so dank and low−browed in their squat and shapeless arches that they resembled excavations from the rock, rather than vaults of masonry down many a flight of steps faintly and fearfully lighted by here and there a lurid lantern far from the blessed light of day, we dived into the haunts of misery and guilt. At length we reached, as it would seem, the lowest pit. The floor was, indeed, a living rock, as were a portion of the walls; while from them hung many a long stalactite, formed by the incessant moisture, that fell with a dull plashing sound the only one which broke these fearful solitudes upon the natural pavement. A low door of iron was before us the key grated in the wards, the heavy leaves revolved, and I was thrust into my cheerless habitation. It was a long, low hall as I viewed it dimly by the light of the jailer's torch supported by a dozen massy pillars, bearing rings of iron riveted or morticed firmly into their sides. But the object on which my eye fell most suddenly was the horrible invention from which the cell had derived its name the horrible invention of him who, like the framer of the classic bull, was doomed to be the first victim of his own ingenious cruelty the iron cage of Balue! There it stood dark and rusty, but still perfect, although centuries had passed over it a fearful monument of human misery and superhuman malice.

"St. George!" I cried, involuntarily recoiling, bold and young as I then was, at the idea of confinement in such a spot "St. George! but ye will not leave me here!"

"Ay, will we, by St. Denys!" he replied. "The durance of monsieur will be so brief that it will scarce be tedious. Good repose to you, sir; and next time, an you will take my advice, you will have learned that civil words cost nothing. Good repose!"

With a hoarse laugh he left me. And lucky was it for him, and I doubt not for myself, that he so left me; for I was wrought to desperation, and, although unarmed, such was my power and activity at the period of which I write, that the struggle would have been severe between us, although it must in the end have terminated in favour of the odds. As it was, the key was turned upon me, and I knew myself a prisoner, at the very point of time in which I hurled myself against the door. With another sneering laugh the ruffians withdrew. I listened to the sound of their retiring footsteps till they were lost in distance, with no certainty that I should ever hear again the step of living man. Hundreds had vanished from the face of earth during the sovereignty of Richelieu, never to be heard of more the secret dagger the cord the bowl or, surer and more terrible than all, the wasting agonizing famine had consumed them! Why should it not *me* likewise? For a while these fantasies crowded thick and incessant on my brain; but by a mighty effort I repulsed them. I had heard of men who had been driven frantic by their own imaginings, who had even lost the knowledge of their own immortal essence, who had grown enamoured of their prison−houses, careless of themselves, debased, and brutified; and I resolved at once that so should it never be with me! I arranged my thoughts, I called up all my constitutional courage to my aid, all my habitual coolness and decision; nor did they desert me at my need. After a few hours I felt satisfied satisfied even in the cheerless gloom of that miserable dungeon that, whatever might be the hatred of my enemies, there could exist no sufficient causes for my destruction. Mazarin, with all his deception, all his craft, and all his grasping ambition, was never wantonly or unnecessarily cruel; neither could there exist any reasons to render my death or removal desirable to the court. Offence I might have given suspicion might be aroused against me; yet I had done too much to benefit, while I possessed too little power to injure. I was at once an object of too great importance to be

cast aside or annihilated for any interest of trivial moment; and of too little public weight to make the danger and trouble of my destruction inferior in consideration to its necessity. Condé, I was assured, would not forsake me in my need. Anne of Austria, too, as far as men may judge of princes, was well inclined towards me; and Mazarin himself had stronger motives for assisting than for attacking me. Thus mused I amid the thick and, as it were, palpable darkness of my living tomb; and ere six hours had passed away, the correctness of my opinions was proved. A footstep was heard approaching it drew near was stationary at the entry of my cell. A turning−box in the door revolved; it contained a lighted lamp, food, water, and a change of raiment. And I, anxious and broken−spirited as I had cause to be, ate, drank, composed my spirits, and arranged my dress. I wandered to and fro the sounding vault; I read the scrawled legends of human misery that were graven a dark registry upon the walls. I took no note of hours, but in the wasting of my lamp; it waned, expired, and I was once again in utter darkness. Coolly and fearlessly I rolled myself in the voluminous cloak which I had fortunately retained upon my person; and, extending my body on the rugged pavement, slept no less soundly than I had often done on the fragrant turf and beneath the pure canopy of heaven. If the fetters were about my limbs, my soul was chainless; and there was a buoyant confidence in my spirit that rendered me, not merely equal, but superior to this last affliction! I know not how long I had lain thus, buried in slumber and insensible to all my hardships, when I was aroused suddenly by a light glaring into my eyes. I sprang to my feet, prepared on the instant to do battle for my life; but the man who stood over me had none of the murderous intentions which I had been prompt to suspect. He was one of the warders of the Bastile, but, by his dress alike and his demeanour, of higher rank than those who had treated me with such indignity on the preceding day.

"This must be amended," he muttered to himself, before he addressed me "this must be amended, sir. Will it please you rise and follow me to a more beseeming chamber prison though it be?"

"As you will," I replied; "but to the prisoner it matters little whether his state be one degree more tolerable or no. Nevertheless, I thank you for your courtesy." But, although I carried it off thus lightly, my heart did indeed leap cheerily, as I left those damp and desolate apartments, and climbed the long, long staircases that led to the genial realms of that day which never might penetrate those subterranean caverns. The blessed sunlight streamed upon my soul with a consolation, a happiness, and a power; the very courtyard, which had yesterday appeared so dark and dungeon−like such is the force of contrast looked blithe and beautiful! The air, which I had fancied, even then, to partake of the gloom and chillness of a jail, murmured freshly, and with a voice of music about my temples. The sunshine, the air, and above all the comparative liberty, were ministers of Hope!

In a few moments I was again immured in a small chamber, in an upper turret, light in itself and neatly furnished, though the casements, in addition to their being some two hundred feet above the level of the yard they overlooked, were crossed and recrossed by heavy bars of iron. Here, too, was I furnished with plain but wholesome food, and with a cup of wine, not perhaps of the first growth, but passable enough. Linen and all the necessaries or luxuries of the toilet were provided, nor were books denied to me. But still, although I compelled myself to use them although I divided my prison−day into allotted portions of time wherein to trim my beard and hair; to take such exercise as the limits of my cell afforded; to read; to eat my solitary meals although I tasked my spirit to all this, with a view to banishing the tedium and monotony, and to defeating that careless and despairing languor which has eaten into many a noble spirit when pining in hopeless solitude still, as sun after sun rose and set, and I received no tidings, underwent no change of condition, my heart did in truth begin to sink despondency was fast creeping over me my eye was growing dim, and my cheek hollow the cankering iron was making inroads into my soul. On the tenth day of my captivity, for the first time I omitted the wonted distribution of my time my hair remained untrimmed, my garb unchanged, my food untasted. I was sitting by the narrow window, watching till the great sun should sink beneath the wilderness of walls that bounded my horizon, and drawing half−credited omens from the flood of lurid and bloodlike light which he poured through the smoke and haze of the metropolis upon the gray towers of the prisonfortress.

"I bring you tidings, sir," cried a voice from behind, of one who had entered my cell unobserved "good tidings, an you be innocent. The Parliament is even now in session, and to−morrow you shall be judged!"

"Ha! this is, indeed, in all events good tidings; for, trust me, I would sooner fall by axe and block in the free sunshine, than die thus, like a murrained sheep, in the closed atmosphere of earth's most brilliant palace!"

My informant was the warder, who had alone demeaned himself towards me courteously; but, beyond this, he was unable or unwilling, perhaps both, to give me any information; but even this had raised me from the abyss of mental gloom to hope and to anticipated joy. The moments flew briefly, though morning found me not, as heretofore, a sleeper.

With the dawn I arose, arranged my long hair with more than my accustomed care, curled my mustache, and dressed myself with as much of splendour as my scanty wardrobe would permit; nor did I hesitate to fling the rich scarf of white and gold, which marked the royal party, with the swordless scabbard attached to it, across my shoulders. I felt that to be innocent was not enough, if I should *seem* despondent; and desperately I assumed an air of confidence and joy which in good truth I felt not. Nay, more than this, when my morning meal was set before me, although I loathed the very sight of food, I did violence to my feelings I broke bread and ate, I quaffed a goblet of the thin wine of Gascoigny which had been set before me, and I arose strengthened, if not refreshed.

Another hour passed, and I was summoned! "I go," I cried exultingly "I go as to my bridalfeast, rejoicing!" and I learned afterward that this brief sentence was not without its influence. I reached the courtyard, and there was drawn out a guard, an escort of the royal Switzers, in their rich uniforms of white and purple, with morion and halbered, plume and scarf, glancing and fluttering in the cloudless morning. The governor of the Bastile himself stepped forward, and offering me his ceremonious greeting, delivered me to the custody of the fiscal, who stood ready to receive me with the captain of the guard. The soldiers formed around us in serried files; the word was given to march, and in silence I was conducted from those sad precincts.

At the outer gate stood a carriage, into which, with the civil officers, I was at once desired to enter. We drove slowly forward, and in half an hour reached the gateway of the Hotel de Ville. The ponderous vehicle stopped short; the guard closed up, forming a lane from the carriage to the doors of the building a lane of serried steel; and still at every step the Switzers fell in behind me, offering no chance or possibility of escape, had I been so mad as to attempt it.

Thus was I conducted into the great hall of justice: the presidents were already in session, with their chief, the upright and noble−minded Molè, at their head. From such men as these I had but little cause for apprehension, even though I perceived that the celebrated Talon, as advocate−general, was about to exert his unrivalled powers in favour of the prosecution. The vast apartment was crowded the space below the bar with advocates and counsellors; and the long galleries, extending from the ceiling to the floor, with anxious and wondering spectators: on either hand the bar, at which were placed two scribes, or secretaries, with their writing materials, to enter the proceedings, hung a huge crimson curtain, behind whose folds I could readily judge, by their sudden and unnatural waving, that some persons, most probably the witnesses, were concealed, until the time should arrive when they were destined to appear. Slowly I cast my eyes around the gathered concourse, but I found not one familiar face; hundreds were there whom I had seen in casual encounters, whose names I could have remembered, without perhaps much effort, but not a single one of those whom I had called my friends. My heart for a moment sunk within me; but I manned it I manned it with the reflection, that on my own bearing, on my own calmness, on my own wielding of the intellectual sword, the victory of that day would probably depend.

The huzzars so are the inferior officers of justice denominated in France the huzzars led me to a seat immediately below the bar; and, after a few moments' consultation, Talon arose, and whispered to a crier, who stood below, waiting the orders of the court; and the immediate result was a proclamation, in loud and sonorous tones

"Hear, all men, hear! and first, hear, Harry Mornington styled major−general, in the service of the most Christian king hear thou! Thou standest here charged with these heinous misdemeanours, crimes, and

felonies: Neglect of duty towards your king Murder done and completed on the persons of François de Chateaufort and Charles de Chateaufort the younger, of Jacques Menard their body servant, Jean Dumas their ecuyer, and Amelie Menard, fille The forcible bearing off and subsequent seduction of Isabel de Chateaufort, commonly known as Isabel de Coucy, and wrongfully styled Isabel de Mornington, by which thou hast persuaded or compelled the said Isabel to live with thee, as a wife with her husband, no legal marriage existing, to the great injury of her family and the deep dishonour of her name And lastly, with having, by the aid of some priest unknown, unlawfully and feloniously wedded the same Isabel de Chateaufort, the permission of her next of kin, or the signature of his gracious majesty, not having been appended to such contract, which is therefore void, invalid, and illegal!

"How sayest thou, Harry Mornington standest thou here prepared to submit thee to the mercy of the court, or dost thou rather claim thy trial?"

"The charges," I replied, "which I have this day heard advanced against me, are foul, malignant, and false−hearted lies! and so by the blessing and the aid of the Eternal so shall I prove them! Of your laws, your customs, or your justice, I know nothing; but, well aware that it is not for the prisoner to impugn the will of his judges, I do claim full inquiry and free justice pleading, in the first instance, that I am, in this matter, guiltless, upon my honour!"

Again there was a pause again a whispered consultation and again the herald's voice broke the silence which brooded so deeply over that concourse.

"Prisoner, wilt thou be tried according to the laws of this most great and ancient realm; swearing upon the blessed crucifix, and by thy hopes of the salvation that cometh thence swearing to speak the truth before this court, and in the presence of your God?"

"I swear!" was my brief and almost stern reply.

After another pause, in which a third discussion seemed to be agitating the court, I was asked whether I would first be tried on the first *arrêt* for breach of duty!

"It recks me little how I be tried, or when, so it be shortly. But if it be deemed justice to bring a prisoner from his dungeon to the judgment−hall ignorant of the matter charged against him, ignorant of his accusers, without the opportunity of summoning a single witness, and there to pit the keenest wits of your best lawyers against a single soldier may the court pardon my abruptness I term such justice mere judicial murder!"

Without seeming even to have heard the words of my bold appeal, the court again signified their intentions to the crier, and again I was questioned:

"Harry de Mornington, standest thou before the court innocent or guilty of the alleged breach of duty towards your king?"

"Before God, not guilty! And may one plea suffice, to *all* the charges I have but *one* before my God, not guilty!"

"The court gives license to the advocate−general to proceed!"

Talon then stepped forward, and, in a few words, declared, that the breach of duty having been investigated by military judges already, and their decision having proved favourable to the prisoner, he was directed to withdraw the charge! The court consulted again for a moment or two, and proclamation was made, that

"The court are of opinion, and therefore solemnly pronounce that the prisoner is NOT GUILTY of the alleged breach of military duty!"

"Gentlemen of the court," continued Talon, "and you, monsieur the president, to you shall I right shortly prove the murder of the noble youths named at length in the proclamation of the court, no less than of their body−servants; the former of whom fell by the shot of a concealed assassin the latter in gallantly attempting to arrest the prisoner after the commission of the deed! Painful as it may be to my own feelings thus to be called on to accuse a gentleman whose gallantry in the field, and whose devotion to his king, are heretofore undoubted, I must remind you, gentlemen of the court, that guilt comes not at once, or suddenly; it may lie dormant in the breast of men of virtuous seeming dormant for years but when it doth break forth, openly, boldly, manifestly, as it hath done in this instance, which we shall prove hereafter, no character, however high, no virtue, however evident and noble, may avail to set aside the proof! Gentlemen, I shall delay the court no further; the prisoner hath confessed that he is unprovided with a single witness *we* of the prosecution are not so unfortunate; although one of our most important was cut off as it is well supposed, by the hand of him who stands before you on the fatal field of Charenton. Enough, however, we do still possess to establish, beyond a doubt, the guilt of this brave, but, I regret to use the words, most guilty gentleman! Will the court cause the following papers to be read duly recorded and attested, as it will not fail to notice, by the president of the courts judicial at Bar le Duc?"

The assent of the court was instantly granted; and the crier recited, or read aloud, a long and sufficiently well−connected string of evidence, professing to be the affidavit of Eugene Lacretelle, body−servant to the Duke de Penthiêvre, since slain at the battle of Charenton! The purport was this that on the morning of the twelfth of January, he, the witness, was engaged in escorting together with Jacques Menard, mentioned in the indictment, as also with Charles de Chateaufort the younger a carriage, occupied by François de Chateaufort, Isabel de Chateaufort, and Amelie Menard, the attendant of the lady. That he was so engaged by order of monsieur, the *then* Duke de Penthiêvre; and that he had been accompanied, until just before the catastrophe, by Achille de Chateaufort, the *present* duke; that the object of their mission was to conduct Isabel de Chateaufort, suspected of indiscretion, to a nunnery near St. Mihiel. That they had reached the high−road from Vitry to Bar le Duc about a quarter of an hour; had taken a relay of horses, and left their escort in the rear. That he himself, with Jacques Menard, who drove as postillion, and Charles de Chateaufort the younger, were now the only persons left in attendance on the carriage, but that, being on a public and frequented road, they still apprehended nothing of peril. That upon entering a dense tract of woodlands the witness being then some twenty paces in the rear a shot was fired from the covert, which took deadly effect on the postillion, Jacques Menard; a second, which brought down the horse of Charles de Chateaufort; and then a third, which, as subsequently ascertained, slew Amelie Menard; that the witness immediately drew rein, and galloped back, with a view to bringing up the relay to the rescue; but not before he saw a person, whom he has since ascertained to be one Harry Mornington, major−general and *chef d'escadron* in the royal service, rush out and strike down the aforesaid Charles de Chateaufort by a thrust of his rapier; that, before the witness lost sight of the group, François de Chateaufort had leaped out of the carriage, and was fighting hand to hand with the murderer; that, having succeeded in overtaking the escort, the witness brought them up by the forest−roads, and nearly intercepted the prisoner; who got off, however, after a desperate resistance, in which he slew Jean Dumas by a pistol−shot, bearing with him the said Isabel de Chateaufort; and making good his retreat, by swimming the Marne, then in wintry flood.

Thus closed this precious document; which, regularly signed in the presence of witnesses, and with the attested autograph of the deceased, was brought forward as the strongest evidence against me. It will be readily believed, that I exerted my whole intellect to discover the slightest defect or discrepancy in its details; that I weighed every syllable, as though my life depended on the construction of each word. It was not long ere *I* was satisfied! Suddenly, as I raised my eyes, I caught the glance of Talon fixed on me as though he would have read my soul but, as our looks encountered, the phrase which had arrested my attention seemed to flash upon him likewise for an instant's space he clearly was embarrassed; though, when he perceived that I had discovered his confusion, he turned aside, as if to examine some other documents relating to the cause. When the written affidavits had been thoroughly recited, the crier summoned Achille de Chateaufort, Duke de Penthiêvre; and, with a front of unabashed audacity, my old antagonist stepped forward. He delivered his evidence firmly, and in a well−set speech; answering all questions readily; and bearing the cross−examination by which some of the younger advocates attempted, from pure love, as it seemed, of mischief and chicanery, to disconcert him with an

air of lofty and unmoved integrity! The sum of that which he stated was in all respects corroborative of the testimony that had been previously introduced, with the additional sanction derived from the oath of an eye−witness.

He swore that he entertained no malice against me, the prisoner, further than the natural desire of bringing the murderer of his brother, and the seducer of his cousin, to the sword of justice; and that he had no views in this proceeding, save the public good. Observing, further, that had not his feelings on the latter point been peculiarly strong and vivid, he should hardly have been willing, even to avenge the slaughter of his beloved kinsmen, to render the misfortunes of his house a subject of common parlance, and of ribald calumny.

His statement went to prove that Isabel de Chateaufort, his cousin, and the natural daughter of his maternal aunt being a girl of light character, it had been judged expedient by his father, her sole guardian that she should be consigned to a nunnery, wherein her name and her dishonour might be alike forgotten. That, on the morning alluded to before, he had, as stated in the affidavit of Eugene Lacretelle, escorted his elder brothers through the forest to the causeway of Bar le Duc; the two latter, with the servants above specified, continuing to accompany their frail kinswoman after he had left them, as had been before resolved. That barely a quarter of an hour had elapsed from the time of his leaving them, ere Eugene Lacretelle returned at a hard gallop, with the intelligence that the carriage had been waylaid, and his younger brother murdered by an unknown assassin. That immediately he rushed to the rescue with all his followers, and arrived in time to witness the death of François by the hands of the prisoner, and nearly captured him on the spot; although, by the goodness of his horse, and by his desperate fighting, he had finally succeeded in bearing off the guilty girl, whose indiscretion had been the cause of so much misery. That he had himself subsequently rescued his cousin from her foul seducer, and had been prevented only by the civil conflicts from bringing on this prosecution at an earlier date and that he had now only been enabled to do so by the courtesy and high honour of the Comte D'Harcourt, who had moreover saved his life from the same weapon which had drunk the life−blood of his brethren.

"And wherefore," I asked him, the moment he had concluded his statement "and wherefore was it deemed necessary to procure the written evidence of an eye−witness, who, though subsequently slain, was then in good health, and easy to be produced in court at any moment?"

"Men's lives, as the prisoner well knows," De Chateaufort sneeringly replied, "are easily cut short; and it was deemed advisable to have some legal documents, whereby to establish the guilt of Monsieur Mornington, should he succeed as he has too surely done in removing the obnoxious witness!"

"Ha, sir," I replied; "and in addition to his other merits, this most egregious witness was a prophet? is it not so?"

A bright smile shot across the countenance of Molè; and he addressed me cheeringly in the spirit of his speech, though the tone was severe, and the words harsh.

"How mean you, prisoner a prophet? dare you to make sport of this matter or to contemn the court?"

"With all humility, monsieur the president, and with all due acknowledgment of mine own ignorance, I would advance in my defence and pray the noble court now sitting to observe that this Eugene Lacretelle must indeed have been a *very* prophet! Here, in this paper, dated and regularly signed on the twenty−ninth day of January past the very gallant and most upright gentleman who, for the public good, has sworn to some score or two of gross and slavish lies against the life of a man who never injured him or his against the honour of his own persecuted cousin this very gallant gentleman, this honest, patriotic prosecutor, is styled the *present* Duke of Penthiêvre, and his yet baser sire the *then* duke! Now may it please the president to look somewhat the more closely into this matter he will find that the said worthy sire of this worthy son was in full life some three weeks later than the date of this same document, and some two weeks later than the *death* of the pretended signer. So much for the statement of Eugene Lacretelle! Ha! sir, doth not this pinch you the more closely?"

A low hum of approbation ran through the court, and, though it was checked on the instant from the judgment−seat, a corresponding movement took place a shuddering movement, as of intense excitement among the assembled lawyers.

"The prisoner is correct, monsieur the advocate," uttered the deep voice of the stately president; "there hath been foul play, and most foul perjury in this! Hast thou, sir, aught to advance, why we dismiss not this complaint?"

Talon arose, but slowly, and evidently disconcerted; still, however, he endeavoured to maintain his ground the document he allowed to be a forgery, though it had escaped his own notice, and he smiled strangely as he spoke but yet the evidence of Penthiêvre himself whose character alone would vouch for his having been deceived, not a deceiver in this matter was unimpeached, and *must* be disproved.

"And it *shall* be so!" I cried; "an the court will grant me a delay, to summon witnesses."

"There may be no delay," was the president's reply; "but call your witnesses it may be they are even now in court."

"Isabel de Mornington!"

"Isabel de Mornington!" repeated the clear voice of the crier "Isabel de Mornington, witness in the prisoner's behalf, stand forth!"

Slowly the crimson curtain was drawn aside, and there supported on the right and the left by the great Condé, and, stranger yet, by the Benedictine prior who had united us in that tie which the malignant slave before me had so feloniously laboured to dissever there stood my lost, my virgin bride! Pale she was pale as the snow−drift of December. Agitation was in her manner, at times almost overpowering shame and sorrow seemed to sweep across her mind, in one wild deluge, obliterating every sense beside yet was there no doubt, no terror, no dismay in her calm blue eye. That eye was turned towards me with an expression of the most unutterable tenderness; a crimson flash passed like a meteor across her speaking features, and was again swallowed up in that fixed paleness. I almost feared that her presence of mind was leaving her; but I should have better known the strength of that heroic spirit.

"Here!" she replied, to the summons of the crier, in those soft low tones which speak so keenly to the heart "here stand I Isabel de Mornington, born Isabel de Coucy to witness in behalf of my most noble and most slandered lord, to hurl back upon the head of yon base calumniator the shame and the imputed guilt which he has striven to heap upon one whose whole life has been, through him and his, a long, long series of suffering and sorrow. Hear me, oh hear me, if you be men, and let my words prevail they are the words of truth."

I looked to Penthiêvre: he had turned away his head he could not brook the calm intelligence, the mute upbraiding of that most eloquent eye! As she ceased from speaking, a thrill ran through the breast of every man in that wide concourse a deep breath was drawn by all, so simultaneously as to seem almost a sigh and, with a smile of benevolent approbation flashing across his noble features, the president encouraged her to proceed.

"Doubt nothing, lady," he said "doubt nothing of the calm dispassionate attendance of the court; and, above all, *fear* nothing. Say on, boldly and thoroughly, whatever you may know of this dark−seeming business; we are prepared to hear you, not indeed with favour, but with impartial judgment."

"The president will do well to remember," exclaimed Talon, "that the witness claims to be *wife* of the prisoner, and may not, therefore, testify!"

"Not upon oath!" returned Molè "not upon oath! The court cannot forget but *pour renseignement!* Madame de Mornington will now proceed."

"I have been," she said, "for years an orphan, under the hard and cruel ward of the late duke, the sire of my now accuser. That the wretch," and her lip writhed with indignation "that the wretch before you has dared to blacken *my* good name, I marvel not nor is it in aught marvellous. When for the space of years long wasting years they have succeeded, sire and son, in blasting the good name of my mother, in proclaiming *me* the child of infamy! when a brother has murdered his own sister, by the weapon of her outraged feelings! when, for the gain of a few sordid acres, he hath registered an oath a perjured oath against his own immortal soul what marvel if the son of that same brother should seek to blight name, fame, and honour in that sister's child? But now the time hath come the purposes of the Eternal have been fulfilled and He hath put forth, in this matter, his terrible right hand his workings are as evident in the witness I shall lay before you, as is the sun in heaven at noonday. That *wretch*, who even now is cowering and cringing beneath my words that *wretch* hath sworn that, on the morning of the guilty deed which he hath charged upon the head of one whom he *knows* innocent, I was committed to the care of those most wretched brethren. It is false! false as the great and holy One can witness false as the imputation he hath dared to cast upon my woman−fame! In the dead of night the dead of midnight, was my lonely chamber forced by the elder brother, François de Chateaufort, and by the wretched victim of his villanies, Amelie de Menard. 'Twas to no nunnery they would have borne me in that carriage, but to eternal infamy and sin. Married already to another, François de Chateaufort would have compelled me to his wedding−couch *me*, the daughter of his father's sister *me*, whom they have dared to stigmatize as frail and indiscreet *me*, who would sooner have wedded the abhorred death! It was night, as I have said before black night when I was hurried into that carriage, bound and speechless! Till the dawn of day we journeyed, and, by the sounds about us, I do well believe we were escorted as for once *he* hath said truly by Achille de Chateaufort. Day broke, and we were in the forest. A shot *was* fired from the covert but not, as he well knows, by this true gentleman a shot was fired, and it *did* slay Jacques Menard; another, and, missing narrowly the head of François de Chateaufort, it *did* cut off the miserable Amelie in the very flush and rankness of her crimes! I saw it, by the truth of Him who cannot lie I saw the brother, Charles de Chateaufort the younger, rush from the coppice, with the weapons in his hand, and aiming desperately at the life of his own mother's son! I saw Eugene de Lacretelle fly; and I saw François de Chateaufort leap forth, rapier in hand, to meet him! More I saw not; for the wounded girl, who had fallen upon me when she received the bullet, entwined me in her arms, dragged me into the bottom of the vehicle, and held me there until the overpowering strength of agony was conquered by the hand of death. But, even thus, I heard the shivering clash of weapons, wielded by kindred hands, for not another human being stood beside them. Anon I caught the tramp of a horse; nearer it came, and nearer. I heard a voice beseeching them `to hold their hands, if it were but for a moment!' but still the clash of steel came fast and frequent an instant, and I heard a grapple, a fierce death−struggle, and a voice a yelling voice cry, `Brother, we shall meet in HELL!' My terrible companion was, at the last, stone dead. I broke from her embrace, I staggered from the carriage, and I saw that miserable guilty pair, lifeless, and cold as the frosty soil on which they lay, pierced and gored by the bloody blades that still were clutched in those fratricidal hands! Beside them stood a stranger, sorrowfully gazing at the kindred dead; he leaned upon his naked sword but it was bloodless bright and untarnished as *his* honour and *my* truth that stranger was Harry Mornington! More I know not, for, with horror and disgust, I swooned. More I know not, till we were weltering in the icy waters of the Marne my only refuge from the unrelenting hate of that all−perjured enemy, who has this day added wilful and deliberate perjury to his long list of crimes!"

"It is enough," cried Molè, starting from his seat; and with one voice the court, the advocates, ay, and the anxious and excited spectators, with one voice cried, "It is enough!"

"But were it *not* enough," said Condé, stepping forth, "I too can testify that, some six weeks now past, the prisoner at the bar related to me, word for word, and syllable for syllable, the evidence of that wronged lady; and, further yet, this Benedictine friar holds the confession on his death−bed the confession prompted by late penitence of the *last* Duke de Penthiêvre; for he who hath this day insulted your ears with his atrocious lies is no *duke* , but an attained traitor!"

"Stand forth, the Benedictine!"

And, throwing off his cowl, the noble priest stood forward. As De Chateaufort's eye fell on him, distracted as he was before, and guilt−stricken, he shrunk back trembling, as though in a palsy fit "It is a spirit," he cried, "an avenging spirit!"

"No spirit," answered the monk, in his deep voice of music "no spirit, but most surely an avenger. I am the father Gualtier, superior of the convent of St. Benedict aux Layes; and *I*, as such, and knowing of her origin knowing her to be the persecuted daughter of a murdered mother *I*, in the chapel of my convent, and in the presence of two, the eldest of our brotherhood, united her to this true gentleman."

"Dared you," cried Talon "dared you so to unite an heiress, and a minor, without the written warrant of her next of kin?"

"I did *not*," to my ungovernable astonishment, was the reply; "for I held, as so in duty bound, the warrant of her next of kin."

"Display it to the court."

And, by my honour, he drew forth a strip of parchment, with a seal and signatures attached, and tendered it to the advocate without delay or hesitation.

"I, Gualtier de Coucy," it was published by the crier "I, Gualtier de Coucy, in the presence of two witnesses, do grant my full and free permission to my own and only daughter, Isabel de Coucy, by my true wife, *born* Isabel de Chateaufort, deceased, to wed with Harry Mornington, a cavalier of England, and a major−general of the most Christian king.

"Given on this twelfth day of January, 1649, in this convent of St. Benedict aux Layes.

Signed, "Gualtier de Coucy.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Witnessed by brothers Jerome le Noir and Ignatius Fayolle, of the same Benedictine convent."

"He hath been dead for years! Where got you this false signature?" cried Talon.

"He is alive to−day," sternly replied the monk; "and at his own hands I received it."

"Produce the man!"

"He stands before you. *I I* am Gualtier de Coucy! *I*, when the wrongful decree was issued by this very court that severed me from my truly wedded wife *I*, when that injured angel was slaughtered as her daughter hath well worded it slaughtered by the sword of her own outraged affections *I* buried my devouring anguish within the peaceful walls of St. Benedict aux Layes; and, all praise be to the One Eternal, *I* have so saved my child!"

"My father, merciful God my father!" with a piercing cry, that penetrated the soul of every hearer with a cold and steel−like keenness, she flung herself upon the breast of the noble Benedictine, and he, from those unfathomable eyes, smiled down in fond paternal love upon his beautiful and innocent child.

There was a tumult in the court, a rush of many feet, a clamour of many tongues. Men, stern iron warriors, melted into tears, ay, and the *grande barbe* himself, the President Molè, was seen to pass his hand across his eyes, and his voice came thick and husky, as he ordered the crier to make silence, and the huzzars in attendance to remove the lady, and to attend her in all honour "for it is fitting that the court look further into this matter."

After a time order was restored, but it was evident already that the cause was lost and won.

"You have called the decree of this high court," the president continued, "*wrongful*. I myself, though at the time among the youngest advocates, do well remember the passing of the decree which set aside that marriage as incestuous, as between parties of forbidden consanguinity. That decree hath to this day been unimpeached. Wherefore call you it wrongful? and wherefore, well knowing that your consent was null and void for that a natural child hath in the law no father wherefore did you proceed without permission of the next of kin, the girl's maternal uncle?"

"Will it please you cause these papers to be read?"

"I, Guillaume de Penthiêvre, feeling my life's end approaching, grievously repenting of my former sins, and of the persecution of my most guiltless niece and her wronged mother, for which I well believe I have been bitterly rewarded in the dark crimes and darker punishments of my first−born sons, whom I now see before me, slaughtered by their kindred hands! I, unsolicited of any, and being in full sense and soundness both of mind and body, do hereby confess and swear that my own evidence, as offered against Gualtier de Coucy and Isabel de Chateaufort, was false and perjured! The witnesses produced suborned! and the documents forged one and all! a tissue of deceit and treachery. May the great God who hath indeed punished the sins of the father upon the children pity, and oh, may he pardon

"Guillaume de Penthievre."

CHAPTER XXII.

"In addition to this confession of that wretched guilty one, I hold, an it so please the court, the true and the forged papers!" continued the monk; "when *they* shall be compared, I doubt not the decree will be rescinded."

The papers were handed to the members of the court. A deep investigation followed; but ere an hour had elapsed, Talon rose to withdraw all charges.

"Not so," interrupted Molè "not so. The court hath heard the evidence. The court must now decide. How say ye, gentlemen, is the prisoner, Major−general Mornington, guilty or innocent of the things alleged against him?"

"Innocent, innocent, upon our honours!"

A burst of approbation rang through the vast hall; again and again it pealed three rounds of full−mouthed cheering! I was surrounded by a crowd of smiling faces, grasped by a hundred friendly hands; but again the court spoke in the person of its president.

"It is the full opinion of this court, and their deliberate sentence, that the decree bearing date from May the tenth, 1632, shall be rescinded evidence being fully adduced to prove that such decree was then obtained by perjury and falsehood; that Isabel de Chateaufort, deceased, be styled, in title of her husband, Isabel de Coucy; and that the daughter of her body, Isabel de Mornington, be in all respects deemed her rightful heiress, and her child legitimate!"

At this instant Condé grasped me by the arm, and hurried me through the crowd; I looked in vain about me for Isabel, or for the Benedictine.

"To court, to court," whispered the prince; "our horses wait!"

"But Isabel?" I cried.

"Is there already cared for by Anne of Austria. Away, we are awaited!"

At the foot of the steps we found the prince's horses, with a group of gentlemen and pages, and among them the best horse and the most faithful servant stood Bayard and old Martin Lydford.

"Bless you," he whispered, as he held my stirrup "bless you, my glorious master!"

Merrily clattered the pavements, as we dashed along; but my brain whirled round and round, and my intellect, which had never been confused or shaken by the pressure of calamity, reeled in the fulness of my joy. We reached the gates of the Palais Royal, threw our reins to the royal pages, and, leaning on the arm of the best and bravest noble of the age, I a mere adventurer of fortune entered the presence−chamber of him who was to be thereafter the mightiest king in Christendom.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"*Ang.* We are sent To give thee, from our royal master, thanks; Only to herald thee into his sight, not pay thee. *Rosse* . And for an earnest of a greater honour, He bade me, from him, hail thee Thane of Cawdor: In which addition, hail, most worthy thane! For it is thine."

Macbeth.

The superb staircases of the Palais Royal were thronged with guards and pensioners, pages and gentlemen in waiting, all in their gala−dresses; in the open space on the first landing was stationed the noble instrumental band of the royal household, making the long corridors and vaulted roofs to ring alternately with sweet or martial symphonies. The youthful monarch or, to speak more properly, the queen−regent, and her powerful minister, triumphant in his brief success was holding his first court since their return from St. Germains. It was accordingly a day of universal mirth and gayety. All parties were received with equal affability; and the dukes of Elboeuf and Beaufort, and the prime mover of the *Fronde* himself, the factious coadjutor, might be seen conversing amicably, and exchanging *jeux des mots*, with Grammont and De Meilleraye, or making their appropriate homage to the king, not against, but *for* whom they had so lately drawn the sword, to put down, in the parlance of the day, his ill−advisers.

Many a kind look was cast towards me, many a friendly pressure interchanged, as I threaded the galleries, rich with their antique sculptures and priceless works of art: but my brain reeled, a mist seemed to have curtained my eyes, I saw things as in a dream, darkly the features of the men who spoke to me, familiar as they were, appeared to flit to and fro, and to run together like the phantasms of some horrid vision nay, my own words sounded strange and meaningless; though I was afterward informed that the confusion existed in my own ideas, rather than in the language to which they gave birth.

My noble conductor was, however, more quick−sighted than the rest; for, as we paused upon the threshold of the audience−chamber, to exchange salutations with my tried friend De Charmi who, splendidly appointed, and in command of a choice detachment, occupied that important post as guard of honour he shook me by the shoulder, and whispered gayly,

"Awake yourself, *mon cher!* awake yourself, or they will deem that I have brought with me a *night−owl* from the terrible Bastile, rather than that brave falcon which soared so high a flight to stoop upon the vulture of Lorraine! Awake yourself, for the love of God! here will you see some well−known faces, whether of friend or foe! But never heed; they are, I wot, too closely packed to stay long unfermented! *Tête Dieu!* but we shall have a brighter blaze ere long ay, and a more destructive than this game of war, at which our worthy citizens have played so long, only to weary of it in the end! Answer not now! but rouse thyself we are in the presence!"

As he uttered the last words we entered the audience chamber. Nobly it was fitted, doubtless, and becomingly of the brave and great whom it contained; but my thoughts were too much occupied with the living inmates to descend to details how magnificent soever. On an elevated dais, beneath a royal canopy, stood the boy−king, attired as a monarch should be seen; and already skilled to assume the high and proud, yet at the same time courteous, bearing that best beseemed his rank. On his right−hand stood Anne of Austria fair and majestic, a fit mother for a king; and on his left the supple and accommodating, yet politic and wily, Mazarin, now at the very summit of his glory.

It were long to enumerate the mighty men and lovely women who thronged, in stately yet animated groups, those wide apartments. Maréchals of France, with scarf and bâton of command priests in cowl and scapulary officers blazing in embroidery and gold and ladies with flashing gems, and trains of a thousand dies; which, gorgeous as they were, no human eye could e'er have paused to note, while fascinated by the forms, the features, and the grace of those bright wearers, who will be the boast of centuries, for all that is most lovely, most intellectual, most witty, and most wicked of their sex.

Grammont was there, and Longueville the talented, and Montbazon, the *belle des belles!* Coligni, worthy descendant of the murdered admiral, and the wild, accomplished Count de Grammont; Meilleraye, who won his staff so gloriously upon the breaches of Hedin, and who deserved to lose it for his mad impetuosity in the civil tumults of the *Fronde*. Mingled with these were men founding their claims more justly on their benefits conferred upon mankind, than on the slaughters of their sword Balzac, who was the first to lend the polish and the roundness of the Italian period to the rougher and more epigrammatic tongue of France. The wise young Bossuet was there a miracle already for the talents which will assuredly gain him a name in later ages; when the most boasted of us, peers of the sword, shall be forgotten engaged in a warm and close flirtation with the beautiful Mademoiselle Desvieux, who, in after−days, nobly sacrificed her own happiness, freeing her lover from the claims she held on him, lest a wife should be a clog upon his soaring yet pure ambition. Calprenede and Corneille too were there, although the latter had not then attained to that admiration of men which he has reached in my latter days; while the former, with many others, who are already almost numbered with the forgotten, were in the very high−day of their glory. Others were there, in numbers that would wellnigh have baffled the eye of the enumerator valiant, and beautiful, and wise but, as Condé hurried me forward, I scarcely marked the features even of those whom I knew, and whom I now have barely mentioned. One face, however, I did behold one form! It was that of Charles the Second! Charles, the fugitive of England! clad in the deepest sables for his murdered sire, who, scarce two months before, had expiated on the block his follies rather than his faults yet, with difficulty composing his dark and saturnine visage to the gravity of decorum, or his conduct to the due restraint of a court which never at least violated the laws of decency, however it might in private scoff at strict morality. When first he caught my eye, he was lolling negligently over the back of a crimson sofa in the antechamber, with his arm in remarkable proximity to the waist of a very beautiful girl no other than Louise de Querouaille better known afterward, when his acknowledged mistress, by her English title, as Duchess of Portsmouth. Not far from these young lovers stood Wilmot Earl of Rochester; his light hair and blooming complexion strangely contrasting with the dark elf−locks and swarthy skin of his comrade, rather than his king. As I gazed on them a sigh rose to my lips; for I thought of red Marston, and of the deluges of English gore already poured forth like water on the desolated valleys of my native land desolated that such a *thing* as this should be their ruler.

Even in the instant during which I paused, another figure glided by well known in happier days, and in more familiar, if not brighter, courts; it was the widow of THE KING the still fair and ever−virtuous Henrietta! Called

forth from the seclusion of her sorrows to pay the necessary homage to her sister queen, and sole protectress she looked as one travelling to that portal through which there is no returning, rather than as a sharer in the gay festivity of kings. Yet were her weeds less deep, her mourning robes less ostentatious in their sadness, than the garb of her profligate and heartless child; for her sadness was that deep, incessant burning of the soul which finds no vent even in tears or groans, much less in the vain usage of sable trains, or veils of widow−lawn. As she glided onward, followed by a single lady, her eye just glanced on the group I have described, and fell mournfully to the ground; it rose again, flashing, as it were, with glorious indignation. She raised her hand aloft, and paused while I might have reckoned ten her lips moved, and though no sound came from them that could have been heard three paces distant, I caught the words, "Peace, peace! where art thou? where but in the grave?" She collected herself, as if conscious that by noticing she should only render more public the scandal, and moved onward; but ere she had crossed the threshold, I heard the light laugh of the abandoned girl, and the yet more shameless satellite.

"Odds−fish!" cried Charles; "does our lady mother think that men must *weep* for ever? 'Fore God, Wilmot, we will strike the Roundhead dogs the keener, that we can laugh betimes! What say you, Beautiful? a thousand tears would be bought cheaply by a single smile of yours! A man should never sorrow while he may drink and love! But come, this etiquette wears tediously let us away. Where tarries Fitzharding, and where Astley? We'll to my lodging in the fauxbourg; and so, hey for lansquenet or ombre, and a glass of old auxerre!" and, with another burst of laughter, that must have pierced like daggers to the heart of the retreating mother, the exile, with his minion and his paramour, swept onward, amid the ill−disguised contempt, and bitter, if secret, sneers of the French noblesse; with whom, if virtue herself were dead, so much at least of honour was paid to her ashes that they preserved her semblance in their own demeanour, and bowed to her reality in others.

"Bad enough, in good truth," whispered Condé; "yet wear not *thou* , for other men's failings, such a guise of virtuous indignation! I laugh at such things, while I loathe them "

"But you," I interrupted him "you never *bled* for them! You never lost broad lands, or name, or country! You never saw your father slain on his own hearth−stone your mother wasting away piecemeal, and dying of a broken heart! This have you never done for them or you, like me, would CURSE "

"Not I, by all that's beautiful!" he interrupted me in turn; "not, at least, with a queen waiting to beg my acceptance of my own spear−won bride, as old Homer would have worded it! Come, man, you must amend your manners, or we will have you back to the Bastile!"

The prince's words did at length arouse me; for, strange as it may seem, in the whirl of my singularly mixed sensations, I had forgotten time, place, every thing! My feelings had been so long dammed up and frozen, as it were, and so suddenly let loose, that they discharged themselves by the first channel; reckless as the waters of some over−charged and bursting lake reckless whether they rolled down their natural channel, or rushed with devastation and dismay over the cultivated champaign. The scales now fell at once from the eyes of my spirit: I did, indeed, behold my own Isabel, smiling as when first I saw, to love her; smiling like an April morning, as then, through tears but, not as then, through tears of joy! Natural, however, as it would have been to rush to her side, neglectful of all else, I knew too well that such a proceeding would undo all that, with so much of toil, of bloodshed, and of sorrow, had been at length accomplished.

"I bring to your highness's footstool," said Condé, as I dropped on my knee before the majestic Anne "I bring to your highness's footstool a truant soldier, who hath succeeded in delivering his body, but hath forgotten to deliver his wits, from the iron cage of old Balue, in your most loyal fortress the Bastile!"

"Of Monsieur Mornington's sufferings," she answered, a brilliant smile of condescension lighting up her fair, but usually inanimate, features, as she spoke, "no less than of his exploits, in our own behalf, we are aware. We have regretted, and would have interposed to prevent them, had even−handed justice permitted us to do so, or could the honour of our officer have been appeased, under such shameful charges, save by an open examination, and as

open an acquittal. This, Louis," she continued, turning to the princely boy "this is a servant who hath approved himself brave, faithful, honourable, and heart−upright, under circumstances such as try the heart. Cherish him, boy, cherish him! for, served by men like this, you shall be *served* indeed!"

"It needs not your introduction, lady mother mine," replied the youth, with no inapt assumption of dignity, "to make a king, young though he be as I, acquainted with an officer so faithful and distinguished as the saviour of our army at Cambrai, and the conqueror of our foes at Valenciennes. We trust, ere long, to be of age ourself to hear the whistle of a bullet, and we trust that *then* we shall find Monsieur de Mornington near to our person, as he *now* is near to our judgment. Our excellent cardinal here will speak with you further. Till then, sir, accept a youthful monarch's thanks."

"Having heard the high and, I *will* add, not unmerited praises," continued Mazarin, after a brief pause, "which it has pleased their majesties to shower on you, it would befit me ill were I, their humble minister, now to gainsay them. Nor do I, in truth, feel so inclined. Well you have done in some respects excellent well! But ask your *heart*, sir, ask your own *heart*, if you have well done in *all!* On your first mission, secrecy were your orders, and despatch. I will not say that you *did* violate them; but, if you fell not, you tottered on the verge! We rejoice that you have escaped; we rejoice that it is our province to reward, and not to PUNISH!" and he spoke with a snarling energy, that showed how fierce would be the enmity of that mild−seeming easy man, if once it should be fairly roused. "I say not this, sir, to wound your feelings, much less to do you aught of disgrace far from it; but that hereafter you may remember this: That if to postpone a monarch's business to your own be *treason*, merely to mingle them is *felony!* But on this will we dwell no further. It is her highness's bidding, and my own great pleasure, that I extend this bâton *conditionally* promised to the Comte D'Harcourt to a better soldier, and a more worthy man, in Major−general Mornington; and with it the rank of mar échal of France!"

"With thanks," I answered "with thanks, the more profound that I confess the honour most unmerited, I submit myself wholly to your and to her highness's pleasure. Would I could here close my speech; but, praying you to pardon my seeming boldness and discourtesy, I am compelled to add, that the promise I made to Monsieur D'Harcourt, on your Eminence's bidding, *was* conditional but the condition has been fulfilled. The army of Turenne is yours. Further, unworthy as I am, and humble, I am yet too proud to rise upon a brave man's ruin even though he be my enemy or to rob a soldier of a soldier's meed!"

"Do you cast back our bounty?" cried the cardinal, his pale cheek flushing, as it seemed, with anger; "but this, methinks, is "

"Most like the man who spoke it!" interrupted Anne, before he could commit himself against me, "and most worthy of the noblest! From me, sir," she continued, receiving from the hand of Mazarin the truncheon of command, who, by yielding at once what he felt to be a trifle, secured the greater power for a greater crisis "from me, sir, receive the honour, of which none *can* be more deserving; and rest, in your nobleness of soul, assured, D'Harcourt shall be no loser. Further than this, that you may not lack the means to support your standing, it has pleased his majesty to grant you letters−patent, securing to you the lands, the appanages, and the title made vacant by the death of the late, and the forfeiture of the present, Duke de Penthiêvre; who, in mitigation of the penalties of his treason, will sail right shortly for our colonies of Acadie. And now, maréchal, I remember me, when last we spoke together, I bade you hold right onward in the narrow path; so should you be one whom men would delight to honour, kings to hold near them, as the brightest decoration of their thrones, and last not least women to LOVE! I deemed not then, indeed, that my prophecy would be so soon fulfilled; but here is one who, even HERE, will not, methinks, be backward to confess its truth. All else that I have given to you is nothing is the dust beneath your feet compared with this inestimable prize the whole and holy love of a pure and virtuous woman!"

She concluded her address; which, had it been fraught with all the eloquence of a greater than Demosthenes, could not so have thrilled to my heart as now for, as she concluded, she placed in mine the hand of Isabel.

"She is your own," cried the noble Condé; "and I will only add, that if she be but served as devotedly as she hath been won gallantly, she well may look for happiness!"

I gazed into her eyes dovelike and radiant through their tears I saw the flush of warm carnation that overspread brow, neck, and bosom I felt the agitation that shook her slight and lovely frame; I felt it in the tremour of her small white hand and I forbore, by word or look, to add one throb to her confusion. But, as I held that hand aloft "If giving happiness," I cried, my heart filled almost to suffocation, and my eyes suffused "if giving happiness to man be a deed acceptable in the sight of God, then shall your majesty's declining years be as serene and peaceful as their noontide has been bright and glorious! And for this youthful king to whom my life, and more than life, are mortgaged, to be held or lavished at his bidding for this youthful king brilliant as is the morning of his promise even *I* can wish no greater bliss than he has now bestowed on *me:* for if re−nown, acquired in arms; power, granted by the best and purest; true faith in friendship; success and constancy in love if these be *not* the happiness of heaven, they come at least so near to it that earth has naught which may compare with them!"

THE END.