

THE CLUB-BOOK:

BEING

ORIGINAL TALES,

&c.

BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

EDITED BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE DOMINIE'S LEGACY."

A. Pickers

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

COCHRANE AND PICKERSGILL,

11, WATERLOO-PLACE, PALL-MALL.

1831.

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INTRODUCTORY.

WHENEVER any thing in the least degree promising novelty, or tending to innovation is aimed at in the world, particularly within the well-warded territories of literature; it is reasonably expected that some plea shall be offered for thus impertinently swerving from the good old beaten tract of imitation.

In accounting then for our present conduct, in putting forth a publication of the lighter sort, which is meant to differ as well from the

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numerous race of pretty picture-books of winter, with their lady-like poetry, and their refined romance, as from the general performances of our novelists,—wherein, by great art and pains-taking, and often sorely against the will both of reader and hero, they contrive to draw out the lengthened sweetness of those valuable productions, to the exact measure of bibliopolical prescription—never were men more fortunate than we, for we have to bring forward in our favour no less a personage than the great goddess of Fashion herself, who, in these innovating times, hath decidedly pointed her autocratic finger in the very direction which we have obediently taken.

This omnipotent regulator of the great concerns of literature and millinery, then, this mistress of the ceremonies even to politics and religion, having first set up a series of magnificent palaces at the western end of our metropolis, under the name of Club Houses, and

caused to associate together into them, numerous bodies of worthy men who have little to do ; next in the course of the clubbing fever which naturally followed, threw her handkerchief in the most inviting manner to all persons ambitious of being considered literary, and said to them, in a voice of potency, if not of thunder, “ go ye and do likewise.” How far the mandate of our great ruler has been obeyed *in the letter*, by the setting up of an additional Club, with a literary title, it does not perhaps become us strictly to inquire. A higher power even than Fashion herself—namely, that irresistible spirit of improvement which seems now abroad in the world, hath revealed to us and to all men (who, blessed with that recondite degree of penetration, elegantly termed the possession of *half an eye*, are disposed to look into the tendencies of things,) that it is now time it should be obeyed *in the spirit*, for reasons applying

both to literary men and to the world, which are too grave as well as numerous to be here entered upon. Be that, however, as it may, this peculiar tendency of our time—this increasing spirit of segregation and of union, both at home and abroad, of which it were well that our men of talent engaged in literature more generally partook, hath furnished the collector and part writer of the following pieces, with that necessary desideratum, a tolerably suitable title, under which the whole may be appropriately presented to the public.

Upon the subject of the clubs and all that pertains to them, however, we would willingly, were it at all expedient, take the present opportunity of saying a few words. Not that we ourselves have any such inconvenient discernment, as to see evil in a thing that is decidedly in fashion, so long as the fashion is fairly supported by the goddess. But considering ourselves bound on all occasions to take the part

of the ladies, it hath been put into our heads, to offer on their parts on this occasion a few words of gentle expostulation, with the honourable members of these great establishments.

It is well known, that since the clubs have come *in*, marriage has entirely gone *out*. The reason is obvious. How can young men of moderate fortunes be expected to confine themselves to an ordinary establishment and plain English fare, when for a tythe of the expense, they can live in a palace and enjoy every sort of luxury? How can it be expected that a gentleman should marry for the old-fashioned motives of comfort and society, when the clubs and their appendages, supply all this at a tenth of the cost? What is the consequence? Marriage is completely at a stand! White favours, special licences, and honey-moons are almost forgotten. The spinsters increase on every side, and even the few married men now alive and getting old, have entirely deserted

their own homes, to live, habit, and repute at their Club House! What is the world to do? Are the ladies to betake themselves to nunneries, according to the project of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who, like other advice-givers, was, as we all know, particularly inclined to that nunnish life which she once strongly recommended to others? Something must be done. In these reforming times, the ladies must have a reform of their own. Already they cry out for it loudly, whenever they meet. Nay, they are beginning, among themselves, to talk absolute radicalism in regard to the clubs, and be they rotten-boroughs, or be they close-boroughs, the men say they "must not be suffered to *burrow*, so constantly about these luxurious establishments, or if they do there is no hope for us." We have heard of several projects being in actual discussion to bring marriage again into fashion, which it would neither be wise nor

delicate in us here to broach. Now all this may be laughed at by some, and sport to the Malthusians,—but it is death to the ladies!

Grievous as this matter must doubtless be to many of that interesting sex for whom we would stand up against any, the most decided, improvement in which they are not included, we have the satisfaction to think that no such objection can be urged against our simple arrangement. Clubbing of wits,—or different individuals telling a series of tales in one book,—is too intellectual an exercise to have any serious effect in putting a stop to matrimony. At least we should hope so; for so it happens that every one of us are married men, and it is generally found in the world that those who are in any trouble themselves, are quite pleased to see as many as possible inveigled into similar circumstances.

But not to predicate anything upon this matter, we cannot avoid adding a grave word

upon the subject of a favourite project of ours . namely, the association together as much as possible of men of talent and character, who are professionally engaged in literary pursuits. We know it is in the nature of man, that those divided into their respective coteries of sociability, or throughout the connections of bibliopolical competition, should be ready to say, “ I am of Paul, and I of Apollos,” &c., and so bend their minds to all the littlenesses of detraction and opposition. Yet among other orders of men, whose labours have less to do with the world at large, we have heard of such a thing as an *esprit du corps*, which accomplished much good and obviated much evil ; and we imagine we see something in the near distance,—even in England, where men of letters are comparatively neglected,—which promises that not long hence they will be disposed voluntarily to say, like the two kings of

Israel, "Come and let us look one another in the face."

Whether, however, he has any prophetic discernment or not, the Editor of the following tales, &c., has dreamed in his moments of sanguine speculation, of the many advantages both public and personal, which might arise from the friendly association of those who have much to do with that great modern power, public opinion. But this is not the place to speak further upon so grave a subject; and doubtless he who indulges himself with the penning of these sentiments, and who has made that beginning in literary association which may be implied in this friendly collection, is not worthy to keep a door to a club of real *savantes*, yet in all matters of private pursuit or public spirit, it is wonderful what a love for any thing, and an occasional gleam of sanguine enthusiasm will, by perseverance, effect.

But we feel we are taking a liberty with the

public, for which our respected constituents have given us no express authority ; so, to end our introduction, we would only further in their name say to the good-natured reader, though the following stories are comparatively but trifles, yet considering the difficulty in the present hackneyed state of this sort of literature, of writing short tales which may obtain the attention of those who have not leisure or taste for three-volume undertaking, you will please to believe that we have done our best as a first offer for your amusement, both as to interest and variety. To conclude, then, this friendly parley with the reader, we would further say to her or him, in the manner of the older authors,—“ gentle men, and gentler maidens—dames ever fair and ever fascinating, who read tales of love, because for it ye were formed, and smile or sigh as your feelings are affected, because form and feeling are your most engaging attributes—also critics stern,

penetrating and severe, with spectacle on nose and snuff at elbow,—sit down all when you are in an amiable humour, and when reading is no toil, but a mental relaxation, and be pleased if you can with our CLUB-BOOK.”

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THE CLUB-BOOK.

BERTRAND DE LA CROIX;

OR,

THE SIEGE OF RHODES.

BY MR. JAMES.*

CHAPTER I.

I'll follow this good man ; and go with you,
And having sworn truth, ever will be true.

SHAKSPEARE.

IT was on the evening of one of those uncertain days of spring, which winter and summer seem to fix upon as a common battle-field, now frowning with clouds of sleet and hail, and now smiling with as bright a glance as if the blue eye of Heaven had never known a tear : it was on the evening of such a day, in the

* Author of "Richelieu," "Darnley," "De L'Orme," &c.

beginning of the year 1522, that, in the public room of entertainment of a small inn at Beaucaire, with his feet placed upon the large iron dogs which supported a wood fire—one foot upon one and the other upon the other—sat a young traveller, turning over the red fagots on the hearth with the steel tip of his sword-scabbard.

His form was light, though muscular, and he had more the appearance of great agility, than of great strength. Yet he was cast so heedlessly on his seat, and his limbs seemed to fall with such a nerveless heaviness, that the promise of activity afforded by his figure was belied by the listlessness of his air, and he might have passed for one of the habitual *hostelrie* loungers of the period, had not a certain meditative sadness in his countenance spoken a mind overcome by bitter thoughts rather than a body consumed by customary sloth. His habit was good but not new, and a scanty portion of fur and gold about his mantle, seemed to say that the wearer's inclination for splendid apparel was more confined by the narrowness of his purse than by any circumstance of birth or any simplicity of taste.

There was no one in the chamber but himself, and totally given up to deep and seemingly sad meditations, he continued stirring the embers with the point of his sword-scabbard, apparently unconscious both of the occupation in which he was engaged and the instrument which he employed in it. A tankard of strong Rhone wine stood untouched upon the table; and while the wind whistled through the ill-stopped cracks of the poor tenement in which he sat, almost extinguishing the lights in the sconce, and the rain of a sharp night-shower dashed angrily against the casement, he unconsciously sung a verse or two of an old Spanish ballad, which had probably as much resemblance to the real matter of his thoughts, as the *Tourbillons* of Descartes had to the system of the universe.

“ Mas de las penas que siento
Esta es la mas principal,
Porque perderme yo sola,
Al perder llaman ganar.
Y en perderos vos, Senora,
Es perder sin mas cobrar;
Mas pu assi lo querais
No lo queramos dilatar.”

So he sung : and indeed it is an extraordinary fact, that under the pressure of many a heavy grief, the heart will very often find a voice in music for sorrows that are silent to language. In such cases the words to which the melody are joined are nothing. It is the music that is eloquent ; and never did a more melancholy tone breathe forth the feelings of a sad and troubled spirit. His thoughts, his sensations, his very external senses, seemed so powerfully concentrated on some deep and absorbing theme, that the ordinary occurrences that passed around him were veiled from his eyes and ears.

A troop of horses stopped at the inn gate, and the clattering hoofs and jangling of their caparisons might have awakened the seven sleepers ; but his dream remained unbroken, and he marked not one of all the many sounds which trumpet the arrival of a large company at a poor inn.

A fine manly voice was then heard giving manifold directions to some mute attendants. " Cross the ferry with all speed ! and then on to Arles.—The horses are quite fresh.—'Tis

but three leagues.—Tell the noble prior that I remain behind on business at Beaucaire, but that I come onward to-morrow ; and you, Brother Francis, see that the arms be all arrived, and examine well that they be in good condition. Think of all things for the good of the order, —‘ Watch and pray ! ’ ”

With such injunctions, half clerical, half military, the speaker concluded ; the clattering of the hoofs again echoed along the street, mingling as it receded with the howling of the wind, the pattering of the rain, and the roaring of the angry Rhone ; and, after a little more bustle at the door, the worthy host, with various nondescript attendants, ushered in the stranger, who had remained behind, and whose step, as he strode up to the hearth, was the first thing which roused the original tenant of the room from his dream of other times.

The young man started, and for a moment looked bewildered, as one whose thoughts had been far, far away ; then rose from his stool, and fixing his eyes for an instant intently on the face of his new companion, he withdrew from the monopolising position in which he had

placed himself before the fire, and with a graceful inclination of the head, made room for the other to share in the warm smile of cold, stern winter's most cheerful opponent.

The stranger shook his robe, which was drenched with the night rain, and took his seat by the fire, gazing for a brief space on his young companion, with one of those glances of quick examination which we are wont to bestow on him that is to be our fellow for an hour—rapid but keen—superficial but comprehensive. His own occupation was at once denoted by the dark robe and eight-limbed cross worn by the Knights of St. John of Rhodes, and his tall martial form, his broad splendid brow, round the high contour of which the grey locks of eld curled unthinned and luxuriant, his eye full of fire and intellect, his proud lip, on whose patrician bend hung a world of energy and command, all bespoke one of the best knights of that gallant order, the stumbling-block of the Saracen power, and the bulwark of Christendom.

All this was easily read, and one hasty glance was sufficient to satisfy the younger

traveller; but he himself presented a page which his companion found harder to decipher. His dress was of that middle rank, which in those days was less common in every country of the world than it is now. Each class was then more distinct: the peasant trod less upon the kibe of the peer, and every species and genus in that branch of zoology called society, was in general to be known immediately by some external mark, as distinctive as the beaks of the accipitrine or the legs of the gruine tribe. The young stranger, however, in simplicity of apparel, touched somewhat upon the class of burghers, while a casual ornament of a higher grade spoke pretensions to a more elevated birth.

The first glance the Knight of Rhodes had given, did not satisfy him, and he again ran his eye over the stranger's dress: then, still undetermined, he turned it to his face, and read, or thought he read, the traces of tender education and gentle breeding in the fine, clear, defined lines of his features, and the flash of his dark, melancholy eye; while the extreme whiteness of the upper part of his forehead, which was commonly shaded by his hat, con-

trasted strongly with the ruddy, sun-burned hue of the rest of his countenance.

What had been apparently a severe wound, was still covered with a long black patch upon his cheek ; and as the younger traveller, suddenly roused himself from one of his deep fits of thought, and surprised the eyes of his companion fixed upon his face, the Knight of St. John took that wound as the pass-word to conversation, saying—

“ You have been in the late wars, young Sir, I see.”

“ I have, Sir Knight,” was the reply ; and the younger stranger again sank into silence.

“ Was it in the wars of Navarre, of Flanders, or of Burgundy ?” demanded the other ; “ I have a motive for my curiosity, young gentleman, better than curiosity alone.”

“ And I have no motive for concealment,” replied the young soldier ; “ I served in Navarre,” and he was again silent.

There was a degree of cold, and somewhat haughty reserve in his manner, that seemed to offend the Knight of St. John, who doubtless looked upon the advances of an old and dis-

tinguished member of so renowned an order, as an honour to which any stripling soldier might reply with somewhat more free respect. A cloud came over his brow, and his eye sparkled for an instant, but such signs of heat passed by immediately.

“After all,” muttered he to himself, “we are but poor friars, or at least poor soldiers of Christ; we should be humbler than we are.—In Navarre,” he added aloud, “I have a brave nephew, my dead brother’s only son, who is fighting under the noble Andrew de Foix to restore to Henry d’Albret his natural dominions of Navarre; I would fain hear news of him, young Sir. In your campaigns have you met with the young Duke of Nivelle?”

“There was such a person in the army,” replied the soldier, “and I remember we won our knightly spurs together at the taking of Pampeluna, but the difference of our fortunes threw us far apart. I saw him once, however, in the prison at Logrogno.”

“In prison!” exclaimed the knight; “in prison!”

“Ay, in prison!” replied the young soldier.

“ Have you not heard of our defeat, and the taking of the young Count de Foix, and all his officers?—’tis an old tale with us. Some three weeks gone we fought the Spanish army and were beaten, — ’tis an old tale now.”

“ But I have been travelling quick, though long, my son,” replied the knight, “ and have thought of nothing but how best to fulfil my duty towards the Grand Master and my order, by sending arms and provisions to Rhodes, against the menaced invasion of the Turks. Speak, Sir : was my nephew still in prison ?—how did you yourself escape ?—does he require ransom ?—where is he confined ?”

The youth gazed on his elder companion for a moment with a glance, in which the eager anxiety of the knight’s questions seemed to have awakened a corresponding energy ; but instantly the light faded away, and the same cold shadow fell over his face.

“ In truth, I cannot tell,” he replied gravely, “ whether the Duke de Neville be still in prison or not. He sent to Toulouse for money to pay his ransom, and doubtless it has reached him by this time. I myself escaped by acci-

dent, and go to try my sword under the new Grand Master of Rhodes against the Turks."

The Knight of St. John paused thoughtfully for a moment, as if there was something in the youth's reply that had struck him deeply. "The new Grand Master of Rhodes!" he said at length thoughtfully. "It is strange that I, a prior of the order, should first hear that there is a new Grand Master of Rhodes from the lips of a stranger; but De Merail loves me not. When he offered me his daughter for my nephew in marriage, I refused an alliance with a man of his great pride, and now he loves me not, and doubtless has never notified to me his election, that I may be the last informed of the order. So Fabricius Carette, that valiant prince, is dead, and De Merail has of course been elected in his place?"

While his companion thus spoke, half communing with himself, half carrying on the conversation in which they had been engaged, the young soldier had apparently relapsed into thought, and with his eyes fixed again upon the embers, seemed far away in some silent world of his own. Nothing shewed that he

heard the good knight's words, till at length, without a change of feature, he replied abstractedly, "Carette, indeed, is dead! De Merail has lost the election of which he was so sure, and Villiers de l'Isle Adam is Grand Master of Rhodes."

The Knight of St. John started on his feet. "I!—I!" cried he. "Impossible! utterly impossible! How should De Merail lose his election, with wealth, and rank, and influence—and be it said too, with valour, and wisdom, and talent? And how should I be chosen—absent, and probably almost forgotten? But tell me, Sir, who are you, who know so much more of my order than myself?"

"A poor gentleman of Tourain," replied the youth, "Bertrand de la Croix by name, and it is easy to tell how I learnt all the news I give you. 'Tis but two days since, that landing at Marseilles, from Spain, I met with a whole train of knights and serving brothers of the order of St. John, who had been at Paris, seeking in vain for *you*—if you indeed, as you words imply, be the newly elected Grand Master of Rhodes. I came on hither,

having some business at Toulouse, and intending instantly to make my way back, and, with the first bark sailing, to take a passage for Rhodes, with the purpose of there offering my sword to the Grand Master on the threatened invasion of the Turks. That sword I now offer with all my heart—accept it, Sir, for it is the first drawn in your service.”

The Grand Master stood for a moment mute, with his eye fixed upon vacancy, whilst a crowd of new sensations filled his bosom : hopes, doubts, anxieties, pride chastened by moderation, ambition elevated and purified by religion and disinterestedness. A crowd of new ideas too whirled through his brain—cares, dangers, difficulties, much to be met, and much to be overcome, much to be prevented, and much to be crushed. The sudden announcement of his new station, changed like the touch of death his state of existence ; his relation to every thing around was altered, he was in a new world, where all was new, vague, uncertain, indistinct, unfamiliarized with his mind and heart ; yet still it is not to be denied that the whole was pleasing. How-

ever much we may guard against the seductions of our vanity, that Dalilah of the human mind, her blandishments will still be sweet, even though they win us not to evil. He could not hide from himself that the tidings were gratifying to him, and he that had first communicated them, found the avenues of his heart opened by the news that he had given.

The Grand Master laid his hand kindly upon his young companion's shoulder : " Your sword, young Sir," he said, " is willingly accepted by the order of St. John, for, by my faith, we shall need the assistance of all our friends, if the news which I have gathered in Hungary be correct, regarding the preparations of the Turk. But should what you tell me of my election be true—and I will not doubt it—I must instantly forward to Marseilles to meet the deputies of the council ; although, God help us, I must therefore abandon the design I had formed of going on into Navarre to see my poor nephew, whom I have not met for these fifteen long years. Would that I could find any one worthy of confidence who would bear a letter for me to my poor Nivelle,

if he be still in prison, or would absolutely ascertain that he is free."

The Grand Master fixed his eyes upon his young companion, who at once understood his meaning, and accepted the commission. Nor let it be thought extraordinary that Bertrand de la Croix thus readily undertook a fatiguing journey, and a difficult, perhaps a dangerous enterprise, for a person he had seen but for one short hour. In those days the reverence for age itself was great, and for high military renown still greater. The name of Villiers de l'Isle Adam was gloriously known throughout all Europe, and even without having, like Bertrand, taken service under him, which rendered his request almost a command, there was probably scarcely a young soldier in all France, who would have hesitated to do his will, had it sent them to the uttermost parts of the earth.

A few brief explanations ensued. The Grand Master informed his young companion that with all his impatience to depart for Rhodes, he would be still obliged to wait at Marseilles for several weeks, embarking the military stores and

reinforcements, which during many months he had been employed in collecting for the defence of the order ; and it was agreed that the young soldier should with all speed rejoin him there, bringing with him, if possible, the old knight's nephew, the Duke of Nivelles. The letter was then written, some business concluded between the Grand Master and the merchants of Beaucaille, and the two travellers separated, to proceed the next day each upon his own path.

CHAPTER II.

When I view the beauties of thy face,
I fear not death, nor dangers, nor disgrace.

DRYDEN.

THE sun had risen and set, and risen again, since we last left Bertrand de la Croix, and now he was in Spain. Not, indeed, in either Navarre or Castille, but in the rich and beautiful land of Catalonia, upon that lovely shore that casts its splendid smile over the bright waters of the Mediterranean sea. A high old tower, perched upon a wild, bold rock, from the scanty earth of which a thousand shrubs and trees sprang up and waved their green branches in the sunshine of a Spanish spring, looked over on the one hand, a wide track of hill and dale,

and wood and pasture, and river and cascade, and on the other, hung beetling above the waves.

France and Spain were at enmity, and invading armies lay upon the frontier of each ; but there wandered the young French soldier, through that fair scene, enjoying all its beauties, nor did he seem to fear aught of evil or interruption. The cloud had passed from his brow also, and indeed a magic more potent than northern spells seemed to have been used to dispel it, for as he wound down from the castle along the meandering and sunny path, as fair a creature as ever Nature in her sweetest and most witching mood created, hung upon his arm, with that fond confidence which only love, full, deep, undoubting love can give. Far out of ear-shot, toying with one of those gay and silky dogs, whose true though fawning attachment, and whose obedient love have become almost a by-word in the mouth of perverse man, came an old sedate dame, clothed in hood and wimple of deep black, with prim, subservient features, touched with a grim look of habitual acid, which at once denoted the duenna. Down in the valley too, two pages, of the true page breed, pert,

happy, thoughtless, and as fine as new-blown buttercups, held the proud horse which had borne the young soldier thither, and which, glancing his clear eye around, with raised ear and pawing hoof, seemed anxious for his lord's return, to dart away and revel in his fleetness and his strength.

But Bertrand de la Croix was in no haste to quit such fair company, and as he strayed onward, and ever and anon gazed fondly on the lovely being by his side, a thousand varied expressions of happiness lit up his features, changing from the gay and laughing glance of sparkling joy to the calm, placid smile of bland content. Nor were the dark full eyes that looked upon him sad, though there was a tenderer tone in their delight, and at times a shade, as if of melancholy, would dim the light that darted through their long and silken lashes.

At length, as the path wound round the hill, there suddenly broke upon the eye, through the fluttering canopy of the leaves and boughs, a bright far view over the sunshiny sea; and Bertrand paused, and stretching forth his hand towards it, he exclaimed—"Over the sea, Isa-

bel ! over the sea ! Quick, quick, if you love me ! rapidly as Juno's messenger, or as the winged will of Jove ! You are not frightened, dearest, at those dark blue waves ? Look how they dance and smile in the golden sun-light, as if to woo your small feet to the bark that shall bear you, like the floating feather of some snowy bird, to the spicy island of the east ! Oh, no ! no ! so fair a thing as thou art, should never fear ; 'tis not in the cold cruelty of the most treacherous sea to hurt thee, far less so bright a plain of calm blue waters as that. No, no ! it shall be I who will fear, and listen for every wind, lest it rock my Isabel too roughly, and chide every wave, lest it disturb her slumbers ! It is I will fear !”

The lady shook her head. “ You fear !” she answered : “ you know not what fear is, Bertrand. I do fear—yet still, if that sea which, with all its multitude of false-smiling waves, looks even now like eternity, were trebled in extent, I would cross them all to make you happy. But still, though it is very, very delightful to hope, do not let us deceive ourselves too far. When I tell you that my father has summoned

me to Rhodes, you seem to think that every thing is over, and yet forget that he has said, fire and water shall sooner unite than we with his consent."

"Rash words, dear Isabel! rash words!" replied her lover; "soon said and soon recanted. Fear not! fear not! I have a thousand ways to win him; and such good havoc shall my sword make amongst the Turks, that for very shame he shall not dare refuse me. Then, too, I shall see you every day, and your dear eyes shall be the fortunate planets of my house, and light me on to glory and to victory."

With such lover-like rhapsodies they wandered on, full of sweet thoughts; and though Isabel would hardly own how much she herself hoped, and how mingled with glad expectations were her fears of crossing the wide sea, yet still her lover's ardent words fell not on her ear without effect; and when the sad, inevitable moment of parting at length came, she too spoke the mutual words of comfort and assurance, and owned that she felt happier, far happier than when last they parted, when he was about to speed alone over the dark waves to win a difficult consent

from her stern, proud parent, and she had to remain behind in lonely expectation, waiting, comfortless, the uncertain event.

Bertrand gazed round, to see if there was any one in sight, pressed her to his bosom, and printed his last adieu upon the dear soft lips whose words had given him so much happiness. Then bounding up the hill, he turned the corner of the rock, which had hidden them from the complacent duenna, laid a small but satisfactory purse in the palm of that worthy and discreet friend, and bidding her guard well her mistress in the approaching voyage, he turned away, and hastened to the valley where his horse was held.

“Have you delivered safely the sacks of money with the ransom?” demanded he of the elder page. The boy signified that he had fulfilled his orders, and placed a safe conduct, as a passport was then called, in the hands of his master. “Well, then,” continued Bertrand, “speed back to your fellows, and bring them with all haste to meet me at Marseilles. You, sirrah, hold the stirrup. But stay,” he continued, “I had forgot the letter !” and drawing a

step back, he produced the identical epistle written by the Grand Master of Rhodes to his nephew, and after pausing for an instant to consider, he cut the silk between the seals, muttering with a smile—"The contents may be fully as useful to Bertrand de la Croix as to the good Duke of Nivelle, so I see not why I should not read."

Thus saying, he perused the contents from beginning to end, thought for an instant in silence, and then, with a gay smile, tore the letter in a thousand pieces, and gave the fluttering fragments to the wind. A moment after he was upon his horse's back; and, with as upright a carriage as if he had violated no confidence reposed in him, the deceitful messenger of the Grand Master turned on his road to France. Gradually, however, as he spurred on his way, the bright memory of the happy hours he had passed with Isabel de Merail waned into regret; the splendid day-dream of young love, with all its many-coloured hues of delight, faded away like a dying rainbow, as the star which had lent it its brilliant tints was hidden by the cold cloud of absence. The gay sparkling of his

look lasted but for half an hour ; and, before night had fallen, he was nearly as cold and sad as when first we painted him in the inn at Beaucaire.

On his arrival at Marseilles, he found the Grand Master in all the bustle of active preparations. Knights and soldiers, and serving brothers surrounded him ; and in the palace of the bishop, who lodged and entertained the chief of the Christian knights with courtesy and magnificence, all was hurry, and crowd, and inquiry, and command. Bertrand de la Croix opened a path through a multitude of merchants and seamen, who waited the Grand Master's commands concerning military stores for Rhodes, and finding his way to that prince's presence, he gave an account of his journey, somewhat different, alas ! from the true one. He had not been able to penetrate, he said, as far as Logroño ; but he had met a messenger speeding back to the Duke of Nivelle with his ransom, and to him he had confided the letter of the knight. He softened the mortification, however, which he saw the Grand Master experienced at not receiving more satisfactory

news of his nephew, by informing him that he had found means of enlisting fifty veteran volunteers, who were willing to serve the order of St. John, under his command, during the menaced attack of the Turks, however long that attack might be.

Villiers de l'Isle Adam gazed on his young companion for a moment with a look of some surprise; at length he answered, "If fifty veteran soldiers are willing to serve under so young a man, I have every reason to rely upon their judgment, and to look highly upon their commander; but we will inspect these troops, Sir Bertrand de la Croix."

The young soldier made no reply; but after the interval of a few days, his volunteers arrived, and were passed in review before the Grand Master, when their dark and war-worn countenances, their skill in the use of arms, and their correct and easy discipline, at once shewed them choice companions for dangerous moments and bold attempts. Bertrand de la Croix rose in the opinion of the Grand Master; but though the Knight of Rhodes felt his curiosity awakened, he would not descend

to question the soldiers the young stranger had brought, and did not choose to make any inquiry of a man so reserved and uncommunicative as he had shewn himself.

The troops and the stores were embarked with all possible speed, and at length Bertrand, at the desire of the Grand Master himself, entered the vessel which bore that prince to Rhodes, and accompanied him from the port of Marseilles on his voyage to the island of the order.

The sun shone upon their departure, and the various galleys and feluccas which convoyed the bark of the Grand Master, bounding lightly over the blue waves, before a mild and favourable wind, rendered it a gay and splendid scene, as the armament sailed away from the sweet shores of France ; but evil auguries of all kinds soon overclouded their passage. Before the ship was a day old at sea, a cry of fire was heard ; in an instant the flames were seen running with frightful rapidity from spar to spar, from rope to rope, and from sail to sail. Whirlwinds of smoke and fire invested the whole ship, and drifted over the sea, and

terror, confusion, and despair, seemed to take possession of men, who on other occasions had calmly met death and danger in a thousand varied forms. Some were mute and stupified, some cried wildly for help, where no help was near, and some sprang into the sea to avoid the more terrible fate around them. In that moment of peril there were but two who preserved that cool and ready firmness which combines all the best qualities of mental and corporeal courage—Bertrand de la Croix, and the Grand Master of Rhodes; but their united efforts recalled the rest to hope and exertion. The fire was gradually arrested, diminished, extinguished, and the vessel though injured, was preserved.

After a delay in order to refit, the ship pursued her way, but the high lands of Corsica were hardly out of sight, when the heavens, which had hitherto been as clear and smiling as a father's gaze upon the sleeping countenance of his first-born child, grew dark and stormy as an evil dream. The winds howled with a hot sharp gust, the rain fell, and the lightning blazed along the sky. Flash after

flash rent the angry atmosphere, and at length the sharp white stream of liquid fire struck the vessel, pierced the deck, and blazed in the cabin of the Grand Master. For a moment the bright meteoric glare dazzled all eyes. None saw what passed around, and the intensity of the light rendered it akin to darkness, but when sight returned, Bertrand and Villiers de l'Isle Adam found four of their companions stretched lifeless on the floor. The storm passed away and the bodies of the dead had sepulture in the bosom of that dark charnel the sea; but it was afterwards found that the sword of the Grand Master had been broken by the lightning in its sheath, which itself bore no sign of fire,* and all augured evil to his government, when it began with such prodigies and misfortunes.

Villiers smiled at evil auguries, and though at Syracuse he heard of pirates, who waited him on his passage to Rhodes, he boldly pursued his voyage, passed every danger, and rounding Candia, entered the golden expanse

* See Vertot *Histoire de l'Ordre de Malte*, Vol. II. page 426.

of the Carpathian sea. A thousand bright islands jemmied the waters, and as the ship sailed on they were seen one after the other in the blue distance, invested with an airy and fantastic splendour, as if they were not really of the earth, but some of the grand phantasms of a splendid vision.

The heart of Bertrand de la Croix beat high, as he stood upon the deck and saw them one by one rise upon the view, pass by, and recede into the gray obscurity of space. The many memories which those climates recal—the spectres of a long-gone age of mighty glory—the voices of a thousand wonderful years, saluted the young soldier as he sailed along, and for a time shared his bosom with the feelings, the wishes, the hopes, the regrets of the present.

At length Rhodes itself rose from the waves before him, and passing on towards its many-memoried port, he beheld the armed city of the christian knights, stretching down towards the sea with its glorious gardens of the olive, the pomegranate, the fig and the vine, spreading over the uplands, towards the clear unclouded sky.

CHAPTER III.

Duke. Now !—What's the business ?

Sailor. The Turkish preparation makes for Rhodes, so was I bid report here to the state.

Othello.

WHEN Villiers de l'Isle Adam and his young companion first trod the shores of Rhodes, not a sign of approaching strife was to be seen. The island with all its dependencies slept in peace, and the sails of the galleys of the order flapped idly in the listless wind of the port.

But very soon after the installation of the Grand Master, the whole began to bear a new aspect. His eye, like that of the long experienced mariner, which sees and prepares against the storm that is gathering afar, beheld at once the tempest of infidel war, which was

silently accumulating to break upon the order with double force, and he lost not a moment in putting the island into the most perfect state of defence. The affairs of peace were abandoned at once: stores were sought in every part of the earth: deep ditches channeled the ground in all directions round the city, and mighty fortifications were raised in addition to those which had before guarded the town and ports. The hand of desolation too, was stretched forth over the land, and to insure that neither the means of subsistence, nor materials for offence, might be furnished to the enemy by the country they were about to attack, the fields, the vineyards, the gardens were wasted, the olive tree, the fig and the pomegranate were cut down. The country-houses and the churches were razed to the ground: the very stones of which they were built were swept away, and the whole country was laid as bare and desolate, as if the cultivating spirit of man had never bade it blossom into beauty and plenteousness. At the same time that great and extraordinary force, military discipline was called to give vigour and power to the defen-

ders of Rhodes. Enthusiasm was kept alive in every bosom. The natives of the island and the citizens of Rhodes, though not belonging to the order, showed strongly by their ardour and pride in its defence, that the chivalrous character of its knights, had extended its influence even to the hearts of the burgher and the peasant; adventurers and volunteers flocked in from every land, the soldiers of St. John were all courage and defiance; and the whole island looked for the coming of the Turks, as a means of living honour or glorious martyrdom. Each officer, each soldier, each knight had his particular post assigned him, and seldom has the christian world presented such a splendid display of gallant chivalry as thronged in arms upon the battlements of Rhodes.

In these arrangements Bertrand de la Croix was not forgotten; his cool but daring courage in all moments of danger, had forced itself continually upon the observation of the Grand Master during the voyage from France: and there was also in his manner, however taciturn and grave, something which won regard—an undefinable charm, which like the secret in-

fluence of some magic power, pleased and captivated without being seen or known. Villiers looked upon the young stranger with kindness, and relaxed the state of office and the sternness of command, to win to confidence and intimacy; but Bertrand repelled every advance, and yet the Grand Master's affection, he knew not why, increased towards him instead of diminishing; and though he left him within the entrenchments which his silent reserve raised up around him, yet he did every thing consistent with his duty and his dignity to honour and to raise him.

To the fifty veteran soldiers who had first volunteered to serve under this young leader, the Grand Master added a band of an hundred adventurers, who had taken service with the order, and in command of these, Bertrand was assigned the defence of a part of the bastion of Auvergne, as it was called; for each part of the fortifications was entrusted to one of the several nations or languages of which the order was composed.

Still days and weeks passed, and no enemy made his appearance; and Bertrand was con-

stantly seen gazing from tower and turret, and high ground over the seas ; and every sail that he saw, he watched long and anxiously, as it sometimes glided on calmly over the distant waves, sometimes grew upon the eye till it approached the shore and reached the port. In that case Bertrand was always at the ship's side amongst the first, listening eagerly to every detail of her passage, and, with frowning brow, marking the many tales of Mussulman pirates that hovered round the island, and strove to master each vessel as it passed round the Sicilian coast and entered the Ionian seas.

To the knights of the order the young stranger soon became generally known ; but the same silent reserve continued in his manner to all those whose age and pursuits seemed naturally to assimilate them with himself. A cold and somewhat haughty inclination of the head—a passing word, neither courteous nor rude, was all that he exchanged with any one, except with Sir Andrew de Merail, the chancellor of the order. To him, however, the manners of Bertrand de la Croix were very different ; and whatever were the means he took to win the

proud Castilian, they were at least successful, for De Merail was soon his frequent companion in his walks along the battlements, or in his rides over the high hills, which commanded a view of the sea; and they would talk long and earnestly of far distant lands, and scenes that seemed to be familiar to both, and some common anxiety appeared to be in the minds of each.

This was remarked and remembered afterwards, and the knights of Rhodes were accustomed to observe, with a smile, how the two haughtiest men in the island had at once fallen into companionship together.

Though his countenance grew day by day more sad and anxious, the appearance of Bertrand de la Croix had in other respects assumed a gayer aspect than when first we spoke of him at Beaucaire. His apparel had gradually become splendid, his horses were the finest that could be procured. Servants and cavaliers were added to his train, and though he himself fared hardly, and lay upon a soldier's couch, yet ease and luxury pervaded his dwelling in the town of Rhodes, and many a young adventurer was

glad to take service under him. Such as saw Bertrand de la Croix near, however, soon perceived that some deep and agitating care was busy at his mind. Each day, each hour it preyed upon him more and more; and even at night, when sleep fell, for a few troubled hours upon his eyelids, his slumber was disturbed and wretched, and the name of Isabel would break often from his unconscious lips.

In the mean while the mind of the Grand Master was wholly occupied with the defence of the capital. The triple enclosure of fortifications by which it was surrounded, the Castle of St. Angelo, that of St. Elmo, the great tower of the Duke of Burgundy, called the Tower of St. Nicolas, the thirteen old towers which flanked the second wall, had each their respective garrisons. Each of the ramparts also, was defended, as I have said, by the nation, whose name it bore; and a reserve was formed, divided into four bands, which were called companies of succour, under four of the most distinguished knights of the order, of whom the chancellor De Merail was one.

At length a multitude of fires upon the

Lycian mountains gave notice that some great movement was taking place amongst the infidels, and after waiting for a few days in anxious expectations, the dawn of morning shewed to the knights of Rhodes the whole sea, covered with innumerable ships, bearing the enemy to their coasts. Each man in Rhodes was prepared to do his duty—to conquer or to die : but it must not be dissembled, that when first the cry was heard—“ A fleet ! A fleet ! ”—and the fatal crescent was seen glittering upon the air, many a heart, even of the bravest, beat with new and awful feelings, and a deep silence fell upon the armed city after the first rush of many feet had carried the multitude to the walls. They gazed upon the coming foe with the still quietness of strong expectation, watched all his manœuvres, counted the continual sails, measured with keen eyes the size of every vessel ; and then reasoned, each with his fellow, on the enemy’s number and their strength.

Four hundred ships, of different sizes, anchored within sight of Rhodes, and during the fifteen days which followed, near two hundred thousand men were disembarked upon the island.

The scattered report of artillery from some of the small forts, erected to defend the coast, was all that announced to the inhabitants of the town itself that the enemy was multiplying on their shores; for though the fleet continued still in sight, the bay in which the landing took place was hidden from the view by the high ground around. The reconnoitring parties, however, also brought in news from time to time, and then the advanced posts of the christians were seen retreating towards the town, while here and there upon the heights appeared the gay and fluttering dresses of the Turkish horsemen. At length, thick and cloudy, the dust rose above the hill, and the wind brought swells of wild and martial music to the very battlements of Rhodes. Troop after troop of infidel cavalry, mounted on horses like the wind, gathered upon the plains, and long files of infantry advanced slowly, lining the edge of the prospect, and bristling the rise with pikes. In the morning the eye might have ran over the whole view without seeing one living thing move through the extent of miles; and at evening, wherever the sight could reach, was

thronged with busy life. Myriads of dim forms might be perceived in every direction, and a roar, like the distant voice of the sea, came faintly upon the ear till night fell, and all was silence.

A space of nearly three miles still lay between the city and the besieging force; and though a gun or two had been fired upon the parties which advanced far into the plain, the first day passed without any serious effort on either side.

The next day, however, the trenches were opened, and every hour saw them advance. They were pushed within cannon shot, a battery was erected, and its guns began to play upon the walls; but the tremendous fire which was opened from the artillery of the place soon silenced the battery and swept the plain. The whole of every day a continual cannonade was kept up from the walls, mowing down like grass before the scythe, every thing that appeared; and during the night, even the dark lines of walls, and angles, and towers, and battlements, wrapped in the deep obscurity, through which the eye could scarcely trace their heavy masses,

would suddenly become illuminated by a bright line of fire that, running from gun to gun, garlanded with fitful caprice the frowning brow of the fortress, and displayed its grim features with a sudden blaze, which was as speedily extinguished. Still, however, the Moslems pushed their approaches, and still by a thousand vigorous sallies the knights of St. John impeded their advance. Death in a multitude of fearful shapes awaited each infidel that ventured into the plain, and never did chivalry achieve nobler feats than before the walls of Rhodes. In every sally, in every bold attempt, Bertrand de la Croix was foremost and most keen. Night after night he lay upon the ramparts, and day after day he went forth at the head of his followers, and returned red with the blood of the foe. The eyes of all men gradually fixed upon him, for wherever Bertrand de la Croix was seen, there was the place of danger and of honour—there the thickest of the fight. The Moslems scattered from his arm, like the dust of the desert before the siroc, and the christians followed where he led, like darkness on the path of the lightning.

Days and weeks wore by, and though supported by forty-fold the number of christians, the Turks made no impression on the walls of Rhodes ; and as every evening closed in, some new tale of the young adventurer's daring was added to those which had gone before.

If praise and honour, however, were universally given to him, the companion of all his vacant hours, Sir Andrew De Merail, was looked upon with some degree of cold dislike. No one doubted the courage of the chancellor of the order, who for eighteen years of his life which he had devoted to its cause, had shewn a fearless valour, unsurpassed by any of its members ; but certain it was, that in the present war none of his former activity appeared. He avoided not danger, it is true, he stood calm and unmoved in the midst of the thickest fire ; he seemed to forget the possibility of personal fear : but still there was no longer any of that eager energy in his demeanour which had raised him in the eyes of all to the glorious place of one of the most distinguished knights of St. John. His present indifference was easily accounted for ; and the whole order had

long perceived that the elevation of another to the dignity of Grand Master, when he had fancied his own election sure, had given his vanity a wound which nothing could heal, and that thenceforward Andrew De Merail was but a lukewarm member of their chivalrous brotherhood.

The whole talents of each individual, however, was necessary to the very salvation of the order, and the Grand Master tried by every demonstration of kindness and favour to win De Merail back to the display of all his vigour and activity. He praised, he consulted, he even courted him; and on one occasion he proposed himself the alliance which he had formerly declined, of his nephew, the Duke of Nivelle, with a daughter whom De Merail, when he took the cross of St. John, had left behind him in Spain. The chancellor replied but vaguely, but at the same time there was a bitter and cynical smile upon his lip which argued not favourably for the Grand Master's offer. His efforts, however, in favour of the order seemed occasionally to revive, and such was the fiery and chivalrous defence which

the knights opposed to the Ottoman arms, that murmurs, discontent, and despondency spread through the Turkish army, and the fate of Rhodes seemed assured by the gallantry of her noble masters. At this crisis, however, arrived the Sultan Soliman himself, at that time in the meridian of his power and glory. With him, too, was the famous Corsair, Courtogli; and the spirits of the Moslem rose under the eye of their king and the conduct of their daring countryman, to a pitch of ardour and enthusiasm which required all the fortitude and resolution of the christians to resist.

The approaches were now once more pushed forward with incessant activity; batteries were raised and sustained; two enormous cavaliers were erected, domineering the bastions of Auvergne and Italy. The Tower of St. John, from which the christians had discovered and frustrated the former measures of the Turks, was beaten down with cannon shot; and it seemed, as if by some preternatural intelligence, the infidels obtained information of all the weak points of the fortress, and of the designs of its defenders. At the same time the progress of the

Turkish works was covered by such immense bodies of troops, that the Grand Master was obliged to forbid the sallies of the knights and soldiers of the order on account of the immense and overwhelming multitude of their enemies. The volunteers, however, were still permitted to follow the dictates of their own courage; and hardly a day passed over but Bertrand de la Croix surprised the foe, and won new honour by some bold and politic exploit. The praises he received, however, and the deference with which he was treated, seemed to fall upon his heart like rain upon the sand of the desert, leaving not a trace of its having been. In the moment of danger and of strife, the soul would beam up and flash forth in living fire from his dark eye; his glance would become full of energy and command, and a few brief words, instinct with the *prestige* of victory and the consciousness of power, would rouse his followers to deeds of almost insane daring, and lead them forward to the very cannon's mouth. At other times he was still cold and sad; and wandering round the bastions, he would sometimes gaze long and wistfully upon the melan-

choly sea, and then, with a mournful sigh, turn away, or calmly placing himself in the midst of the enemy's fire, would watch their movements and plan some feat to counteract their designs.

One day after standing long on the bastion of Italy, against which the whole cannon of the enemy were pointed, he turned and walked on, musing, to another part of the ramparts, which, unattacked, had been left nearly solitary. As he proceeded he saw an arrow, shot from one of the angles before him, fall into the Turkish lines and a Moslem suddenly pick it up and carry it quickly away. The young soldier hastened forward towards the spot from whence it had been winged; for, notwithstanding the rapidity of its flight, he felt sure that he had seen a small white packet attached to the head as it fell; but on turning the angle of the wall he found no one but the Chancellor De Merail, and a slave holding a bow. So high an officer of the order, and so brave a soldier, was above suspicion; but still the matter was strange, and Bertrand de la Barre passed on musing. His curiosity was excited; yet, nevertheless, he felt bound by the laws of courtesy to inquire no

further, and some ill-defined doubt made him mention what he had observed to no one. De Merail had remarked him pass, and from that moment his regard and attachment towards the young soldier seemed a thousand-fold increased, and all his own energies were henceforth signally exerted in defence of the order.

Indeed every effort had now become necessary. The enemy had rendered themselves masters of a part of the Italian post, and the sap and the mine were going on at once with great alacrity. The English and the Spanish Boulevard also were attacked; fresh troops came over daily from the Lycian continent to the aid of the infidels, and continual, persevering, unremitted assaults wore and wasted the small host of defenders. At length more than one terrific breach appeared in the walls, and notwithstanding all the activity of Villiers de l'Isle Adam and his brave associates, the tremendous fire of the Turkish artillery prevented the reconstruction of the defences. During the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth of September, this unceasing cannonade seemed to announce that some great and general assault was about

to take place on the part of the Moslem ; and during the morning of the thirtieth it was continued with terrible effect. Various movements also were seen in the Turkish army, and a great part of their force was drawn out in array, while a number of reconnoitring parties advanced and examined the state of the fortifications, notwithstanding an incessant shower of shot which poured from the cannon of the place.

But suddenly the fire of the Turks began to relax, their troops retired within the lines, and though the christians remained in arms during the whole day, it became the general opinion, towards night, that the infidels had completely abandoned their design. The knights in general pressed the Grand Master to suffer all such troops as were not absolutely necessary, to retire from the ramparts ; and on his evincing some hesitation, De Merail observed, with a sneer,—“ that their commander wished to harden his troops like steel ; and that, having heated them red-hot in the sun of a whole September day in the island of Rhodes, he was now going to cool them in the dews of a whole September night.”

Still the Grand Master remained firm ; and

it was not till he had again and again examined, with careful accuracy, the distant encampment of the enemy, that he suffered a part of his weary soldiers to retire from the shattered walls and seek a few hours' repose. He himself knew none, but instantly proceeding to the citadel, he called six of his principal knights to council, and remained in long and secret debate. Bertrand de la Croix wrapped himself in his mantle, and casting himself down upon the bastion of Auvergne, where a large mass of stone threw a broad shadow in the midst of the yellow glare of moonlight, he closed his eyes, and seemed to sleep, but his mental vision rested still upon the wide and greedy sea, and many a gloomy phantom rose up before imagination, and drove hope, and peace, and slumber far away.

CHAPTER IV.

To me the cries of fighting fields are charms,
Keen be my sabre, and of proof my arms,
I ask no other blessing of my stars.

DRYDEN.

THE sky, and the air, and the earth were all calm as infancy, and the brightness of the midnight moon mingling with a soft, white autumn haze which filled up all the hollows, wrapped the scene in a dim, uncertain splendour, more difficult for the eye to penetrate than darkness itself. A slight distant murmuring rush, like the roll of slow waves over a pebbly shore, fell upon the ear of Bertrand de la Croix as he lay upon the bastion, and starting upon his feet he gazed over the space between the armed walls and the lines of the infidel. Nothing, however,

could he descry, and putting his hand to his ear, he listened ; but for a moment the eager pulsations of his own quick heart was all he heard ; and he doubted —An instant after, the same rushing sound rose more clear upon the air—yet it might be the river—it might be a change of the wind which brought the roaring of the sea along the shore : but suddenly the quick, wild neigh of a war-horse mingled with the sound, and Bertrand, raising his horn to his lips, blew a long and loud alarm—

“To the walls ! to the walls ! The enemy ! the enemy ! Alerte ! alerte ! To the walls !” he shouted, and instantly the cry was echoed from voice to voice, from wall to wall, from house to house. Knights, and soldiers, and citizens hastened forward ; the couch was quitted in an instant, the armour buckled on, and forth to her ruined battlements, Rhodes poured her armed children, while a thousand torches flashed along the streets, and withered the pale moonlight with their angry glare. But still was heard the rushing sound of the coming enemy, and soon, through the wreaths of the dewy mist, dark masses were seen moving onward,

divested of all form and measure by the shadows of the night. Instantly, however, as the first trace of their line became discernible, a blaze of fire flashed over the walls of the city, and a thousand mouths of flame hurled death into their ranks. Then came a momentary pause, and then again the cannon opened upon the enemy, who were still seen rushing forward in the blaze ; but at that moment, a roar more loud than that of all the cannon of the place, simultaneous, with a broad, red, sudden glare of intense light, rushed up from the bastion of Italy, while a thousand dark masses hurled into the air, were seen mingled with the bright blaze, like the stones cast up by the first outbreak of a volcano.

The remnants of the shattered wall were still rolling and tottering after the explosion of the mine, when the Janizaries rushed up through the breach in thousands, their dark countenances gleaming one behind the other in the light of the torches and of the fires on the ramparts, which shone red and strong on the forms of the first line, and faded gradually away amidst a sea of grim features

and turbaned heads behind. On the walls too, and in the breach, the fierce blaze lighted up the armour of the knights, and the morions and *rondaches* of the soldiers; and while levelled lances, swords, bucklers, casques, and axes filled up in an instant the wide gap the explosion had left, a thousand hands from the crenelles and battlements around, hurled down stones, and boiling oil, and flaming tar upon the heads of the assailants. Scream and shout and clang and roar rushed up fearfully from the bitter struggle of the earth, to God's calm sky. Troop after troop of the infidels forced their way up into the breach, and every turbaned head was met by a waving blade, or hurled down by some impetuous lance; but still fresh forces thronged to the assault, and foot to foot, and man to man, and steel to steel they fought, sometimes kept at arm's length by the pike or sword, sometimes clasped together in close and deadly struggle, where the dagger and the knife ended all.

For near an hour, Bertrand de la Croix had stood the foremost on a shattered mass of the wall, dealing death to every Moslem that came

within the sweep of his rapid and untiring arm. A hundred shots from below had passed close to his head; a hundred swords had waved around him; thrice had some of the more daring Moslems singled him out, and rushing upon him with the spring of a tiger, had endeavoured to reach his fearless heart with the dagger, and thrice, by a single blow dealt with the quick precision of the lightning, had they been cast lifeless into the fosse beneath. At length the Grand Master himself stood by his side.

“Bertrand,” he said, in a rapid voice, “you have outdone yourself: but quick, speed to the bastion of Auvergne; I see all the knights who should have been there to defend it have crowded hither. Your men, there, upon the rampart, are pouring down fire on the enemy: call part away to aid you, and should you find danger, send to me, and I will come to your support; but, above all things, speed! speed!”

Using the broken masses of the wall for steps, Bertrand was in a moment upon the battlements above; there he staid but to choose

twenty of his bravest men, and then hurried, with a foot of light, towards the bastion of Auvergne. Every step that he took, the wall became more solitary; all the defenders had hurried to the principal point of attack, and only here and there a simple sentinel stood looking towards the spot where his friends and fellow-christians were struggling with the enemy. Such was the case upon the bastion of Auvergne; but the young soldier found that a still more lamentable fault had been committed on the Spanish side, where not only the knights had quitted their post to hurry to the fight, but the sentinels themselves were all employed in wheeling some cannon to an outwork to point them against the stream of enemies that were still pouring up towards the great breach. Bertrand instantly commanded them to desist and return to their post; but before they had time to take ten steps towards the spot, a loud shout burst from the Spanish bastion, and the crescent of Mahomet was seen planted by the watch-fire, while the forms of the Janizaries were beheld scattering themselves over the platform, and gathering materials for

effecting a lodgment and defending their conquest.

The mind of Bertrand de la Croix instantly saw the only chance of recovery. "Fly to the Grandmaster," he cried to one of his followers; "tell him what has happened! You of the bastion d'Auvergne, turn all your cannon on the Spanish platform, and cease not firing for a moment till you see this standard on the wall. Let the men in the traverse sweep the foot of the wall with their guns, so that no new reinforcement overpower us. And now, my brave comrades, once more, Death to the infidels! Success! Victory! and good St. John!"

Thus saying he turned from the wall, led his scanty band round behind the works, and while the artillery of the bastion of Auvergne played with terrific effect upon the Turks in the post of Spain, Bertrand penetrated by the casemate into the bastion, and with the white cross standard in one hand, and his sword in the other, reached the top of the platform, cast himself into the midst of the Turks, already broken and scattered by the fire, and after a severe struggle drove them once more

through the breach. At the same moment he beheld the rest of the infidel army retreating from the attack, and heard the general signals of recal, and now certain that the town was saved, he determined upon pursuing the fugitives. Without giving them a moment's pause he followed them through the breach, hung upon their flank in the darkness, and urged their retreat into precipitate flight. Carried away, however, by the eager fire of his heart, he forgot the time and the distance, and followed the flyers almost to the Turkish camp; but the sight of the watch-fires and the lamps round some of the principal tents, within a few hundred yards, recalled him to himself, and he turned with his followers to find his way back to the city. They could plainly distinguish its dark walls, from which, every now and then, the flash of the cannon still continued; but Bertrand found himself embarrassed in the Turkish lines, though the trench near him seemed to have been the part of some approach which had been found useless, and in consequence was abandoned. While he considered its direction and calculated whither it led, he

heard the tramp of armed men, and caught a faint glimpse of a strong body retreating from the city to the camp. Silent, and speedily he descended with his men into the trench and hastened back towards Rhodes. The body of Janizaries he had seen, passed him within a hundred yards, but without discovering him ; and he marched for the city. The trench was evidently no longer used, and along all its angles and turnings Bertrand pursued his way undisturbed till he had nearly reached the town, where he encountered a small body of stragglers, who after a slight struggle dispersed in all directions, and sought safety in flight. The path now led directly to the Spanish bastion ; but that spot which had been so neglected during the attack was now all bustling with soldiers, and the first reply to Bertrand's voice, as he shouted from below, was a cannon shot. It boomed over the heads of his little band, however, without doing injury to any one, and he was soon recognised and admitted.

He found all the knights and officers, though wearied and exhausted, full of the events of the night ; but there seemed also some other subject

which occupied them deeply, for he remarked several knots gathered together speaking low and eagerly ; but as he had hitherto entertained little communication with any one, they suffered him to pass on without making him a sharer in their discussion. At length one of those men who cannot resist bestowing a part of the few ideas they gain upon every one they meet, demanded if he had heard that Sir Andrew de Merail, the chancellor of the order, had been arrested and confined in the Tower of St. Nicolas for treasonable practices with the enemy ?

“ Impossible ! ” exclaimed Bertrand, starting back with a degree of emotion no one had seen him evince before,—“ impossible ! utterly impossible ! ”

“ True, nevertheless,” drily observed an old knight who stood near ; and Bertrand seeing the eyes of many around fixed upon himself, regained at once his cold composure, and with somewhat like scorn upon his lip, retired, leaving them to comment as they chose.

CHAPTER V.

Haste then, and lose no time,
The business must be enterprized this night.

DRYDEN.

THE young soldier strode home to his dwelling in the lower town, wearied in body and depressed in mind. "A traitor!" he thought, "De Merail a traitor!—Was it possible?—One who had so often shed his blood for the order of St. John—one who had ever shewn himself a true knight though a haughty man!—And yet the arrow and the packet he had seen shot into the Turkish lines!—The common report among the knights that De Merail had said, on the failure of his own hopes of election, that Villiers de l'Isle Adam should be

the last Grand Master of Rhodes!—his slackness in the defence!—his pernicious counsels!—all rushed upon the mind of the young knight, and though he would have given a world to believe De Merail innocent, he could not himself but doubt. He suffered his page to unclasp his armour and to bathe some slight wounds which he had received, and then casting himself down, he strove for sleep till morning.

He rose almost with the dawn and sought the palace of the Grand Master, but Villiers was deep in council and might not be disturbed. He then joined some of the knights of Castille, to which language De Merail belonged; but all he could hear of him was, that two knights grand crosses, together with the ordinary judges, were ordered to sit that very day upon his trial. Those who affected friendship for him shook the head in silence, and those whom his pride had offended, boldly called him a traitor. Still Bertrand de la Croix resolved to see the Grand Master himself, and watching his moment when he visited the ramparts, he boldly approached him in behalf

of the unfortunate man, who had so lately fallen from one of the highest and noblest grades of the order, to imprisonment and disgrace. But the moment his name was mentioned, Villiers de l'Isle Adam sternly waved his hand.

“Sir Bertrand de la Croix,” he said, “stain not the honourable name you have acquired, by deeds of unequalled courage in defence of Rhodes, by saying one word in favour of a convicted traitor. His peers and his judges have condemned him on evidence of his guilt, conclusive beyond all doubt, and to-morrow, as I live, he dies by the hand of the executioner. Answer not, Sir: you are a gallant man, and we thank you for your services, but you have no voice in Rhodes!”

Bertrand's eye met that of the Grand Master with a glance of proud dignity equal to his own. “I come not, Sir,” he said, “to speak for the guilty or the condemned: but not knowing that his trial had so quickly taken place, I came to remind you, Sir Villiers de l'Isle Adam, that he was your opponent at your election, and to bid you see that free and

fair justice was done him, as you would hold your good name throughout the world. This, Sir, I came to tell you as gentleman to gentleman and knight to knight: and now, Sir, I bid you farewell."

"Hold!" cried the Grand Master as Bertrand turned away. "You speak, Sir, somewhat too boldly, and yet your words touch upon painful truths. I feel—I know that the execution of Andrew de Merail may, in the world, be attributed to me, as an unworthy vengeance. But I *have* done and *will* do justice to him and to all. He has been examined, tried and judged by two noble and upright knights, who voted in his favour against my own election. It has been proved that he first called the infidel to our shores, and that he it has been who has betrayed all our secrets to the enemy. After patient investigation he has been condemned to death, and were he my dearest friend, my nearest kin, he should suffer the award—Now, Sir, to *you* farewell: I have wasted more words than befits me."

Each turned upon his path, and Bertrand de la Barre, seeking his own dwelling, gave him-

self up to bitter meditation. "Isabel!" muttered he, "Isabel! How will her heart be wrung! Yet, why need I think of her? Her father's fate will never reach her ears. Either those greedy and insatiate waves, have reckoned my lost jewel amongst all the fair bright things they have entombed, or else some cursed pirate—but I will not—I dare not think of that;" and Bertrand covered his eyes with his hands and groaned in agony of spirit.

The hours passed by, and the dark edge of the horizon hid the last beaming spot of the setting sun, when the page of Sir Andrew de Merail stood before Bertrand de la Croix after carefully closing the door and drawing down the tapestry. "Well, boy, what news?" exclaimed the young soldier. "Bring you letter or message from your lord?—Quick!—Speak!"

"No letter have I, Sir," answered the boy; "nor have I message but to bid you speedily to him in the prison. Take this friar's gown and this chaplet, Sir Knight! The gaoler is bribed, and the doors will open to you—and hasten to him, for life and death are upon your steps."

Bertrand paused for a moment, and thought —“It matters not!” cried he, at length; “it matters not!” and taking the gown and chaplet he drew the hood over his face, and strode onwards towards the sea, into which the Tower of St. Nicolas, where De Merail was confined, projected on a sort of natural mole. No sentinel challenged him till he came near the tower, but there he was obliged to give the word at each post. His knowledge of the countersign, however, served him till he had entered the tower, and there inquiring in a feigned voice for the civil officer, in whose custody the prisoners were lodged, he found that his way had already been prepared by weighty bribes. He was instantly conducted into a small room, where the gaoler made him uncover his head to satisfy himself of his identity. That being done, he led him through the long dim passages of the tower, whose melancholy gloom was heightened by the roaring of the sea, as it dashed against its base.

All passed in silence, and the only words exchanged were, when opening a strong door the officer bade him enter, whispering “be

quick.”—“I will,” replied the young soldier, and he passed into the cell. A table, a chair, a bed and a lamp, were all the moveables it contained, and in the midst stood Andrew de Merail, with a thousand deep channels and lines in his brow and cheek, wrought by the passing of a single dreadful day. His eye was still, however, full of fire and light, and his brow was knit with stern determination; but the stiff curls of his gray hair, seemed to have relaxed their bend, and hung wildly over his brow and cheek, and there was a quivering eagerness about his lip, which spoke the restless and perturbed soul within.

“You have come!” cried he, as Bertrand entered, and the gaoler closed the door behind him. “You have come! I thought you would—this is no moment for fears or hesitation!—But mark me, Sir—I sent not for you on my own account! No!—they might have torn my old limbs with red hot pincers, ere I would have claimed aid of mortal man. But my daughter—*my* Isabel—*your* Isabel—our beloved, must be saved.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Bertrand, in the same

rapid, almost incoherent manner; "have you heard of her? Where is she? How can she be succoured?—Speak, my lord!—speak!"

"Only by one earthly means," replied De Merail. "Till my child was involved, whatever were my plans, I sought no earthly aid; content, if I rose, to triumph singly, and if I fell, to fall alone. But now, Sir, you must aid me, and if your heart quail or hesitate, but as a strong lance trembles to a light wind, you are false and faithless to your love, and give her tamely to the polluting arms of a base infidel. Look you—you read the *lingua franca*,—construe me that," and he drew from his bosom a roll of paper, which he placed in the hand of his companion. Bertrand approached the light and read.

THE LETTER.

"Peri Bacha of Patras to De Merail, one of the chiefs of the Corsairs of Rhodes.

"The High and Mighty Sulthaun Solimaun, Emperor of the World, wills me to tell thee, oh! faithless Gaiour, that doubting the truth

and honesty of thy councils, which have as yet proved only fatal and detrimental to the armies of the Prophet, he has found a means to insure thy sincerity, or to punish thee in its default. Know then, oh son of a perverted race! that a Frankish girl has been taken by Courtogli, the faithful servant of the sublime sultaun, who declaring herself thy daughter, has been kept as a pledge and hostage of thy faith. If according to thy treaty, thou dost deliver into the hands of the servants of the Prophet this strong-hold of christian robbers, the sovereignty of Cyprus shall be secured unto thee, according to the unbroken word of the monarch of the monarchs of the earth; and the maiden thy daughter, shall be restored to thy arms pure and uninjured as she left thee. But if thou failest in that which I am about to prescribe to thee, she shall become the slave of the lowest groom of the sultaun's stables, and when Rhodes shall have fallen, thou thyself shall be torn to pieces by wild horses. Know then that to-morrow night, the armies of the prophet will once more march to the storm: two hours after the evening prayer, a false at-

tack will be made upon the bastion which the Gaiours call that of Italy, but the real one will be against that of Auvergne. See that not a gun be fired from that bastion, for thy daughter's tent is within reach of its fire; and see also, that when the soldiers of the Prophet plant his standard upon the post of Auvergne, not a Gaiour be found in arms upon that point, and that thou art ready to aid the servants of the Most High. Do this and thou shalt live."

As Bertrand de la Croix read, the eye of the unhappy De Merail fixed upon his countenance with intense and agonizing scrutiny. The muscles of his face were drawn and tense, and his strong marked features were sharpened and almost distorted with the world of busy passions that were thronging at his heart: but when the young soldier had finished, and he saw the proud stern scorn that gathered in his eye, rage took the place of fear and expectation, and with threats and imprecations he sought to drive him to his purpose.

"Was he the lover," he asked, "who would sacrifice life and all that life was worth

for her he loved—yes, he who dared risk nothing?”

And then again he menaced him with accusations before the council of the order, and threatened to charge him with participation in his own crimes. Wildly and volubly he poured forth a torrent of mingled argument, intimidation, inducement and supplication. But Bertrand de la Croix listened with firm, unshaken mind.

“Unhappy man,” he said at length, “I would not be the thing you think me—no! not for a million empires. I will save *your* child, *my* Isabel, or die: but stain my knighthood and betray my trust is what I never will do. Fare you well, and God have mercy on you!” and casting down the letter he turned to quit the cell.

The heart of De Merail was bowed to the earth. “Leave me not! leave me not!” he cried,—“stay, stay, oh stay!” and he laid his hand with an uncertain grasp upon the friar’s robe that covered the young soldier. Bertrand turned for an instant with a glance of painful pity: De Merail relaxed his hold, covered his eyes with his hands and exclaim-

ing, "Oh, God! oh, God!" suffered him to depart.

When Bertrand issued forth from the Tower of St. Nicolas, the whole earth was covered with deep darkness. The Moslems' hour of evening prayer was past, and the moment which was to bring the new attack, and to seal the fate of her he loved far better than existence, was hurrying on; but still he turned his steps to the palace of the Grand Master, and demanded earnestly to speak with him on business of life and death, but Villiers refused to see him, and Bertrand turned upon his path.

In a few minutes all his men were collected, and equipping himself in the lightest armour he could find, Bertrand prepared to leave the city by the sally-port of the post of Auvergne, indignantly leaving the Grand Master to meet the coming danger as best he might. But still as he was about to turn away he paused for a moment—

"No, no!" cried he at length, "he must be warned. Perchance he thought I came to plead for a guilty traitor. Get thee back, Dufarrel; go to the gate of the Grand Master's palace:

besiege it closely ; seek to speak with him, and leave it not at all events till you see him come forth. Tell him to look to the bastion of Auvergne, for that I have good reason to believe *there* will be the greatest struggle, wherever the Turks may feign their first attack, and if I return not before dawn to-morrow, give him this ring with your own hands and tell him I am dead."

The soldier refused not to obey, although he murmured somewhat about quitting his lord. He hurried quickly, however, to the Grand-master's palace, and twice sought to speak with him, but was twice refused admittance, as Villiers de l'Isle Adam was deeply busied in a council of the order. At length an outcry from the western side called his attention as he stood watching at the gate for the Grand Master's coming forth. Shouts and exclamations were heard, and the roar of artillery grew loud and frequent. Forgetting the orders he had received, he rushed with all speed towards the scene of strife, but ere he had gone far his master's commands flashed across his memory, and he turned with the same haste to seek the palace gate

again. Before he reached it, however, and panting and out of breath with the speed he had put forth to remedy his error, he suddenly encountered Villiers himself hurrying on foot towards the Italian ramparts followed by a crowd of knights and soldiers.

The Grand Master mistook the object of his haste. "What ! flying !" he exclaimed, striking him with his gauntlet. "Back to the ramparts, caitiff ! for by Heaven if thou fightest not like a man, thou shalt die like a dog. Speak not ! back, I say !" and again he struck him with his armed hand. The soldier glared upon him for a moment as if he would have smote him in return, and then turning suddenly round, he darted away, reached the bastion of Italy, and mingled in the fray.

CHAPTER VI.

For I must love, and am resolved to try
My fate, or, failing in the adventure, die.

DRYDEN.

THE moon was hidden in clouds, and not a star was to be seen in the heavens, when Bertrand and his men glided forth from the sally-port of the post of Auvergne. Darkness spread all around them, and a few twinkling lamps in the Turkish camp was the only guide to their footsteps; but most of the party had crossed and recrossed that plain so often in the various sorties which had taken place, that scarce a step of the ground was unknown to them; and they advanced fearlessly, though cautiously, down the slope of the hill, till they reached a small

clump of bushes and stunted trees, about a quarter of a mile distant from the first tents of the Turkish encampment. No sallies had of late taken place on the part of the garrison, for their numbers were too small to risk unnecessary loss ; and the infidels, except when urging some night attack, had slept in peace, so that, buried in perfect security, small precautions were taken against any efforts of the christians.

So well had Bertrand chosen his way, that not a sentinel had been met ; but now he paused behind the bushes, for at no great distance lay a post of Turkish soldiers. At the same time he knew not whether the trench by which he had returned the night before, and which lay close beside him, might not form the line of advance for the Turkish troops upon the post of Auvergne ; and he was determined to wait till a part at least, had passed by before he attempted to execute the bold adventure on which he was bent. During this temporary halt he told his men the hazardous nature of the action before them, and finding all willing to follow him to death itself, he allotted them their several duties clearly and precisely, and then crouching with them

under the bushes, waited for the passing of the Moslem storming parties.

It is needless to dwell long upon his thoughts during the few minutes he thus remained. Life and death, as far as he himself was concerned, and deliverance or degradation to her he loved, were the stakes from which he played his bold and fearful game: but the bitter memory of her father's treason, and near-approaching fate, hung heavy upon his mind, and mingled with many a painful thought for the future. But still the great excitement of his present enterprise occupied his first thoughts; and though, when the idea of De Merail's fate flashed across his mind, a chill and painful feeling would gather round his heart, yet his whole senses were alive to what was passing around, and not a leaf fell from the trees above him, but was marked by his keen ear. As he lay, the sound of a gradually gathering host was heard from the Turkish camp, — the whispered commands, the stealthy movements, the muffled arms; and then the measured but soft tread of men tutored to silence. A large body was evidently advancing, and they could be seen interposing as a dense

mass between the spot where he lay and the lights in the Turkish camp. They came near—more near—skirted the very bushes, and passed on, file after file, towards the city. Another mass of many thousands might be just distinguished as they crossed some faint streaks of struggling light upon the edge of the horizon; but they too moved on, and then there was a pause. Bertrand lifted his head and listened, but instantly bent down again, while a third and larger body still poured on at a short distance. It was clear that on this great effort Soliman sent forth the whole of his multitude.

Silence succeeded, and then advancing gently to the trench, which had not been occupied, Bertrand and his companions stole forward to the Turkish camp. As they advanced they could distinguish, on a hill at half a mile's distance, a sort of scaffolding, with several torches round about it, together with a large body of cavalry, and on the scaffolding itself several human figures, apparently gazing towards the fortress. Between his party and the camp was a line of sentinels, scattered at considerable distances, and the one nearest the extremity of the

disused trench had been seduced away to speak with his companion at some distance. Just behind was a village of pioneers' huts, but they were all dark and deserted, and behind them were some lighted tents, just within the range of the guns on the bastion of Auvergne, and Bertrand doubted not that there lay all that he valued in the world. The sentinel was evidently deep in conversation with his companion, and one by one, Bertrand and two of his comrades stole across, and hid themselves in the darkness of the pioneers' huts. As a fourth was going to pass, however, the sentinel turned back, and resumed his post; but Bertrand knew that the soldier that was next to follow was bold and skilful, and well versed in the Turkish tongue, and he paused anxiously to see how he would accomplish his passage.

The sentinel turned slowly backwards and forwards for some time—then pausing to listen, he leaned upon his arquebuse; but at that moment with one spring the christian soldier was upon him—his hand clasped upon his mouth, his foot upon the match of his gun, and his dagger in his heart. The slight rustle of a momentary strug-

gle, and a deep groan, was all that was heard, and before the other sentinel had turned from the round he was making, the Christian soldier, with the turban of the dead man on his head, and his arquebuse on his shoulder, was slowly parading in a different direction, so as completely to deceive his eye, and make him think that his companion, having resumed his post, was not willing to risk any further conversation. Each time the Turkish sentry—whose post was about two hundred yards from the spot—turned in his walk, two or three of Bertrand's men passed across into the shadow of the huts; and when the whole were thus within the lines, he himself advanced cautiously towards the lighted tents, in one of which, he doubted not that Isabel de Merail was confined. Keeping carefully in the shadow, he advanced between two, and bending down his ear, listened to some voices that were speaking within; but the language employed was Turkish, and the tone, not that of her he loved. Still he listened for a moment longer, when from the other tent on his left, he could hear a noise as of a dog running quickly round the inside of the canvas walls, and

with a low sort of whine of pleasure seeming to recognise him, and to welcome his approach.

“What ails thee, Querida? What ails thee?” cried the voice of Isabel, a moment after. “Alas! alas! He that thou were wont so to greet in other days, is no longer near.”

Bertrand beckoned forward his followers, and bade them be prepared to second him in a moment if he found any one in the inner tent besides Isabel herself. Some one was beyond all doubt on guard in the outer tent, but he effected a shorter means of entrance for himself, by drawing his dagger, and at once ripping the canvas down to the ground. The hangings with which it was lined were easily removed, and Bertrand stood within the tent. Isabel was alone, and the instant she saw him, she sprang forward to his arms with a faint cry of delight.—Some one moved in the outer tent, and conscious that their safety greatly depended on the secrecy of their escape, Bertrand drew back behind the hangings, and Isabel with instinctive quickness stooped to fondle her dog. At the same instant, the grim head of an eunuch was thrust in, but seeing nothing to excite sus-

picion, was immediately withdrawn, and in a moment after Isabel was in the free air by her lover's side. No words were spoken ; all was comprehended at once ; but Bertrand hurried forward to the spot where his follower still kept guard, to all appearance a Turkish sentinel, and there bore Isabel across the open space in his arms to the mouth of the deserted trench. The other sentinel had extended his parade farther than usual ; all the followers of the young Christian passed unobserved, and thus, as will sometimes happen, one of the most bold and hazardous attempts that the mind of man could conceive, was executed without difficulty, and with no singular event in its course.

In the deep darkness which still continued, Bertrand hastened with her he loved, fixing his eyes upon the dim lines of the city, which were scarcely to be distinguished from the deep obscurity of the sky. Suddenly there was a quick flash upon the Italian bastion, and then came the report of a single cannon. The moment after, the whole walls were in a blaze, and the stillness of the night was

swallowed up in the roar of the artillery. On ! on ! Bertrand sped, sometimes leading Isabel by the hand, sometimes carrying her in his arms, as the ground permitted ; but still hoping to reach the bastion of Auvergne before the false attack upon the post of Italy had been abandoned, and the real one commenced on the other point. The balls of the cannon sang over their heads as they advanced, and sometimes striking the ground near them, dashed a shower of sand into the trench, while each minute the roar of the artillery became louder, the shouts and cries of the combatants, mingled with the sound ; and through the clouds of smoke that began to envelope them, the flaming mouths of the cannons might be seen, pouring death and destruction on the very path they were pursuing.

Isabel trembled in every limb, and for her the stout heart of Bertrand felt sensations he had never experienced for himself. Nearer, more near they came, and for a moment turned from the thick of the fire, and approached the bastion of Auvergne. The ramparts at that point were but thinly manned, and Ber-

trand, carrying Isabel in his arms, shouted loud to the soldiers to give him entrance.

He was soon recognized, and some movements were made to admit him ; but at that moment a large body of the Turkish infantry wheeled upon the spot where he was standing. Not a moment was to be lost. The Janizaries were advancing with the speed of lightning to the attack of the bastion ;—every instant brought them nearer :—the warder at the sally-port was fearful and unsteady ; and seeing no other way of escape, Bertrand rushed up over the ruins of the breach, which the Turkish artillery had effected during the day, whilst a tremendous discharge of shot and arrows took place around him. Agitation, fatigue, and terror now completely overwhelmed the unfortunate girl he carried in his arms. The flash and the roar of the cannon, the shouts, the cries, the yells, the strange fierce faces and armed forms she had seen around her on every side, all in a moment faded from before her mind, and she fainted away in the arms of her lover. Staggering up over the unsteady ruins of the wall, Bertrand struggled on, but towards the top a large stone

gave way, and nearly cast him back to the ground. At the same time a strong soldier, who knew him, held down his arms from above to reach the beautiful, but apparently lifeless, form he carried. The Turks were close behind his steps—each moment hazarded her life, and Bertrand entrusted Isabel to the hands of the honest soldier, exclaiming—“Quick to my house! I will take your place.” The man, stooping far over, received her in his arms as a father would his infant, and bore her instantly from that scene of bloodshed and death. In the meanwhile Bertrand again endeavoured to climb the last few steps, but there the stones were looser than below; and as he rushed on, losing nearly as much ground as he gained, the Turks also began to climb the breach. Bertrand saw that they would reach him before he could arrive at the top, and was about to form his men as best he could even where they stood; but at that moment the Grand Master, perceiving the real direction the Turkish attack had now taken, hastened to the bastion d’Auvergne.

As he sprang forward towards the breach, followed by all the knights and soldiers he

could collect, the first object his eye fell upon was Bertrand de la Croix, leading on—as it appeared—the Turkish soldiers to the assault. Where he stood, the short space between the young soldier and the Turks was nearly lost to his sight; the knights who accompanied the Grand Master were deceived like himself, and crying out upon the imagined treason, they threw themselves into the breach.

Bertrand gladly beheld them coming, as he thought, to his assistance, but, to his surprise, he was in a moment struck to the ground, seized, and disarmed; and, while shoulder to shoulder, and shield clasped to shield, the Knights of St. John opposed to the Turks the same dauntless, unconquerable front with which they had met all former attacks, one of their most gallant supporters was carried bound and bleeding to the criminal prison in the tower of St. Nicolas.

CHAPTER VII.

Peace, good reader ! do not weep—
Peace ! the lovers are asleep :
They, sweet turtles, folded lie
In the last knot that love could tie
Let them sleep !—let them sleep on,
Till this stormy night be gone,
And the eternal morrow dawn ;
Then the curtains shall be drawn,
And they waken with that light,
Whose day shall never sleep in night.

CRASHAW.

THE fight had passed by, the attack of the Turks was again repulsed, and morning had taken the place of night, when Bertrand de la Croix was led, bound and guarded, from the prison in which he had spent the last eight hours, to the palace of the Grand Master. As he passed through the great square, he was met by four men carrying a dead body covered with a cloth, and a little further on, he beheld a scaffold, a block, and an axe, with bloody evidences around of their having been lately used for the purposes of death. At the same

time, from the scattered groups of spectators, who were separating after the fatal scene they had witnessed, he heard frequently pronounced the name "De Merail," and the appellation of "hardened traitor."

Bertrand required no other comment, and without question, suffered himself to be led on in silence. After arriving at the buildings which were called the inns of the order, he was detained for a few moments, and had an opportunity of observing the ravages which war had already made. More than one half of the lodgings seemed vacant, and the groans of the dying and wounded knights brought home from the last assault, rendered the hall but a melancholy resting-place. At length the door of the council chamber was opened for him, and he was brought before the tribunal of the order.

At the end of a long table, in a seat a little raised above the rest, sat the Grand Master; his features worn and channelled with toil and anxiety, and his garments apparently unchanged since the combat of the preceding night. Several of the higher officers of the brotherhood were placed around him, and the rest of the table was

filled with knights commanders, and grand crosses. Bertrand placed himself at once opposite the chief of the military fraternity, and encountered his grave dark eye, with a glance, firm, calm, and dignified as his own.

“It is a melancholy task, Sir Bertrand de la Croix,” said the Grand Master, after a momentary pause, “to judge and sentence treachery and treason—things, we would fain believe, could not exist with gallantry and courage. Nevertheless, in the case of the unhappy man who died this morning, we had proof that such an union of crimes and virtues may take place, and we have strong reason to believe that in you also we have an example of the same. Putting aside what we ourselves beheld, we have this morning examined various witnesses, whose evidence seems conclusive of your guilt. Yet still, whatever you can bring forward in your own defence shall be listened to attentively, and have all due weight; for, God knows, we would willingly believe you innocent. The specific charge against you is, having leagued with the Turks, in consort with Andrew de Merail, once a knight of this order, and having commu-

nicated with the enemy, favoured his enterprises, and finally led him on to the attack last night, by which Rhodes has been more injured and her garrison more weakened than by the whole of the previous siege. The facts already proved against you are, that you were the constant friend and companion of the traitor De Merail—that you visited him disguised last night in prison, and in consequence of a letter from the Turkish commander, Peri, found upon his person, that you concerted with him the means of giving up the city to the Turks, by withdrawing your men from the bastion of Auvergne—that you went yourself to the Turkish camp; and that, in the certainty of success, you yourself, with the men you had brought to Rhodes, led on the infidel troops in their fatal attack of the very post to which you were attached. The witnesses are the page of the traitor Andrew de Merail, the gaoler of the Tower of St. Nicolas, two soldiers who opened for you the sally-port of the post of Auvergne, and five knights of St. John, who with ourselves witnessed the fact of your leading on the Janizaries to the breach last night.”

“ Good faith, Sir Villiers de l’Isle Adam,” replied the young soldier, “ were the matter less than life and death, it would make me smile to see how cunningly a chain of evidence may be woven against an innocent man. Frown not, Sir ! I charge you not, with seeking the death of one who never injured you. I believe you to be a good knight and true, if ever was : but still I beg you to remember what communication I ever held with the infidels since first I set my foot in Rhodes. That I have leagued with them I acknowledge, but it was as the tiger leagues with the wild bull, for mutual destruction. That I have communicated with them—true ! but it has been with my sword-edge to their brows and my dagger in their hearts. They are my dear companions in arms !—are they not ? Have you not, all of you, seen us mingle our hearts’ blood together in trench and in the breach, and holding each other to our bosoms, let nothing part us but death. Fie, fie ! ye knights of Rhodes, is it thus ye repay your soldiers ? True, Grand Master, I did visit De Merail in prison,—true, I did read the letter from the Bacha Peri,—true,

I did go to the Turkish camp, but with no friendly intent ; and before I set my foot beyond the walls of Rhodes, I came to warn you of your danger, if you would be warned, but you refused me your presence. Even then I sent one of my followers to seek you, to watch for you, and to tell you to guard the bastion of Auvergne, for there would be the true attack. Doubtless he did his duty, and why you repeat not now that fact, I cannot tell. Last night, however, was not my night to watch the bastion of Auvergne, therefore I took not my men from their duty when I sallied out to the Turkish camp ; nor did I go thither to league with enemies of the faith, but to save from their hands a lady, and my love, and where is the knight who dares to say I did not right ?”

Bertrand de la Croix now proceeded to give an exact detail of all that had occurred during the preceding night, and it was evident that the simple truth of his story had some effect. His manner was calm and dignified, although there was less of that cold haughtiness in it than he usually displayed ; but still the brow

of the Grand Master and of the elder knights retained their stern aspect, and after a brief consultation, Villiers de l'Isle Adam replied—

“ Your story, Sir, is plausible ; but we have no proof, even though the deliverance of this captive lady might take place through your means, that you did not betray the city to the Turks as the means of gaining her. The fact of your having sought for me may have taken place—the fact of your having sent me warning or message never did. No such warning reached me. However, fearful of doing injustice, though resolved to punish where punishment is deserved, we give you two hours to seek through the whole town the messenger you dispatched ; choose from the Knights of St. John any two in whom you may place confidence, and on their knighthood let them use every means within that time to produce any proof that you even attempted to warn the Order of the danger you knew was about to befall it. Make your selection, and God speed their endeavours !”

“ You, Sir John de Real ! and you, Sir Oliver de Brissac,” replied the prisoner, addressing two of the knights present, “ if in your

good courtesy you will so far trouble yourselves, I will beg you to seek for one Peter Dufarrel; first let him be inquired for amongst my own followers, and then through the town. Bring him before the council—let him be fairly questioned what were his lord's last commands before setting forth on his expedition last night. If he speak not as I have spoken, strike off my head!"

The knights willingly undertook the task. Bertrand was removed, and the bonds taken from his hands; but moment after moment passed, and no tidings of comfort or consolation reached him. An hour went by, and then another, and Bertrand was again led to the council-chamber of the Order; the cloud had gathered deeper than before on the brow of the Grand Master.

"The knights you yourself chose," he said, in a slow and solemn voice, addressing the young soldier, "have searched town and castle in vain for the person you have named, and on their honour they cannot discover him; the council have heard your case, and have patiently examined it all. Traitors must not be left un-

punished, and it is, therefore, my painful duty to doom you to death, Sir Bertrand de la Croix !”

“ Hold !” exclaimed the young soldier, in a firm, deep, powerful voice, in the clear steady tone of which no note of fear could be heard. “ Hold, Villiers de l’Isle Adam ! and call me not Bertrand de la Croix. Say rather, Francis, Duke of Nivelles—yes, Sir,—your nephew, and the chief of your own house ! Now forward with your sentence—now that you know that the innocent blood you are about to shed is kindred to your own,” and placing his hat and plume upon his head, he fixed his proud dark eye full upon the countenance of the Grand Master.

A convulsive motion, springing from the agony of his heart, passed twice over the face of Villiers de l’Isle Adam ; but still the struggle to do his duty, and his high sense of impartial justice, wrought powerfully against the bonds of kindred and affection. His clenched hand wrung the arm of the chair in which he sat, his features became drawn and haggard, his lip quivered, his eye strained upon the fine noble countenance of his nephew, and

then after several attempts he staggered up from his seat, and strove to speak. Words at first were wanting, but at length with a dreadful effort he repeated twice, "I doom you to death ! I doom you to death !"

"Not so ! not so !" cried several of the knights present. "Hold, my lord ! hold !" But at that moment the door of the hall was forced open, and a pale ghastly man, covered with bloody bandages, rushed into the hall, followed by several surgeons of the hospital, who strove in vain to hold him.

"He is delirious," cried the surgeon ; "let him not near the Grand Master !—he is delirious from a wound on his head, and raving about some ring."

But the wounded man strode on, noticing no one in the hall, and with a rapidity that permitted no interruption. He approached the Grand Master, cast himself at his feet, and holding up a ring, he exclaimed, "I am not mad, my lord ! Last night, my noble master, the Duke of Nivelle, when sallying forth against the Turks, bade me warn you to look to the bastion of Auvergne. If he returned not before

the dawn, I was to give you this ring, and tell you that he is dead. You struck me last night and called me coward when I came to warn you as my lord commanded. Strike me again if you will—I am ready to die, for my lord is dead, and I have done his bidding !”

“ God of Heaven !” cried the Grand Master. “ Pardon me, a sinner !—my rash haste has caused me to strike an innocent man, and nearly hurried me on to spill the guiltless blood of my own brother’s son.”

* * * * *

But few words now remain to be said, and few explanations to be given. The faithful follower to whom the Duke of Nivelle had entrusted his message to the Grand Master, after having been driven, as we have seen, back to the ramparts, mingled in the thickest of the fight, in order to shame the name of coward, with which he had been branded. He soon fell under several wounds, and was carried to the hospital of the Order, where he raved wildly during the night, of the Grand Master and the Duke of Nivelle, a name unknown in the town of Rhodes. In the morning he asked

wildly if the Duke had returned, and the surgeons fancying him delirious, replied in the negative. He then strove to rise, but was prevented for some hours, at the end of which, however, he watched his opportunity, forced his way out, and reached the presence of the Grand Master, as detailed above.

The innocence of the young Duke of Nivelle was now fully established, and he easily explained to his uncle the circumstances which had led to the cold reserve and concealment he had adopted. Having met and loved Isabel de Merail in Spain, he had determined to win her, by high deeds in favour of that order to which her father had devoted himself. But his own uncle, the Grand Master, having refused the alliance when pressed in former days, the young lover was afraid that his scheme would meet opposition and obstruction, if he made himself known to his relation, from whose memory fifteen years had obliterated all traces of his person. Lest any casual circumstance should betray his secret also, he imposed upon himself a stern system of reserve, which he only broke through towards the father of her

he loved; nor did he reveal himself to him till he had won his regard. De Merail, who had already bound himself to the Turks, gladly seized a fresh means of punishing, as he thought, the rival who had borne away the highest dignity of the order from the hand he stretched to grasp it, and willingly promised his daughter to the Duke of Nivelles, though he had at one time declared that fire and water should as soon unite as his race with that of Villiers de l'Isle Adam.

When many mutual explanations had been given between the Grand Master and his nephew, the mind of the gallant Knight of Rhodes reverted to all the splendid deeds he had seen the young soldier perform in defence of the order, and clasping him to his bosom, he exclaimed, "How—how could I ever think you guilty? But tell me, tell me, Nivelles—for it weighs like a load upon my heart, that the same fatal errors which had nearly led to your death, may have brought that wretched man, De Merail, to the block without cause—tell me, was his sentence just?"

"Be your heart at rest," replied the duke.

“ He well deserved his fate ; but if I have served the order of Rhodes—if I have shed my blood in its defence, never let the manner of his death reach his daughter’s ears. Let it be buried in silence and hid in the bosom of the order, for I would not for a world that my bride’s cheek should burn with the knowledge that her father was a traitor.”

Nor did she ever know it. Nivelle soon clasped her again to his bosom, and did away all her fears for his own safety. He had still, however, the hard task of breaking to her the loss of her parent, although his devotion to the order of St. John had long deprived her of his immediate care and near affection. To her dying day she believed that he had fallen gallantly in the defence of Rhodes, and in after years when that island was mentioned, though she thought of it with a sigh, there mingled with her sorrow a touch of that pride with which the knights themselves remembered their long glorious resistance.

As all men know, Rhodes at length fell, but it was not till her bulwarks were levelled with the ground, and defenders reduced to less than

a hundredth part of the force that assailed them. Even then, a proud capitulation gave glory both to the living and the dead ; and sailing away from the island, for which they had so nobly fought, the Grand Master and his knights anchored at Setia, in the Island of Candia, where Isabel de Merail gave her hand to him who had so long possessed her heart. The morning of their affection broke in storms and tempests, but now, when once the clouds had passed away, the hours sped on in sunshine and tranquillity, and a bright calm evening closed the long summer day of their existence.



HADDAD-BEN-AHAB ;

OR,

THE TRAVELLER.

A TALE OF STAMBOUL.

BY MR. GALT.

“ Gramercy, Sir Traveller, it marvels me how you can carry between one pair of shoulders, the weight of your heavy wisdom ? Alack now !—would you but discourse me of the wonders you saw ayont the Antipodes !

“ Peace, ignoranimous !—’tis too good for thy ass’s ears to listen to. The world shall get it, caxtonized in a great book.”

The Traveller and the Simpleton.

HADDAD-BEN-AHAB was a very wise man, and he had several friends, men of discernment, and partakers of the wisdom of ages ; but they were not all so wise as Haddad-Ben-Ahab.

His sentences were short, but his knowledge was long, and what he predicted generally came to pass, for he did not pretend to the gift of prophecy. The utmost he ever said in that way was, that he expected the sun to rise to-morrow, and that old age was the shadow of youth.

Besides being of a grave temperament, Haddad-Ben-Ahab was inclined to obesity; he was kindly and good-natured to the whole human race; he even carried his benevolence to the inferior creation, and often patted his dogs on the head and gave them bones; but cats he could not abide. Had he been a rat he could not have regarded them with more antipathy; and yet Haddad-Ben-Ahab was an excellent man, who smoked his chibouque, with occasional cups of coffee and sherbet, interspersed with profound aphorisms on the condition of man, and conjectures on the delights of paradise.

With his friends he passed many sun-bright hours; and if much talk was not heard among them on these occasions, be it remembered, that silence is often wisdom. The scene of their social resort was a little koisk, in front of one of the coffee-houses on the bank of the Tygris.

No place in all Bagdad is so pleasantly situated. There the mighty river rolls in all the affluence of his waters, pure as the unclouded sky, and speckled with innumerable boats, while the rippling waves, tickled as it were by the summer breezes, gamble and sparkle around.

This koisk was raised two steps from the ground ; the interior was painted with all the most splendid colours. The roof was covered with tiles that glittered like the skin of the Arabian serpent, and was surmounted with a green dragon, which was painted of that imperial hue, because Haddad-Ben-Ahab was descended from the sacred progeny of Fatima, of whom green is the everlasting badge, as it is of Nature. Time cannot change it, nor can it be impaired by the decrees of tyranny or of justice.

One beautiful day Haddad-Ben-Ahab and his friends had met in this Koisk of Dreams, and were socially enjoying the fragrant smoke of their pipes, and listening to the refreshing undulations of the river, as the boats softly glided along—for the waters lay in glossy stillness—the winds were asleep—even the sunbeams seemed to rest in a slumber on all things. The smoke

stood on the chimney-tops, as if a tall visionary tree grew out of each ; and the many-coloured cloths in the yard of Orooblis, the Armenian dyer, hung, unmolested by a breath. Orooblis himself was the only thing, in that soft and bright noon, which appeared on the land to be animated with any purpose.

Orooblis was preparing a boat to descend the Tygris, and his servants were loading it with bales of apparel and baskets of provisions, while he himself was in a great bustle, going often between his dwelling-house and the boat, talking loud and giving orders, and ever and anon wiping his forehead, for he was a man that delighted in having an ado. *splendid!*

Haddad-Ben-Ahab seeing Orooblis so active, looked at him for some time ; and it so happened that all the friends at the same moment took their amber-headed pipes from their lips, and said—

“Where can Orooblis, the Armenian dyer, be going?”

Such a simultaneous interjection naturally surprised them all, and Haddad-Ben-Ahab added—

“I should like to go with him, and see strange things, for I have never been out of the city of Bagdad, save once to pluck pomegranates in the garden of Beys-Addy-Bookk.” And he then rose and went to the boat which Orooblis was loading, and spoke to him ; and when it was ready, they seated themselves on board and sailed down the Tygris, having much pleasant discourse concerning distant lands and hills, whose tops pierced the clouds, and were supposed to be the pillars that upheld the crystal dome of the heavens.

Haddad-Ben-Ahab rejoiced greatly as they sailed along, and at last they came to a little town, where Orooblis having business in dye-stuffs to transact, went on shore, leaving his friend. But in what corner of the earth this little town stood Haddad-Ben-Ahab knew not ; for, like other travellers, he was not provided with much geographical knowledge.

But soon after the departure of Orooblis, he thought he would also land and inquire. Accordingly, taking his pipe in his hand, he stepped out of the boat and went about the town, looking at many things, till he came to a wharf, where a

large ship was taking merchandise on board ; and her sailors were men of a different complexion from that of the watermen who plied on the Tygris at Bagdad.

Haddad-Ben-Ahab looked at them, and as he was standing near to where they were at work, he thought that this ship afforded a better opportunity than he had enjoyed with Orooblis, to see foreign countries. He accordingly went up to the captain and held out a handful of money, and indicated that he was desirous to sail away with the ship.

When the captain saw the gold he was mightily civil, and spoke to Haddad-Ben-Ahab with a loud voice—perhaps thinking to make him hear was the way to make him understand. But Haddad-Ben-Ahab only held up the forefinger of his right hand, and shook it to and fro. In the end, however, he was taken on board the ship, and no sooner was he there than he sat down on a sofa, and drawing his legs up under him, kindled his pipe and began to smoke, much at his ease, making observations with his eyes as he did so.

The first observation Haddad-Ben-Ahab

made was, that the sofa on which he had taken his place was not at all like the sofas of Bagdad, and therefore when he returned he would shew that he had not travelled without profit, by having one made exactly similar for his best chamber, with hens and ducks under it, pleasantly feeding and joyously kackling and quacking. And he also observed a remarkable sagacity in the ducks, for when they saw he was a stranger, they turned up the sides of their heads and eyed him in a most curious and inquisitive manner—very different indeed to the ducks of Bagdad.

When the ship had taken on board her cargo, she spread her sails, and Haddad-Ben-Ahab felt himself in a new situation ; for, presently she began to lie over, and to plunge and revel among the waves like a glad creature. But Haddad-Ben-Ahab became very sick, and the captain shewed him the way down into the inside of the vessel, where he went into a dark bed, and, was charitably tended by one of the sailors for many days.

After a season there was much shouting on the deck of the ship, and Haddad-Ben-Ahab

crawled out of his bed, and went to the sofa, and saw that the ship was near the end of her voyage.

When she had come to a bank where those on board could step out, Haddad-Ben-Ahab did so ; and after he had seen all the strange things which were in the town where he thus landed, he went into a baker's shop—for they eat bread in that town as they do in Bagdad—and bought a loaf, which having eaten, he quenched his thirst at a fountain hard by, in his ordinary manner of drinking, at which he wondered exceedingly.

When he had solaced himself with all the wonders of that foreign city, he went to a fakier, who was holding two horses ready saddled ; beautiful they were, and as the fakier signified by signs, their hoofs were so fleet, that they left the wind behind them. Haddad-Ben-Ahab then shewed the fakier his gold, and mounted one of the horses, pointing with the shaft of his pipe to the fakier to mount the other ; and then they both rode away into the country, and they found that the wind blew in their faces.

At last they came to a caravansary, where the fakier bought a cooked hen and two onions,

of which they both partook, and stretching themselves before the fire which they had lighted in their chamber, they fell asleep and slept until the dawn of day, when they resumed their journey into remoter parts and nearer to the wall of the world, which Haddad-Ben-Ahab conjectured they must soon reach. They had not, however, journeyed many days in the usual manner, when they came to the banks of a large river, and the fakier would go no further with his swift horses. Haddad-Ben-Ahab was in consequence constrained to pay and part from him, and to embark in a ferry-boat to convey him over the stream, where he found a strange vehicle with four horses standing ready to carry him on towards the wall of the world, "which surely," said he to himself, "ought not to be now far off."

Haddad-Ben-Ahab shewed his gold again, and was permitted to take a seat in the vehicle, which soon after drove away; and he remarked in a most sagacious manner, that nothing in that country was like the things in his own; for the houses and trees, and all things ran away as the vehicle came up to them; and when

it gave a jostle, they gave a jump; which he noted as one of the most extraordinary things he had seen since he left Bagdad.

At last, Haddad-Ben-Ahab came to the foot of a lofty green mountain, with groves and jocund villages, which studded it as it were with gems and shining ornaments, and he said, "This must be the wall of the world, for surely nothing can exist on the other side of these hills! but I will ascend them and look over, for I should like to tell my friends in Bagdad what is to be seen on the outside of the earth." Accordingly he ascended the green mountain, and he came to a thick forest of stubby trees: "This is surprising," said Haddad-Ben-Ahab, "but higher I will yet go." And he passed through that forest of trees and came to a steep moorland part of the hill, where no living thing could be seen, but a solitude without limit, and the living world all glittering at the foot of the mountain.

"This is a high place," said Haddad-Ben-Ahab, "but I will yet go higher," and he began to climb with his hands. After an upward journey of great toil he came to a frozen region,

and the top of the wall of the world was still far above him. He was, however, none daunted by the distance, but boldly held on in the ascent, and at last he reached the top of the wall. But when he got there, instead of a region of fog and chaos, he only beheld another world much like our own, and he was greatly amazed, and exclaimed with a loud voice—"Will my friends in Bagdad believe this?—but it is true, and I will so tell them." So he hastened down the mountain and went with all the speed he could back to Bagdad: saying, "Bagdad," and giving gold to every man he met, until he reached the Koisk of Dreams, where his friends were smoking and looking at the gambols of the Tygris.

When the friends of Haddad-Ben-Ahab saw him approach, they respectively took their pipes from their mouths and held them in their left hands, while they pressed their bosoms with their right, and received him with a solemn salaam, for he had been long absent, and all they in the meantime had heard concerning him was only what Orooblis, the Armenian dyer, on his return told them: namely, that he was gone to the wall of the world, which limits

the travels of man. No wonder then that they rejoiced with an exceeding gladness to see him return and take his place in the koisk among them, as if he had never been a day's journey away from Bagdad.

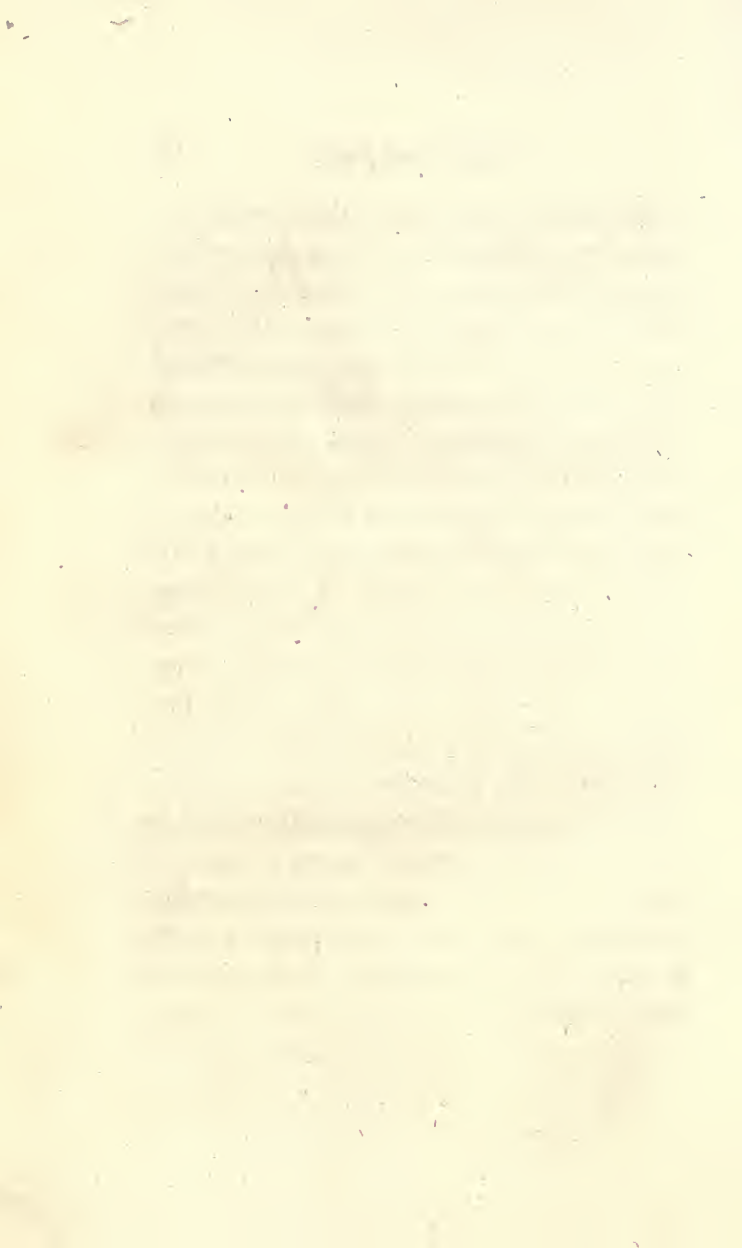
They then questioned him about his adventures, and he faithfully related to them all the wonders which have been set forth in our account of the journey, upon which they declared he had made himself one of the sages of the earth.

Afterwards they each made a feast, to which they invited all the philosophers in Bagdad, and Haddad-Ben-Ahab was placed in the seat of honour, and being courteously solicited, told them of his travels, and every one cried aloud—

“ God is great, and Mahomet is his prophet !”

When they had in this manner banqueted, Haddad-Ben-Ahab fell sick, and there was a great talk concerning the same. Some said he was very ill ; others shook their heads and spoke not ; but the world is full of envy and hard-heartedness, and those who were spiteful because of the renown which Haddad-Ben-Ahab, as a traveller who had visited the top

of the wall of the world with so much courage, had acquired, jeered at his malady, saying he had been only feasted over much. Nevertheless Haddad-Ben-Ahab died; and never was such a funeral seen in all Bagdad, save that of the Caliph Mahoud—commonly called the Magnificent. Such was the admiration in which the memory of the traveller was held, the poets made dirges on the occasion, and mournful songs were heard in the twilight from the windows of every harem. Nor did the generation of the time content itself with the ceremonies of lamentation : they caused a fountain to be erected, which they named the Fountain of Haddad-Ben-Ahab, the Traveller; and when the slaves go to fetch water, they speak of the wonderful things he did, and how he was on the top of the wall of the world, and saw the outside of the earth; so that his memory lives for ever among them, as one of the greatest, the wisest, and the bravest of men.



THE GIPSY OF THE ABRUZZO.

BY MR. POWER.*

CHAPTER I.

THE hot south-east wind had prevailed all day, and cast gloom and languor over the lovely valley of Salmona—a spot worthy of having given birth to the amiable Naso; that immortal poet, whose glowing imagination has so truly painted those “charming agonies of love, whose misery delights.”

* Author of “The Lost Heir,” “The King’s Secret,” “Married Lovers,” &c.

It was near to that spot, still known to the peasantry as *La Bottega d'Ovidio*,—that the young Donna Constanza stayed her eager palfrey to let him drink of the limpid stream of *Gli Fonte d'Amore*. Notwithstanding the sickening oppression of the malaria, now fast pervading the heated breeze, the flush of hope and happiness sat upon the maiden's brow, and the smile of youthful joy played around her pouting lips. While her horse sucked up the cooling draught, a voice from beneath called out in low but musical tones,

“Gentil' Donna,” two several times, before she could recognise whence it proceeded.

“Gentil' Donna,” said the voice, a third time, “fling a ducat on the margin of *Gli Fonte d'Amore*, and I'll read you your fortune.”

The lady now discerned the speaker, where he lay stretched at full length beneath the thick olive that shaded one side of the spring.

“This is no hour to have fortune read,” replied the donna; “but here's a gold zechino for thy good wishes, for truly never did I need fortune more. Here, Andreas, rein up thy steed, and bear the coin to him.”

“ Touch it not, Messer Andreas,” sharply cried the first speaker, addressing the waiting servitor, “ ’twill blister thy fingers else.”

Andreas instinctively started from the proffered gold; the speaker laughed, and in a softened tone continued:—

“ Fling it thou upon the flowery turf, made ever verdant by the waters of *Gli Fonte d’Amore*: fling it freely down, and thy love, lady, shall never know cross again.”

A deep suffusion passed over the cheek of Constanza.

“ The Baron is in sight, Donna,” announced Andreas.

“ Then let us ride on,” she replied, as, with a look that seemed to say, I would hear more if occasion suited, she flung the coin towards the prophet; and, giving her spirited palfrey the rein, she galloped lightly on towards the Castello.

“ Your fortune is read *molto beato*, and may your star never shine less brightly than at this hour,” cried the man, springing up, and displaying the well-known equipment of the *Zingaro*—one of a race, half bandit, half gipsy, who were, at this period, thickly lo-

cated about the wild mountain track lying between Isernia and Popoli, and extending from the lake of Celano across the Maronne and Matesse. In his hand he bore a staff, full nine feet long,—this was his only apparent weapon; from his neck hung a rudely formed guitar, a long hair-net constrained his luxuriant black locks, and a large-leaved hat lay back upon his shoulders, sustained by a narrow leather strap passed across his forehead. His nether man was clad in loose breeches of dark yellow cotton, drawn tight below the knee; a greave-shaped leathern gaiter covered his leg nearly to the ankle, where it was met by the lacing of the rude sandal, which barely protected the sole of the foot. A short closely-fitted jerkin of deer-skin, and a very large *capa* of coarse black cloth, completed the wardrobe of the very picturesque-looking youth, who, leaning on his staff, watched the receding figure of the beautiful Constanza. There was a yellowish tint in his complexion, which would have given a sickly character to the countenance, but that it was more than counteracted by the lustrous brightness of his large black eyes, the

redness of his lips, and a set of teeth, which, from their strength and whiteness, seemed formed for eternity. In figure, he was about the middle height; his limbs light and long, denoting both strength and elasticity.

As the cortège of the Baron drew near, the youth thus minutely described moved round the spring, and having picked from the turf the piece of gold, rapidly darted away; and by the aid of his pole, readily clearing the many streams which intersected the meadow, made for the olive-grove, which covered one side of the steep hill leading to the Castello.

This was the day of the festival of the patron saint of the Monastery of the *Annunziata*, and in despite of the sirocco, the Baron de Mirialva had attended the ceremony, in company with his niece. They had left the castle at day-break, and were now returning from the monastery, accompanied by some of the neighbouring nobility. It was on this day, in the church of the *Annunziata*, Constanza had recovered the smiles stolen from her brow, ever since the hour her uncle first announced the feud which separated her from Luigi Con-

radini, her long-affianced and heart-chosen lord. It was from the hand of a mendicant palmer, to whom she tendered alms, in the gloomy aisles of the church, she received the electric touch which imparted new life to her heart. It was from beneath that pilgrim's hood the glances shot, which had kindled anew the fire of joy in her eyes ; and it was to read the letter of love, hidden next her beating heart, whose lines, indeed, were to decide her fate, that she now spurred homeward so freely, heedless of the heat of sun or air.

The same day was far advanced, when the gipsy stood close before the noble gate of the Castell de Mirialva, and whilst tuning his guitar, the wanderer's constant recommendation, disturbed the rest of the pampered porter who sat within its shade.

"Peace, and quit thy thrumming, rogue ; thou cannot expect to steal aught here," growled the unmusical servitor ; "what wouldst thou ?"

"Something to eat, and somewhere to shelter me within these ample walls," replied the youth sadly ; "see you the threatening storm ?"

"Diavolo, Zingaro !" rejoined the porter, "thou must have profited little by thy being

ing up, if a coming storm or a night's lying in the air, with a grey stone pillow, and a sky-coloured coverlid can give thee much care."

"But, charity, good Signor Castellan!"

"Aye, aye, I am charitable to the real necessitoso, even to overflowing, and give abundantly to the worthy Fathers of San Dominico. The Convent of Monte Garigliano is hardly a league lower down; and if thou usest lightly those long legs of thine, thou mayest yet cross the torrent, before the mountain-waters find their way there. The holy fathers are excellent judges of the proper objects of compassion; go, tinkle thy guitar at their gate, and see if thy Zingaro ditties may win thee straw and a supper. Ho, ho!—Pah! that puff of malaria was the very breath of *Satan*; the true blast of the sirocco—away, rogue! Off from the portal, and let me close out thy ill-breathing, and thy master, the Devil's, together—it will not harm thee, 'tis thy native air; so good night, poveretto."

"The malaria be your only breathing, son of a ban-dog, until your bloated form be as

black and as foul as the heart within it !” muttered the repulsed suppliant, as he turned from the closely-barred portal of the Castello, and fixed his eyes upon the mighty masses of cloud now fast descending on every side, obscuring the close of day, and creating a premature night, by colouring every object with their sickly saffron hue, only contrasted by the fiery glare of the vivid lightning, shot at intervals from their laden bosoms.

A few heavy rain-drops, splashing upon the hard and thirsty soil, gave note of the coming storm, and promised a speedy termination to the sirocco that had blown all day. Though it was late, the birds, by a sudden quick and lively note, seemed to offer up thanks to the God of Nature for the relief about to be afforded them. The leaves of the olive, too, emitted a gentle rustling sound, as if eager to court the coming gale, that with cool breath began already to puff back the baleful blast, under whose withering influence all beneath the sky had seemed to droop and sicken.

“ ’Twill be a heavy fall, and soon too,” muttered the gipsy, as after a moment’s ob-

servation of the heavens, he leaned upon his staff, and glanced about him; “and not a chance of shelter, except I crawl like a hound under some projection of these walls, upon which my curse should light, but that I watched the fair form of her who flung me this zechino, gallop lightly beneath them. Gold, humph! if I were in a city now, this would win me supper and shelter from Christian or Pagan; but of what use is it upon the mountain? A thousand such pieces would not bribe yon over-laden cloud to bear its waters a league further, and leave me in a dry skin. No! man alone knows its influence, and the ring of this tiny bit of yellow metal would thrill even to the *heart* of the churl who now bars me in the storm,—would even charm him to change hands and touch cup with the Zingaro. *Sformato!* if ever we meet on the mountain, I’ll read thee a true fortune; aye, and see to its fulfilment too, even as near to the end of thy life, as may well be with safety.”

The glance that accompanied this promise fully vouched for the sincerity of the speaker, who now pulled over his brows the large leafed hat which had hitherto lain upon his shoulders,

drew the hanging part of his hair-net tightly under his throat, and, folding his coarse capa closely about his person, seemed fully prepared to abide the pitiless pelting of the coming maestro, as with a quick and stealthy pace he turned the leeward angle of the Casa.

CHAPTER II.

'TWAS about the second hour of morning, the storm had done its errand, and was passed away, and the dome of heaven shewed clear and unclouded. The cool breeze blew freshly, and formed a singular contrast to the dull suffocating wind that had prevailed during the preceding day ; the deep shadows of the Castello were flung far down the side of the hill upon which it was reared, and the only sound that broke on Nature's repose, was the distant roar of the swollen waters of the Pescara. A tall and stately cavalier was eagerly climbing the

most precipitate part of the hill, over which hung a large projecting window; he halted as he arrived beneath it, and after gazing in silence for an instant, eagerly unwound his scarf, and waved it to and fro in the air.

“No,” he at length murmured, in a tone of bitter disappointment; “there is no hope; the light has long been extinguished, and she has despaired of my coming. I would I had plunged into the torrent that detained me, death would have been less painful than the eternal misery of hope delayed—could I yet apprise her that I am here without noise—but how? Stephano is with the horses, and I could as soon scale the Duomo as reach that cursed window. I would give a thousand ducats to see it fairly opened.”

“A bargain, Signor Cavaliero,” was at once whispered, in a clear and distinct, though low tone, which seemed to rise close from beneath the Signor’s feet; he cast his eyes downwards, and observed, rolled up in a coin of the buttress, immediately under shelter of the window, a dark looking mass, from out of which a pair of twinkling eyes were fixed intensely upon him.

“Who art thou?” he demanded, fiercely, “lying coiled up there like the lynx of the Abruzzo? Come forth quickly, and shew thy form and errand, or I’ll unkennel thee else with the point of my spada.”

“Don’t do that, Signor,” again whispered the voice; “don’t do that, for when tickled, I have an ugly trick of laughing loud enough to be heard at a round league, and listeners *might* choose to seek out the joke sooner than you could be prepared to join in it.”

“Come forth, sirrah knave, and fear not—only inform me what thou hast been doing in that lair, and why there at all?”

“Veramente, Signor, I am here for lack of better shelter, and have been doing what I still had done but for your coming, sleeping sound—as the cat sleeps;—my ear is quick, Signor, and my eye is quicker. I know you, *Luigi Conradini*, and could guess your present business here, aye, and could help you to do it into the bargain.”

“And what are you that read me this riddle?”

“One who lives by riddles, a Zingaro,” answered the speaker, rising nimbly to his full

height, and shaking about him the folds of his capa.

“Ha ! methinks I have seen thy face before, friend !”

“And I am sure I have seen yours, Signor. Zingaronever yet forgot the face of friend or foe.”

“Am I then to conclude myself recognized as the former, since you so readily proffer service ?”

“Not more promptly, Signor, than you extended it to me twelve months agoe this very day, in the wood of Venafro, when the king’s hounds turned off the trail of the deer to nose me, where I lay *perdu* under a tree, watching the chase, and the *chasseurs* were going to hang me up as a scare-crow for throwing them out—aye, and but for your prompt word had done it too. Now, Signor, what can I do to repay the obligation ? Fear not to trust me, I am your’s to the death—for gratitude, like vengeance, should be *senza limite*.”

“I fear me, Zingaro, that thy service, though honestly and freely proffered, may little avail me in this strait, unless thou hast wit to conjure me into yonder window, or give warning

in a whisper to her, who no longer watches, that he whom she loves is here."

"Humph! both may be contrived, and without aid of the devil, if you, Signor, can afford to part with a portion of your dignity, and putting forth the native strength of your manhood, so become my bearer for a brief space."

"I do not rightly comprehend, but fear not my compliance; if thou canst but make it appear, that by bearing thee I may enter yon chamber—but pshaw! the thing has no likelihood; that window is a good twenty feet from the ground we tread on."

"Ha, ha! I have scaled a higher wall to rob a meal of flour from the Fornajo, and for the wealth and beauty that await thee!—*Animo*, Luigi Conradini! stand on this bench; so—why there's two feet less distance between thee and thy mistress already—Now take this pole, and drive the iron point into the opposite buttress with all thy might, and as high above head as may be; strike manfully for thy lady's love." The count raised his arm, and the point of the staff was buried between the huge stones.

"Well stricken, Signor," cried the Gipsy; "now

lend me that silken scarf; elevate thine arms to the uttermost—so, now hold firm the pole, and stand fast, for my limbs may be periled, if thine fail.”

Agilely springing upon Conte Luigi's shoulders, the Gipsy next stepped lightly upon the tough pole, which the lover with his vigorous arms bore above his head, pressing against the point which rested in the opposite wall; once at this elevation; he dexterously threw the scarf round one of the frightfully carved heads which projected by way of ornament from the ends of the beams that supported the window, and seemed to grin defiance on all below; this done, to twist the two parts of the scarf together, and climb up by shifting his hands alternately one over the other, with the lightness and nimbleness of a marmot, was the work of a moment.

He tried the casement—it yielded to the touch, and the long-desired haven stood open before the anxiously watching lover of Constanza, who, making a sign to his assistant, quickly drew from his cloak a light but strong ladder of silken cordage, and flinging up one end to be hooked to the window's edge, fastened the other to the rude bench below, and promptly mounting entered the chamber.

“The thousand ducats are mine,” whispered the gipsy-boy in the ear of the Count.

“They will not be the moiety of thy reward,” answered Conradini eagerly, “if I this night succeed in my hopes.”

“*Basta*, Signor,” rejoined the successful climber, “let me first rub out the debt contracted in the forest of Venafro, before we begin a new score.”

“This apartment,” continued the count, “is one of the suite occupied by Constanza; her dressing-room should be somewhere near the window on the right hand. Ah! during our days of happiness, I knew well each turning in these apartments; and did the good old Marchese, her father, still live, I need not now be seeking my affianced bride by night, and in darkness, as a thief seeks his prey.”

“Why, I fancy I feel more at home in the darkness than you do, Signor,” interrupted the gipsy, as they felt along the wall. “Ha! perchance here is the very door; a light within too!—by your leave, Messer Key; all is well—*Eccola*, Signor; condescend to place your eye here and behold her whom you seek.”

The count instinctively obeyed. It was indeed Constanza ; she was still equipped as if for the saddle, except that she had thrown aside her hat and plume. Her beautiful countenance was suffused with the tears still falling upon an open letter that lay upon the table before her, and with whose contents she was intensely occupied. A half-uttered exclamation from the count reached her ear ; she listened with doubting eagerness—a low tap was next heard on the door, and “ *Constanza* ” was softly whispered, in those tones in which none ever breathed her name, save only one. She started on to her feet, and gazed timidly around, passing her hand across her forehead. The next moment she had flung wide the chamber-door, and the swart form of the Zingaro stood before her ! She saw no more ; a wild piercing scream burst from her lips, and covering her face with her hands, she sank senseless into the arms of her betrothed husband, Luigi Conradini.

“ *Diavolo !* Signor, was it your looks or mine that so terrified the donna ? ”

“ We are lost ! ” exclaimed the count, “ lost be-

yond hope ; her loud scream must have alarmed the household, and my life will be the sacrifice to her guardian uncle's anger and revenge."

"Nay, then," cried his companion, "resign thy senseless prize, and let us two fly ; 'tis ill arguing with an angry guardian on his own ground."

"Not so, but do thou leave me, good fellow ; take this purse and fly ; for myself, I will abide the worst, and die, rather than again be separated from her for whom alone I wish to live."

A distant noise, as if of approaching footsteps, was now heard. The Zingaro paused for a moment, as he quietly put aside the proffered gold ; he cast his eyes on the senseless form of Constanza, over which the count fondly hung ; then, as if suddenly having resolved and decided on his course, he exclaimed, taking the hand of the lady—

"I this day read you a fair fortune, Donna, and it must be fulfilled ; take up your mistress, Signor, and bear her down the ladder."

"'Tis useless, worthy fellow : already I hear the sound of advancing feet at the end of the corridor ; we should be pursued and seized

ere I could bear this dear burthen half way down the hill to where my good horses wait."

"You shall not be pursued. I will remain behind, will close down the window, lead them on a wrong scent, and so win you ample time—away, come!"

"How! *you* remain! but your life will—"

"I know, I know, Signor; my neck will be put in some jeopardy, but that is an everyday venture—if I 'scape, so—if not, at worse, hanging is the natural death of our race, and I am already some twelve months older than I should have been, but for your interference—so I owe you a death. Ha! they are getting impatient without; so courage, Signor, the fresh air revives her already—there, throw your cloak round her head; let her not again get sight of my face to terrify her anew. Ha, ha, ha! I never judged before it was so forbidding to the sex."

A violent hammering was now heard on the outer door of the corridor, together with the baron's voice ordering it to be broken down. The count and his lovely prize were by this

time at the foot of the ladder—he looked back to the gipsy, and urged him to descend.

“Down with thee, my brave lad, and try thy fortune with us!”

“You were lost if I did that,” answered the youth coolly. “Adieu, Luigi Conradini. Tell the Donna ’twas I who yesterday read her fortune by the waters *Gli Fonti d’Amore*. And hark! should the aged of our race ever cross your path, fling a coin in their way for my sake, and confess that the gratitude of lo Zingaro is *senza limite*.”

He closed the window with the last word, and softly entering the chamber of Constanza, had just time to secure the lock, when the outer door was burst open, and the baron appeared, surrounded by a crowd of half-dressed domestics, who all eagerly pressed forward, alarmed at the thought of their young lady’s danger.

“All here is quiet,” said the baron, after looking about him for a moment; “are you sure it was the Donna Constanza’s voice you heard, calling for help?”

“*Per certo*, Signor,” answered a domestic, “and when first I listened at the outer door,

I heard more than one voice whispering in this very room."

"And I," said another, "heard the most fearful scream."

"Scream! several screams you mean, or Heaven mend your hearing," added a third.

"Peace, knaves!" said the baron, as he knocked at his niece's chamber. All were silent, but no answer was returned; repeating his summons in a louder key, he next called upon her within but to assure him of her safety: still echo was his only reply. "The girl has not surely been mad enough to attempt her life, for love of the foolish boy, to whom her father in his dotage betrothed her? Here, Jocope, try thy hammer on this door."

This command was immediately followed by a storm of blows upon the door, under which, after a gallant resistance, the stout cedar at length gave way, and the hallowed sanctuary of beauty lay open to the profanation of the vulgar gaze.

The domestics hung back, from a mingled feeling of respect and apprehension, and the baron alone entered the chamber. All within

bore testimony to the taste and elegance of the inhabitant, but shewed not any sign of violence or even discomposure. Upon the table stood an extinguished taper, and near it lay the guitar and music, last touched by the fair hand of Constanza. A velvet curtain hung before the recess in which stood her couch ; this was lowered, and as the baron gently drew it aside he perceived the bed was occupied.

“ This,” he cried, in astonishment, “ is most strange, surely the wilful girl is moon-struck ; Constanza, answer me ! Constanza !” he repeated, striking the coverlid violently with his hand. “ Nay, this foolery is too much for patience ; therefore, bring lights here, knaves. Fair lady, by your leave ; for your face I will see, and your voice I will hear, ere I sleep again.”

“ You must ride hard, or watch long, then, *Grandissimo*,” cried the occupant, rising up as the baron laid his hand upon the bed. The attendants rolled back upon each other in affright ; even the stout Mirialva recoiled, as if he had touched a torpedo.

Well might the nerves of the Donna Constanza quail beneath the glance of the Zingaro

as he now appeared. His capa was discoloured by the red soil he had so long lain upon; his long elfin locks, escaped from their thralldom during the storm, hung in wild disorder about his face, whilst his eyes, full of the excitement that stirred within him, blazed with an almost unearthly brightness.

“Devil!” exclaimed the baron, after recovering from the surprise of this most unexpected vision, “what has led thy fiend-like carcase to so unfitting a resting-place?”

“The stars,” was the prompt reply, uttered with an oracular wave of the hand; “the stars, which govern and decide our destinies, and with whose mighty influence it were as vain to contend, as to puff a feather against the raging blast of the maestro, or stay the determined will of woman’s first love.”

“Dog of a cursed breed! thou shalt find it was an evil star led thee to thrust thy handy-work between me and my will! Where is my niece? Speak, hast thou murdered her?”

“The blood of woman never yet followed blow of mine; nor ever did the lust of gold lead me to thrust my will between her and her heart’s choice.”

“Peace, slave ! Answer thou my questioning, and utter word more or less than to that end, and I’ll have thy saucy tongue torn from its foul root. Thou canst tell the course she has taken ?”

“Aye, if you once put me upon her track, my eye is keen enough to distinguish the light foot of a lady from the spur of the lynx.”

“Who is her companion ?”

“At this minute it would be wild to swear that ; some time has past since I last saw her, and women at the best are variable in their fancies.”

“Holy Mother ! the unblest churl juggles with my patience. Ho, there ! drag this foul carrion from out the bed ; strip the deer’s hide from his back, and lash him till he learn straight speech.”

On the Gipsy’s being hauled from the couch, and placed upright on the floor, his limbs apparently refused their wonted service, and he at once sunk down like a thing wholly bereft of bone and muscle ; this dogged and passive resistance being the only opposition he thought fit to offer, he was quickly raised upon the shoulders of four stout fellows, and borne to the hall ;

where, still refusing to stand, his jerkin was slashed with knives from his back, and with such little care, that blood was seen to follow more than one blade. In this work, Jocopec, the surly porter, was conspicuously officious.

“ We’ll make it more difficult for you to stand, ere we’re done dealing on your swart hide !” whispered the fellow, as he assisted in dragging the prisoner’s arms round the marble pillar they were made to embrace. When bound, with the upper part of his body exposed and naked for the lash, Jocopec approached him, armed with a heavy whip. “ I owe thee my service, son of Satan,” he whispered in his victim’s ear. “ What, thou wouldst have tricked me into taking thee under shelter of the Castello, to cut our throats, as well as spirit away my young lady, eh ! But for once thou hadst to deal with thy master.”

“ Thou didst deal wisely in barring me out, truly, *Spietato !*” replied the gipsy, with a bitter smile of triumph.

“ Lay on, and spare not !” impatiently cried the baron, and he seated himself to see the cruel order fully carried into effect.

The stalwart arm of the ruffian porter plied his instrument of torture with such coolness and skill, that a streak of red marked the course of every lash. With eyes and teeth firmly compressed, and without suffering a groan to escape him, the wretched youth bore for awhile his punishment ; even the fiercely exerted strength of his torturer began to flag, when turning his eyes towards the baron, the sufferer cried, " Hold ! " At a sign the next blow was suspended.

" What, thou hast found thy tongue ? " demanded Mirialva.

" And how am I to be benefited by using it according to your will ? "

" Thou shalt have a couch of straw and bread and water till to-morrow ; then a strong cord and a fair spring from the top of the castle-gate. "

" Hum ! fair offers and tempting ! what if I still keep silence ? "

" Thou shalt be now flogged as near to thy death as may be done on this holy Sabbath morn, " sternly replied Mirialva, " and on the morrow shall await thee a like punishment, to be continued until thy dark spirit be dismissed to the hell it sprung from ! "

“Umph ! unbind me !” calmly said the Gipsy. “I choose straw and a supper, the long cord and the free spring ; but, hold ! you will not, after squeezing me dry, put me again under lash ?”

“I have promised thee respite until Monday morn ; wilt thou not take the given word of a *Roman Baron* ?”

“As readily as you would take *Zingaro oath*, sworn on the road ! Touch with your lips the cross of your dagger, and on it swear to keep faith with me, or my lips are again sealed, and for ever !”

“Unbelieving miscreant !” exclaimed the baron, starting in rage from his seat ; “I am well-enough minded to put thy stoutness to the proof.”

Prudence, however, and the desire of a nobler victim for revenge overruled this momentary burst of passion. Making, therefore, the prescribed oath, he again took his seat.

“A draught of water to moisten my parched throat, and my cloak to cover over my shame, and then your questions, Signor, I am ready to answer.”

Water was brought, and the capa thrown upon his lacerated shoulders. He calmly drew

his cloak about him, and bowed slightly, in token of being prepared ; the baron began :—

“ Who was the contriver and companion of my niece’s flight ? ”

“ The husband chosen by her father, the Count Luigi Conradini.”

“ Ha ! is it so ? And how gained he access to her chamber ? ”

“ That service I contrived for him.”

The baron cast a glance of deathful import on the unflinching speaker, then went on.

“ Knowest thou where they now be ? ”

“ With willing minds, sharp spurs, and stout steeds, they may now be well nigh across the Pettorano.”

“ Then they are bound for Naples ? ”

“ For Naples.”

“ Now art thou a lying knave ; for mortal man dare not venture to cross the Pescara, after the rain of last night.”

“ The Count Luigi had already crossed it, though somewhat later than he had looked to do ; a delay that had well nigh lost him his fair prize.”

“ May its swollen waters overwhelm them both,

and for ever !” cried the baron, as he started up and rapidly paced the hall. “Ho, there ! to horse, some of you ; hasten to the river, and see if it be yet fordable ; look close for the new track of horses, and ride upon the spur ; a *thousand ducats* to him who brings back my niece, or can shew me a blade dyed with the heart’s blood of Luigi Conradini. Take hence that hound, bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the tapestried chamber at the extremity of my gallery ; let him have bread and water, and straw to lie on. If thy story be true, and the torrent fordable, I will keep faith with thee, and on the morrow thou shalt have a strong cord, and die the death of thy fathers ; but if thou hast spoken a lie, thou shalt be whipped until thy false heart be laid bare to the sun, whose beams shall wither it within thee.”

“By the *star* that rules me, I have spoken truly, Baron Mirialva.”

The clatter of the departing horsemen was now heard, as they hastily spurred over the paved court.

“Ha, ha, ha ! they must ride and spare not, who seek to win back time past, or true lovers

flown," continued the Zingaro, as he was led from the hall to his prison-chamber.

During the foregoing events, Time had held on his unchanging, unchangeable course ; and as the prisoner was thrust into his last earthly lodging, he was saluted by the first burst of a bright morning sun, darting its many-coloured rays through the stained glass of a narrow window, placed high over head, and indeed the only means of supplying with either light or air this gloomy chamber.

The Zingaro gazed for a moment at the cheerful light, half shading his brow with his hand ; then, turning to his guards, he requested that they would place him within the influence of its beams.

" Ay, to be sure," was the reply : " Nicola, toss down that straw here ; the poor devil wants to sun himself."

" He's no judge of astronomy, then," answered the bearer of straw, " or he'd have known that the rays of the morning sun will rest but a short space where they now fall : no, no, poor ignorant, if thou wouldst have the sun

for company, I'll put thy straw in yonder nook, where he will sleep awhile after mid-day."

"Put it down here," said the Zingaro, adhering to the same spot; "'tis not his noon-beam I would watch, for that I shall never see again; no, 'tis his earliest light on the morrow I would fain give greeting to, that I may know how near is the hour of my end as I watch my last sun rise."

"O, that's it," replied the astronomer; "then even so be it—have thy bed where thou wilt. But methinks thine is an odd fancy, now I, though naturally of an inquiring turn, am no way curious about seeing my last sun rise, and don't care, in troth, if I never see it at all, so I live the longer—but every man to his humour: so there. But, by your leave, we must bind your hands and legs, for you Zingari are but slippery subjects; however, with this little precaution, and without outlet, except for a weasel, through yon window, I think thou may'st be trusted. Now thou'rt fast, here's thy bread and water; at night-fall I'll not fail to bring thee a fresh supply; and, unless thou have stomach for a right early

breakfast, thy turn of eating may be then considered pretty well served for this world. 'Tisn't every man that's doomed to the dog's death that meets such gentle fare or soft lodging; but a bargain's a bargain, and thou'lt find the baron a man of his word; so, till night, rest in peace, honest pagan. Come, comrades, leave the Zingaro to his repose; there's no fear of his being troubled with nightmare, for he wont lie much on his back, I guess—ha, ha, ha!"

Amidst the loud laughter this jest created, the door was firmly secured without, and the subject of this brutal mirth was left alone.

The tapestried chamber was a large square apartment, never used but for one melancholy service,—that of guarding the mortal remains of the Lords of Mirialva, during their brief passage from the death-bed to the tomb.

In this chamber was prepared the last display of earthly vanity attendant upon departed greatness; here was laid out in all the impotence of lifeless clay the once mighty lord of a thousand vassals. The room was, in conformity with its sad purpose, hung round with

black tapestry, that had once, no doubt, been of exquisite workmanship ; but, from age and neglect, it now was torn in many places, and in others hung loose from the wall. With the exception of the high window described above, a stout oaken door, leading into a gallery belonging to the baron's apartments, was the only outlet ; a more secure or melancholy prison, therefore, could not easily have been imagined ; a like conviction appeared to enter on the prisoner's mind, for after a keen and searching glance around him, which, as he gazed on his own fettered limbs, settled at length into a look of fixed despair.

“ The slaves,” he exclaimed, “ have bound my hands so straightly, that the food they have thrown me is useless, for, nor hand nor foot can I stir. The hypocrites would not hang on their Sabbath, but think it no sin to scourge and starve. But, 'tis no matter, I need not much strength to *hang*, and there is, I fancy, no hope of respite or escape ; so good day, fair sun ! and welcome be thy first ray to-morrow ! ”

So saying, the captive turned himself composedly upon his straw, and enjoyed, hungry

and lacerated as he was, a sounder sleep than visited the pillow of "thrice driven down," pressed by the proud baron who thirsted for his blood.

Carlette Mirialva was the younger brother of the late marchese, and the inheritor of his titles and estates : early plunged in dissipation and overwhelmed with debt, the latter he had anticipated long before his brother's death, and consequently, when this event took place, he had little to avail himself of but the empty title. Before the death of the marchese, every thing had been arranged between him and the father of Conradini for the marriage of their children ; it was postponed only by the illness of the marchese, and with his dying breath, he enjoined the fulfilment of his pledge upon his brother. This, however, would have ill suited the views of the needy gamester. The Castell di Mirialva, and the property in the Abruzzo, formed the inheritance of Constanza in right of her mother ; and this must have been necessarily given up to her husband, upon her marriage, leaving the proud baron houseless, or compelling him to avow his folly, and rest dependant on his niece's bounty, until time should pay his

debts, and again make him master of his own ample domains. His first act, therefore, on his brother's death, was to refuse his consent to the fulfilment of the marriage contract, unless it were stipulated that he should be left master of this domain for so many years. Luigi and Constanza were too far gone in love not to have agreed readily to his wishes; but not so the elder Conradini: he, with the prudence attendant on his age, and the indignation natural to a high mind, replied by spurning the unworthy proposal in no measured terms. An open and violent rupture was the immediate consequence, which threatened, in the end, to sunder the lovers for ever; for Constanza was but seventeen, and the laws left her at her uncle's disposal, until she should attain the age of three-and-twenty, a century in true love's calendar. Many months had elapsed since this disagreement, and numerous were the suitors, introduced by the baron for his own purposes, and rejected by Constanza, with a firmness well worthy her name.

At length the festival of the Annunziata enabled Conradini, in the disguise of a mendi-

cant palmer, to communicate to her his wishes, and his plans for their execution ; and so well did he describe, in his letter, the present misery of separation, and the risks he had run in vain to see or communicate with her ; and in such bright colours did he contrast the happiness and security awaiting them in flight, and in the fulfilment of a marriage, already plighted before Heaven, and sanctified in their hearts, that Constanza, on that very night, heedless of the storm which raged without, had frankly obeyed the directions of her lover, and like another Hero, placed a light in her turret window, at once to be the guide to his steps, and the token of her own readiness to follow them.

It has been already told how the swollen Pescara detained her eager deliverer, until mortified and wearied, she, two hours after midnight, withdrew her beacon, and abandoned herself to grief. Grief soon changed to joy by the embrace of her long banished Luigi.

This retrospective detail will at once explain the baron's cause for rage, and his eager thirst for vengeance, not only on the Conradini, but on the humbler agent of his loss, the luckless

Zingaro, whom no laws of the time either acknowledged or protected. His wretched race were left, like the wild animals of the rude country they inhabited, to roam at large through their desert, and like them too, were liable to be hunted to the death by any noble sportsman, who might choose, at his own proper peril, to follow such diversion.

Anxiously did the Baron di Mirialva count each minute of that Sabbath morn, that holy Sabbath, ordained as a day of repose, both from the toils and passions of frail nature—a day wisely sanctified and set apart for reflection and repentance. But far otherwise were employed the thoughts of Mirialva; intensely did he listen to each sound, eager to catch the footfall of returning horse; constantly were his strained eyes fixed on the approach from the banks of the Pescara, whilst his heart was consuming within him, fired by the demon's Avarice, Anger and Revenge.

A horseman at length appeared, whose hard spurred, jaded steed could hardly bear its rider up the steep. The baron flew to the gate to meet him—with the hellish hope in his heart, and the wish on his lip, he demanded,

“Well, have they been track’d? have ye overtaken the runagates? is *he* dead? Say yes, and boldly claim the promised thousand ducats, and more, thy lord’s eternal favour.”

The vassal hung his head in silence. One by one the wearied riders returned, with no better success, till at last but one remained out, on whom to rest a hope. But the baron knew well the nature of the hound that still hung upon the track, and whilst Jocopec returned not, he did not entirely abandon his demon-like hope. Right well this worthy servant merited the confidence of such a master; patient, wearyless, and true to the scent of blood, as the hound of whose savage nature he so largely partook, he, though outstripped and baffled, still hunted on, a dogged instinct his guide, and the promised gold his spur.

CHAPTER III

THE shades of evening had once more fallen upon the valleys of the Abruzzo, before the Zingaro was re-awakened to a sense of pain and hunger. As he slowly turned upon his straw, he cast his eyes upwards on the now almost darkened window, suddenly a gleam of wild and unrestrained joy lighted up his pallid and worn features—his sight became rivetted to the object, as he cried aloud—

“ ’Tis there! ’tis there! It shines bright and dazingly upon me, unclouded and serene, the star of my birth and the guide of our race.

I saw it twinkling thus in my past dream of freedom. Hail to thee, herald of hope ! Thou didst shine thus lightly upon me, as, but now, in sleep, I sat again by our mountain stream, with Zea by my side ; and once more listened to her sweet voice, as it rose in thy praise, attuned to the guitar she best loves to hear ! Thou art still above me, shining star, and I am not forsaken ! Thou art still unclouded, and I will not despair, for never wouldst thou rise so brightly at eve, were a son of thy people to die the cruel death ere thy setting."

With the spirit of new-born hope did the captive now await the approach of his jailer, as he heard the massy bolts withdrawn ; for, true to his promise, Nicola again stood beside him, bearing a fresh allowance of bread and water.

" Why, how's this," said the man, observing the former supply still remaining, " thy food and drink untouched ? Mass, but thou art somewhat dainty in thy fare, or hast a marvellous gift of long fasting. Why hast thou not broken bread, Zingaro ? thy hanging to-morrow will be none the more agreeable, because thou art some pounds the lighter ; why, man, thou'lt be as hard to die as a cat ; eat, and drink, and

prepare for thy ending as like a good christian as one of thy doomed breed can."

"How can I do either?" bitterly replied the prisoner; "your food is left but as a mockery, when my lips might parch for a drop of water, ere I, thus tightly bound, could moisten them. What fear you, that you thus pinion me? Escape were impossible, unless I had wings like a bird, and no more bulk than a shadow; for otherwise I could neither reach, nor pass out of yonder window."

"Why there is some reason in that," rejoined the jailer glancing round; "and though the baron ordered thee to be bound, he also intended thou should'st eat, or else he had ne'er promised thee food—so, by our Ladye, I'll strain my warrantry and loose thy cords a trifle—and more, thou shalt have the bottom of my wine flask to give a whet to thy appetite.

"There! with two foot between hand and hand, a man may do much, with a hungry stomach and good will—thou need'st not thy feet to help thy feeding, so we'll let them be; and if they feel somewhat tight-laced, why console thee, 'tis but a few hours, and then thou may'st kick away with them like an

unbroken colt—ha, ha, ha! Nay, never lout at my joke, man—thou relishest the smack of the wine though, ha? Well, finish it then, and welcome, for now we're alone, between thee and me and the wall, I owe thee no ill-will for helping the lady Constanza to the man she liked, and am not sorry the young birds have shewn them such strong wing."

"The horsemen have then returned?" demanded the Zingaro.

"Aye, come back, empty handed; all but one, and he'll get little but wrung withers and dirty boots for his ride, I guess."

"Who is he that still hangs on the track of his lord's daughter?"

"Who but JCOPE, the porter," said Nicola; "and as for hanging, by the mass, for the gold that's promised he'd hang a slip knot round the neck of the brother that twin'd at birth with him."

While the jailer thus indulged his gossiping propensity, the Zingaro eagerly continued to eat and drink; and as from time to time his dark eye flashed upwards, it would kindle with hope revived, and reveal a thousand thick-coming fancies of liberty and vengeance. In a few moments Nicola rose to depart.

“Adieu till morn, Zingaro,” he said. “eat thy last supper, and sleep soundly; fear not to be awakened in *hanging* time—ha, ha, ha! Nay, no anger at my jest! thou would’st like well enough to list to it this time to-morrow.”

The door again closed; the bolts again jarred on the ear; and the Zingaro was once more alone. But he was no longer the inanimate log that for so many hours had lain without exhibiting one sign of life or motion; but alert, active and stirring, with a glance like the hawk, and with vigour and ingenuity equal to his will.

First, with the assistance of his teeth, he managed to spread before him his capa, and then, from a secret pouch within its folds, he drew forth the hidden implements for procuring light, which ever formed a part of his *matériel*—quickly and skilfully using his partially freed hands, he succeeded in the first part of his attempt; when holding over the light the bonds which confined his wrists, he sat, partially feeding the flame, until the stout cords gave way. His hands thus free, he waved them in triumph and thanksgiving towards the star, still shining brightly upon him; and in an incredibly short

space of time he, by similar process, freed his feet from bondage, though not without some suffering from the flames. As the last turn of the lashing was unwound, he sprung from the floor, and attempted to stand erect, but the cramped trembling joints failed to support him, and he fell back powerless, upon his straw; by degrees, however, he restored the circulation to his benumbed and sore scorched limbs, until they once more became capable of their wonted exertion.

As the night advanced he boldly proceeded in his plan. First, tearing down a large portion of the tapestry, he passed his hands along the walls of his prison; on three sides his views were opposed by solid stone; the fourth he discovered, with confirmed hope, to be of stout wainscot. But whither did the next room beyond, lead to? or by whom might it now be occupied? Could nature support the dense smoke that must attend his attempt to burn a passage through here, for the escape of which smoke not an outlet existed, excepting the window high overhead, any effort to break which would alarm the yet wakeful inhabitants of the castell, before his purpose could be half ef-

fected. Then came the more horrid suggestion, might he not, ere the stout oak gave way before the flames, himself perish miserably, tortured by a vain dream of freedom, whilst his limbs withered within the folds of the terrible agent whose aid he was about to invoke. These, and a thousand other fearful imaginings, swept through the prisoner's mind, as he busily collected a portion of his straw, together with some of the dry and mouldering tapestry, so as to form a heap of combustibles immediately beneath the wainscot.

Thus prepared ere he applied the light, he again fixed his eyes upon the window, as if he expected from the star of his wild faith some evident and visible sign to direct him. He now looked in vain; the star shone no longer upon him. For a moment a shade of doubt clouded his brow, ere he interpreted this change: then bending low his head he cried—

“Thou art gone: thou wilt no longer let thy free rays linger within these thrice accursed walls of stone—thou art gone, to light up the dark mountain and the silver stream, and thou callest on thy son to follow thy free course, or die;—ever blessed star of my fathers, be thou obeyed!”

As he concluded, he again bowed low his

head, with a solemn earnestness of voice and manner, that fully bespoke his ardent faith in the strange creed he held.

He touched with his light a selected portion of the straw, and the flame rose fiercely against the sturdy wainscot, that seemed in its strength to defy the puny effort.

The Zingaro patiently sat crouching upon his hams, and from time to time carefully fed the slow fire, which, by degrees, gave certain evidence of its subtle and insidious power upon the surface of the blistering, blackened oak.

A little while longer, and the wainscot began itself to assist in its own destruction: the bluish flame that at first had but flickered for a moment, unsteadily and by fits upon its surface, seemed all at once to fix its hold with a tenacity not to be again shook off, and in a moment after, it rushed in fierce triumph over the hissing wood.

The smoke became dense, even to suffocation: nevertheless, stretched at full length with his face close to the floor, the Zingaro continued for a long time to endure this suffering, as he carefully fed and directed the flames, which, to his hopes, gave promise of freedom; but at length, the heat and smoke

combined might no longer be borne with life. Thus made reckless of the consequences, he suddenly started up, and seizing the vessel which contained his supply of water, he aimed it against the lofty window: the immediate shiver of falling glass which followed, bespoke the success of his effort, whilst the huge mass of smoke, lifting itself quickly upwards, left the floor comparatively free for breathing.

The dangerous consequences which had made him so long defer this movement, as he foresaw, almost immediately followed. First was heard the buz of many mingled voices, gathering in the court below, to mark the thick smoke as it rolled through the broken window: then followed an eager cry for the keys of the tapestried chamber. Not an instant was to be lost; and no sooner did the prisoner hear these sounds, than gathering together the stout cords which had bound his feet and hands, he with their aid firmly secured the door inside; a work barely accomplished, before he heard the quick tread of feet, and the hasty withdrawing of bolts; the heavy lock next turned in its wards, and an attempt was made to thrust open the door.

“ Santa Maria ! ’tis fast within,” cried a voice

the prisoner recognised for Nicola's: "'tis the body of the poor Zingaro, doubtless, that has fallen against it—push stoutly together, lads"—but the door again withstood their united efforts. "Get axe and hammer quickly some of you," continued Nicola; "the fire is certainly here; 'twas never a spark from my lamp surely when I took the lad his supper. Ring out the great bell; call up my lord, the baron, or he will be burned in his bed else, like the poor *heathen* within, whose flesh I can plainly hear sputtering like chesnuts a-roasting."

A succession of sturdy blows rebounded from the entrance, and immediately the Zingaro tried with his foot to force the crackling wainscot, but it refused to give way. How to gain more time? already the door was rent from its hinges and had been down, but that the assailants had retreated from the first burst of smoke, calling loudly for water.

The Zingaro saw at once that now or never came the decisive moment—gathering therefore the remainder of his straw and other fuel, he quickly heaped it before the forced door, and just as this was falling inwards, he flung a blazing mass upon the ready pile—a wall of fire, in

an instant supplied the place of the barrier just beaten down, and the terrified water bearers ran from the spot, with cries of horror, as they caught a glimpse of the dark form, beyond which appeared to move calmly and untouched amidst the blaze.

In a few moments the fallen door began to add fresh fuel to the fire; the great bell, too, rung out the awful sound of flame. Drunk with the smoke, and maddened with the pain of his half-burned hands, the Zingaro also prepared for his last desperate effort. He covered his head and shoulders with thickened folds of his capa, retired a few paces from the now smouldering wainscot, then, rousing his whole force for the attempt he rushed forward and dashed himself sideways against it. The half-burned boards burst before his weight, and whelmed amidst the blazing ruin, he rolled into the next apartment.

Shaking the burning embers from about him, he hurried across the unoccupied and unfurnished room, and opening the door, entered the passage beyond. On the instant a voice arrested his step :

“Who art thou?” demanded a man, advanc-

ing hastily from an adjoining door, holding high a lamp,—“why am I thus rudely aroused, and whence this peal of wild alarm?” The Zingaro turned upon the inquirer, and the light flashed upon his face. Had the master-fiend himself, clothed in all his terrors, met Mirialva’s sight—for he was the speaker—he could not have looked more dismayed, than he now did, as he gazed upon his late prisoner, blackened with smoke, and with garments glowing from the sparks of fire which still clung to them.

“What demon art *thou*?” again demanded the baron, as he stepped back towards the nearly closed door of the room just left by his sentenced prisoner, “speak!”

Demoniac indeed was the look the gipsy cast upon his proud foe, as with a voice of thunder he shouted,

“*Lo Zingaro!*” Then bounding forward with a tiger-spring he dashed the bewildered baron into the apartment, already half-filled with flames, and closing the door, quickly drew the bolts. He then turned into Mirialva’s now vacant bed-chamber, tore from the sumptuous couch and windows the silken cords which draped the curtains, and by their aid descended with speed

and safety into the private garden of the castello.

Already flames were bursting from the closely barred windows of the room which held the wretched Mirialva. The Zingaro paused for a moment, and looked upwards—a wild scream for “help!” burst upon his ear—a roar of curses, and loud laughter followed. This last was the domestics in the gallery, who thus mocked what they took for the cries of the suffering Zingaro. A yet wilder and more piercing cry of agony again filled the air—and again was it echoed by fresh yells of savage mockery.

“Ha!” exclaimed the listener, “these shrieks should have been *mine*, and such the laughter that would have greeted *my* agonies! Ha! ha! ha! roar on, ye accursed, let your shouts of joy ring in the ears of your unheeded, burning lord: and may the fiends of Eblis redouble your cries, as his black soul is hurled amidst their eternal fires!”

Dashing the hot sweat from his scathed brow, the gipsy made for the olive grove, and with great difficulty held his way, until, exhausted, he sunk upon the welcome margin of the calm waters of *Gli Fonti d'Amore*.

CHAPTER IV.

ON a gentle eminence, at the foot of the Vomero, stood the palace of the Conradini, in the midst of luxuriant vineyards, and immediately encircled by a private garden of some extent, beautifully laid out, and evincing a more careful superintendence than is usually bestowed in Italy upon such preserves. For, in this favoured climate, nature has showered so generally on every verdant spot her beauties of tree and flower, that the wealthy have little inducement to enclose for private luxury exotics which may be enjoyed by the meanest serf who cultivates his native fields.

To the palace of his ancestors, the Conde Luigi had at once borne his youthful bride, for such he had legally made her. Fast as the church could bind them, they were now one ; and although his father would not become a party to an unworthy bargain to obtain a daughter-in-law, he was not in his heart sorry to find that the happiness of his son was secured without such a compromise ; and although Luigi's attempt would, had it been known to him, have been met by his fixed opposition, the die being fairly cast, he received his son with forgiveness, and his new-made daughter with a cordial welcome, and a father's blessing.

Letters were immediately dispatched to the Baron di Mirialva, to suggest to him the necessity of fulfilling the contract entered into by his deceased brother, or otherwise preparing to abide the king's judgment, and probable displeasure ; for to the foot of the throne, immediately upon a refusal, Conradini resolved to bear the claims of his son, and appeal to the justice of his sovereign.

The messenger dispatched with the above demand, had now been absent the full time

necessary for his journey, and hourly expecting his arrival, the Conte Luigi and his bride sat beneath a veranda that commanded an ample view of the lovely bay.

The moon was slowly rising in her fullest majesty, and had already silvered with her light the edges of the lofty cliffs, rising high over the picturesque Castel d'Ovo, which was itself lost in their deep shadows. The classic isles beyond, just shewed in the extreme distance like globes of silver, floating on the dark bosom of the glassy sea. Not far removed might be heard the cries of the fishermen, as they hauled their boats above the reach of the waters, accompanied by the hoarse low roar of the surf, rolling in, round the long continued line of beach. Nearer the palace, all was thrown into deep shadow by the stately silver pines, which, planted in thick rows, covered it in front, like a noble guard, whilst many clumps of sweetly-scented shrubs were made to encroach to within a few paces of the window where sat the lovers.

Constanza listened with a charmed ear to her lord, as he pointed out the various beauties of the scene, with all the enthusiasm of a poet,

and with the love of a patriot for his native Naples.

“ But the night air is freshening, and you, love, must be wearied with my legends of the past glories of Naples, and of imperial Capri and its horrors. They are twice dear to me, for they are associated with my every childish joy and sorrow. They first stole on my wondering eager ears, in all the exaggerated detail of my good old nurse, and were, in after days, made the reward of well-doing, as on this very spot they were described in the grandeur of simple history, made still more noble by the glowing eloquence of my aged preceptor, the excellent Carlo Mattei. Come, we will enter the apartment—see, the lamps are already lighted : come, and you shall shame my tediousness, by playing one of those wild mountain airs we have so often sung together, as we sauntered through your sweet valley of Salmona.”

“ Ah,” said Constanza, with a sigh, as the recollection of her own birth-place rose fresh upon her memory, “ loved valley ! shall I ever again behold thee ? ever again wander by those clear

waters, where I have so often bounded on the light foot of childhood ?”

“ And in the young days of our love, too,” whispered Luigi. “ Oh, fear not, dearest ; your uncle will scarce dare abide the sovereign’s command, which he knows must follow my father’s appeal. He will yield to strong necessity, doubt not ; and soon again shall you sit in the antique hall of your Castello, and sing to me the country’s gentle songs in praise of love’s own poet and Salmona’s pride.”

Together they now entered the apartment, throwing wide the casement, which opened to the ground. Constanza seated herself opposite to it, and, in a tone of anxious melancholy, continued :—

“ I know not, my Luigi, what so oppresses me, but my heart is ever and anon seized with a throbbing which threatens even to burst it : my mind, too, has been all this day filled with dismal fancies.”

“ What can chill thee thus ?” answered the Conte, as he fondly pressed with his lips her marble brow. “ Thou art happy, my own Constanza ?”

Beaming with tenderness, she fixed her gazelle-like eyes upon her lord, as she replied—

“ Happy ! Luigi, am I not with thee ? Am I not thine own Constanza ? But would that this tardy courier were returned ; you know not the fierce nature of Carlette di Mirialva. When I reflect on his hatred, on his daring, on his vengeance—oh ! Luigi, can I speak it ? but at this hour your life is perhaps only held at the will of the most profligate, the most reckless of men.”

“ Tush, tush ! this is indeed wild dreaming : what, do you think Mirialva has no fears for himself ? Too well he knows my father’s vigour, and our house’s power, to tempt, by any evil wrought on me, his own assured destruction. I would I were but half as certain of the safety of my poor Zingaro ally ; but he, I fear me, was allowed brief law. I would give, this very hour, the best horse, hound, and hawk, I own, to save him from jeopardy, and that is higher pricing than was ever before put on him or any of his kind.”

“ They are, indeed, a wayward, but also a sore-suffering race,” replied Constanza : “ but

if ever I am again restored to the seat of my fathers, you, Luigi, must look to their better ordering, even for the sake of him who read my fortune by the springs of *Gli Fonti d'Amore*."

"And died, to have that fortune fairly sped," added the Conte. "Even the lynx may be tamed to love, and I will waste some kindness on that rude race, but I will mend their sad condition, even for his sake, who helped me to the sweetest bride Salmona ever saw, or Ovid sung; that is, provided she belie her sex and change not."

A look of love and pride beamed from the eyes of Constanza, as, striking her lyre, she prettily echoed the word "*change*," and sang—

"For ever thine this heart—

 Feel how it beats for thee,
And whilst it beats, this heart of mine
Will answer every throb of thine
 With truest sympathy;
 Thine, thine, alone!

For ever thine this heart—

 All else may change, and be;
But this, thy heart, no change can own,
For thee it beats, for thee alone,
 And breaks, cast off by thee;
 Thine, thine, alone!

For ever thine this heart—
All else beneath the skies,
The grass, the flower, earth, air, and sea,
May pass away, again to be ;
The heart—for ever dies—
Thine, thine, alone !

The Conte rose in delight from his lady's feet, where he had thrown himself to listen to her melody ; the last tones of her sweet voice had not yet melted into the air, when a slight movement was heard at the window—the words, “ Die, coward and fool ! ” were articulated, in tones clear and piercing, though hardly uttered above the breath ; one deep groan and a heavy fall followed—and all was silent as before.

The Conte started, and passed hastily to the window, close to which he at once observed the body of the fallen man. He stooped over the form ; he pressed his hand upon the heart ; but it beat no more ; life had fled with the last sound. He was just opening his lips to call for aid, when a low hiss, issuing from the thick clump of shrubs close in his front, caused him to raise his head. What was his surprise, when full in the light of the moonbeam, with head

uncovered, he beheld the well-remembered features of the Zingaro !

“ Ha !” exclaimed the Conte, “ thou alive, and here ! How means all this ? speak !”

“ *Pianissimo*, Signor mio,” whispered the gipsy ; “ it is ill speaking too loud of a death done, where one’s confession may be overheard by more than the priest. But fear nothing now : first assure thy lady’s silence ; for, if you remember, my face was not altogether after her liking when last she saw it, and I promise you it is not much improved in comeliness since ; a cry from her lips now might peril me to the full as much as it did before ; and by my life I have no mind for another such adventure.”

The Conte Luigi turned into the chamber, where Constanza sat as if spell-bound : she had heard the groan, had seen her husband’s movement towards the sound, but at that moment her over-excited nerves failed beneath the shock, and she remained without the power of speech or motion.

“ Be no longer alarmed, dearest Constanza,” murmured the Conte, trying to reassure his gentle wife ; “ ’tis nothing ; only a faithful var-

let, who is now without, and whose appearance hitherto has ever been to us a harbinger of joy. Come, cheer thee to hear the marvel of his coming ; perchance thy uncle has relented, and so released this trusty knave, as a true pledge of his wish to conciliate."

" Trust not, oh ! trust not to the baron," exclaimed Constanza, wildly, drawing the Conte nearer to her ; " for there is danger, my husband, and the presence of the Zingaro speaks it. That fearful groan too ! Oh ! said I not my soul foreboded evil ? Luigi, rely not too firmly on the faith of this strange being ; many and fearful are the tales told of his people's treachery, and few and bold are they who place deep trust in them."

" Nay, be not unmindful of his true service, love. Remember I owe to it all my present joys, and even those joys I'd freely pledge upon his faith : be not alarmed, and he shall himself speak out his errand." Luigi beckoned the Zingaro to advance : with a glance of bitter scorn, he planted his foot upon the corse stretched in his way, and at once stepped into the apartment. Constanza shrunk within her-

self, as doubtingly she gazed upon his features. He was, in truth, much changed ; his face and neck were in many places disfigured by blotches of deep red, these contrasted but ill with its natural hue : his once luxuriant hair, too, was almost gone ; in some places it was shorn quite close to the blackened scalp, whilst here and there a stray lock remained, no longer flowing gracefully as before, but shrivelled and bristling from his head. His eye alone retained its native lustre, and bespoke that, though all without was altered, the ardent soul within still remained unchanged.

Bending low to the lady, he calmly stood as if waiting question.

“ When,” demanded the Conte, “ didst thou leave the Castel di Mirialva ?”

“ On the eve of your past Sabbath.”

“ By good leave, or— ?”

“ Even by the way you entered it—the window ; no bad way either, when a man needs more haste than help.”

“ How ! You escaped from durance, then, and without the baron’s knowledge ?”

“ Not so either, Signor ; the baron learnt,

though somewhat at the latest, I was about to quit his hospitable keeping."

"Thou speakest somewhat in riddles, Zingaro. I have a courier dispatched to the baron: knowest thou his present humour—how will my servant find him?"

"He may not well find *him*, Conte, without first quitting your service."

"How so?"

"Because he whom he seeks no longer lives."

"Ha!"—Constanza sprung from the couch—"my uncle dead!"

"Start not, lady," coolly replied the Zingaro, "and speak not over loud, for I stay not your questioning on roses. In brief, you are now, thanks to my fortune, once more in safety; may return to your fair domain, and live free and fearless, for your worst enemy is no more; he has died the death that best may fit him for the after-life. He was burnt!—burnt within that very house he held from his brother's child: he was swept from life, planning the misery of her to whom he should have proved a sworn protector."

“Merciful God, assoilze his soul!” fervently prayed Constanza.

“The fire was accidental?” demanded the Conte, closely regarding the man as he spoke. He smiled grimly as, lowering his voice, he answered with fearful earnestness—

“The flames were lighted by me, to aid my escape from bondage and from certain death. What! did the slaves think to keep the falcon and not hood his eyes? Did they leave to the Zingaro one glimpse of the clear light of heaven, and look to have him yield without a struggle the life that light made dear?

“Scourged like a hound, till my very bones lay bared to their lewd mockery, I was bound and thrown aside to wait till their pleasure served to hang me. Was I to bide their coming? No! I fired the detested den that held me, and broke once more to freedom from its blazing ruins as they crumbled round me.

“Thus at liberty, I had, perchance, contented me with my escape, but the ill spirit of the baron threw him in that wild moment across my way. Smarting from the fire I scarce had hoped to live through, I saw my pain, my hopes,

made by his presence, in an instant void, and fresh tortures again awaiting me. One instant effort promised both safety and revenge. I boldly, madly made the venture. Behold ! I am safe—I am revenged. Even now his shriek from that mouldering chamber of death sounds again in my ear, and more than answers all my sufferings. He is no more ! and you, Conte Luigi, are now free to live.

“ Return to your Castello, lady ; ’tis little the worse for the airing I have given it. I read you fair fortune, and you have found it ; may it ever bide with you ! Signor, I owed you a *life* ; we are now freely quitted, for I have saved you this night from as sudden an ending as awaited me that day when the hunter’s belt was drawn round my throat in the forest of Venafrò.”

“ How ! my life — mean you that ? ”

“ Look on this carrion,” continued the Zingaro, as he turned over the body of the slain man with his foot ; “ stoop down, and know that evil face.”

It was the countenance of Jocope, for many years the porter of the Castel di Mirialva.”

“ What ! ” said Luigi, “ would this man

have struck the husband of his old master's child?"

"*He!*" interrupted the Zingaro, "he would have struck the husband of the mother that bore him, for half the price set upon your head. On my escape I sought out this traitor, and caught him grovelling on a wrong scent. Unseen and unsuspected, I soon found means to set him right: once well laid on the track, I knew he'd stick to it."

"What!" cried Constanza, shuddering, "you guided him the way to *murder*?"

"Truly, lady, I left him not unguided; for from that hour I slept when he slept, and when he rose, I rose; I breathed as he breathed, moved as he moved: we had but one shadow in the sun; but he dreamed not of this: full surely I *guided* him, even to his purpose and his end. He was blinded to my wish by the promised gold; it ever glittered before his eyes, and he saw no other object. But it is passed, and behold where he lies! Mark, Signor, his hand is on the lock of the petronel, whose report was to have pronounced you a corse, and him master of a thousand ducats. I

watched his serpent-crawl to this very spot ; I saw the felon-sparkle of his eye ; I heard the short panting of his bated breath, and marked his deadly aim ; but me he saw not, heard not, till he felt my blow."

"Heavens !" cried Constanza, "an instant later and the murder had been done."

The Zingaro smiled. "No, lady, think not I rested upon less than surety—his trusty petronel a truer friend of mine had rendered harmless. Blindly he incurred the penalty without the chance of murder."

"Strange being," inquired the Conte, "why not have informed me of my danger, and left his punishment to justice?"

"What ! would justice better have revenged my stripes than my own right hand has done ? That one blow struck, I am again a man, and the mark of the lash will be no longer my shame. From my mother's breast, until the dark hour, but one hand ever inflicted disgrace on my free body—*this* hand it was."

He let the lifeless limb which he had grasped fall upon the path, and contemptuously gazed upon it.

“But why,” said the count, “when you knew his purpose, why let him proceed so near to the fulfilment of his bloody errand?”

“Ha, ha! Conte Luigi, think you his mere death could appease my vengeance? No! I am well learned that, by the creed you hold, crime once determined on is dealt with by *your* God as crime already done. Look there!—read the resolve to murder, stamped upon his brow. Even with his last thought upon the bloody act, the damning wish recorded on his heart, the instrument of death, too, in his hand, I smote him! and, without one prayer for mercy, his soul is gone to its eternal account. Like his gratitude is also the vengeance of lo Zingaro—*Senza limite!* But hark! I hear approaching footsteps.”

He now gave a long, sharp hiss—a young female was in an instant by his side.

“Zea,” he said, “there stands the man for whom you have laboured; the only man who ever saved or spared any of our race. Thank him quickly, and let us begone to the mountain.”

The girl advanced to the Conte, and taking his hand, she pressed it with reverence to her

forehead, whilst her eloquent look spoke volumes of thanksgiving.

“Allow me a few minutes’ law, ere you have this foul carcase stirred,” said the Zingaro, “for I would ill like further questioning. Nay, shudder not, lady,” he added; “think upon my wild nature, and my cruel suffering. *Farewell!*”

The Zingaro and the maiden together disappeared as the attendant announced to the Conte the return of his belated courier.

First requesting his father’s presence, Luigi admitted the man, and from his lips heard the story of the Zingaro confirmed. He told, how he had witnessed the removal of the blackened remains of the baron from the ruins of the still reeking chamber!—the fire, he said, had been promptly got under, and, indeed, extended little beyond the immediate suite of apartments where it first broke out.

He told, too, strange stories of the Zingaro, of his having spirited the poor baron to change places with him, through the devil’s aid, whom some of the attendants swore they saw personally engaged in feeding the flames, and at last take to flight through the broken casement,

bearing the Zingaro on his huge wing, and leaving the spell-bound baron to abide the fiery penalty.

On the man's being dismissed to entertain his awe-stricken fellows with these marvels, the Conte imparted to his father the true, but strange story of his preservation. The proper authorities were promptly assembled, and the necessary forms gone through; but as every evidence went to prove the purpose of the dead emissary of Mirialva, the Conte was at once honourably installed, by the royal consent, in all the honours and wide domains of his fair runaway. Large rewards were offered for the apprehension of the incendiary, and orders issued to clear the Abruzzo of the outlaw Zingari with fire and sword; but as the execution of these orders rested with the new baron, they were very differently interpreted.

CHAPTER V.

A TWELVEMONTH had passed away, and many mingled sounds of song and dance, and the light laugh of unrestrained glee, echoed round the old towers of the Castel di Mirialva; gay banners fluttered in the mountain-breeze from the lofty battlements, and the hill-side swarmed with merry groups of peasants, who were eagerly watching the approach of a distant cavalcade, impatient to hail the first-born of their liege lady, the heir of the Conradini.

It was the anniversary of the festival of the Annunziata, and chosen by Constanza for the

day that was to give the mother church one other member in her new-born son.

“I choose this day,” said Constanza to her lord, “for it was on this day I met the mendicant palmer in the church of the Annunziata; but, though I love right well the gentle name of Luigi, yet shall this boy be called *Ovidio*, in remembrance of the spot where I staid to list my fair fortune.”

The lady had her will, and it was her return from the convent the assembled vassals so eagerly abided. As the gay cortège approached the foot of the hill, Constanza turned her palfrey from the side of her infant's litter, and, calling to her lord to follow, gaily galloped over the yielding sward towards *Gli Fonti d'Amore*.

Together they reined up upon its margin; Constanza fondly pressed the hand of Luigi, and pointing to the rich olives whose branches swept the waters, she told how upon that spot her startled eye first rested on the dark form of the Zingaro. She waved her hand to hasten some of the approaching guests, when a female advanced from the thick shade of the trees, and, laying her finger impressively on her lip, motioned the

Conte to be gone, glancing at the same time upwards amid the branches. Following the direction of her look, the Conte caught sight of the dark visage of the Zingaro, with finger on lip, just visible for an instant through the thick foliage. On this, whispering his discovery to Constanza, they quickly turned together and staid the advance of their gentle followers. Loud shouts from the hill, at the same moment, bespoke the reception of Mirialva's future lord amidst his happy vassals.

“Let us hasten to thank the honest knaves,” said the Conte, and in a moment quickly bounded each steed onward towards the Castello.

The day was devoted to sumptuous festivity. At length the sounds of revelry were hushed; the banqueters, wearied with the fulness of their joys, were buried in profound repose. In the silence of their chamber, the Conte and his fair wife, at length left alone, marvelled on their strange vision of that morning; for from the time he bade them farewell in the palace of the Conradini, no word of the eagerly sought Zingaro had reached their ears. The fond mother bent above the couch of her sleeping boy, and loudly

prayed all evil might be averted from his innocent head, when—"Hark!"—the soft notes of music rose through the air. Imagining it to be a gallant device of their guests, or some rustic serenade, the Conte and lady left their chamber, and advanced to that very window whence, twelve months before, they had so fearfully descended.

The night was close and calm, and the casement stood open to court the lazy air. Looking out to greet the serenaders, they recognized at once, standing in the shade below, the figures of the Zingaro and the dark young maiden. She was seated on the rude bench at the foot of the tower; before her lay a huge hound of the mountain breed, and by her side stood her companion, his rude guitar in his hand. The count was about to address them, but motioning for silence, the Zingaro spoke in a low tone to the girl—

"Sing, Zea, sing to them the song of joy, made more welcome from thy lips; sing to them the song of our last parting."

He pointed impressively towards the distant horizon's edge, and then softly swept the strings

of his guitar, whilst, raising her dark eyes towards Constanza, the maiden obeyed, and sang the

PROPHECY.

“LADYE, look from thy bower on high,
Look on yonder western sky,
Look o’er tree, o’er tower, and fountain,
Where the silver cloud sits on the mountain.

Look, ladye, look, and mark the star,
Beaming so lightly from afar ;
That star is a herald bearing joy
To thee and thy sleeping cherub boy.

I mark’d the day, I watch’d the hour,
I’ve read its errand, know its power ;
It bears to that boy who cradled lies,
All of good beneath the skies.

Success in love, in peace, in war,
High fame, and honour, brings yon star ;
Happy mother, now rest thee well,
His fortune’s read ! Farewell—farewell !”

Never again did the wild form of lo Zingaro cross the path of the Conradini, nor ever after this hour did the plaintive melody of his guitar awake the night.

EISENBACH;

OR,

THE ADVENTURES OF A STRANGER.

A METROPOLITAN STORY.

BY MR. PICKEN.

Marriage is a matter of more worth
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship.

SHAKSPEARE.

CHAPTER I.

THE road from Kreuznach, or rather from Munster, towards the picturesque town of Bingen on the Rhine, is so beautiful, and the distance between the two latter places so short, that by the time I had got to that point in my

journey, I determined to travel it on foot, and by myself, for no other reason that I can tell, but because I wished to refresh my limbs by a walk, and had taken a conceited fancy for my own company.

Before I had arrived at the end of my day's excursion, however, I found that I had quite enough both of the one and the other; for though my "weary legs" did not actually break down, my head began positively to ache from the fervour of my own meditations, excited as they had been all day by the beauty of the scenery through which I had been passing; and I found that personal solitude, even in the noble valley of the Nah, becomes wearisome at length to a man of colloquial propensities. Besides, I had been quite misinformed regarding the real charms of these parts, and as I mounted the pass of the Ruchesberg, near the chapel of Saint Roch, which overlooks the whole sweep of the valley, and which gave me the Rhine gleaming beneath me, up and down on the right—the quaint turrets of Bingen in the hollow reflected in its bosom, and the noble mountain of the Rudesheim in front of me as I con-

templated the view across the valley,—I became so lost in poetry and other nonsense, that I quite forgot myself as usual, until common hunger and exhaustion began to remind me once more of the weaknesses of humanity.

I would not, however, as I descended the mountain, lose the last lowering glance of the sinking sun, which now deepened the black shadows of the rocky hills that skirted the horizon beyond the valley—and that lightened the bright green of the vineyards with which they were clothed, and reddened the picturesque summit of the Rudesheim beyond—for I hoped that could I only reach Bingen this evening, I should there find some English people who would do me great civility for my money, and supply my lack of the Allemand language, by wholesome talk which I could reciprocate. But man is short-sighted, and so forth; a philosophical reflection which I found particularly pertinent to this present occasion—for by the time I had descended towards the lower grounds, the shadows of evening began to prevail to the eastward, the Rhine and the town in front of me seemed to

recede away every step I took, and I was inclined to misdoubt whether I was not making a circle round the mountain, instead of proceeding mathematically to any christian habitation. The usual troubles of a strayed traveller journeying in foreign lands now overtook me, and perplexed my thoughts exceedingly. Fancies drear crowded into my brain like the hollow wind that now began to moan in the distance, and to whisper strange words in my ears, while a certain exhausted receiver that I carried about with me, seemed to yawn discontentedly like the deep chasms that now grew dark among the surrounding vallies.

Philosophy, however, came again kindly to my aid, reminding me in the plenitude of its wisdom that I had no money wherewith to render me a worthy subject of any creditable robbery; that moreover, the Germans were an exceedingly honest people, and that, according to natural history, even the vultures and crows of those parts were of a kindly nature, and could not have the heart to pick out my eyes, even if, like a Bethlehem shepherd, I should be obliged to lie in the fields all night.

While preparing my mind for the worst

that might happen, in this judicious and sensible manner, I found myself mounting a height on the borders of another small valley. The light seemed now again to brighten a little, and by it I perceived, peeping from among the woodland above me, the white turrets of a small mansion, or rather villa, which came by degrees into view from among the planting, and appeared to me at once, as in some way quite different from the usual dwellings in this part of Germany. The road soon passed within a few hundred yards of this house, the valley below swept up enchantingly among the mountains, the stream at the bottom turned into a little lake in the distance, and the white houses of a small hamlet studded with a lively effect the side of the hill on the opposite side of the hollow.

I was speculating within myself whether the tasteful little property beside me could belong to a native, when I heard a footstep pattering among the planting near, and the voice of a child to my astonishment cry out in English, "O! papa, here is a stranger going past, and I am sure he is an Englishman, for he wears such a pretty cap: do ask him in."

A fair-faced, and exceedingly gentleman-like young man now came in view from among the shrubbery by the road, and observing me, seemed for an instant to hesitate whether or not he should address me. I put an end to his doubt by speaking first, and in English, and was agreeably surprised not only by an answer in the same tongue, as I had hoped for, but by an expression of congratulation at meeting me, and a warm invitation to accept of the hospitality of his house. Nothing could have been more opportune at the moment. I accepted of his kindness with real joy, and in five minutes after was comfortably seated in a handsome parlour, so fitted up and furnished, that I almost imagined myself on the banks of the Thames or the Severn.

A slight German accent was all that distinguished my host from an Englishman—and when here on the frontier of Germany, he began to ask me of the news from London, and to talk of persons and places with which I was familiar at home, I was almost as much delighted as his little daughter by his knee, who absolutely jumped with joy at hearing my English speech.

“ I will not hear a word of apology, my good

Sir," he said, "and if you can submit to plain fare, here you will be pleased to take up your quarters for the night,—for my wife is from home; I am, as you see, left alone with my little daughter—so the gratification from this chance visit of a condescending stranger, is all on my side," and he finished his simple invitation by ordering in fruit and refreshments, with several varieties of that delicious Rhenish, that, drank among the valleys where it grows, is so grateful to the palate of the exhausted traveller.

"It is not wonderful that I am happy to see an Englishman, Sir," he continued; "my recollections of your country are most interesting," and he looked in the pretty intelligent face of his child.

"Your lady is an Englishwoman, Sir?" I said, evincing my usual penetration.

"She is, Sir—how happy she will be to see you, if you will do me the honour to be my guest till she return! She has left me for the night for a work of kindness at the bed-side of a sick friend; for we have friends here, and she loves them too, it being my wife's nature to love the good wherever she meets them. Excuse my egotism, Sir, when I speak of her."

“And your little daughter is her image, I dare say,” I ventured to observe, as I again contemplated with pleasure, the pure English features of the beautiful child, so different from the general plainness of the females of these parts.

The young man gazed on the smiling girl. I seemed to have touched the chord of that deep German feeling which belongs to the inhabitants of these valleys.—“She is her mother’s image,” he said—and as he clasped her convulsively in his arms, I turned my head away, that I might not seem to pry into the genuine emotion of the happy parent.

“And yet,” he added, “I can scarcely call myself a German; still less am I an Englishman. In truth, I have all my life been but a child of chance, if you will allow so unphilosophical a term. Chance made me a stranger wandering the world for many years. Chance took me to England. Chance procured me friends there, as it has your society this evening. Chance has made me a happy man, while it might have made me miserable. But Providence is the better word and the truer, and I am fortunate and thankful.”

I was positively interested by the conversation and manner of my host, and began to think myself quite favoured in meeting with him, particularly here, finding he had lived in England.

“ But you are not to suppose,” he afterwards said, “ that I saw nothing but beauty and virtue in London. In the chances of my stay in that capital, there came in my way the usual persons and characteristics which draw often such contrasts into life—which mix its incidents, or which, like sounds of painful discord, succeed each other with such grating effect upon the tympanum of experience. I saw of course virtue for a time in the grasp or the toils of guilt—gentleness of spirit harassed or alarmed by unfeeling grossness. Along with many better things, I saw weakness and waywardness making up the sum of human impulses—chance and desert working out the sum of human life.”

With the jealousy of all enthusiasm, and the matter-of-fact way of thinking attributed to my countrymen, I could not help smiling at this speech of my new friend; yet I love a little moralising when it does not take any high sounding name; and now thought it suitable

enough, in a conversation about England with a stranger on the banks of the Rhine. The more I had of my host's company, the more I became interested concerning him. In the course of the evening the hints that dropped from him regarding certain occurrences which befel him in London excited my curiosity, as they seemed to allude to some circumstances of which I had formerly heard, but with a vagueness and misapprehension which were exceedingly unsatisfactory.

On the following day, therefore, I with little difficulty persuaded him to narrate to me the details of his story—or rather of that part of it which related to his sojourn in England. It will speak for itself, both as to his character and the occurrences in question. The following may be taken as nearly his own words:—

I had no sooner set foot in England—began my host—than chance threw in my way persons and incidents which unaccountably interested me, as if by an involuntary presentiment that both were in some way to become accessory to events in which I was myself to be concerned.

On my landing at Dover, having a few hours to spend there, I did not, like the usual rabble of strangers, clime up the cliffs or lounge about the ramparts of the castle, but sat down quietly at the window of my inn, looking out at nothing at all, unless it might be at the passengers in the street, who did not indeed appear to be particularly worth contemplating. Never, however, had I on former occasions tried this plan of seeming idleness for any length of time, in a strange place, but something fell in my way that more or less fastened on my mind, and became a nucleus for future observation.

Casting my eyes down a narrow lane or passage nearly opposite to the window where I sat, I observed a gentleman walking backwards and forwards alone, evidently in much anxiety or agitation, or as if he waited for something with the greatest impatience. His bearing and manner fixed my attention on him, but being near-sighted, I could not then obtain a proper view of his face. Presently a servant came hastily up the lane, and whispered something in the gentleman's ear. He drew back his head as if in surprise at the intelligence, smiled with an

air of aristocratical hauteur, yet spoke with a condescending manner to the man, as he seemed to give him some directions, and while doing so evidently casting his eye towards the place where I sat. They then separated, and I observed the servant cross the street, and at once enter my hotel, while the gentleman from whom he had parted slowly walked off up the lane.

In two minutes after, my own room-door opened, and the landlord of the inn himself came bowing towards me.

“I am going to ask a particular favour of you, Sir,” said he; “I hope you will not be offended.”

“Say on, if you please.”

“That you will oblige me by moving to the apartments below, only for this day, as this sitting-room is particularly required.”

“You gave it up to me not an hour ago,” I said,—“besides the apartment below is a common room—I cannot comply.”

“You would very much oblige me, Sir,” added the landlord, “and a gentleman who—”

“I know not why I should give up the only place in your house where I can sit with comfort

to any gentleman whom I do not know. If it was to accommodate a lady, then"—

"Probably there *may* be a lady, Sir," said the servant whom I had just seen with the stranger—as he now stepped in behind the landlord. "Beg your pardon, Sir," added the man, "but master sends his compliments, and is most anxious"—

"Pray who is your master?"

"I am not at liberty, Sir—my master's name is—is"—

"Never mind," said I, perceiving the fellow was about to give me a false name—"I will abandon the room," and I rose and walked down stairs.

Hating to enter the public room of a middling hotel, I preferred standing by the pillar at the door, particularly as I wished to have a look at the person who thus strangely had interested me, and turned me out of my apartment.

I lingered, however, nearly an hour without his again making his appearance, and was about returning to remonstrate with the landlord, when the same servant again entered the hotel, and instantly after a travelling-chariot drew up

to the door. Two persons only were seated in it, one a sickly melancholy-looking gentleman, not however much beyond middle age; the other a lady, muffled up and veiled so that I could not see her face. They did not alight, but while the horses were watered and refreshed, the lady seemed endeavouring to persuade the sickly man to something to which he would not assent, and as I stepped a little aside, I heard the sweet and tender tones of her voice remonstrating with him, while he answered her with a crabbed roughness and seeming contempt, that made my heart bleed for her, whoever she might be.

On casting my eyes within the hall of the inn, I observed, to my astonishment, the servant of the strange gentleman making every effort, by looks and signs, to attract the observation of the lady in the chariot. She perceived him at length, and looked steadily towards him. In a minute after I saw her lift the edge of her veil, and looking upwards, fix her eyes upon the window at which I had just been sitting. What could this mean? for I had seen no one enter the house since I had left that room. Stepping across the way, however,

I observed the black curled head of the gentleman whom I had seen in the lane, who had evidently entered the hotel by a back door, and whose large and intelligent black eyes now seemed to seek those of the lady with the greatest anxiety. I would myself have given any thing to obtain a sight of her face, but could not, and only heard, as I again drew near, her soft pleading tones, and the tart and short replies with which they were greeted by the disagreeable person who sat beside her.

At length I saw the servant of the stranger and one of the waiters of the inn in close communication, and in a short time after the latter, handing some fruit to the lady at the carriage window, slipped into her hand a small piece of paper, which he had concealed under a bunch of grapes. The nervous emotion with which she clutched the billet affected me, and made me almost ashamed of thus watching her; and as I turned to enter the hotel, the cross and piercing tones of her companion, blaming her, or uttering a crabbed malediction on the servant for thus delaying them, entered my very soul, as I am sure they did that of the poor

female who was obliged to endure such behaviour. In an instant after the whip was laid to the horses, and I saw no more of this strange couple, and before another five minutes had passed, the landlord came bowing to where I stood, and with many apologies, informed me that the apartment I had so obligingly given up was again at my service.

“And where is the strange gentleman?”

“He is gone, Sir.”

“When, or how?”

“From the court-gate behind, just this instant.”

“Pray who is he?”

“I never inquire the name of my guests, Sir; it is not my business; and I never even say, ‘my Lord,’ or ‘your Grace,’ in addressing those who honour my house with their custom, unless it may be a nobleman’s pleasure to travel by his own title.”

It is vexatious to have one’s curiosity excited and then to know nothing. “It will be very odd,” said I to myself, “if the chances of life do not throw in my way some clue to this affair when I get to London.” I little knew then how wide a place London is.

CHAPTER II.

UPON my arrival in the capital I found myself for a considerable time, like other friendless persons, a lost man among the busy myriads of the English metropolis. Knowing no one, and unwilling to make any acquaintance with those who looked upon me with suspicion because I had no friends, I passed away my time in that weary solitude, which has been so often felt in a great town by strangers like myself.

But though I went every where, and saw every thing that strangers see, and looked in

every face that passed me, for want of something better to do, I never could set my eyes upon the remarkable man whom I had observed at Dover, and who, together with the lady, still continued to occupy my thoughts with an unaccountable curiosity. Why I should continue to concern my mind about them, seemed odd even to myself, for, as for the lady it was not possible that I should know her again, never having seen her face, and as for the gentleman who had acted so mysteriously, I had seen him at such a distance, and for so short a period, that it was doubtful if I should among the thousands of London, be again able to identify his person. Yet I could not get either him or the seemingly ill-treated lady out of my head. I looked for them so eagerly in all public places, and my mind dwelt so much on the slight circumstance I have related, that for want probably of better employment, curiosity concerning them became almost a disease, and I would have given any thing to have had it gratified.

About a fortnight after my arrival in London, proceeding along one of the crowded streets in

the west end, on one of those fine days when all the beauty and fashion of the metropolis may be met out of doors, I observed a gentleman walking slowly before me, whose noble figure and elegance of dress, were almost distinguishing even among the numbers of handsome men around me. Before I could pass him to obtain a look of his face, however, a servant with a led horse came hastily riding up. The gentleman mounted it, while I involuntarily watched him. Chancing to cast my eye towards the servant, I knew him at once to be the same that I had seen at Dover, and stepped hastily forward to get a proper sight of his master. It was in vain, however, that I even tried to catch the profile—the horse's head was turned round as he threw himself into the saddle, and putting spurs to the animal, he and the man were in an instant out of my sight.

A few days after this, while in a different part of the town, and happening at the time to be musing upon this very circumstance, my eye rested upon the figure of a lady, as, issuing from the door of a mansion, she crossed the flags to her carriage. As she passed before me and

shewed her ankle in ascending the steps, I noticed her only as one of those fine figures of women so often seen in this land of beauty ; but looking carelessly at the carriage as I passed, the arms on it at once struck upon my recollection.—They were the very same as were on that carriage at Dover, which contained persons who had so very much interested me. This *must* have been the lady—I strode forward to observe her face. The blinds however were drawn up in a moment. Crack went the coachman's whip, and in two minutes the vehicle was out of sight.

I now began to see the absurdity of this involuntary curiosity about persons whom I was never likely to meet, and determined to watch for them no more. For several weeks I succeeded in forgetting them, when, coming out of the Argyle Rooms one evening after a concert, I heard two ladies in the crowd whispering eagerly, and one say to the other, “ Look—there—that is he ! ”

“ Where ? ”

“ Just beyond the fat lady.”

“ Oh, I see him—what an elegant young man ! But is it actually true ? ”

“ I am convinced it is—but as yet it is a mere whisper.”

I looked in the direction that the ladies pointed to, but I could only see a section of the face, yet I was certain it was the strange gentleman. I pushed forward, but the towering head-dress of a tall woman came betwixt me and the object, and whatever way I turned my head, was sure to intercept my efforts for a look. I could not push past her without absolute rudeness, and before I was relieved from this annoyance, the strange gentleman was completely lost in the crowd.

If there could be any excuse for such absurd curiosity, a lady only ought to have made it pardonable in a man,—and as to her that was associated in it, I had never actually seen her, and never was likely to do so, in such a manner at least as to identify her with the object of my anxiety. But if the mind once employs itself long or frequently upon any one object, what that object may be is of no consequence as to the interest taken in it. All the sights and scenes of London were stale, flat, and insipid, compared to my obtaining authentic

information regarding those three persons who had attracted and upheld my curiosity from the first hour of my arrival in England.

I soon began to find that my present state of mental solitude was not the best, and far from being the most safe for one of my character, for it gave me too much the habit of reading faces and catching impressions from them, which, as beauty was no rarity in London, might end in consequences very serious to my happiness. A thoughtful stranger, wandering about the streets of the metropolis, is nought else but a walking intellect—a moving reader of the world's book—a meditative unit of mind, which giving out nothing, imbibes as it goes those impressions and observations upon which it afterwards chews the cud of inference and reflection.

This was my case, and an escape from this brooding solitude I found the more necessary, as, in the course of my perambulations in public places, I had been much struck with two faces, one of which at least began to take firm hold of my fancy. It was that of a young female of about eighteen, one of those quiet but touch-

ing beauties, which the eye cannot long contemplate without drawing in the heart, and which it involuntarily turns away from gazing upon, from an instinctive deference to the power of simple loveliness.

The other face was that of a man who had insinuated himself into my conversation one evening, when I met him among some foreigners, at the *Café de l'Europe*, and which at least in its indications and expression, was the very contrast of the touching sweetness and innocent beauty of the girl. He was a person of about forty—with a salacious, I should almost say, swinish eye, a gluttonous if not dissipated look, and a patch of bald on the crown of a frowsy head. Although shrewd, and by no means wanting in intelligence, he was one of those brutish versions of humanity which a mind of any delicacy must instinctively hate. I was involuntarily impelled to abhor the character that this man's countenance predicated to be his. Yet one of those chance circumstances which often bring in contact persons the most dissimilar in their nature, brought, for the most providential purposes, this coarse man and

I into some intimacy. I afterwards learned that his name was Compton, and that he was rich, and by profession a lawyer, and occasionally a money-lender.

Finding myself too solitary in a hotel or a private lodging, I determined, rather than live without society, to seek it by boarding with a respectable family. An advertisement in a newspaper soon procured me what I wanted. The house I was directed to was in a good street in the west. The apartments I liked. The landlady was smart and a notable Englishwoman. Two other gentlemen I was informed were domiciled in the house. What was my surprise on sitting down to the first dinner with the guests of this establishment, to find myself introduced to the Mr. Compton whom I have just mentioned? His very countenance deprived me at first of all appetite, and to add to my annoyance, he drank wine with me all dinner, and attached himself to me as my particular friend. I determined to leave the house with all haste, but this determination was not so easily accomplished.

Meantime, though forswearing this constant

reading of faces, I could not help going once more to the crowded drive in your Hyde Park, to obtain one other look of that beautiful, that fascinating countenance, which had now almost become the delight of my existence. For a long time the sweet female did not appear, but just as I was about to leave the crowded spot, I perceived the plain and modest green chariot in which, accompanied by an elderly lady or gentleman, she usually rode. A chock of carriages stopped the line, and as theirs stood for a time, I observed a gentleman leaning over the rails and gazing on her. With the selfishness no doubt of jealousy, as well as from a feeling of admiration and deference, I felt indignant to see so sweet a creature so eagerly stared at by another. What was my astonishment when, as at length lifting his head, I recognized in the gazer the large black eyes of the stranger whom I had thought of with so much curiosity since I first saw him at Dover !

The admiration with which I had regarded the fascinating female in the carriage, was but a passing gleam of the sunshine of beauty, at which a traveller stranger might look and

be satisfied ; but now I seemed to live but under the influence of this peculiar man, of whom I had only this day obtained a proper sight ; for, whereas before I had the most unaccountable wish to see him, and could not for all my anxiety gratify my curiosity, from this day forward I saw him every day and in every place, as if he had been absolutely haunting me. Go where I would in any public place, I was sure to meet him. If I went out in the morning, he was almost the first man I met. If I rode to the country, I could not look over my shoulder but I perceived him riding after me. If I went to the park, he was there already, and stared at me as he passed with a dull and haughty smile, as if he knew me. If I tried to avoid him by going to church, I was sure to find him in the very next pew to myself. Could all this be accident ; or was I under some enchantment ? He was a handsome man, with extremely dark eyes and very white teeth, and his whole physiognomy sometimes put on a most peculiar expression. Was I too idle that I thus observed him, or too imaginative that I thought thus about him ? or had he thrown

some spell over me? I really know not, but every time I saw him afresh, a nervous sensation ran through me. He made me forget even the interesting angel that had so often delighted my fancy in the park. Who, or what could he be? Was he any ordinary living mystery? Was he Mephistophilis walking the earth? or was he the allegorical demon of England, who mocked the curiosity and froze the feelings of the stranger.

Avoiding him by staying at home for two or three days, I soon convinced myself that I was too solitary in mind, and too abstracted to think justly, and that by a species of involuntary yet indulged musing upon single objects, I was all this time making something out of absolute nothing. The society at the boarding-house began to break in upon my reserve. The young men quizzed me, and the landlady bantered me, and as for Mr. Compton, he laughed at me with so much good humour, and rallied me with so much clumsy good sense, that my prejudices against him began to give way, and I talked to him with even an approach to freedom.

“I doubt not, Mr. Eisenbach,” said he,

“ that you think yourself exceedingly deep and penetrating, and that when you go back to Germany you will write a perfectly correct account of English society, seeing that you know it so intimately. Nay, do not deny it, for I know that that is your drift; and I myself will give you several hints which you will find particularly valuable. But I would not have you to give yourself much further trouble in diving into the depths of English manners, having evidently such large opportunities of acquiring knowledge, for a man always writes with most zeal upon a subject that he does not understand.”

“ I certainly don’t understand *you*.”

“ So much the better. It is by want of understanding that the world thrives, for there is no confidence like the confidence of ignorance, and if your book itself was understood, it would have but little success. But, harkee, you’ll never get out of England without being taken in.”

“ How mean you ?”

“ Why, courted.”

“ What ! *I* courted ?”

“ To be sure. The courtship in England is all done by the women, and you are just the honest softling to be wooed and won, if you only have plenty of the *geldt*, to make it worth the while of mothers and single sisters, to sue for your hand. But when you are *in* for it, if you happen to like your wife, and wish to live godly and honest, without horns above your ears, I would advise you to take her beyond the Rhine with you. or at least out of London; for although the French fashion in this respect is rather *out* at present, there are strange doings occasionally take place in town.”

“ The English women are allowed to be exceedingly virtuous?”

“ They are so in general. But what between ill-assorted marriages, daily made for the sake of fortune, and the arts of certain shewy men on town; what between the monotony of English life, which makes even the semblance of intrigue so seducing, as it is so dangerous, — there are things happen now and then which help to swell the muddy stream of human guilt, and to keep up the bitter tide of private misery.”

“ This is strong language ; but know you of any late occurrence that causes you to speak so ? ” and as I spoke the still unexplained scene at Dover came naturally across my mind.

“ Yes ; but if I told you, you would put it in your book.”

“ Pshaw ! I am not going to make a book.”

“ ’Pon your honour ? ” said my new friend, with affected vulgarity and looking incredulously in my face. “ Well, my friend, if you don’t write a book while you are ignorant, you have little chance of doing so when you come to know something ; for ignorant people always write most and fastest, and those who are more ignorant still, like a book the better for containing little that is of any value. But excuse me,” he added, taking out his watch, “ my hour is come—I have a d——d drunken affair to go to to-night, which will probably keep me very late,”—and thus saying, and swallowing the *débris* of his wine, he left the company, to take a deeper dose somewhere else.

The resources of a stranger and a bachelor are few, even in London ; at least I found them so. His very pleasures are solitary, and if not,

are sure to be in some shape mercenary or interested. I took up my hat, and having the privilege of a seat in one of the common sort of boxes, I determined to while away the evening at the Opera.

The house was thin, and the box into which I had the *entrée*, contained already two ladies, friends of the owner, accompanied only by a spoiled boy. I felt my situation awkward, as a stranger in England will often do, but putting on the dogged dulness of a thick-headed John Bull, to avoid that hateful suspicious look with which in London a foreign face is usually regarded, I sat down behind the women without speaking.

The music that I heard was elaborate and unmeaning, and as for the ballet, it was well enough, only that it was a mere repetition, as usual. But the ladies in front of me held a whispering conversation, which, becoming exceedingly earnest, I was, though not an eaves-dropper, obliged to give attention. It might be only a tale of private scandal, but from the manner in which they talked they seemed to have found a mine of family romance, the de-

tails of which I could only catch by snatches and single words, but over which the speakers gravely shook their heads as they hinted at strange facts and stranger surmises, deep guilt and deeper suffering, which formed another painful illustration of the weakness and the waywardness of poor human nature.

Could it be possible that there could be any identity between this tale and what I had observed at Dover ! But I could learn nothing connectedly, for probably nothing satisfactory was known by the ladies after all. In the words I overheard, there seemed to be dim reminiscences of an envied bride and a proud bridegroom, of a splendid sacrifice to Hymen, which the fashionable long talked of, and of continental adventures afterwards, which were only known by inuendoes to the world, and spoken of chiefly among the servitor orders, in dark and doubtful whisperings. Then there were hints of open assignations and midnight manœuvres, and bribed servants and dark passages, and of a strange man whom no one knew, who had lately been seen on the streets of town.

Of this person the ladies spoke with perfect

enthusiasm, while yet, with reference to his conduct, they affected disgust and indignation. In the hyperbolical language of female admiration, he was described as one who dressed as no man had ever dressed before, and looked as no other man in England ever looked: — a man of high title and haughty bearing, with a complexion admirable, because un-English—a profile like that of the master-pieces of Phidias, and a moustache overlooking a scornful lip, that had about it the very curl and authority of aristocracy.

As to the lady, her beauty was spoken of in those critical and doubtful terms in which one woman usually talks of the attractions of another. Gay and fascinating once, she was described as so no longer, and was now never seen in public, unless it might be in that very house, the Opera, where, added the ladies, she might possibly be that very evening.

While listening to this gossip, my eye was much struck by a face, which I observed to steal occasionally from behind the curtain of a box nearly opposite. The countenance retired quickly, and I again lost its bold and almost

magnificent expression of beauty. I laid my head back, and kept the glass to my eye for a quarter of an hour, while I watched for the re-appearance of this hidden star that eclipsed all others around it. While thus occupied, I heard the door of the box next to the one where I sat opened, and a single man, as appeared by the heavy foot, ushered in. Again I saw the head of the lady I was watching come forth from behind the curtain to look at Pasta, and to my astonishment, she slowly, and with seeming caution, turned her face towards where I was, and, as I thought, gave a hasty glance exactly at myself. I kept my glass to my eye, instinctively impelled to observe the motions of this apparition. I declare on my soul I saw her smile and almost make a sign to me—it seemed evidently to me. I could not mistake it, but in another instant the face was lost behind the curtain.

It was now my disposition, as a stranger, to be curious and observing, and solitude had made me thoughtful. I began to wonder what could cause a single individual to come to the Opera so late as the man in the next box had

done. Again I saw the lady opposite look across. It now struck me that it was not to me, but to this late-coming stranger that she had seemed to smile.

The great curtain of the stage was about to drop, and I should soon know nothing. My curiosity was not to be restrained, and putting my head out to get a sight of my neighbour, I saw a black, foreign-looking head, which turning round at my seeming impertinence, the large dark eyes of the man by whom I had of late been haunted glared full upon me. I declare I was seized with an absolute tremor, and as the house rose, I found a sort of refuge in losing myself in the crowd of the crush-room without. But by the time I had arrived at the colonnade below, and my ears began to be stunned by the shouts of the servants and people calling for the carriages of the nobility, my curiosity returned, impelling me to try, if possible, to obtain a sight of the lady. This attempt was useless now, for though silks rustled around me, and lights glared above, and forms of beauty flitted past, and all the perfumes of Paris wafted across my sense, the crowd was

too great for me to see any one distinctly, unless I had made myself more obtrusive than it was my nature to do.

Just as I had got however among the soldiers and valets, who served to choke up the outer vomitory of the theatre, the steps of a carriage without the columns were let down with a rattle, and I turned my head to look at its intended and probably fair occupants. A noble female figure, wrapped in a carriage-cloak, swam past me like a queen. As she bent herself in stepping into the carriage, I had a single glance of a bold Roman profile, which might have suited that of Lucrecia herself. I could see no more save a dark eye-lash, but a portion of the head-dress, which I was able to notice, informed me at once. I knew it was the very same I had seen from behind the curtain—at least I thought so. I tried to get another look to assure myself, but the crowd jostled me out of sight, and I only heard the carriage rattle off down the street, while I elbowed my way forth towards my lodgings almost in a fever of ungratified, and yet strongly excited curiosity and interest, concerning some persons I could not tell whom.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN I got to the door of my own home, some fancy struck me, of waywardness or of an odd humour, and I could not bear to enter it. Though the night was by no means particularly inviting, I turned away, and determined, late as it was, to make up for my late confinement, by strolling away some distance, before I attempted to sleep. I was by no means well acquainted with London, so, proceeding northward, I was soon lost among turnings and crossings.

Wandering through that labyrinth of dull streets that shoot up their tiers of long windows and tire the eye with their eternal sameness, from Piccadilly to the Regent's Park, on turning a corner, and looking down one of those interminable lines of lamps that blind the eyes and fatigue the imagination, a figure intervened in the near distance, which by continuing for a considerable time in my view, and by its slow tread and measured movement, strongly attracted my observation.

Striding forward to get nearer, I observed that the figure wore an elaborately tassellated cloak, while a crushed opera-hat was placed out of all keeping upon his thickly furnished head, as if stuck on to help to disguise the wearer.

There are individuals, who, when the eye once fixes upon them, excite one's curiosity we know not why. By his stately gait and muffled elaboration of Spanish cloak, the man before me impressed me with the idea that he was a person of rank; but why such a man should be wandering the streets of London on foot at this hour could not well be accounted for, unless

some secret intrigue was supposed, which might make it unsafe to employ any decent vehicle. When this fancy had once got into my head, after what I had overheard at the Opera, I was instantly smitten with that woman's curiosity, which still was at hand, and determined to watch the motions of the stranger.

Crossing to the opposite side of the street to prevent suspicion, I at length observed the cloaked man stop at one of those large black doors so common in the west of London; but instead of seeking admittance to the mansion by the bold and decided knock and ring of aristocracy, I observed him touch the great door gently by three light taps with the head of his cane, when instantly the door opened, as if a servant had been stationed behind it to wait for him, and the next moment he was out of my sight.

The incident struck me as so singular, that, stepping across the street, I determined at least to mark the house into which the stranger had been thus suspiciously admitted, and afterwards to inquire the name of the street, in case any

event should occur to give me a clue to the affair. I stepped up to the door, and in looking up close to it for a number or name, I unintentionally gave it a slight push with my hand. To my astonishment it swung wide open; and as if an infatuation of curiosity was over me, in another instant I was in the interior of the hall.

I had stepped in, in the first instance to catch hold of the door, and shut it again without being observed. I did so, but finding no one near, and the entrance lighted only by a single lamp borne by a statue in a niche on the staircase, I stood for a moment inside to take another observation. I listened—and heard feet as if cautiously ascending the stairs from an inner hall, for the mansion was extensive and magnificent, yet to me it had a strangely dead and sombre appearance.

I ventured three or four paces within to listen with better effect. I heard a foot softly treading, but it seemed at a distance. What was my consternation when on looking upwards I perceived a servant stealthily descending the great stairs almost immediately over me. For-

tunately I was not seen. Stepping behind a pillar until he should pass, I observed the man go directly to the hall-door. He uttered an oath when he found it scarcely closed, but my feelings may be conceived when as I stood trembling behind the pillar, I saw the fellow double-lock and chain the door, and taking out the key, proceed, with a grumble of characteristic profanity at his own stupidity, to place the heavy instrument in his pocket ; then putting out the dim light on the staircase, he walked past me, and descended towards the apartments below.

I was so amazed at the situation in which I now found myself, thus accidentally locked into a strange mansion, that for a few minutes I stood behind the pillar perfectly stupified. I saw that to get out from this unpleasant predicament, I must make myself known to the inmates, and what excuse to frame or how to face them I knew not. Undoubtedly I had, with the most thoughtless folly, made myself an object of serious suspicion ; and I saw that to get out of durance, explanations would be necessary that could not fail to be exceedingly

degrading. But when I began to anticipate the tale of this adventure getting abroad in the public, and coming to the ears of those I lived among, my face burned with forestalled shame, and my heart became absolutely sick with vexation.

I was beginning to rally my courage, however, when I heard a door open above, and a heavy step proceed along the passage. Immediately after I perceived an elderly woman, having the appearance of a sick nurse, come tottering down the back-stairs. Every thing within this dwelling was eagerly observed by me, in order that I might obtain some idea of the sort of house into which I had got; and, whether it was the deception of my agitated feelings, I knew not then, but the eyes of the woman glared strangely as she passed down, as if she was intoxicated. Where on earth could I have got to? The beldame hobbled off with her candle in her hand, and soon was lost among the apartments below.

While considering what I should do, I heard a feeble voice issuing from an apartment overhead and calling repeatedly some name which I

could not distinguish. I listened anxiously as I went towards the stairs, and at every repetition of the feeble and entreating cry, I mounted up a few steps higher, impelled now by sympathy even more than by curiosity, until I soon found myself on the first landing-place, and gazing towards the open door whence the sound proceeded.

“Hannah! Hannah!”—cried the voice. “Is there no one here to attend me? Hannah, I say!—Oh, must I lie here and die of thirst!”

I stepped involuntarily towards the open door.

“Is there no one there? Where are all my servants? Where is my wife this week past?” continued the voice. “What serves all my wealth, when here I die of burning thirst? Ah, cursed wealth, without love—cursed wealth—I choke! I choke! Oh, could I only reach that glass, that mocks my parched tongue!”

The appeal was too much for my excited feelings—and forgetting every thing else, I walked into the chamber, and lifting the glass, towards which the sick man looked with harrowing eagerness, I held it to his lips.

“Ha!—he!—he!” uttered the feeble sick

man, after he had drank hastily, and looking up in my face with a delight that partook of the idiotcy either of raving fever or of insanity—"What brought you here, Lodowick, to give me my drink? Ha! he!—don't you know me?"

The address astonished me, when I looked in the emaciated countenance of the sick gentleman and tried to recal a dim fancy of having seen it before. I had seen it certainly, but where or when I could not at the moment think of; for the eyes were so sunk with illness, and their expression so altered by mental imbecility, that past recollections were confounded in the pain of the spectacle.

"Hark'ee, Lodowick," whispered the sick person feebly, and still under the imagination that he knew me, "if you find that drunken old nurse on the stairs, be sure you throw her over!—be sure you do!—Oh, I am a poor wretched man!" and the pained invalid shut his eyes and groaned with a heart-touching moan.

He again opened his eyes, and gazed steadfastly upon me. "Shall I help you to more drink?" I said compassionately.

"Hell and fury!"—screamed the sick man, his

countenance now changing into an expression of horror as he gazed on me—"you are not Lodowick! I know what you want. You have come here after my wife—my false wife!—but I might have known all this—for she never, never loved me—and some one, such a woman must love—Oh, I am an unhappy man!"

"I solemnly assure you, Sir, I have never seen her."

The countenance again lost its energetic wildness and assumed its pleased and half imbecile expression.—"Is that really the case, friend?" he said, as he still gazed—"and you attending upon me here while my own servants leave me to die. But hark!" he whispered, "there is that drunken old devil coming up again. I cannot get rid of her, for she deceives even my wife, by pretending kindness to me, while she neglects me all night. Now, my friend, will you just watch till she gets to the top of the stairs, and then pitch her over—pitch her just over—head and heels—he! he!"

"I will," said I, glad of an excuse to leave this sad scene; "I'll soon do for her;" and again I stepped out into the passage.

“ This is the most extraordinary exhibition of wealth and misery,” said I to myself, “ that ever presented itself to my observation. Where on earth can I have got to? and where is this odd adventure to end?”

A light shot upwards from the back-stairs and across the corridor, and the old nurse now came clambering up the stairs, carrying her taper in one hand and a bottle in the other, which obliged me to mount the second flight to escape her observation. As I looked down, I observed that the wretch was nearly tipsy, but fearing to meet her eye, I hastily mounted the next stair, and in a few moments more I found myself on the second story of this strange mansion.

“ How in the name of fortune am I to be relieved from this awkward predicament?” I again asked myself, “ and where have I got to? Never did a house appear less likely for a scene of intrigue than this dismal mansion, and yet I am certain I saw that dark, solemn, aristocratical figure enter it.”

My reflections were interrupted by a murmuring sigh, which evidently came from only a

short distance, and stepping a few paces inward, I perceived the dark corridor crossed by a stream of light, which proceeded from a room in the passage, the door of which stood slightly ajar.

“By Heavens!” said I mentally, “since I am in this situation, I will take my chance of every consequence, in order to get at the bottom of the mysteries that appear about the inmates of this house,” and I stepped up quite close to the slightly opened door.

I thought I heard a murmuring sound as if of a soft whisper from within, but as I stood to listen, all was again silent. The door, moved by the draft of air from below, edged a little more open, and I could partly see inside. The glimpse of magnificence and of luxury that I obtained, whetted my curiosity, now, as I was prepared for any personal exposure; and touching the door lightly, it moved half open. The one glance of rich curtains and couches, gilding and decoration, that first caught my eye, convinced me that I was looking into no ordinary apartment, and the idea of a lady’s boudoir, but more Parisian than English, came instantly

across me, accompanied by that guilty feeling, which one may well experience who ventures within the inner recesses of an eastern harem.

The light seemed to burn low, but I next had a glimpse of the table, on which was placed a dim lamp, which stood on a tripod, fancifully supported by carved figures, and shed its mellow light over crystal decanters and glasses, wherein the dark ruby colour of wine, with fruits and refreshments, served in silver, and crowded together under the softened light, gave an idea of gorgeous and profuse luxuriance. The sight that next presented itself, however, almost took the light out of my eyes. The bust of a lady appeared beyond the table, as she sat with her arms folded over her breast, and seemed to gaze with an expression of excitement on some object which I could not as yet see. A noble, heroic bust it was, a white throat, and part of the bared bosom, to be seen, her shoulder just touched by the curling tendrils of a bouquet of dark clustering hair which towered above a head of the most classic form. Her lips began to move, but emitted only a whisper ; she turned her face a little, and I detected in an instant the bold and

striking, yet lovely feminine features, of the lady whom I had seen enter the carriage, and whom I could not mistake, as the very same which I had watched looking stealthily from behind the curtain at the Opera.

“ For mercy’s sake, Georgiana, do not use me thus ; I can bear any thing but this,” exclaimed passionately a man’s voice from within.

The lady sighed, and compressed her lips, but replied not.

“ What have I done, Lady Stains, to merit this treatment ?”

“ A slight thing, for a man of gallantry,” said the lady, bitterly, but yet with scornful dignity,—“ only ruined me—ruined me, my lord—that’s all.”

“ How can you say so, Lady Stains ? when after all my assiduity, all that my unconquerable love has impelled me to do and to submit to for your sake, I have never until this night obtained one half hour’s private ——”

“ Are you not at this moment,” interrupted the lady, “ alone with me in my boudoir after midnight, and Sir Archibald’s own servant privy to it ? Has the world leisure to judge from any

other than exterior circumstances? and is it its way to take the favourable view of the conduct of those whom it envies or affects to pity? Alas! you, my lord, and my own thoughtless heart, which has given you too much encouragement, and my girlish ambition, and my mercenary relations who have placed me in the unnatural circumstances in which I am, have ruined me—ruined me! Oh, if it were possible in this world, for unintentional guilt to retrace its steps—”

“Guilt! my lady—how can you talk thus, when you know—”

“Is not that very assiduity that you make your boast, guilt, when *I* did not peremptorily forbid it? Is not this meeting deep guilt, on my part? Were any one of the world’s prowlers after matter of scandal standing this moment behind that door, and watching us now, would the eves-dropping wretch not call us a guilty pair, and proclaim my deep delinquency to the greedy ears of a rejoicing world, before the morning’s dawn; or hold me up one day to scorn in a public court of justice, by witnessing, with the holy Evangelists at his lips, my everlasting infamy?”

My feelings may be conceived at this moment, as the lady paused in her passionate speech, when I thought of my present predicament; but I stood perfectly still, prepared for the worst.

“For Heaven’s sake, Georgiana, do not speak so loud; and see, the door is wide open. Allow me,”—and I heard the speaker rise from his seat.

“No, my lord, you shall not, unless you mean to leave me this instant,” cried the lady. “We are not come to that—to be shut in together.”

The noble paramour seemed to resume his seat, while I stood doggedly where I was, but trembling, I confess, with conscious shame, and only putting my head occasionally past the door to catch a glimpse of the lady.

“My lord,” she said, after a moment, “I *beg* of you to leave me. What can you possibly promise yourself by this desperate boldness, after what I have told you?”

“Georgiana,” he said, assuming a tone of tenderness, “you are unhappy.”

“I know I am: is that any novelty among our helpless sex?”

“And you are wedded to one who—”

“Heavens! my lord, what would you say?”

How few women, from the highest to the lowest, are married to their hearts' wish !”

“ From what I can learn, the present illness of Sir Archibald is a mere repetition of those fits, which may keep you lingering over him partly as his sick nurse, and partly as the endurer of his humours, until the blessed years of your youth shall have wasted themselves in sickening depression and confinement ; and that love, for which you were born, and which is the strongest feeling of your nature, shall burst the swelling heart in which you would in vain stifle it.”

I looked forth as he paused, and saw the lady cover her eyes with her long plump fingers, and while leaning her head upon her naked arm, her breast heaved with deep emotion.

“ Lady, listen to me,” continued the other voice eagerly ; “ you talk of there being little novelty in your circumstances ; but point me out amongst all whom you know in society, any one of half your beauty so wretchedly situated ; and would there, let me ask, be, even in the eyes of the world, any novelty in a young and lovely woman breaking through the trammels that others forced upon her at an age

when she was unable to judge of the imperative requirements of her own heart,—and, abandoning age, imbecility, and jealous impotence, for congeniality—happiness—joy such as I—I, Georgiana, who adore you, could bestow—and *will* bestow—will confer and lead you to, throughout every moment of my future life, and with every advantage of my birth and my fortune—seek for that contentment, which in present circumstances you can never taste. Lady, think—consent—will you?—this moment is mine—this opportunity, that I have bought with so many nights' watching, is ours—put yourself under my protection—despise the babble of nine short days at home, while you and I shall be abroad enjoying life and love—Georgiana! speak! are you mine? I will devote my existence to you!”

The lady slowly raised her head and let her white arm droop from her face, as she fixed her eyes on the speaker. The pause was like the breathless instant that precedes the flash of the tube which deprives some being of existence. By Heaven, I was unable to resist my anxiety to assure myself regarding the other, and taking

half a step forward, I saw the eager, half-foreign countenance of that stranger, whom my curiosity had followed from the hour of my arrival in England, gazing with an ardour, that was almost terrible, in the beauteous face of the lady.

“Now,” said she calmly; “now I have heard you out—now I know all—now I see all that the dread vista of futurity presents, should I listen to your audacious proposal—Go, my Lord! Go!—Leave me I say—I will not hear you! Not a word further will I listen to. Go! else I will call up the servants;” and as she rose, I retreated a few steps outside the door.

“Does not the world, as you say, already call you guilty?” I heard the other say; “and does not even your jealous husband believe it and upbraid you concerning me?”

“Yes, and I deserve it; but I have another to answer to—I have my own conscience to satisfy. Now leave me, my Lord,” she added, intreatingly; and now thinking that this strange scene was about to be terminated, I hastily, and on tiptoe, traversed the corridor, and again stood at the head of the stairs.

All was again dark around, but I had no sooner got to the staircase, while the stranger within still held a low-toned altercation with the lady, unwilling, as it appeared, to abandon his object, a smell of fire crossed my sense, as if ascending from below. I slipped again softly down to the first landing-place, and now the smell became decidedly sensible. Recollecting the tipsy state of the nurse, I stood once more at the door of the sick man's chamber. A strong light gleamed at the foot of the door, which was now shut. A rapid suspicion again aroused my feelings, and braving every personal consideration, I turned the handle of the chamber-door and walked in. I soon saw what had given rise to my suspicions.

The careless beldame was stitting at a table by the window, sound asleep; the top of her muslin cap burned completely off, having been consumed by the flame of the candle over which she nodded, and the ignition of the cap and shawl having now communicated with the window-curtain, the latter was rapidly burning towards the drapery above.

I saw that without aid the fire would in-

stantly communicate to the bed, in which the sick man lay now also fast asleep, and in short that in five minutes more the room would be in flames. As I ran towards the window, and drawing aside the further curtain which was not yet ignited, perceived that the shutters were not closed, a sudden thought struck me, regarding the termination of this adventure. Heaven help us, but man is a selfish animal, for in another instant my own awkward predicament came so home upon myself, that I resolved to risk the burning of the mansion, and all other consequences, for the chance now afforded me of getting unobserved out of the house.

Pulling away the unconscious old woman, who was drunk asleep, as well as some other baggage from near the window, I witnessed the flames spreading, without in the mean time giving any alarm; and retreating towards the door, which I shut as I went out, to prevent the draft of air, and then descending the great stair, going to the entrance, I lifted the end of the heavy chain and thundered violently at the hall-door.

The sound of my unexpected noise had not died away within the mansion, when I heard a

scream above stairs, and light foot-steps come hastily forth; but the lady seemed to have fainted, for the sounds ceased, and in an instant after, I heard the wires move by the walls through the lobbies, and a bell ring violently below.

Again I thundered at the door, and in a few moments after the servant whose duty it appeared to have been to sit up, came from his lurking-place in great terror, and passing me while I again stood concealed behind the pillar, I observed him take the key from his pocket, and to my great relief, proceed to open the door. Looking out and seeing no one, he stepped forth as I had calculated, to ascertain who raised this alarm. The street was silent, and deserted, but in his terror he crossed the way while I slipped out, and going up to him, exclaimed in his ear, "Are you mad? Do you not see that your house is on fire?" at the same time pointing up to the blazing window. "The whole inmates might have been burned to death," I added, "had I not most fortunately observed it in passing and given the alarm by knocking at the door. Hasten to the apartments, and I will be here to call assistance."

The fellow ran back in terror, and was soon joined by some of the other servants, but I was not at all disposed to trust myself again inside, and waited without to observe the result and be ready to give any exterior assistance. I could observe that there was not a little bustle and alarm in the mansion, but at length it died away, and with the burning of the window-curtains the whole actual damage seemed to have terminated, excepting what might have been the effects of the accident upon the invalid gentleman, whom I now knew to be the same I had seen at Dover, and whose screams I could plainly hear as I stood in the street, amidst the confused noise within the house.

Before finally retreating I went once more up to the door to observe the number on it, when it was cautiously opened by the same servant, and the cloaked figure of the aristocratic stranger issued forth. The very sight of this remarkable being had such an effect on me, that on perceiving him I had not the power to move.

“ This is the gentleman, your lordship,” said the servant, to my astonishment, as he pointed.

to me, "who saved the house by giving the alarm without."

"Hah—is it so?" said the former, appearing to know me; but after one start of animation, his features relaxed into the same cold, haughty smile that I had at first observed, as if chagrin and disappointment had sat on it, his large eyes appearing incapable of shooting that lightning of passion which I had been the witness of in the boudoir above. He passed on, however, turned the corner of a street, and before I had completely recovered my surprise, or was able to use my legs with effect, he had entirely vanished from my sight.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN I found myself fairly in the street, after the termination of this adventure, it had still such an effect upon me, that I could scarcely believe that I was really quite alone, and delivered from the shame of which I had so long felt the painful apprehension. I therefore pushed my way on from street to street, as I thought, homewards, as if some one was rapidly chasing me, and several times looked over my shoulder, to see if the personage who had so long excited my curiosity was not actually dodging my steps. Meeting, however, with no one, excepting here

and there a solitary watchman,—for we in England were then under the old watchmen regime,—and perceiving, behind and before, a clear street, without a sound disturbing the silence, I began to pace slower, and to suffer the current of my own reflections upon all that I had witnessed.

The image of a man—any man—is in general easily dismissed from another man's fancy, but that of a woman, a beautiful woman, is much more adhesive; particularly to the imagination of a thoughtful and sober-minded stranger, cast by chance into the ocean of human beings, which ebbs and flows through the complex receptacles of a great capital. And yet I did not think of the lady I had seen, with any other sentiment than the natural interest we all feel in the fate of a fascinating and high-minded woman, placed in circumstances in which she neither could give nor receive the pleasure for which, in person and mind, she was eminently fitted; and now in consequence, and by the arts of another, tottering on the brink of ruin.

The interest I had at first felt, about the strange man, was now turned into suspicion, and almost abhorrence; and should the lady not

have the strength of mind to persist, in her exclusion of him, or in any degree give way to his further attempts upon her virtue, I saw reserved for her in the dim vista of the future, misery and degradation, such as saddened me to think of.

As I mused concerning this lady, however, by the natural scene-shiftings of fancy, and the affinities of association, another image of female beauty was presented to my mind, namely, of that sweet innocent face which I had so frequently had opportunities of contemplating, as it passed me like the fleeting dream of an angel, during my solitary rambles among the well-dressed crowds of this Babel of the west. Beauty—thoughtless, or perhaps pensive beauty, —I speak of the unconscious possessor—how seldom is the young and joyous heart of its wearer aware of the number of its secret but sensitive worshippers, as gliding past, like regretful ghosts, even while they walk the busy streets, its keen glances are darted into their inmost souls, and are afterwards dwelt upon, in fancy, as the precious lightning of the gods, which shooteth down from heaven, to give a golden lustre and

a bright radiance to the heavy clouds of existence ! These touching looks of female loveliness, how they linger upon the recollection of the solitary bachelor, as he sighs over the imagination of joys which he cannot taste, until he lays his head at night on his cold dull pillow ; or as, for want of better occupation, he wanders, as I did, at three in the morning, a restless stranger in the streets of the metropolis, looking out for questionable midnight adventures, like the discontented spirit of prowling observation, which glares in at the murky corners of city crime, and “ vanishes at crowing of the cock.”

I was aroused from these thoughts by the noise of tongues, which suddenly disturbed the narrow street into which I had now strolled, and looking up and around, observed that I had wandered far from my home, and got almost into the city. I hastened forward, however, towards where the noise came from (for night-wandering gentlemen need not attempt to be very select in their society at such hours), and soon my sentimental cogitations were dissipated by a scene, which however new to me then, is no rarity in the streets of London. I observed

two men, having the appearance of gentlemen, engaged together in an angry quarrel, and abusing each other with excellent drunken vigour. The dispute seemed ready to end in blows, but having been put on my guard as a stranger, against midnight affrays in the metropolis, I kept aloof for a minute or two, until I observed the taller man of the two, after calling the other several different sorts of scoundrels, collar him with both hands and shake him violently. Giving way to my feelings, I now drew near, and begged of the strange man to desist, when partly letting go the other, he turned his wrath upon me, and, as I now determinedly interfered, he struck at me with his freed hand. The blow was returned—the shorter man struggled, and also sparred, and a round engagement of fisty-cuffs was soon the consequence of this gentlemanly business.

Had I been an Irishman, nothing could have been more gratifying than this affair, for all the watchmen near were comfortably asleep, the coast was perfectly clear, and we being, as I soon found out, all personal acquaintances, fought with the more good-will. The only

thing unpleasant was, that the little man who, on his hat being knocked off, I found, by the bald patch on his crown, to be no other than my friend Compton, and whose sight was mystified by the liquor he had taken, as soon as he got free of the grasp of his antagonist, dealt his blows on me, and thus the engagement became of a general and rather promiscuous nature.

Sobriety, however, was the better part of my valour, with reference to the others, and having at length succeeded, at least, in scattering my opponents, the taller man then started off down the street, and we two who remained began to look at each other, and to take breath.

“ Bless my conscience !” cried Compton—looking closely in my face; for my excellent new acquaintance always swore by a quality which he scarcely even professed to possess, “ can it possibly be you?—and how well you *did* deal about you. I am amazed, Sir—I am charmed with you ! And to be in the streets of London at this hour in the morning, and so ready to join in an honest quarrel ! You are converted, Sir, you are civilized—you are

homo elegantiarum. You deserve to be presented with the freedom of the city."

In this way the man's tongue ran on complimenting me in language of drunken absurdity, for the very things of which I was heartily ashamed; and indeed his gratitude for my interference in his favour was so great, that I could hardly persuade him to move from the spot.

By this time the hour was too unseasonable for us to attempt to get into our lodgings, and my companion, knowing the town well, dragged me towards Covent Garden, in some of the hotels round which he proposed we should sleep. When we got, however, under the piazzas, and I thought to end this low-lived scene by housing my companion in an inn, where we saw a light still burning, as he groped for the bell at the door, a fit of drunken obstinacy came over him, and, nill ye will ye, he would not enter.

"I tell you what, Mr. Thingumback," he again was pleased to say, "I've quite a new opinion of you after your gentlemanly conduct this night. I'll take you into my favour, Sir; I'll

patronize you, and by G— you shan't go home until I shew you something more of London. Nay, no excuses—no arguments. I'm a lawyer, and can tell you the value of an argument to sixpence. Besides, you can put it all in your book—ha—ha—ha! Come; for I have got something to say to you, if you can attend to it.—Heavens, how drunk you are!" he added, with the usual penetration of more sober persons upon the subject of their own faults, as he looked up muddily in my face.

It was in vain that I refused or insisted; and he speedily brought me to some place near, which is kept open all night, and which has, I believe, been already described oftener than requisite. I saw, however, little that was remarkable in the house, except a young man of exceedingly respectable appearance asleep on his seat in one of the boxes below. Being placed by ourselves in an upper room, the lawyer, looking steadily in my face, and complimenting his own penetration in having discovered so sensible and tractable a person as myself, began to talk to me with extraordinary distinctness and consistency. Having determined to

give me his confidence, his tale, to my astonishment, was regarding a young gentlewoman, whom he described with such enthusiasm of gross admiration, and in such terms as led me unconsciously to collate all he said with the beauteous female whom my eyes had so often followed when she appeared in public, but whom I had of late looked out for in vain.

“But what,” said I, “is all this to you? What is your meaning with regard to the lady?”

“The fact is,” said he, “I am tired of boarding-houses and bachelorism, particularly as I can now afford to buy a wife.”

“To buy a wife!” exclaimed I, repeating his vile expression; “what do you mean with reference to a girl such as you describe?”

“I mean exactly as I say—because I choose to speak plain language. May not any thing be bought in England?—and have not I money to purchase beauty?” he added, clapping his hand on his breeches-pocket. “Ay, a heavy purse is a loadstone so powerful, that hang it up between heaven and earth, as the Catholic priests do, and it will draw you upwards and

open to you gates unspeakable, after you have purchased here below all that the world offers to the best bidder."

I stared a moment in the face of my coarse companion, as I reflected on what he said—for even truth itself is disgusting when too broadly spoken—and then said simply,

"But the girl's affections?"

"Are upon me!"

I again glanced over those maudlin salacious grey eyes, and that tinged nose, which had always repelled me, and felt most uncomfortable.

"I tell you they are upon *me*—that is, they are, and must be, upon dress and equipage, and the means of creating envy; and am not I, with my purse, the representative of all these?"

"And has the lady consented?"

"I never asked her."

"But her father?"

"If he does not, I have a lawyer's alternative—I'll ruin him! I've lent him money."

"And do you call this English manners and proceedings?"

"Certainly—at least with wise people—and

the English are getting wiser every day. Now you may put that in your book if you like, ha ! ha ! ha !”

I again looked at the man, and then gave a glance round the mean apartment. I never in my existence felt so humbled as I did at this moment, to think that I was making myself a companion of such a wretch, and in a place which I am now ashamed to think of. How dear-bought is that thing which we call knowledge of the world ! A thought, however, struck me at the moment that I might be useful to some one in reference to this business, and I determined to persevere in my inquiries.

Whether during the pause, however, Compton had begun to suspect me, I hardly can judge, but what little additional I could get out of him after this, went to convince me that he had some strange schemes on hand, which were intended to ruin the happiness of some amiable family, whom he judged of only by his own gross conceptions ; and, absurd as the notion seemed, I could not withal entirely divest myself of a distant suspicion that possibly the whole might have reference to her,

whose simple beauty had so dwelt upon my fancy since I had become a wandering stranger in London..

Becoming exceedingly uneasy in the company of my neighbour, and perceiving that sleep began to overpower him, I was now enabled to persuade him to adjourn to the hotel. The day, as we again emerged into the open air, was beginning to break, and to my surprise, Covent Garden was already crowded with its early frequenters from the country, who, with numerous carts filled with all manner of fruits and kitchen-stuffs, caused a species of bustle that had a peculiar effect to a stranger. My mind, however, was scarcely in a humour to observe it, and succeeding in getting into the inn, I at length, weary and jaded, retired to my apartment. Thus ended the adventures of this, to me, memorable night.

CHAPTER V.

THE tedium and vulgarity of the street and tavern adventures of the previous night were positively worth submitting to for the sake of the consequences to which they led, and particularly of the look of incredulous astonishment which Compton put on, at our late breakfast on the following morning, upon my repeating what he had told me regarding his scheme of marriage, disclosed to me in his cups. He had no previous conception that the old proverb, *in vino veritas*, had any application to so guarded a fox as himself, neither had he the slightest recollection of the latter part of the evening's transactions.

Craft begets craft, at least it ought to do so, for that is the only way that its crooked plans are to be fitly met—so pretending to know more than Compton had actually told me, he was obliged, as we continued to converse, to give me almost his entire confidence. I did not, however, in return give him mine, for though I suspected, from former hints, that he must have known the strange nobleman who had so oddly interested me, taking my cue from himself, I drank in every thing that my ears could catch from him, but determined to say nothing in return until I saw proper time. Meanwhile he began to affect to treat me with the highest confidence, which I easily discerned was only the consequence of his having already trusted me farther than he intended ; but as I saw as well as himself that a third person would be useful to him in these matters, on his proposing to me to take upon myself that responsible office, influenced by a newly-excited curiosity, I positively refused, unless he was disposed directly to introduce me to the lady whose hand he sought, and also to her father, concerning

whom he entertained the benevolent intentions let out on the previous night.

I did not entirely like his answers to me on this point, but made no reply, until a letter he found waiting for him at our lodgings on our return thither, seemed to give him new light; and brightening up when he had read it, he said, with his usual triumphant yet freezing chuckle,

“Ha! this is lucky—times are changed with the Fortesques when they are obliged to come to me. In five minutes,” he added, taking out his watch, “her father will be here.”

“Well,” said I, “and what of that?”

“Nothing—but that you seemed to take an interest in the lady. Hark! *there* is an aristocratic knock for you. ’Tis him, I’m certain.”

I walked to the window, and in two minutes saw a tall elderly gentleman descend from a plain green carriage. The door of it was not shut after him. A delicate female figure next stepped out of it, and what was my astonishment, when, in spite of veils and cloaks, I was able to recognize the perfect profile of the beautiful creature whom I had so long followed with my eyes through the public places of the

metropolis. On Mr. Fortescue being announced, Compton went to receive the father and daughter in another room. I heard the light foot of the latter trip along the passage beside me. I could have burst through the wall to get near them, so much had the whole circumstance excited my feelings.

Through my own half-opened door, I at first heard loud and angry talk between the gentlemen. Afterwards the sound of the stranger's voice sunk into subdued and low murmurings; but when the clear soft tones of a female struck upon my ear, as if she spoke in expostulating and petitioning language, I was unable to contain my feelings, and starting out into the passage, and opening the door of a small room next to theirs, I went in to catch, if possible, some portion of their conversation. Eves-dropping, and what I was now about, are not the same things. To my joy I found a small door within a recess, which appeared to have been nailed up, but the upper part of which was of green glass and covered with a light screen. Removing the screen a little, I found myself almost

behind the parties, and had a tolerably distinct view of them.

“And do you really refuse me this small sum, Sir?” I heard Mr. Fortesque say, casting a glance of mixed scorn and intreaty upon Compton, who stood between the old gentleman and his daughter with a nonchalance that was, to me, perfectly astonishing. “By heavens!” continued the petitioning father, “this last misfortune will drive me distracted! My house—the domestic hearth of my father’s son—to be profaned by the vile executioners of the law, and all for less than a thousand pounds. My God! and you, too, to desert me!”

“I assure you I am exceedingly sorry, Sir—*exceedingly* sorry—but these things *will* happen, and do happen every day.”

“Ah, Sir,” said the afflicted girl, looking up to the inexorable money-trader with an expression of agony in her countenance which almost took the heart out of my body merely to witness it, “can you see my poor father thus situated, after all that has passed, and not do this for him? I thought when I accompanied him to you this sad morning, that you would

surely do it *for me* at least. Oh, Sir! will you,—will you, Mr. Compton?”—and the poor girl rose up and clasped her hands together in her intense agitation.

The contrast between the two faces was to me so appalling, while witnessing this sensual representative of Mammon and the Satyr gloating over that lovely countenance, as, with eyes now streaming in tears, the wretched girl continued to gaze upon his bloated face, that I could with difficulty refrain from bursting into the room, to be myself her friend, or, at least, her advocate.

The smile with which he regarded her was to me worse than all, as he said, addressing her, “Perhaps—*perhaps* I may be able to find the money, since *you* thus plead for it,” and, leaving her, he stepped forward, and, with sly deliberation, whispered something in the ear of her father.

The start, and the succeeding look which followed the proposal to the distracted victim of ruin, I will not attempt to describe; a hectic laugh was the first audible explosion of his feelings, and, after a few more words, the old gentleman again said aloud—

“ Say no more, Sir ; I see what it has come to with me Leave me for a moment, and I will at once make the matter known to my daughter.”

Compton left the room, and I wished myself anywhere rather than to be witness of what I knew was to come between the father and his child ; but interest in the whole riveted me to the spot, and I bolted the door of the room in which I was that I might not be disturbed, and then stood again at my window to observe them.

“ Matilda,” I heard the pale old man say, after a pause, “ a proposal has just been made to me that involves your future destiny, and the remaining fortune of my family. It is one which I should not even name to you in ordinary circumstances, but it arises naturally out of the unfortunate situation in which we are placed, and is only the last of a series of troubles ; for, as the wheel of fortune is continually turning round, bringing one man up, and—”

“ My dear father,” said the anxious girl, “ name the proposal.”

“ You know the man who has just left us, and how we are situated ; can you not guess the purport of his whisper about you ? ”

“ Is it possible, my father, that you could think of my being married to—to— ”

“ Matilda, my love, I do not think of it—I cannot— ”

“ Father, will it save you ? ”

“ It will ; but do not let me press it, my child, against your youthful feelings ; although I should be driven to any act of desperation for the present—I will go and humble myself before him whom I— ”

“ I *will* do what you wish—I will do any thing ; but, oh, my God ! the wife of Compton ! ” and, stifling her grief for a moment, she at length threw herself weeping into the old man’s arms.

I was unable to bear the sobbings of both, and rushing out of the room in which I had been observing them, I encountered the money-lender in the passage.

“ Where have you fled to ? ” said he, “ I wanted to see you.”

“ What is that you have in your hand ? ”

“It is a contract—a missive contract of *marriage!*” he whispered triumphantly, “of *my* marriage into one of the oldest families in the kingdom; but I have bought it somewhat dear though. Come, you shall see the bride,” and before I could reply, I found myself hurried forward by the arm into the room and the presence of the distressed gentleman and his daughter.

Matilda Fortesque started on seeing me, for my face was not unknown to her, our eyes having frequently met before; but unable to divine in what character I now so unexpectedly stood in her presence at this painful crisis, she turned away and moved towards the window.

After a formal introduction of me to the old gentleman, Compton and he spoke a few words apart, while I was unconsciously regarding only the sorrowful features of Matilda. Perceiving at once the awkwardness of the situation in which the boisterous forwardness of Compton, and my own feelings had placed me, I was only prevented from instantly apologizing and withdrawing by the hope of some opportunity of defeating the plans of the lawyer, without ap-

pearing a meddler in matters of such extreme delicacy.

“Is my word not sufficient, Sir?” said Mr. Fortesque now, aloud.

“It is usual in matters of business to have some little writing in a case so important. You can’t expect that I should advance another thousand pounds without—” and he offered the missive.

“Shall you not have my bond for it?”

“But, there is the contract to—”

“I will give my promise and consent in the presence of your friend, should my daughter be agreeable, you also undertaking to—”

“Excuse me, gentlemen,” said I, “I perceive there are matters between you to which I cannot, in honour and right feeling, be witness, unless they be perfectly voluntary on all sides.”

The lady started from a reverie, as I uttered this, as if a sudden hope had crossed her mind, while the old gentleman threw a penetrating look towards me, which I endeavoured to return in such a way as to convey a particular suggestion to his mind. Adversity is keen

of perception. Mr. Fortesque understood me, or at least seemed to do so, and I at once determined to hazard a remark founded upon what I had formerly overheard.

“ I think,” said I, “ you talked something of a thousand pounds. If it is a common transaction arising out of Mr. Compton’s profession, I will be witness to the signing of a bond or a receipt; but if there is any condition attached to the transfer of the money, to which the receiver gives an unwilling consent, you will please excuse my being present to hear it. Besides,” I added, as Compton looked aghast, wondering what I was about to say next,—“ money is not so scarce a commodity in England, that for so paltry a sum as a thousand pounds, a man who has property, and is only in a temporary difficulty, must be saddled with conditions which, for aught I know, may be painful to his feelings.”

“ Alas !” said the old gentleman, mournfully, “ you speak, young Sir, like one that never has known adversity.”

“ I know this much, Sir,” I replied, suiting my style to the state of his thoughts, “ that the

adversity you seem to allude to *may* and *will* pass away; but, in cases of this nature, there are other evils which may arise from our own act, hastily performed under the impatience of adversity, for which time itself offers no remedy, and which even the mammon of the world's worship when obtained, totally fails to alleviate."

The old gentleman placed his hand over his eyes when I had said this, and laid his head back on his chair in deep thought.

"You are mighty officious, I think, Sir," said Compton, looking hard at me, on perceiving the impression I had made. "I have known many a man make a fine speech who could not raise a thousand pounds at a pinch."

"One of the bitterest feelings raised by adversity," said Mr. Fortesque, with a rising scorn, as he now looked at the lawyer, "is to hear small matters when urgently sought for magnified into mountains. How little I would have thought of a sum like this ten years ago!"

"'Tis a trifle not to be mentioned," said I, humouring the proud feeling of the old gentleman; "and if *I* may have the honour of being your agent, I will undertake to produce the sum

within one hour, and that without any condition whatever, beyond what business requires."

"By Heaven you shall not!" exclaimed the money-broker, with true tradesman-jealousy of me, and thumping the table as he spoke. "I'll shew Mr. Fortesque that I'll deal with him as liberally as any man," and, taking out his bank-book, he instantly, without further stipulation, drew a draft for the required sum, and presented it to the astonished father of Matilda. "Now, Sir," said he, "that shews you what *I* am—and I trust that *my* liberality of dealing will not end with the mere signing of the bond for this, but will be appreciated in the quarter on which I have set my heart," and he accompanied the last words with a most complacent bow to Matilda.

"How little do we know of people's circumstances and feelings, by merely seeing them in public!" I thought, as I first heard of the distress of this amiable family. "What a charming thing is joy on the countenances of the high-minded and the intelligent, when it comes suddenly after despondency and humiliation?" What I now witnessed, particularly in the tran-

sparent face of that heavenly creature, whom my eyes had so long followed, was what no words can ever express. And her beaming and modest glance towards myself, had so much grateful feeling in it—and so much that seemed to say, “God bless you, youth, for your favourable interference at such a moment as this!” and which plainly spoke the words, “I could wish that we might meet again, where we could speak to each other;” that I almost regretted that the paltry thousand pounds had not come out of my own pocket, for it would by no means have paid for this exquisite moment.

I could not, however, help admiring the tact of the old gentleman, when squeezing my hand as we rose to separate, he thus addressed me:

“I perceive, Sir,” said he, “that, though young, you are acquainted with business, which I unfortunately am not, a defect which has been the ruin of many other men, who once, like me, possessed a good fortune. And though Mr. Compton here has been frequently useful to me, yet as opposition in these matters is, I am told, productive of excellent effects, should you do

me the favour of calling upon me, I shall not scruple to avail myself of your advice."

I assured Mr. Fortesque, that though professionally I was unconnected with any business, I should nevertheless be most happy if at any time in future I could render him the least service.

My habits as a stranger had made me a reader of faces, and as I turned towards Matilda, while with an evidently full heart she shook her father's hand—I could see as plain in her gleaming eyes as if the words had been written on them that she would say—"How strange are the ways of Providence! that sometimes raises us up a friend—and opens a new spring of hope—at the very last instant of gathering adversity!"

I saw also by her grateful glance towards me, or at least I flattered myself, that there was a stronger sentiment mixed with this.—I could not be mistaken, and as soon I had seen the father and daughter to their carriage, I hastened away from the house, lest the babble of the coarse lawyer should interrupt the delightful current of my feelings.

CHAPTER VI.

THE world was now a new world to me. I no longer wandered the streets of London, with that cheerless feeling of solitary individuality which had hitherto oppressed me. England, or rather Europe was to me no longer a wide sea of busy human beings, into which I had been dropped as if from the clouds, and among which I was a lost atom of mind unknowing, unregarded, and unknown. Now I possessed the delightful consciousness of being useful to another human being besides myself. I had been looked upon with an eye of interest and of

favour, by one of the virtuous hearts, who after all are frequently to be found on the earth's surface, looking eagerly around them for that communion of congenial spirits, which is the very life of their life ; and towards this amiable being, my heart burned within me, in proportion to the repulsiveness with which I regarded others with whom I could have no sympathy.

All this time, that is, for several days after the meeting with the Fortesques, I had never had a sight of him I called the strange gentleman, nor did I now think of him with any interest, my curiosity being pretty well gratified by the extraordinary scene I had witnessed in the mansion. In my hurry that evening I had omitted to observe the name of the street where the house was situated, and it having occurred to me one day to endeavour to find it out, I tried in vain among the labyrinth of builded sameness in the west to obtain the least trace of it. On ruminating over that affair now, the scene seemed so strange that I could almost have regarded the whole as a dream, had it not been for other circumstances. But respecting the

stranger nobleman, and the unhappy lady, I was yet far from being entirely satisfied.

Considering it now time that I should perform my promise of calling upon Mr. Fortesque, I went to the street to which he had given me his address. In looking for the number of his house I happened to cast my eyes across the street; what was my astonishment to observe the tall portly figure of the strange gentleman, walking leisurely opposite to the very door I was seeking, and casting an occasional glance up towards the windows. My heart rose in my bosom at this sight, with a strange sensation of mixed indignation and jealousy. I passed the door at first, then returned to observe his motions. He walked back also the contrary way, gazed up again, and then shot a dark inquisitive look across towards me. I went up the steps of Mr. Fortesque's door, and knocked boldly; the strange man seemed astonished, passed on, and I was ushered into the house.

I was received by the old gentleman, and afterwards by Matilda and her mother, with that welcome expression appearing in the eyes

and in the very tones of the voice, which is so much above the fictitious phrases of common ceremony, and tells of feelings towards those to whom we are irresistibly drawn, which are very unnecessary to describe by words. When I had mentioned some particulars regarding myself, and of my connections abroad, few of them as still remained alive, the old gentleman knew one of them well; we became more unreserved, and he communicated to me several matters regarding his affairs and in reference to his transactions with Compton and others, to which I listened with the deepest interest.

“Your remarks, Sir,” he said in the course of conversation, “appear to me so judicious that I will intrust you with another matter in which I am painfully interested, and regarding which, as you are more abroad in the world than I of late am disposed to be, and being much of a stranger you are not inveigled into the coteries of ordinary scandal, you perhaps may be enabled to render me some service. You must know that I have a niece—alas! that I should have to mention her name, with blame and regret—for the lively daughter of my

poor deceased brother, was beautiful and fascinating even from a child; but what will a declining family not do to retrieve its ruined fortunes? In short, my warm-hearted favourite was influenced--she was more than influenced--into a most uncongenial and ill-suited marriage. What shall I add? How can high spirit and enthusiastic energy abide mental imbecility and the sour watchfulness of a narrow mind?—and, in a world where the longings of the heart are so hard to gratify, even with all the means and appliances of the most favourable circumstances, how can it be patient without one feeling answered, or one pulse beating in unison, with the one to whom it is associated for life? We every day hear of legal prostitutions—these are hard words, but although few men have known what it is to be obliged to set a value upon money, more than myself, I can never approve of sacrificing to worldly considerations those deep feelings of the ardent mind, which if choaked and stifled in warm youth, or worn down into melancholy apathy during the sad tedium of inward suffering without hope, leave the heart in old age a withered and blast-

ed thing, brooding with regret over a weary existence, and with blanched cheek and saddened eye supporting a burdensome pomp only to convey it to a thankless posterity.”

As the old man paused in his serious communication, I wondered what all this was to lead to. After a few moments he again resumed.

“ It is an old fashion of the world to sacrifice every thing in the shape of feeling or inclination, to worldly advantages and fancied greatness. Undoubtedly these have their value, in their right place, but, after all, happiness and they are distinct things, and it is only vulgar and gross minds which have no just apprehension of the latter, who, at the expense of all that is dear to the human heart, would teach sensitive minds to seek the former as the *summum bonum* of life. When I was consulted about the marriage of Georgiana, it was in vain that I urged these things, and prophesied evil should my advice be disregarded. Even my niece herself, who was not arrived at the years to have any just conception of life or any understanding of her own feelings—not as yet indeed, half deve-

loped,—dazzled as usual with promised splendour, and worried into consent by the false representations of worldly persons, gave way, and I, the unwelcome adviser against such temptations, and the hated prophet of evil, have, I fear, been sadly in the right, if the reports that have reached me have any foundation in truth.”

“What reports, Sir?” said I, unconsciously, and almost with a start.

“Have *you* heard them too?” said he, sharply.

“I cannot satisfy you, Sir,” I said, “until I hear more fully what you allude to.”

“It is regarding the truth of these very reports,” he went on, “that I want, if possible, some authentic information. The eccentric baronet and her went to live abroad, on account of the wretched state of his health; they have of late returned, and have brought with them such a composition of strange accounts, and mysterious scandal, as I never thought to have heard attached to any connection of mine.”

“But there must be some male person in the case to whom these reports must also have allusion?”

“ There is ; and that is the principal point of the mystery. A strange gentleman has been lately seen in town, to whom some say these rumours bear allusion ; but though a personage whom many has remarked, no one, that I have heard of, can tell any thing concerning him, excepting that he is a man who lives splendidly, and has been more than once seen, when abroad at least, with my unfortunate niece. Nay more, there is a peculiar-looking, but certainly elegant man, has been following with his eyes, on several occasions, my own daughter, and some fancy has taken her, and her mother, that he must be the same person which these reports refer to. We have even seen him this very morning pacing more than once before the windows in the street, and from the oddness of the circumstance, we are more concerned about him than even about the repulsive urgency of Mr. Compton.”

“ Of Mr. Compton !” I repeated in additional surprise.

“ Yes,” added Mr. Fortesque ; “ presuming upon the circumstances in which I unfortunately am placed with him, his urgency for the

hand of my daughter is perfectly torturing, almost menacing; and you may conceive how distressing the idea of such a match, could it possibly be forced on us, must be to me after the painful example of my unhappy niece. I reveal to you these things, Sir," said he, "notwithstanding the shortness of our acquaintance, because I think that, stranger as you are, I can rely upon your honour as well as judgment, and because from your judicious interference when we first met, I feel no degradation in being indebted to you for that peculiar service which a third party can sometimes render in our respective circumstances."

I was delighted of course to be thus treated, but did not at all see my way clearly in respect to the information which I was expected to obtain. I was still more gratified by the further conversation I had with Mrs. Fortesque and with Matilda herself, whose beauty I will not now dwell upon, and whose soft looks and delicate sentiments sank deeply into my heart. I at length left the society of that amiable family, my whole being renovated by that glowing sentiment which gives poor human nature a taste of

the joy of the gods, and makes this nether world another heaven. As I again walked the crowded streets of London, I experienced, almost with triumph, that delightful feeling so long a stranger to my bosom, that now I existed in this world not entirely for myself.

CHAPTER VII.

“WHAT do you think?” said Compton to me one day shortly after this. “I am refused by old Fortesque, on the part of his daughter, because, forsooth, my fortune is not sufficient, and the doating spendthrift himself hardly now worth a shilling. But I’ll have her! the girl shall be mine! if I should compass heaven and earth for her! She shall lie in these arms if—Ay, in these very arms!—Oh, isn’t she a lovely creature!”

The very thought—the bare fancy—as I looked at the bloated and sordid wretch, thus

stretching out his arms before me, almost turned me sick.

“But what have you been engaged in for the last fortnight?” I inquired; “I have scarcely seen you?”

“What the devil is there about you, Eisenbach,” said he, “that induces me to make you my confident? I will tell you—but surely you cannot mean to attempt to rival me with Matilda Fortesque! No, no! you cannot. You have not got the *geldt*! at least not to the amount that *I* have;” and as he spoke, he clapped his hand significantly on his breeches-pocket, and looked at me with that triumph with which, in England, a rich man glories over those whom he considers poor.

Scorning to be offended by the coarse freedom of this man, I made no reply, while he went on.

“What I am worth now is but a trifle to what I shall soon be possessed of, and then—Matilda!—I shall keep three carriages!—I shall get into parliament!—I shall—”

“But why,” said I, interrupting this vulgar rhapsody, “should you, with all this wealth,

think of marrying the daughter of a ruined gentleman who can bring you nothing?"

"Ha! you are raw. You know not what *I* know of the connections of the Fortesques, and their ultimate expectations. But I shall have power over them in the meantime at least. Come, will you accompany me this morning on the crowning business, and I will tell you all that is necessary by the way?"

A hackney coach already stood at the door; and, wondering where he was going to take me, I stepped in. A stripling who acted as his clerk being also in attendance, came next into the coach with a bag of papers, intended, along with myself, as a witness of some contemplated transaction, and off we drove in silence. On the way he became thoughtful, as if he already repented of his confidence; talked of my being a stranger in London—of the honesty of the German character, &c. and without giving me any insight into his plans, simply begged that I would consider him my friend, and be his, in reference to this matter—should I require to be called on before leaving England.

“What can you possibly mean?” I inquired.

“You have been my legal friend before,” he said, “and on that occasion you rather disappointed me; now I give you an opportunity of doing otherwise. He to whose house we are going is rather eccentric and strange, but he is perfectly collected. You will see that, and if you see any thing that looks like the contrary, you are not to mind it. You will find him, though weak, perfectly *compos mentis*. I have long been his lawyer, and am of late his particular friend.”

We stopped at the door of a large mansion; something struck me on my entrance into the hall that I had seen it before. What was my astonishment, as I mounted the stairs, to find myself in the same house into which I had been locked, that, to me, remarkable night. I determined to ask no questions of my companion. We were at first ushered into a drawing room furnished in the richest style of English luxury, and soon after the lawyer was called out, leaving me to my own reflections.

Whatever might be Compton's business in this house, I perceived, that in respect to Ma-

tilda, now the great object of my thoughts, and whom I had since met with several times, he was making the usual mistake of worldly men, in supposing that what they have amassed by much care and some dishonesty, is as all-powerful and highly valued in the view of those who have but little of it, as it is by themselves; and thus he never dreamed, that Matilda's father or herself would ultimately refuse him, far less that he could possibly be supplanted by such as I;—or, in short, that any other advantage of mind or person, could weigh any-thing in the balance, against the power of wealth. As I thus cogitated—Compton re-entered the room.

“ I have brought you here,” he said, “ merely to witness the signing of a will. This could, of course, be done almost by any one, but it may be necessary hereafter that proof may be required regarding the state of mind of——”

“ Make no apology,” said I, and with some peculiar anticipations I followed him into the chamber of the invalid.

“ Sir Archibald Staines,” said Compton, pointing to the same melancholy remnant of a man whom I had twice before seen—now placed in

a great chair among a pile of cushions, a small table with writing materials before him, his thin face elongated with illness, and his sunken eye wandering feebly round the room.

“Now, Sir Archibald, just sign here ;” and the lawyer, with a fawning manner, put a pen into the thin yellow fingers of the sick baronet.

“Hah !—am I dying then, that you make me sign my will ?” said the sick, with a ghastly smile of imbecility and terror, as, baring his long teeth, and opening his hollow eyes, he looked up in the lawyer’s face with the very expression of the grave.

“Oh, not at all, Sir Archibald,” said Compton, “you are much improved—you look remarkably well ; but it is better that this should be done before you set off for Italy, you know.”

“But can’t I do it when I return—and then I shall be strong and well—and Lady Staines will be quite charmed—Hah ! lawyer—where is Georgiana ?” he added, as if a sudden renovation of his mental powers had taken place, “where is she ?—I will not sign my will without her.” And the sick man, to Compton’s evident consternation, threw down the pen.

“ It is not usual for ladies to be present on an occasion of this kind ; *do*, Sir Archibald, sign at once.”

“ Will no one call me Lady Staines ?” persisted the nervous invalid, but with increased energy. “ Where are all my servants ?—where is that ugly old nurse ?—Compton, you wicked lawyer, you haunt me about this will—ring the bell, I say !”

The lawyer, with a look of great chagrin, pulled the bell-rope—and as the servant came in to receive his order, I felt, I confess, most strangely at the idea of again seeing Lady Staines, and could hardly credit the chance events, that had conspired to make a stranger like myself witness of these extraordinary scenes in England.

Sir Archibald relapsed for a moment into his usual apathy, while Compton seemed to determine within himself on a bold push for his object.

“ Just have the goodness, Sir, to sign this, if you please——”

The invalid passively took again the offered

pen, as he seemed to relapse into his wandering half insensibility.

“ Sign there, Sir; now, do not delay, Sir Archibald, for here is a gentleman and my clerk waiting to witness this your act and deed —”

“ Mr. Compton,” said I, now coming forward, “ unless your client has read over what he is to sign, and seems capable of understanding it, I must be excused from bearing witness to all this —”

On hearing a new voice, Sir Archibald now opened feebly his languid glazed eyes, and for the first time looked steadily upon me. As he gazed, his wan countenance again suddenly changed into a strangely excited expression,— and shrinking towards the corner of his chair he only uttered the exclamation—“ Good Heavens !”

“ What is the meaning of all this ?” cried Compton, in renewed alarm.

The sick baronet still gazed on me. “ It was no dream —” he at length uttered in a low voice,—“ it could not be a dream. You are the very man.”

“ What man ? what can be the meaning of

this, Sir Archibald?" again exclaimed Compton, in amazement.

"Yes, it was you that gave me my drink that night," continued the bewildered baronet, "I know you, and saw you slip out of the room, just as I was wakened by the smell of fire. You were my guardian angel that fearful night, and as for Lady Staines—alas!—she—Compton, how know you this gentleman?"

At this moment the servant opened the door, and Lady Staines walked in amongst us. She almost started on observing me. The lawyer seemed to shrink into half his size, as she cast a look of inquisitive contempt towards him, while her noble figure and bearing, and her heroic beauty, in spite of the melancholy that seemed to sit upon her brow, and the evident carelessness of her morning dress, involuntarily excited my admiration, as it did that of the enfeebled baronet, who now also looked in admiration on his wife under the unsuitable character of the husband of such a woman.

"You sent for me, Sir Archibald," she said abruptly, yet with a look of some kindness.

"I did, Georgiana," and the invalid raised

himself astonishingly. "Lawyer ! why do you not hand Lady Staines a chair?"

The lawyer had Lady Staines placed on a seat, at the same time making her a profound bow.

"Georgiana," continued the baronet, as he still gazed on the lady across the small table on which lay the papers,—“ say, are you my wife or not ?”

An exclamation of amazement from the lady, at being thus addressed in the presence of strangers, was the natural consequence of this speech.

"Lady Staines," he continued, "I purposely address you in the presence of witnesses, if Heaven gives me strength to do so, for notwithstanding the flatteries of that lawyer, who haunts me night and day, I feel that this may be the last time, I shall be sufficiently collected to speak to you seriously. I have made a great mistake in making you my wife, and your purpose and that of your friends in this ill-advised marriage will be disappointed. Here I have made a new will, which I mean to sign and to burn the former one in your presence. Lawyer, reach me that tin box."

The bosom of the lady seemed to be swelling with emotion, but she uttered not a word, while the lawyer bustled forward the box.

“Will you not speak to me, Georgiana, before I sign away my property from the whole race of your relatives?”

“If you give it to those who are worthy of it,” said the lady, mildly, “then—” and she paused.

“Where will I find them?” interrupted the invalid, with his usual peevish scream; “who is worthy? I may as well will my fortune to this pains-taking lawyer as to any one else.”

“Gracious Heavens!” was the lady’s exclamation of astonishment.

“Ay, Lady Staines—just so. The bear will at least hug and hold fast his prey, and suck his paws over it in his winter’s den; and that is a recommendation to all disponners of the world’s wealth—but I feel myself growing weak. Give me the pen, Compton, and open the box. I once thought *you* worthy, Georgiana,” he continued. “I once thought your uncle worthy—but he is a spendthrift and a fool, that Fortesque, and I now see through his motives for

urging on your marriage with me. But yet, had he sought for a reconciliation—”

“ Pardon me, Sir Archibald,” said I, now impelled by my feelings to speak ; “ Mr. Fortesque, to my knowledge, was strongly against that very marriage.”

The sick man looked across to me in surprise, and then cried,—“ How know you that, Sir ? Was that really the case, Lady Staines ?”

“ He certainly urged me strongly against it,” she said, her heart seeming to fill at the recollection. “ My good uncle was the only one who did so, and all his prophecies have become but too true.”

“ You vile lawyer !” screamed the sick man, looking across upon Compton, his dim eyes kindling into the sharp flame of terrible indignation : “ didn’t you tell me that Fortesque was the great urger of that step for selfish motives, and that he recklessly threw away his fortune expecting that I was to replace it—and that now he stands, like the hungry grave itself, yawning for my bones, that when I am dead and buried, he may waste the substance of my forefathers in riotous living ! Oh, where—where is truth on earth ?”

“ So far is that from the truth, Sir Archibald,” said the lady, “ that my poor uncle has suffered the greatest distress, brought on by pure misfortune, and much by the craft of this very lawyer, and was too proud to let you know it fully, even when he applied to you.”

The sick man’s mind seemed more and more aroused by astonishment at the manner in which he had been deceived.

“ I was witness of his deep distress,” said I, “ when, accompanied by his daughter, he went to borrow money of Mr. Compton ; and I have since been witness of the high honour and just pride of that interesting family.”

“ Went to borrow money of this man !” exclaimed the lady ; “ my sweet cousin so degrading herself ! and this man not to inform me of it—while he was poisoning your ear, Sir Archibald ! Wretch !” she continued, now rising up, her fine eyes flashing fire upon the lawyer, “ how am I degraded to be obliged to sit in your company ; but my uncle himself shall expose you. Yes, Sir Archibald, I have sent to Mr. Fortesque intreating him to come to me here—even here, and I expect him this

very day, that I may throw myself on my knees before him, and before you too, my husband, if you would but speak kindly to me at length, to acknowledge all my follies, and to ask for pardon of you and of Heaven—for—I am indeed—indeed—an unhappy woman !”

At this moment a loud knocking at the door indicated a visitor, and a servant entering announced Mr. and Miss Fortesque, wishing to be admitted to Lady Staines.

“Is he so bitter against me, that he will not condescend to come to my sick chamber ?” said the startled invalid.

“The virtuous have no need to condescend unworthily,” said the lady, “and it is you, Sir Archibald, that has been bitter against him, refusing his request at his utmost need, because this vile lawyer, to whom you have of late resigned yourself, persuaded you he was a spendthrift. Beg of Mr. Fortesque and his daughter,” she added, turning to the servant—“beg of them, in all our names, to step into this apartment.”

The scene that now ensued may *perhaps* be faintly imagined—the first surprise of Mr. Fortesque and Matilda on perceiving me, as well

as the lawyer, in presence of the sick baronet, their delight on hearing the turn that had taken place from his original intentions—and the terrible and almost terrific agitation of the lady, as she acknowledged, particularly to her uncle, sins and follies which had, all but, ended in her dishonour—and as she begged the forgiveness of her dying husband, and poured execrations on the artful and seductive man, who had spared no pains or expense to destroy her reputation and her peace.

“Take my hand, Georgiana,” said the sick baronet, scarcely able to articulate from the effect of the scene—“take my hand”—and he held out his thin fingers to the kneeling lady—“I believe you—I do believe you, and I take to myself much of the blame—Lawyer!—put that will into the fire.”

“Into the fire, Sir Archibald?”

“Do it!—you have made it, and you shall burn it with your own hands.”

“Sweet soul—sweet innocent being,” continued the baronet, his feeble eye resting on the countenance of Matilda, as deeply affected with the scene she sat watching the countenances of

all, and then gazing at the will blazing into ashes on the grate.—“ You will be something the better of my property when I am gone—would that I could see you happily—happily married, before I go hence—and the baronetcy of Staines be extinct for ever.”

He murmured something further which I could not distinctly hear, the apathetic exhaustion seeming again to come over him. We at first thought he was dying, but when, as he began to recover, Mr. Fortesque, was congratulating his niece, as well as beginning to converse with renewed pleasure, our harmony received a sudden shock from what followed, for the baronet beginning to revive and fixing his eyes on my face, muttered thus :

“ Who this stranger is I don't know, but he spoke the first word this morning, to undeceive me regarding these my last remaining friends ; and I feel myself indebted to him. It was he gave me my drink too, when my head swam with fever, and my lips burned with thirst—and it was at the dead of night, that night of the fire—when all was silent in my house—and Lady Staines—Heavens !—what thought is this that comes over me !”

“Can this be raving only!” said the lady, as the company first looked at each other, and then turned their eyes on me.

“Sir,” said the baronet, addressing me with a solemnity that was absolutely distressing, “did you not one night hold a cup of drink to my lips, in this very chamber?”

The eyes of all were fixed on me—I felt my face glow with a flush that spoke more than my words—when, with a hesitating voice, I answered that I did.

“And how did you come to be in my house at midnight?”

I made no reply.

The kindling eyes of the baronet wandered from the confused face of his lady to mine, while Matilda seemed ready to faint.

“Answer me truly, Sir, as I am a dying man—how long have you been acquainted with Lady Staines?”

“I never spoke to her ladyship in my life.”

“Georgiana, know you not this gentleman?”

“I never saw him that I know of until this morning.”

Matilda began to breathe again, and so did

her father, while I in a few words explained, to the astonishment of all, how that, finding the street-door ajar as I passed, I stepped in to inform the inmates, and that hearing a feeble voice calling for drink, I ventured up stairs and gave attendance to the sick ; the fire explained the rest, or at least served to save the evident dread of the lady, lest I should say any thing that would undo all that she had effected, and all now joined in acknowledging with surprise the extraordinary means by which Providence had brought me into their acquaintance, and made me instrumental in rendering them, what they were pleased to call, the most essential services.

I stood up to take my leave, for, after all, I was still little more than a stranger to those present. As I made my acknowledgments to Mr. Fortesque for the pleasure I had found in his acquaintance since I came to know him, the old man seemed affected, and Matilda, as if forgetting every thing but her feelings, rose and put her right hand frankly into mine. As we looked in each other's faces at this present parting, the eyes of all, particularly of Lady Staines, became fixed upon us. At this instant the si-

lence was startlingly broken by the usual scream from the feeble voice of the sick baronet, and with hectic energy, he was just able to say,

“ I see it—I see it—this is the fulfilment of my wishes ! and there, before me, is the beginning of happiness and love, such as *I* never experienced. Fortesque, do you consent to the evident wishes of these young people ? ”

“ Most willingly,” exclaimed the old gentleman, joining our hands again, while I could see his eyes filling with tears, as he looked at Matilda.

Why should I dwell upon the rest ? why should I tell of the tears of pleasure which ran from the eyes of all as Matilda and I knelt at the feet of those who now showered blessings upon us, and joined their prayers for that happiness in our future lives for which ample worldly provision had been made by the dying baronet ? Alas ! however, it was painfully affecting to witness the convulsive sobbings of the regretful Lady Staines, as she contemplated us both, spoke of our present love and future bliss, and thought of what she herself had missed in life.

“ What shall I add more ? ” continued my

good host, by this time quite affected with his own story,—“ that bliss has been well realized, in the course of seven happy years, and now this bright morning, during the short time when my Matilda is gone from me, who, since we left England, has become much attached to these vallies, the pleasure of talking of her in her absence almost compensates for the temporary want of her society, and I shall receive her again with enhanced joy after thus, in fancy and by recollection, going over again the strange events in London connected with our first acquaintance.

My friend had scarcely bestowed a concluding caress upon his daughter, and informed me of the subsequent deaths of Sir Archibald and Mr. Fortesque, and of Lady Staines having entered into a second and more happy marriage, but not with the strange nobleman who has since run a remarkable race both in England and abroad, when a vehicle drove up the avenue, and in a few moments after, starting from his seat, my host hastened down stairs to welcome back his Matilda. The tender

embrace of meetings and of partings of those who truly love each other, are always affecting. I turned away my head, for I could not look, and the very tones of the soft English voice of the lady and the glance of her charming blue eyes, touched me almost to tears, as I thought of those I had left at home, and of the pious bliss of wedded love.

From what I perceived during one interesting hour, which was all that I enjoyed of this lady's society, I could very well account for the enthusiasm of my new friend in speaking of his wife, as well as for the minuteness with which he detailed the particulars of their story; and I left his delightful villa on the Rhine with those comforting sensations with which the mind concludes, from actual observation, that in many interesting spots, on the variegated surface of this green earth, there are still enjoyed many quiet hours of virtuous and truly enviable felicity.