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THE ALBIGENSES,

A ROMANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "BERTRAM," A TRAGEDY:
"WOMAN; OR, POUR ET CONTRE," &c.

Sir, betake thee to thy faith,
For seventeen poniards are at thy bosom.
SHAKSPEARE'S *All's Well that Ends Well*.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE ALBIGENSES.

CHAPTER I.

Oh, ransom, ransom, do not hide mine eyes.

SHAKSPEARE.

WE have told in a preceding chapter, if the reader should happen to remember it, that Sir Amirald on hearing the cries of a female hastened to her rescue. The knight and his steed were indeed wearied wandering among the hills without shelter or food, when they appeared suddenly stirred at the summons, as if the high impulses of chivalry operated simultaneously on both, the knight applying his spurs, and the steed quickening his pace at the signal, exhaustion and weariness forgotten at the appeal.

To understand the cause of the knight's career, which he pursued at full gallop among the rocky defiles at the risk of his life, we must retrograde a few steps, and return to the scene that passed in the cave of the Albigeois on the night we have before described. Genevieve had sat supporting her grandfather's head on her knees, after carefully spreading under his chilled limbs her mantle of woollen cloth, and gazed on a fissure of the cavern through which the moonlight streamed, and felt as she gazed the deep wish to solemnize her feelings, and abstract them if possible from anxious and troubled views of her earthly destination--the solitudes for that "frail and feverish being," which though forced on her by necessity, her pure heart felt it like a crime to dwell on in her hours of lonely reflection.

The preceding scene had touched her mild but acute perceptions deeply. "And here," she said to herself, "even here, where a number of persecuted beings are assembled

together to worship God,—even here dissension and discord are reigning; and those who are weak against the strong are making themselves weaker by division amongst themselves!”

She mused, then turning to that holy beam which glowed brightly on fragment and fissure, and tinted even the small crags and airy foliage with a silvery and visionary light, she murmured, “Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest!”—“Genevieve, Genevieve,” whispered a voice at this moment, low but audible. She listened, but perceived not from whence it came. The sound was repeated, and a figure like that she had first seen passed before the aperture, dimming the moonlight as it crossed its beams, and a voice again called on the name of Genevieve. She remembered the ghastly figure which had visibly crossed the entrance of the cavern that disastrous night, and she heard the voice again whisper, “Genevieve.” She listened

with a feeling that wandered between vision and reality; her imagination took part with her senses, enfeebled by famine and fatigue—she saw all objects falsely, and exaggerated as through a mist: she half believed it might be an intimation from no earthly voice, and gently laying the head of the pastor on her folded mantle, and rising with cramped and shivering limbs, she tried to gain the entrance of the cavern.

It was a venturous progress among those who slept, and whom she feared to awake, more than to disobey the impulse under which she advanced. Her gentle steps trod among men sunk in sullen but still watchful slumber, who murmured the war-word in their dreams, and who at the lightest sound that reached their sleeping senses would have started to arms or to prayer: she trod still more gently, her fairy foot scarce touching earth, when she approached where mothers lay with their infants—*them* she most feared to disturb. Her light step, her slender form,

her quiet solicitude, won her way for her unnoticed and unmolested ; she reached the entrance of the cavern, and a human figure covered with blood stood there to greet her. She shrunk back for a moment, then clasping her hands over her eyes, stood to listen with that deep habitual feeling of self-possession which early misfortune had taught her.

“ You know me not, then,” said the figure bathed in blood, “ you know me not.” It was the voice of Amand, the young Albigeois, who had always been deemed timid even to cowardice, who had never wielded a club, or joined the sorties of the young peasants in the course of his life before. Mild, indolent, and contemplative, he had attended with reverence the assemblies of the Albigeois, and listened with profound attention to the exhortations of the Barbes ; but neither the devout nor the warlike of the community seemed to consider him worthy of farther notice, than for the former to wonder that one so reverent and attentive had never aspired to give

“the word of exhortation,” and the latter to remark his increasing stature, and marvel that he never wielded “the sword of the Lord against the mighty:”—the men thought of him as nothing, and the women as worse than nothing. “And is it thus I see thee, and none but thee?”—“Thou wouldst, then, have seen other than me?” said Amand, with a peculiar expression; “yet for thy sake am I *thus*. I was deemed a coward—I have proved I am not: behold I am covered with blood!”

“I never thought—” said Genevieve, not knowing what to say; “but to see thee thus covered with blood is horrid to mine eyes: we have wandered, wept, and prayed together—and I know not how this new aspect of thine in war terrifies me. Was it thou I beheld to-night, as thou didst darkly seem to cross the entrance of the cavern?”—He was silent: “And why didst thou disappear on the instant?”

“I shrunk when I beheld thee, Genevieve: I had madly hoped to die in thy sight, but,

when I saw thee, the love of life stirred in me again."

"But why art thou here so late, and wherefore here at all?" said Genevieve. "Thy wounds need tending, and thou hast nought of hope or comfort to tell."—"If my wounds lack tendance, I ask thee not to be my leech," said Amand impatiently: "if I have nought of hope or comfort to tell, I have that to tell which is of import to thee—if I have breath to utter it. Thy beauty, Genevieve——"

"Mine!" exclaimed the startled girl, shrinking as from the charge of crime, "mine! and is this the moment thou hast chosen for topic so light and vain?"

"Farewell, farewell," said Amand, rushing from her; "thou art displeased with me; but I shall perish to-morrow, and let that be remembered as a palliation, if my words have offended thee this night."

"Nay stay, Amand, stay, I pray thee," said the trembling girl, "and tell me, I

charge thee by our common creed, if I have aught to dread, exceeding the trials my people are exposed to."

"Thou wishest then to hear of the fame of thy beauty, while thou affectest to shrink from its mention," said Amand, with an expression which was but too well suited to his harsh but marked and expressive features: "then hear. When we encountered with those children of the Anakim, for such they seemed in stature, force, and power—with the sons of Belial, for such they are, luxurious and loose—when they cut us down like the grass of the field, and trampled on us as the peasant treads on the weeds of his path—what was the war-cry of one?—'Saint Genevieve of the Albigeois!'—Oh, Genevieve, we have been children together—we have been nurtured in the same faith, and trod the mountain, and breathed the breeze, and sung and prayed, and smiled and wept together—oh, pledge me then thy faith, Genevieve, that (if it so should chance)

the fame and praise of thy fair beauty, the courtly talk of goodly and gallant knights, and, above all, the profane and flattering gallantry of him men call the Abbot of Normoutier, will not, will not, turn thine heart, or thy faith, or thy brain."

"Is thy brain turned," said the maiden, "that thou askest such question? What know I of thy knights and thine abbot? and which of those sons of pride would deign a glance to the peasant maiden?"

"Oh, Genevieve!" said the youth, with agonizing earnestness, "thou knowest not what thou sayest: they might not descend to persuade; but (his voice became not louder, but more intense and emphatic in its tones) thy youth, thy innocence, thy eloquence, heaven-taught, and uttered in tones that breathe of Heaven, would vainly plead against that enemy thou ever bearest about thee."

"Is it mine evil heart of unbelief?" said Genevieve. "What other enemy have I?"

“I speak of thy beauty,” said Amand: “that is thine enemy—thy sole, thy worst; for which of the daughters of men can vie with thee in beauty, and who would be a more acceptable prize and prey to the ruthless knights and licentious churchmen who call themselves Crusaders?”

The unhappy girl stood confounded at this intimation of a danger, to which her unconsciousness of or indifference to her own exterior, combined perhaps with the hourly exigencies of a life of peril and suffering, had hitherto rendered her insensible. She stood silent for some time; and then raising her eyes, fixed them on Amand with an expression of appeal the most piteous and piercing.

“Yes,” said her companion, answering her looks, “I came to shew thee at once thy danger and thy safety:—there is a retreat.—”

He was much agitated, and his voice became inarticulate.

“But wherefore,” said Genevieve, gazing timidly around her on scenery she beheld for

the first time—"wherefore hast thou led me so far from the cave?"

"It was lest we might disturb the sleepers," said Amand.

"I will go no farther," answered she: "speak what thou hast to tell here, or rather let me return to my retreat and hear it there."

"Thy father lies stretched near the entrance, and thou knowest the lightest whisper were enough to break his slumbers," replied Amand.

Genevieve paused, prepared to listen, but resolved not to advance; and he described in a confused manner a retreat among the hills that surrounded them, known only to himself, and tenanted by an Albigeois family, who lived in unmolested tranquillity, practising their worship unsuspected, amid solitudes unviolated by the cruelty, unknown even by the jealousy, of persecution. "And thither I will bear thee ere dawn," he continued, speaking rapidly; "and let priest, or peer, or

fiend in league with them, trace thee if he can."

There was something pictorial, hollow, and fallacious in the style of his description that had more than once struck Genevieve in the course of it, rapidly as it was delivered. She suppressed her doubt, however; but hastened to terminate their conference.

"Thine offer is vain," she said: "I accept of no retreat that does not also shelter my father;" and she turned towards the cavern.

"Thou shalt not choose!" said Amand, fiercely: "thinkest thou I came hither to talk? In the depths of the wild woods, in the caves of the mountains, in the clifts of the rocks, would I rather see thee stretched at my side and perishing with famine, than behold thee the paramour of a glorious Crusader. Amid the mountains thou wast born, and amid the mountains, please Heaven! thou shalt perish, though such is not thy wish." As he spake, he had raised her in his arms and carried her to some distance.

Genevieve struggled gently for a time, scarce believing such violence was intended her; at length she made her strongest effort, and attempted, but vainly, to extricate herself.

“Why didst thou not suffer me to depart?” cried Amand, overcoming her struggles: “why didst thou not suffer me to flee, when I would have done so? My conscience smote me—I fled; but thy voice recalled me, and thou must abide the result of thine own wild will.”

Genevieve struggled more vehemently, and with increased terror; but her strength was no match for that of Amand, who, though timid and feeble, displayed on this occasion a force with which female strength contended in vain. He had borne her up a rocky steep, and, scarce drawing breath, was preparing to ascend another, when from behind a projecting angle of the rocky path two men suddenly started forth, part of their armed figures gleaming in the setting

moonlight, and part shrouded by their dark houplands. Without speaking a word, they struck Amand to the earth; and then seizing on Genevieve, they enfolded her in one of their long dark cloaks, and attempted to stifle her cries by drawing it closely round her while they bore her on between them. There was no need for the attempt—her terror suppressed all outcry; and it was not till they had borne her to some distance, that she collected the feeble force of her suppressed voice to implore for mercy. “Mercy!” said one of the captors; “what mercy deservest thou, who canst not pay a liard for thy ransom, and has cost us more toil than if we were to bear a nun from a cloister?” —“Befall what may,” said the other, “she will be no unacceptable prize to one of the Crusaders who are feasting at the Castle of Courtenaye.”

At these words Genevieve uttered a shriek so loudly that her companions, without mercy or hesitation, threatened to stifle

it by the most ruthless means if she dared to utter it again.

The cry, however, had reached other ears. As Genevieve was hurried on, half-stifled, half-dead with terror, she heard distinctly a voice (though its feminine tones seemed to give but little hope of defence) exclaim, "Hold, caitiffs! miscreants! whither are ye bearing that burthen between ye?"—"It is a corse we are bearing to be interred, the due rites being first said over it by the Abbot of Normoutier," quoth one of the bearers.—"It is a prede taken from the heretics, which we want the blessing of some holy man to consecrate to the use of Holy Church," said the other: and as they spoke both in the same breath, and in the same moment, the stranger, whoever he was, had no hesitation in believing both accounts false.

"Mercy! for the love of Heaven," exclaimed Genevieve, in a struggling and stifled voice, which, faint as it was, seemed to thrill

through the ears of her champion by the answer he made on the instant. "Is it a corse ye bear? set it down on the spot, or, by Mary's might, that abbot ye name will have to sing a mass over *your* hilding corses, instead of that ye pretend to bear."

The men returned no answer; but the next moment Genevieve (whom her captors had flung on the ground) heard blows dealt about so heavily and heartily, that she scarce could believe they were bestowed by an arm that appertained to one whose voice was so soft and feminine. Those blows, so lustily dealt, decided the point in less than two minutes; but ere those had elapsed, Genevieve, though stunned by the shock and fall, had disentangled herself from the folds of the houpland, and tried to gaze around; and by the light of the stars (more vivid than moonlight in other regions,) she beheld the slender figure of a youth contending, and not in vain, with two muscular ruffians. He was armed, and his antagonists soon betook them-

selves to flight, exclaiming it was sooth that the devil always helped his friends, nor could they hope better meed for dealing with a heretic Albigeoise.

Genevieve rose from the earth, on which she had sunk in gratitude, and stood before her young preserver without the power of speech. He had, indeed, saved her from the outrage of ruffians ; but she knew the habits of that lawless age too well to deem her dangerless in the hands of a youthful knight, generous and valiant as he had proved himself in her cause. Through her instinctive sense of her danger, quickened by the hints of Amand, as well as by her late peril, she folded her mantle about her, so as to shroud both her face and person, and stood trembling in irresolute and ungracious silence.

Her champion seemed as embarrassed as herself ; he was fatigued by the struggle, and he mused how he might address a shape so silent, and apparently unconscious of the service he had just rendered her.

“Is it indeed a corse that I have rescued?” said he, at length approaching her; and his young and gentle tones inspiring her with confidence, she ventured to answer, “It is one who would ere this have wished she were a corse, were it not for thy valour, sir knight.”

“Fair saint,” said the youth, addressing her in the strain of the age---“fair saint, draw the curtain of thy shrine, that I may see and worship.”

“Your devotion, sir knight, would be ill bestowed,” said Genevieve, timidly.

“By the favour of our Lady, I have saved thee from some danger,” said the youth; “and may I not be guerdoned by a glimpse of thy fair form, a glance of thine eye, a touch of thine hand, or perchance of thy red lip, in requital?”

Genevieve felt her danger equal at least to her obligation; but she took her resolution in a moment.

“Yes, with all, sir knight,” she answered,

unfolding her mantle ; “ and with more than all—for here are not only eye, and hand, and lip ; but fame and honour, body’s safety, and soul’s price, entrusted to thee. I am a peasant maiden, an Albigeoise : the child of those against whom thy faith and thine arms are pointed alike ; for well I guess thou art a Crusader. I am in thy power ; but feel, therefore, that as thou art noble, I am safe.”

There was a trembling majesty in her form and accents as she spake, an appeal without power, a fear that commanded, that made her young preserver feel all that can melt and agitate a youthful heart, whose chords for the first time vibrate to the delicious touch of a claim for pity and protection. Yet ; comparing her voice and manner with the purport of her words, the young Crusader could scarce conquer his incredulity. “ And is this the daughter of an heretic and peasant ? ” he said ; “ yet her tones have no smatch of her birth, nor do her reasons lack

aught of what clear and noble spirits might utter in hap like hers:---Damsel," he added, "thou art safe with me; he who perilled life for thy safety would not lightly endanger that which thou nobly valuest more than life, and which he who has saved it prizes above his own." And this was spoken with the eloquent blush and earnest grace of truth; so that Genevieve, sinking with fatigue and agitated feelings, no longer declined the support of the arm which he tendered with as high courtesy as ever he had to titled beauty. "Thou art trembling, damsel," said Amirald, with anxious gentleness.—"I tremble, but my fears are not for myself," answered the maiden.—"Thou art near one of the wretched retreats of my persecuted people, and should they find thee here——" "Would they not be grateful for thy safety at least?" said the knight.—"I cannot answer for their gratitude; but I can well answer for thy danger," said the maiden.—"Leave me, I pray thee: thy noble life is perilled while thou tarryest;

leave me to wander back alone." "Not at the peril of a thousand lives, were they mine," cried Amiral, as he marked the faltering step and sinking voice of Genevieve; and lifting her on his steed, he led her gently on in the direction her parting steps had indicated.

In the effort, the wounds, till then unfelt, that he had received in his conflict with the ruffians, burst forth, and the blood gushed through his armour.

"I will perish, I will perish on this spot," cried Genevieve, "or I will wander back as I may, ere I witness such a sight again. Oh that I might," she cried, the habitual reverence for rank overcoming her other feelings, as one whose community was at war with the established state of society—"Oh that I might with mine own hands heal those wounds, and wash them with my tears, and tend them by the hour, while stooping frame and bended knee, care and prayer, watched over the work. Oh that I

were but worthy to be thy handmaid, noble knight !”

Touched more deeply by the mellow and melting tenderness of the peasant maiden’s voice, than by his own sense of actual pain, the young knight once more attempted to raise her in his arms. Genevieve resisted, but in vain, and was at length compelled to submit to accept his assistance. While Amiral sustained her slender weight, and while she endured to be so sustained, each murmured to themselves—Amiral perhaps audibly, “ Is there, then, such noble and gentle affection in an Albigeoise, such lofty thought, combined with language so gentle?”—and Genevieve internally, “ and is there such honour in a Crusader, that he risks life for the safety of a despised daughter of my people ?”

They had not advanced far, when a certain whistle was heard, accompanied by watch-words, or rather signals, to which the ears of Genevieve were well accustomed. “ Depart,” cried Genevieve eagerly; “ I hear

the feet of my people approaching—they are, perchance, in quest of me.”—“I will depart,” said Amirald, bending his proud knee to the earth, while he kissed the hand of his lovely burthen. “I will depart, maiden, though I know not where this night to couch my head; but rather would I deal with a host of ruffians like those who seized thee, than touch a hair of the head of thy people who seek thee and who love thee. Maiden, under no Crusader’s corslet beats an heart so full of pity towards an heretic as mine to thee. Oh that thou wert a daughter of the true Church! what then would be lacking to thy glorious qualities and gentle haviour?” He parted:—“Oh,” cried Genevieve, “that thou wert an Albigeois—*but for their bonds!*”

The restless agony of Pierre, who had felt his daughter’s absence on awaking from his broken slumber, had caused some of them to set forth at whatever risk in pursuit of her. By them she was found, and the joy of meeting forbade all enquiry with regard to her

short absence; or, perhaps, the habits of the Albigeois, accustomed to strong vicissitudes, anticipated all enquiries by the consciousness that another might occur before the cause of the preceding one could be explained.

CHAPTER II.

Here Presbytery with Episcopacy
Holds such a fight it would amaze you,
Here free-will holds a fierce dispute
With reprobation absolute.

ANONYMOUS.

THE Crusaders hourly now expected the return of the Monk of Montcalm with the answer of the Albigeois, and the bishop proudly anticipated another triumph of that eloquence which had hitherto been deemed irresistible;—already he saw in perspective the reputation of St. Dominic himself, the first preacher and inquisitor, shrinking into insignificance, and the memory of the ill-fated Chateauneuf compromised in the glory of that powerful appeal that was to convert the Albigeois to the Catholic creed, and place a new gem in his expected tiara.

It was certainly a rare and perilous policy on the part of the Church of Rome, to *commit* men who, however individually powerful in intellect, and possessed of all the learning of that age, relied for the effect of their sermons rather on *prescription*, than on the interest of novelty, the cogency of argument, or, perhaps, the omnipotence of truth—with men who drew their credentials from Scripture, and urged them with an energy, feeling, and conviction, “as having authority.” The preachers of the former class (now for the first time urged to exertion in that important department) seemed to offer to their thirsty hearers stunted draughts from a medicated cup; the latter pointed with the air and voice of inspiration to the “*integros fontes* :” they shouted aloud, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.”

Such, however, had been the mode adopted (and perhaps no better presented itself then) on the first disastrous mission of Pierre de Chateauneuf, partly from the pride of power,

which would not be outdone in the novel mode of competition adopted by the antagonist, and partly from the consciousness of superior intellectual attainment (then conceived to be the exclusive property of the ecclesiastics, though in truth it was but thinly and inadequately diffused among their vast body).

But the Church of Rome, then in the plenitude of her power, could not, or would not, admit the conviction, that the supremacy of her establishment rooted, even at that remote period, for ages, and supported, aided, and embellished by all that was then powerful in human eloquence, profound in human learning, exciting in human interests, and touching in human passions, could fail before the preaching of a few illiterate peasants, who drew their theology from a forbidden book, and their inspiration from Nature and from heaven; that the glorious galley—the “gallant ship,” which had weathered a thousand storms and assaults, was

to strike sail to a carvel, when she was now safe and proud in harbour.

The experiment, however, had failed, and the missionary Chateauneuf had been the victim. But the court of Rome had at present another object :—the grasping ambition of the Bishop of Toulouse, whose heart, eye, and almost hand were already on the tiara, had not escaped their notice. His intrigues with the various sovereigns of Europe they had been apprised of, by the emissaries they employed at their courts; moreover, his correspondence with the Emperor of Germany, and the Kings of Arragon and England, had been intercepted, and though the cypher in which they were written baffled all the ingenuity of the Vatican, with that of its most expert secretaries, still his peculiar hand was recognized; and the circumstance of such a correspondence existing was enough to awaken suspicions and apprehensions still more formidable. Finally, his putting himself at the head of the Crusaders, next to

Count Simon de Montfort, seemed, in fact, to be putting himself in place of the Pope himself in France, while the *well-good* understanding, as it was termed in the language of that age, between him and the boisterous and brutal De Montfort, was considered as a kind of sinister omen, and strengthened the supposition that he might avail himself of his influence over his rude coadjutor to win his own secret way, and work his own powerful will.

It was, therefore, at this juncture that the court of Rome availed itself of its usual temporizing policy, and through the legate, who stood responsible for all measures, employed as its commissioned mediator the Monk of Montcalm, whose well-accredited sanctity of character and purity of life stood between the rotten politics of the Vatican, and the vigorous and vital spirit that animated the community of the Albigeois—like the priest of old between the living and the dead—to negotiate between the contending parties. To the infinite dis-

appointment of the Pope and the conclave, they found they had selected a man the last on earth to be trusted with such a mission. They thought they had secured every point; the known sanctity of his character rendered him a most respectable agent; the humility of his station, and his spiritual-mindedness made him also an unsuspected object to the Bishop of Toulouse, who knew as well as any cardinal in the conclave, that the Monk of Montcalm would not resign his hermitage for the tiara. Thus they imagined that they had provided a powerful antagonist (for the sanctity of the poor monk far outweighed the dignity of the prelate, even in the estimation of the most worldly,) under the guise of one apparently the most feeble and inefficient; and that all their procrastinating policy (meant chiefly to diminish the power and mortify the ambition of the Bishop of Toulouse) might be laid safely on the shoulders of the legate, who, supporting his assumed and constrained part, affected a profound reverence for the sanctified

character and inspired counsels of the Monk of Montcalm.

Thus the whole politics of the ecclesiastical world, (and politics were at that period almost exclusively confined to ecclesiastics,) like an inverted cone, rested on a point, a diminutive and almost invisible part of the mighty mass it sustained; but the wisdom of the Vatican was here completely outreached, even by the very simplicity of the instrument it deigned to employ.

The man whom they justly deemed humble, abstracted, and unearthly, was, nevertheless, one who went head and heart straight forward to the truth and the right of whatever cause he was engaged in. Had they employed the most profound diplomatist of the age, who was sworn in secret to confound or counteract their counsels, they could not have fared worse than they did from the instrument employed. An honest upright man is the worst implement that ever designing and corrupt hands meddled with, to work their foul and secret purpose.

The Monk of Montcalm was a strict and conscientious Catholic, but he had a Christian feeling for the sufferings of the Albigeois; and “innocent of the knowledge” that he was played off as a *pis aller* in the desperate game that was fighting between the Vatican and the Bishop of Toulouse, he travelled from Rome to the Castle of Courtenaye, and from thence to the neighbouring retreat of the Albigeois, from which, as we have related, he was now returning; grieved alike by the pride of one party and the obstinacy of the other, but rejoiced that he had at least effected one peaceful meeting between them. Thus, his integrity of purpose, benevolence of heart, and true heavenly-mindedness, (which was all counted by the Vatican as weakness that would perplex and protract the negotiation *ad libitum Papæ*,) instead of having the effect they had hoped from his imputed ignorance and diplomatic inefficiency, produced exactly the contrary effect of making the adverse parties under-

stand the terms on which they stood; and of effecting, by indefatigable activity and immaculate veracity, the arrangement of a meeting between the Crusaders and the Albigensis—a meeting within a few hours, which the council at Rome hoped might have been delayed for as many months.—And thus the Monk of Montcalm proved all unconsciously the triumph of plain strong sense, profound religious feeling, and fervent intense philanthropy, over all the complicated counsels, jarring interests, and fiercely opposed passions of Rome and of those she employed, and dreaded and distrusted most when she found their agency most necessary.

The Monk of Montcalm was expected to return on the day after the combat, (the storm of the preceding evening having, probably, delayed his arrival then), for, though advanced in years, he was known to perform his journeys with the punctuality of a foot-post. All that day a cloud hung over the Castle of Courtenaye. The storm

of the preceding night had passed away, but dark vapours still rested on the hills, thick drops of rain beat heavily against the casement, and blasts came roaring down the wide chimney, driving forth the blaze of the wood-fire before it, that shrunk and failed again as it retired. The fierce excitement of the age knew no graduated intervals of quiet and useful occupation, between the extremes of gloomy sloth or perilous extremity. The guests were, therefore, ill-prepared for a day of dull and in-door tranquillity. To add to its dulness, the lady Isabelle (perhaps to shun the sight of De Montfort) was engaged in the devotions she had promised to her patron-saint, if her champion was successful in the lists. During the day the knights and nobles stalked through the vast hall, yawned heavily, played a game at draughts drowsily, glanced at the high windows, which, though they admitted light, excluded all prospect, and, internally cursing the slow and doubtful counsels of the Vatican, made vows for the

speedy return of the Monk of Montcalm. Verac and Semonville, who were the only individuals in the Castle acquainted with the midnight visit of the others to the vault, assumed faces of importance vainly hiding irrepressible curiosity. They winked, nodded, and looked mysteriously at each other; but their curiosity was doomed to be both insatiable and unsated. They threw themselves eagerly in the way of those who, the preceding night, obeyed the summons of the Lord of Courtenaye, or rather their own wild will and dark feelings, and whispered enquiries with all the secrecy of anticipated confidence, but they could only obtain from Sir Paladour a brief, obscure, and agitated, reply. The rest were totally silent. No mode of questioning or hinting, direct or indirect, no circuitous approaches of Verac, or barefaced questions of Semonville, could extort more. The enquirers stood abashed, repelled, and defeated.

The Bishop of Toulouse (whom neither

dare accost) was playing chess with the Count de Montfort, and dictating between the moves to his Latin secretary, who was seated at a small table beside him, a letter to the Pope, (the contents of which he had no fear of his antagonist, or, indeed, any other in the hall understanding.)

Towards noon or somewhat later, as they were about to spread for dinner, the bishop in the same breath cried "Checkmate," though De Montfort was reckoned the most skilful player of the age, dictated a few final lines in Latin to the secretary, concluded the letter with an hieroglyphic, written with his own hand, sealed it with his own proper signet, ordered the messenger, who received it on his knees, to ride for life, and rose to watch for the Monk of Montcalm, whose speed was delayed, as we have said, alike by his persisting to travel on foot, and by the storm of the preceding day. It was on the close of this weary day, that the monk, indeed, arrived at the Castle of

Courtenaye. He bore tidings that the heretics were grateful for the legate's message, and accepted the offer of meeting the Crusaders and hearing the bishop's exhortation, provided the party came unarmed. "Alas!" said the holy man, "Beziers and Carcassonne are still fresh in their memories."—"And so is the martyr Chateauneuf in ours," said the bishop. The tables were now spreading for the feast, and the Crusaders, collecting round them, anticipated joyously the three great epochs of chivalric life—a feast, a procession, and preaching (a novelty then to Catholics)—and perchance, highly as they deemed of the eloquence of the Bishop of Toulouse—a battle after all.

During the tumult of the hall, the monk was about to retire, when the bishop stayed him, after murmuring to himself, "Had I had emissaries among these heretics—had I sounded their *shoals*, for they have no *depths*, I should ere this—but no matter—I will ere long. There be men among them that may

be tempted, there be women that may be melted. I will have those about me who will watch the bait most likely to catch, or the net best twined to entangle;—no, I will watch myself: some bright eye, some commanding feature, some towering stature among their women—that will be rare among peasants—that will not do;—then, some keen visage, eager face, loud tones, and prompt ambition of an unnoted spirit; yea, that were better to deal with. Your peasantry ever abound in those when their wits are whetted on the touchstone of Scripture, as they call it; and their usurped authority giveth them a kind of right of railing against the power they would be fain to share. If I should meet but two such—a woman fair and ambitious, a man sensual, avaricious, or gluttonous, a slave to those appetites they boast of subduing—then were the game as surely in my hand as if I were to encounter my lord De Montfort again at chess. Bishops, castles, and knights, were

vain against me—I would checkmate with my pawns; but we must hold question with this Monk of Montcalm.”

The crowd gave way as the bishop advanced; and it was a striking sight to mark the meeting between the magnificent prelate and the humble monk, who seemed like the embodied representatives of this world and the future.

The pale ascetic moved timidly and slowly amid the splendid and tumultuous group of the Crusaders, (whose demeanour still breathed of war, though they wore the dress of peace,) like an humble fishing-bark amid a fleet of proud and gilded galleys, tacking every moment, as if dreading to be sunk by their movements, or crushed between their sides. Yet such, even in that rude age, was the impression made by sanctity of manners, integrity of purpose, and benevolence of heart, that many a lofty head was bent to sue for his benediction; and many a proud breast, enfolded in silk and silver, panted for the peace

that was enshrined in a heart covered only by the sorry weeds of an eremite.

When the Monk of Montcalm came in presence of the bishop, where he stood in the splendour of his episcopal vestments, surrounded by attendants, and indeed with an air that would have given grandeur to the humblest state, he bowed low as to superior station, but with undazzled eye, and meekly craved his blessing.

“ Holy monk, we rather ask your’s,” said the bishop, who never failed on due occasion to give his dignity the grace of condescension.

The eremite stretched forth his withered hand as the bishop bowed his mitred front ; and then the conference was about to commence. At the first sentence, “ *Dic Latine, quæso, frater reverendissime,*” said the bishop. “ *Nequeo, episcope sanctissime,*” answered the monk with some diffidence. “ *Absunt mihi et facundia et facilitas.*” The bishop gave a signal to his attendants, who retired to a respectful distance.

The conference lasted but for a few moments, for what had the speakers in common? The monk told all he knew—the bishop learned all he wished; and the former, whose dim sight was aching with the splendour of lights and gorgeous pageantry, craved permission to withdraw to his shed in the base-court of the Castle, conformably to his vow, never to sleep but under the roof of monastic walls or of his own lonely tenement.

The bishop looked after him for a space, and then triumphantly murmured, (for his greatest triumphs were always internal) — “ So, Rome hath enmeshed herself again in her own web; be it so. And so they thought that this poor ascetic would so perplex and obscure their matters with the heretics, that they might dally and delay at their list, and play King against Champion of the Church, and the Champion against the Bishop of Toulouse, as it suited their cold and temporizing policy; and now they are quitted as they deserve. This dolt-

headed monk hath gone straight-forward in the path of his office; the controversy is adjusted in a twinkling; and I, whom they dread (yes, I know they dread me," said the prelate, muttering still lower, and compressing his lips to conceal a proud involuntary smile,) "am, by their bungling politics, the accredited mediator between two parties, of whom it were hard to say which hates me deadliest. By Heaven! had they intrusted their cause to me, I could have protracted it for twenty years, save that it were too long to wait for the tiara. I would have fought battles with them; and were they lost, I would have recourse to treaties; and if *they* were broken, I would have fought battles again. No matter: they have wrought their own decay. To-morrow I must speak with these heretics, and let their mountain-echoes look to it; for though I envy not the martyrdom of that Chateaufneuf, I will not leave a rock that shall not thunder back eloquence louder and more potent than ever

he uttered, and force these heretics that love the mountains to call on them to cover them, but to escape from its sound.”

“ My lord museth,” said one of the attendants, who, like the rest, was standing at a distance.

The sound instantly struck the bishop's ear, whose senses were remarkably acute ; and as the Lord of Courtenaye approached with courteous speech to invite him to the banquet, which was now spread, he answered with the collected air of one on whom important business presses :—“ My lord, you know that to-morrow it is the Holy Father's will we encounter these heretics, not with weapons, but with words. I have need of many orisons to-night, to pray the Saints to enable me to sustain the burthen the will of our Holy Father hath imposed on these poor shoulders. I crave an interest in your prayers, my good lord, though a layman's—and bid you a fair good rest this night.”

“ A fair good rest, my holy lord,” an-

swered De Courtenaye, mechanically repeating the words, and bowing low to the bishop as he quitted the hall; then turning towards the tables, he muttered, "Proud, dark, and daring hypocrite, *thou* talk of orisons! such rest be to thee as thou wishest me in thy secret heart! Thy dreams will be of that vision displayed to thee in the vault last night; thy pride conceals it, but thy heart believes; and mine must be—no matter what! The feast is spread—the fools are smiling—and I—Oh God—must smile too!"

"So please you, my lord—" said the seneschal, approaching.

"I know what thou wouldst say. I am coming. May not a man smile in his own hall, but thou must watch his mirth? I will break thy wand over thy pate if thou marrest my mirth thus again!—Sit, noble guests! and now, lord abbot, pledge me in this cup of muscadine, and tell me how thou thinkest these heretics will meet the reasons of my lord of Toulouse to-morrow."

The abbot answered the pledge duly. But his thoughts on the event of the following day we are unable to record, save that report says they were somewhat inarticulate, and altogether unintelligible.

CHAPTER III.

Pollio must sure to penitence excite,
 For see his band how smooth, his gown how bright ;

 Proud of the periods levell'd against pride.

DODSLEY'S COLLECTION.

THE next morning, at the close of the month of September 1216, at an early hour, the cavalcade set out from the Castle of Courtenaye. The lord of the castle had taken care that his own appointment should be sufficiently gorgeous; and to increase its splendour, he required that the lady Isabelle, with her female attendants, should accompany him,—a request with which she complied the more readily, as knowing that every female of rank in the vicinity proposed to join in the procession. The Bishop of Toulouse, his embroidered vestments resplen-

dent with gold and gems arranged so as to represent the cross-keys, the insignia of his rank; his noble steed almost hid beneath his gorgeous caparisons, but evincing by his impatient prancings and curvettings a spirit that the rider gracefully and majestically restrained—his cross-bearer and other attendants, habited as splendidly and imposingly as their profession and station allowed, surrounding or following; the magnificent standard of the Crusaders, blazing aloof in the morning-sun like the banner of a king, waving before him:—the bishop, I say, rode in the van, “in shape and gesture proudly eminent,” and seeming indeed fit to lead the van of an army of kings.

The Abbot of Normoutier, with scarce less pomp, but far less dignity, followed in the rear. Next in this magnificent march came the horse-litters of the Lord of Courtenaye, the lady Isabelle with her attendants, and a train of noble females, whom devotion, curiosity, or the wish to display their sumptuous habits and furniture, had collected on that

day. Around them rode nobles and knights, their armour exchanged for weeds of peace, and their squires and attendants bearing their pensiles and bannerols as the indication of rank, not the announcement of hostility.

The litter in which the lady Isabelle rode was as gorgeous as that which Margaret of Valois described with such ostentatious accuracy more than three centuries afterwards. The cushions were of velvet embroidered; flourishings in gold, and curious paintings of the sufferings of Saints, diversified its carved and gilded pannels; and the Lord of Courtenaye, looking back from his seat, saw with delighted vanity the arms of the house of Courtenaye blazoned on every small flag that rose from the corners of the litter, like the pinnacles of a church-battlement, or the minarets of an Oriental mosque; for the morning, though in autumn, was so calm, that every decorative pendant stood as still, and gleamed as fair, as if a breeze were never to stir its folds again. Around this and other splendid litters, the

Crusaders and attendant peers and knights of France made, as they rode, their proud steeds caracole, sometimes throwing them almost on their haunches, to shew how skilfully and difficultly the rider kept his seat; and oftener, as they rode close by the litters kissing their ungloved hands, causing them to make certain capricio's, which drew first a faint shriek and then a smile from the fair spectators; nor did such action fail to display to full advantage the mantles of cloth of gold, the chains set with gems, the barrets sparkling with jewels and bending under the weight of plumage, now disclosed and now concealed by the banners waved over them by the squires and men-at-arms.

Amid the cavalcade rode Sir Paladour, without squire, banner-man, or attendant, distinguished only by a form that ranked him among the first and fairest of the sons of men, the report of former valour well-accredited by the recent glory of that combat in which he had encountered the giant-

champion of the Church, and rescued the noblest heiress in France from thralldom of person, will, and wealth. Formed in that perfect mould which antiquity chose for that of her gods, yet with that exquisite symmetry, alike obvious in the robe of silk or the elastic coat of mail, Sir Paladour rode near the litter of the lady Isabelle; and not all the flutter of emblazoned banners, the gorgeous array of attendants, ecclesiastical, civil, or martial, the long parade of caparisoned steeds and sumptuous litters, nor the glow and glitter of their proud riders, could prevent the lady from often waving her white hand from her litter to Sir Paladour,—nor him, though many heads bowed at the signal, from understanding to whom that mark of distinction was addressed. But his proud steed felt the impulse that the rider scarce dared own; for at once he felt the spur and the rein, and his fiercest bounds at the unwonted manege were scarce so high and wild as the throbbings of Paladour's heart.

The place of meeting fixed on was a vast plain surrounded by hills, in the neighbourhood of the Castle, and in the territories of Courtenaye. The eminences that enclosed this plain were covered with spectators, many hours previous to the arrival of the slow-travelling cavalcade of the Crusaders: hundreds, and even thousands, had risen at midnight to be in time for the spectacle, and before dawn their dimly-defined forms were seen moving in shadowy masses, like mist on the hill-tops which commanded the plain. They were arranged, in spite of their immense and increasing multitudes, in amply-accommodated rows, and were "at large though without number," till, as the sun arose, it seemed as if one vast sheet of human vegetation covered the hills with a kind of spontaneous efflorescence. There they sat, still and patient, forming to themselves magnificent ideas of the spectacle they were to witness; and a few hours after dawn their most ambitious anticipations were realized,

as the van of the long procession of the Crusaders appeared, gleaming in gold on the summit of a richly-wooded hill, like the sun rising in his glory.

The plain on which the parties were to meet seemed, indeed, like an apt and ample theatre for the splendid and eventful drama that was to be acted on it: it was almost square, and bounded on two of its sides by rocks of dark granite, hewed by the hand of Nature into a resemblance of terraces, and crowded to their very pinnacles by thousands who "sent their souls into their eyes."

The remaining sides were as opposite in their character and scenery as in their position. The march of the Crusaders wound by an easy path down hills, feathered from their base to their summit with the larch, the pine, and the picturesque ash-tree, with its hoary trunk and leaves of the lightest green; and on the rich sward that clothed its declivities, flowers were glowing and scents were breathing, and all that is grand

and lovely in Nature was effusing its bounty and its beauty. As the pageant first rose on the summit of the hill, the voices of thousands of spectators pealing in thunder from the rocks on which their dark and crowded masses rested, (like the clouds from whence the thunder issues) sent forth a shout of mingled triumph on their appearance and approbation of their cause; and its echoes continued to roll round the hills long after the lips of the acclaimers were closed, as if the spirits of the mountains had caught up the sound, and swelled and prolonged it with the powers of more than mortal intonation.

And now between the trees, with their dark trunks and leaves of vivid green slightly discoloured by the tints of autumn, the proud array of the Crusaders came glancing nearer; and every moment were more distinctly seen the gleams of glittering mantles, of steeds caparisoned in embroidery, of floating plumage and gemmed banners, and they gorgeously emblazoned with all the rich and fantastic pro-

fusion of heraldic devices; the group now emerging from the greenwood shade, now concealed by a thick cluster of ancient trees, now gleaming gaily out on a spot of green-sward, and now at length pouring the full glory of their march in all the splendour of broad sun-light on the open plain, whose surrounding scenery with all its magnificence of Nature, seemed but an appendage to the dignity who were born to be her lords.

As the great standard floated into the valley, the multitudes, that covered the hills, made the holy sign with the solemn ardour of rapturous devotion. The Bishop of Toulouse caught the signal, and made a sign to the ecclesiastical attendants to raise in chorus the psalm "Quare fremuerunt gentes?" The melody, or chaunt, adapted to these words was so simple and monotonous, that it was easily caught and repeated by those to whose ears it was wafted, and thousands on thousands of voices, above, below, and around, in ascending circles thundered "Quare

fremuerent gentes?" till the very mountains seemed vocal from base to summit; and Nature and the elements appeared inspired and voiceful in the spontaneous eloquence of musical devotion.

Right opposite to the richly-clothed and verdurous hill from which the Crusaders had descended, rose a naked rock, bare, save that here and there it was dotted with a few firs, the sterility of the soil denying any other produce even under the sunny skies of Languedoc. There was no path down its rude sides; the passenger had to make his perilous way from crag to crag, slowly and ungracefully. Nothing in inanimate nature was ever more dreary, comfortless, and unlovely; and nothing in animated nature seemed better suited to the cheerless scene, than the group of the Albigeois, who, clad in the grey woollen garments worn by the peasantry (and some of them in sheep-skins), slowly and painfully wound their way down the dangerous declivities of the hill. The group

consisted of the delegates of the Albigois, and was chiefly composed of their preachers, Mattathias and the chief of their military leaders having been disabled in their late conflict. Pierre the pastor was in their van; and from long habit and fond associations believing himself unable to walk without the aid of his grand-daughter, he was supported by Genevieve. This sole appearance of an humble female, consecrated by duty and sustained by motive alone, heightened instead of destroying the delicacy among so many persons of the other sex;† though of her own community, and silently enhanced the respect it claimed.

As the party advanced into the plain, singing the psalm “*In exitu Israel,*” there was no applause, no echoed thunders of the mountains: violence was indeed forbidden, but disdain and hatred were strongly expressed in the profound silence that attended their progress; and the feeble and ill-modulated strain, supported by tuneless tenors and hoarse bases, contrasted with the choral magnificence

of the Crusaders' hymn, to which the very air bore burthen, struck the ear as powerfully as their appearance did the eye; their squalid garments, coarse visages, and uncouth procession, stood in helpless opposition to all that Nature could boast of loveliness, or earth could display of magnificence.

The combat seemed fought and lost already in the eyes of the spectators: it was singular, too, though accidental, that the sun had been pouring the full brightness of his morning-rays (in a glorious September morn) on the path by which the Crusaders had descended, while the bleak and sterile rock down which the Albigeois wound their painful way threw its shadow far and deep westward, darkening their progress as they went, so that their feet seemed literally to "stumble on the dark mountains," and Nature herself to give evil omen, and take up "a taunting proverb against them."

Undismayed (or at least appearing so), the humble party descended into the valley; but

not the coarse hood and thick folds of the woollen mantle which Genevieve drew closely round her, could conceal a form that united the spiritualized graces of a Madonna with the physical perfection of a classic statue.

Her eyes were cast down, but there was a light from beneath their veined lids; her step was slow and her head dejected; but there was a natural majesty, an air of more than mortal purity and calmness diffused about her, as if, in the language of the poet, Nature had said of her, "she shall be a lady of my own."

The Albigeois had descended to the plain, but stood at a respectful distance from the band of the Crusaders, feudal feelings still operating strongly on their associations: they felt it like a crime to approach the presence of "the earth's high lords" till summoned. During the interval the Bishop of Toulouse prepared to celebrate mass under the superb shade of a silken pavilion. There was no lack of implements for that imposing cere-

mony; vases, tapers, flowers, incense, bowing acolytes, and all the ritual pomp which attends its celebration under the "high embowed" roof of a cathedral. The Albigeois, while what they termed the abomination of the mass was going on, stiffly averted their heads, and prayed earnestly, but internally, so as not to disturb the ceremony, to be delivered from the snare thereof, adding, "Surely in vain is the snare spread in the sight of any bird."

The ceremony over, the Bishop of Toulouse prepared to address the heretics. The bishop was deemed the ablest controversialist of the age; and so perhaps he might be—for it is a curious and undoubted fact, that infidels always make the best controversialists.

The zeal of a believer may carry him too far, or his humility may withhold him too much; but the infidel has neither zeal to mislead, nor humility to check him: no language can shock, no objections alarm him. The appalling terms in which doubts and ob-

jections are clothed, compel the believer to stop his ears, instead of answering them---he shuts out the cries of violated religion, instead of flying to her rescue. The curiosity that first tempted the infidel to enquire and to doubt, conducts him fearlessly on; while the believer pauses from reverence, and dares not follow his antagonist to the perilous spot to which he challenges him.

In a word, the believer walks the dark and intricate maze of controversy like a rich, and, therefore, a jealous and timid passenger: the infidel ranges about like a needy assassin; he may gain something; pride at least, by success, and he has certainly nothing to lose. The bishop had this advantage (if it can be reckoned one), and moreover the bishop possessed eloquence to delude, learning to confound, genius to dazzle, and dignity to awe, the proudest assembly of his day. In his discourse, or rather his address, to the Albigeois, he had tact enough to discover that with these children of the moun-

tain and the mist, beings whose lives were passed amid the fiercest conflicts of the elements of Nature, and the struggles of human passion, with which the former have, perhaps, an undefined, and as yet unanalysed alliance; beings, who lived for many months of their comfortless year on ice-clad summits, or in snow-heaped valleys, plunging amid precipices of frozen snow to save their sheep, and returning on their chilly path to hear the word of exhortation or of prayer from a half-clad pastor in a hovel, that tottered with the storm, or more frequently without even that frail shelter, amid the acclivities of rocks, the roar of many waters, and the thunders of heaven:—that with such, it was expedient to adopt other than the usual tone of controversy in that fierce and stormy age; he made, therefore, ample allowance in his address for these physical contingencies. He knew and felt that men so brought up, were likely to be rigid in their notions, and tenacious of their creeds, that the sternness of their physical

existence extended itself to their moral ; that such persons are almost invincible by argument—for the spleen they feel against Nature evaporates in revilements against those who have obtained the means to soften her dispensations. The rigour of their faith is truly a reflection of the rigour of their destiny ; and liberty (whether political or religious, the most rigid of all things) has always been the offspring of mountains and storms, and life uncivilized and unhappy—of beings exasperated by want, fierce from constraint, declaiming against luxury till they enjoyed it, struggling against power till they obtained it, and impatient of authority or domination, till they could exercise it on those who had inflicted it on them.

“Such hath been the origin of all revolutions,” thought the Bishop of Toulouse : “the aggrieved poor retort on the tyrannical rich ; they become aggressors in their turn, and repay with heavy interest their debt of wrong and injury ; but this—this matter hinging on words merely, may be checked

by words, in which I am not to seek; and then I may direct this torrent that threatens to overwhelm us into a safe and quiet channel, yea, turn it into a golden stream whose waves shall pay tribute to the treasury of the Vatican.”

Thus thought the bishop during mass, and the same feeling (if he ever felt) appeared to predominate in his address to the Albigois. He touched on all points of controversy, as matters in which all would agree, were their principles duly examined, and hinted that ample accommodation would be granted by the Church to scrupulous and delicate consciences. Lightly and gracefully he trod over the *ignes supposito cineri doloso* of the controversy. Transubstantiation, the mass, confession, image-worship, were all passed over with superficial and temporizing mention; for the bishop knew that on these points his antagonists were armed in complete mail; but he hoped, and not unreasonably, to send an arrow through the joints of their armour, that would penetrate the

champions' hearts if it did not touch on their convictions.

The Albigeois, with whom, as with all France, the character of the bishop stood high for learning and eloquence, were obviously struck by the mildness of his address, and the dexterous lenity with which he passed over, or treated as unimportant, certain points which they expected would have been insisted on as indispensable. There was a kind of vacillation, a reluctant disposition to listen, beginning to betray itself among them. Pierre, from his blindness, was unable to discover this, but Boanerges and the deacon were beginning to exchange looks of doubt and alarm: the bishop saw his advantage and pressed his point, addressing himself powerfully and exclusively to their feelings.

“Come back,” he exclaimed, at the close of his appeal; “come back, ye wanderers, to the bosom of your long suffering mother: ye have wounded, ye have wronged her, but she is your mother still. The bosom

yet bleeding with the blows you have dealt is expanded this moment to receive and to embrace you; the arms you have tried to lop off are extended to invite you to peace and to felicity.

“The visible presence of the Deity amid these his most stupendous works calls on you for solemn deliberation and salutary choice. He hath shaken mountains mightier than those which lower and darken around you; and will you in your pride be more inflexible than they? He hath made the streams to gush from rocks more hard and sterile than those from which you descended; and will your hearts be less penetrable than they? All Nature, animated and inanimate, is pleading with you; see this plain overspread with the mighty of the earth, the nobles of the land: with sheathed sword and hands held out in peace they supplicate you to have mercy on your own souls. Behold those hills covered to their summits with thousands of the faithful: they implore you by their presence to turn from the error of

your way and live. Behold," he cried, "beings above the heights of the utmost hills. Yon vast congregation is but a shadow of that which watches you from above. There be patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, saints and spirits in paradise; and the seraphim in ascending circles of glory, order-above order, up to the hierarchy of the bright archangels who stand nearest to the throne of God and tremble at their own exaltation: all that glorious company are pleading for you, *to you*, this moment. Myriads on myriads, from glorified mortals to the first order of created beings; angels who kept their first estate: such are your witnesses, your advocates. They bend from their intercession—they look down on you: they say, for you we burned and bled---for you were we stretched on the rack and chained to the stake; by the vast weight of our merits we have inclined the eternal scales in your behalf, till the accusing angel himself resigned his office."

Here a murmur began to arise among a

band of the Albigeois, to whose ears the sound of *merit* was an abomination.

“And even above that glorious circle,” resumed the Bishop, “high beyond the highest, and bright above the brightest, the Mother of God herself appears, as in the vision of the mystic book, clothed with the sun, and the moon beneath her feet, and in her arms the form of him who created both.” And as he spoke the bishop fervently kissed the gorgeous crucifix that was appended from his shoulders.

The murmur among the Albigeois increased.

The bishop watched and waited till the murmur subsided: he allowed the wave to dash in full force, and sailed in triumph on its recoiling surge. “Spurn not the cross,” he cried, “for the sake of him who hung thereon! If ye boast your love to him, if ye treasure in your hearts every word he uttered, every precept he enjoined, every ordinance he appointed, scorn not those who hallow with their lips and their hearts the

memorial of him whom both are bound to love. You cherish his faith in your hearts ; we press its symbol to our lips. Is it possible we can shew inwardly or outwardly too much devotion to Him to whom both look alike for salvation ? Shall men differ for modes, when the spirit and the system is the same ?—and even in those modes, have not saints agreed with us ? Can we not reckon against your feeble, and unauthorized, and recent examples, our saints, our anchorites, our eremites, our holy men whose memory hath been embalmed from age to age, and in the period of twelve hundred years have kept the odour of that memory undiminished ? We point your steps to that bright track : behold who have preceded you ; see how their path is gemmed and studded, not with crowns and coronals of this earth, not with tiaras and mitres. Have you wept ?—so have they. Have you suffered ?—so have they. Have you bled ?—their blood was first shed for you. There are the palms of mar-

tyrs,—branches of living emerald ; the tears of saints turned to diamonds that paved their way to Heaven as they shed them ; the blood of martyrs, whose every drop is now a ruby in their celestial coronals. There be the treasures unexhausted, inexhaustible, of their accumulated merits, which the Church throws open to you, overlaying the way of your return with the gems and gold of the sanctuary of Heaven.” He paused : the Albigeois stood attentive and reverent—but there was neither movement nor answer amid their assembly, and this silence was evidently neither that of conviction nor even of hesitation. “ God !” exclaimed the bishop, (for an infidel can sometimes work himself into the semblance of an enthusiast by the assistance of his passions,) “ if there be fifty righteous in that heretical Sodom—thirty, ten, nay one, let them come forth.”

Not a foot was advanced—not a voice was heard among the vast multitude.

Pierre, the pastor, alone tottered forth, supported by Genevieve, and stood almost opposite to the bishop.

“Silence hath answered thee,” said the sightless pastor. He turned solemnly towards the congregation. They stood mute and motionless as the dead.

The blind old man appeared to hear this silence: he drew a furrow with his staff in the sands of the plain, between his congregation and the band of the Crusaders. “Pass it who will!” he exclaimed: he listened with hearing rendered more acute by the privation of the organs of sight: no sound of voice or step was heard. He shook his white and streaming hair in triumph. “Silence hath answered thee,” he repeated. “There is not one amongst us, from the stoutest that can wield a club, to the timid maiden on whom I lean, who will sell their birthright unto thee! We are poor, and afflicted, and despised; but every man in our host is a Joshua, and every woman a Miriam!” In his emotion, he dropped his staff, which

Genevieve stooped to recover. In the action, her mantle and hood, partially displaced, disclosed a glimpse of her form and countenance : her long dark hair almost touched the ground, and there was a light of holy triumph in her eye and on her features, that gave them for a moment a character almost unearthly. It was but for a moment ! She hastily replaced her mantle, folded herself in it, and stood like a veiled statue by the pastor.

Short as was the interval, the bishop had seen her, and that was enough in his thoughts to decide her destiny. He stood for a space silent, his eyes still fixed on her shrouded figure ; but instantly recovering himself, he pursued his address to the Albigeois ; but his tone was now changed from the conciliatory and expostulative to the minatory and commanding. “ Unhappy men !” he thundered, “ ye have sealed your doom—sealed it in both worlds : the book of life was unfolded to you that ye might write your names on its page, and Paradise would have smiled as you traced them. Ye have shut that book ;

and now another volume is opened, and on its burning leaves I see your doom inscribed, "Death! death temporal and eternal!"---and thousands of voices from vale, and rock, and mountain, chorussed the denunciation, "Death! death! temporal and eternal death to the heretics!"

The pastor attempted to speak, but his voice was drowned by the powerful tones of Boanerges, struggling forth amid the shouts of the multitude. "We are not careful," he cried, addressing the Bishop of Toulouse, "to answer thee farther in this matter. Thou mayest doom our bodies to torture, and our lives to the sword; but every soul, as it parts from its ruined tabernacle, shall swell the cry that issues against ye from beneath the footstool of the judge, 'How long, Lord! how long!'"

Language so unusual produced for some time an amazed silence on the part of the Crusaders; and the deacon, with virulent pertinacity, took up the word, which he could not help seasoning with occasional references

to his favourite propensity. “And who art thou,” he cried to the astonished Prelate, “that scatterest the fold of the Lord, and pushest them with shoulder and side from the fat pastures wherein they should dwell safely? Thou hast thyself eat of the fat and drunk of the sweet, I warrant me; yea, thy food hath been of the kidneys of wheat and the fat of fat rams, and thy drink of the vine of Sibmah and the vintage of Elealeh;—and comest thou here to scare the chosen people who wander in the wilderness, and are fain to feed on manna, while thou wast feasting amid the flesh-pots of Egypt?”

The bishop fixed his stern and steady gaze on the speaker without answering; but his cross-bearer, who noted his lord's expression, said to himself, “That heretic's doom is sealed.” But all other sounds were now lost amid the indignant clamour of the Crusaders, who, scorning to be thus baited by their vassalry, rode fiercely round the pavilion, under whose silken awning the Bishop of Toulouse still stood.

Loudest was heard the voice of Simon de Montfort, who, spurring before them all, exclaimed, "Come we here to be rent by these swine, my lords? Call you this a conference, where your overmuch patience is answered by the blunt and bitter rudeness of villain peasants? A conference, I trow!!! with thee (to Pierre), blind of soul as blind of sight, or with that skin-clad ambassador" (pointing to Boanerges, who was arrayed in skins with the wool unshorn), "who seems to have come deputed by a sort of goats, that have lent him their best robes to grace their grave commission withal."

"Misproud lord!" retorted the preacher, "it would better become thee to cast thine eyes on the vain attire of thine arch-priest, who arrays himself in scarlet and gold, and precious stone, the livery of that Babylonian harlot whose seat is on the seven hills that totter while I speak --- better to cast thy beclouded eyes on *him*, and ask thyself whether he or I most resemble those who 'wandered

about in sheep-skins and in goat-skins—of whom the world was not worthy.’”

“The foul fiend ha’ me!” exclaimed De Montfort, foaming with fury;—“an’ if there were lance in my hand, I would not nail thee to the earth as thou standest, vile peasant! My lord of Toulouse, let us but charge among these dogs with our riding-rods, and they will flee as the slaves in old story, that my chaplain tells of, fled from their masters at the sound of the lash.”

“Foul shame and scorn it were,” said Paladour, interposing, “to assail unarmed and helpless men in the hour of truce.”

“And darest thou oppose thy green wit and unfledged valour against me in this matter?” said the fierce lord, reining up his steed by Sir Paladour, and bending his stern aspect on him.

“For green wit we youth must be content to bear a gibe from our seniors,” said Sir Aymer; “but men deemed his valour well-fledged in the plumage of De Montfort’s crest

what time it swept the dust in the tourney lists of the Castle of Courtenaye.”

“Oh, peace!—for shame, if not for Heaven’s sake, peace!” cried the Monk of Montcalm:—“rein in the fierceness of your vainly incensed spirits, lest the enemy you despise laugh you to scorn.”

“Here break we off,” said the Bishop of Toulouse, rising with dignity. “The long-suffering patience of the Church hath been trampled on, her tender mercies rejected and despised; and for you (for I am not unskilled in those Jewish phrases in which ye delight) ---for you, who have whetted the sword that is to smite you in pieces---who have hewn out with your own hands from the mountain the stone that is to fall and crush you— for you, after this last hour of insulted mercy, every implement of mortal might shall be let loose against you; and should they fail—but they will not fail—the thunders of the Church’s curse, outroaring the thunders of the hills where ye seek for shelter, shall pursue you, to blast,

wither, and exterminate you, till your name perish from off the face of the earth. Blessed shall he be whose weapon is but tinged with your blood, and thrice blessed shall he be whose hands reek with it. As it is written, ‘Thy foot shall be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs may be red through the same.’” As he spoke, the Crusaders prepared to depart; and the sound of their movement as those who rode reined up their steeds, and those who had dismounted sprung on theirs, signing to their attendants, who on foot or on horse hastened forward to stand by the reins of their respective lords, was, in the language and in the ears of the Albigeois, like the sound of many waters.

“Hear, mighty lords,” cried Pierre, “hear yet a word. Suffer us but to depart, at least the women and the little ones: suffer them at least to depart in safety into the mountains of the Cevennes, or the region of Arragon. Spare the lives of wretched peasants; send us forth into the wilderness

lacking all things but God and his word—and if we perish, we perish: wherefore should you set yourselves in array, and make your battle strong against men, amid thousands of whom there is not one who skills to draw the sword, or fight with spear and shield?”

At this appeal the Monk of Montcalm held up his locked hands with an air of supplication to the Bishop of Toulouse. The prelate waved him off indignantly with one arm, while he extended the other towards the Albigeois.

“What!” he cried, “shall ye be suffered to go forth like the locusts in that mystic vision of him who saw the apocalypse in Patmos, to shed your poison over the face of all the earth? Behold,” he added, pausing, and holding forth his robe; “behold I turn once more like the ambassadors of old, to proffer peace or war, safety or destruction.—Choose, while yet a moment for choice.—Choose.”

The Albigeois, as one man, averted their heads, and with one voice called on Heaven;

and the pastor with a faint exclamation between triumph and thanksgiving, fell quite exhausted into the arms of Genevieve. The Bishop of Toulouse cast a terrible look on the devoted band; "The volume is closed—the door is shut—the day is past," he cried; "your blood be on your own heads:—tomorrow ye die."

CHAPTER IV.

My steed shall ride through ranks so rude,
As through the moorland fern ;
Then ne'er let the gentle Norman blood
Grow cold for highland kern.

THE ANTIQUARY.

THE carousal at the Castle that night was deep and late. The Crusaders felt like men who had but to lift an arm on the morrow, whose sole and single blow was sufficient to sweep the Albigeois from the face of the earth. The cups were pledged and drained to the destruction of heretics. The Monk of Montcalm alone was absent ; he had retired with a grieved heart to his shed in the courts of the Castle, and passed the night in prayer. De Montfort, whose spirit, ferocious as it was martial, kindled alike at the

thoughts of a slaughter or a battle, was in tumultuous spirits, and rudely proposed that the lady Isabelle should accompany them to what he called the heretic-hunt on the morrow. "You shall hold me excused, lord of Montfort," said the lady shrinking at the motion. — "Nay, lady," said Sir Aymer, "be not so fond to say us nay—what, art thou not an Atalanta, a huntress, one of Dian's nymphs? I warrant me, thou lovest to ride through the green wood with a merlin on thy wrist, or to wander on the banks of the merry Garonne, to fly thy sparrowhawk at a pigeon, or mark thy falcon stoop at a partridge."—"Tush," cried De Montfort, "thou talkest of sport for my lady's waiting-damsels. I warrant, she better loves to spur her palfrey through glade and brake, when the huntsman winds a mort, and the stag holds out his throat to her fair hand, and the raven perching near flutters and croaks till the quarry is broke."

"Never, trust me," said the lady, the tears almost coming to her beautiful eyes,

which Paladour had never thought more beautiful, “if it pitied not my very heart to see his plight, and I chid myself for the delight I had taken in that cruel sport.”—“Well then, to please thee, they shall not be stags, but a sort of foxes, that we shall deem we hunt to-morrow,” said De Montfort—“foul, filthy vermin. We will place thee on a hill, whence thou shalt see us untappice the sly malign beasts, smoke them out of their earth-holes, and chase them over the country with their young, till not one of the foul vermin be left to poison the land.”

“Not one—not one be left alive,” was the universal shout of the Crusaders. “*Adolescentulos cum puellis, senes cum infantibus*, as the Psalmist hath it,” chaunted the Abbot of Normoutier.—“Alas,” said the lady, shuddering, “in times of peril, such sights must be; but must women’s eyes be forced to look on them?”—“Marry must they,” persevered De Montfort. “As you would wish for short shrift and light penance next confession-day.

My lord of Toulouse, you will yield this fair back-slider such weighty reasons." — "Fair niece," interposed the Lord of Courtenaye, "you will do us pleasure in hearkening to the bishop's reasons." — "I trust, noble lady," the bishop was commencing, when one of the menials hastily entering the hall put into his hands a torn and bloody scroll.

"How now, knave!" said the Lord of Courtenaye, "be these thy manners to thrust a villainous and filthy scroll into the hands of my lord of Toulouse?" The bishop did not mark him: his countenance changed as his eyes fell on the disfigured paper.

"What hath changed your favour, lord bishop?" said De Montfort.

"Read," answered the bishop, putting the paper into his hands. It contained only the word "Beware!" written in blood, and but freshly traced.

While De Montfort with some difficulty decyphered the word, the domestic answered the enquiries of the bishop. He said that he

had followed in the train of the Crusaders that day; and that returning late he had fallen over something that lay in his path: a groan convinced him it was a living being, but one who had not long to live. The unfortunate man was unable to tell the name of his murderer; but he collected his dying strength to adjure him by gestures to convey the scroll, marked with his own blood, to the Bishop of Toulouse; and, while he was speaking, expired. The relator had no more to disclose, and the bishop mused in silence.

“A toy, a device, on my life, a very foolish and insufficient toy!” cried De Montfort, striking down the scroll with the hilt of his dagger: “I will wage,” he continued, raising his voice—“I will wage the broad lands of De Montfort against the peak of l’Aigle sur la Roche—a noble’s having ’gainst an outlaw’s hold, that, leaving the body of our battle to fence these towers, without man-at-arms, squire, or page, I and the knights-crusaders alone will encounter the heretics, and not

leave one to tell the tidings within the bounds of fair Languedoc or ere the sun be high to-morrow !”

This wild proposal was received with as wild acclamation by the knights, who began to be inflamed with the wine they had drunk, and by the hope of distinguishing themselves in the eyes of lady Isabelle.

The bishop, who only might controul the frantic purpose of De Montfort, was still musing, heedless of what passed ; and Sir Aymer alone had the sense to see the danger and folly of the motion, and the courage to oppose it. “ Why, how now, mad lords !” he said, “ where is your wisdom ?---where is your discretion ?---nay, where is your valour ? Sith true valour setteth not more by the peril it risks, than by the glory that gives to peril its sweetness and its price. Be ye such peevish and unskilled chess-players, that ye will hazard Knight, Bishop, and Castle, against a file of beggarly pawns ? Are ye avised what men they be against whom ye thrust yourselves in such raw and unpre-

pared fashion? By the mass! they fight from behind a bare crag, as it were a warded tower;---then they have a whoreson, villainous trick of rolling down stones from the heights on visitors that come not in a fashion to please them; and they will send you over a thicket certain damnable convincing touches with arrows that will find out every crevice in your armour. An' ye come not back stuck all over with darts, like so many Saint Sebastians, or battered like cocks with cudgels at Shrovetide, say there is neither truth, wisdom, nor manhood in Sir Aymer." And so ending his free, honest speech, the knight sat down. His blunt rebuke was lost in the tumult of voices scoffing and shouting; and scarcely could the knights be withheld, by the mover of the mad enterprise himself, from rushing out to undertake it that moment.

"Forbear!" said De Montfort, exalting his voice---"forbear while I marshal the cavalcade for the chase to-morrow. The lady Isabelle and her damsels, most like the hun-

tress-goddess and her nymphs, shall be seated on a hill to view us wind and run down the prey. My lord abbot and the reverend brethren of Normoutier shall be placed to chaunt litanies for us on the brow of a mountain---

“How far distant?” interrupted the abbot.

“On a peak of the Pyrenees, an’ thou wilt,” said De Montfort, angrily.

“Nay, I speak not in respect of fear; but, the more distant the view of a battle, the clearer still it always proved to my sight as it were,” replied the abbot. “I promise you I shall be the first to bear glad tidings from the mountains; and now I bethink me,---is there not an instance for it?”

“*Quam speciosa sunt vestigia,*” whispered the cross-bearer.

“Mass and well said!” quoth the abbot: “it was a joyous hunting-song that; but all those carnal toys have clean slipped from my memory.”

“And we,” pursued De Montfort, shouting with fierce delight---“we keen hunters will

unearth these foxes that spoil the vineyard of the Church, and chase them over the country like Samsons, with firebrands at their tails. For thee, young Paladour, do thy devoir as thou didst on the day of tourney; and bethink thee, it is a lighter task to lay the heads of a thousand heretics in the dust, than to make De Montfort's bend to his saddle-bow."—"By Heaven, lord," said the generous Paladour, "I have little heart for wasteful and unresisted slaughter. It yields me no joy to ride over a field of wretched peasantry, as I would over the fern of a moor, and lop head and limb as lightly as a peasant-boy mows down thistles with his staff. Trust me, when the poor knaves clasp my knees or footcloth with their unarmed hands, and sue for life, I am fain to avert my head, that I may not see the blows I deal."

A murmur of derision rose among the guests at these words, which closed the debate; and it now only remained for the knights each to choose a brother-in-arms for the encounter, who might succour them when

assailed, or defend them if wounded, as they had deprived themselves of the wonted attendance of their squires and pages. Paladour named Sir Amirald.

“That young knight is a stranger to these walls, methinks,” remarked De Montfort.

“He is no stranger to any spot where peril may be braved or honour won,” answered Paladour.

“Indeed it troubles me much,” said the Lord of Courtenaye, replying to De Montfort:---“know you the cause, valiant Sir Paladour?” and trembling as he spoke, he attempted to raise his eyes to the young knight, but dropped them instantly. The free and prompt reply of Sir Paladour that he was ignorant of the cause, abated his apprehensions for a moment; but he was heard to murmur to himself, “This hawk but *canceliers**; he will pounce anon.”

While this was passing, De Verac and

* A term in falconry, meaning that the bird hovers over its prey before it descends on it.

Semonville held a whispered sort of discontented conversation in a recessed window, where they had withdrawn themselves from the carousers. "Thou seest how lightly we are held," said the latter resentfully; "none but this Sir Paladour to be named as the peer of De Montfort---none but Sir Paladour to lead the lady forth off the hall, and kiss his fingers with apish courtesy as she mounts her palfrey."—"I ever deemed lightly of that lady's discretion, since she dispraised my habit that was so curiously wrought with——" "I have seen it," said the other, who justly dreaded this exordium—"it was, indeed, of a rare and singular fashion."—"Thou hast a marvellous subtle judgment," said his gratified associate; "and of a truth I love thee; and wilt thou but join thy wit to mine, I will confide to thee a plot that shall pluck the feather vanity from this jay of a Paladour, and enforce my lady to turn the vane of her inclinations to whatsoever point the breath of our choice may vary to."

"Sometimes I think I have but a small wit," replied his friend; "but when I hear

of a plot, I promise you I rise hugely in mine own conceit. Any churl, thou knowest, may guide himself by his vile common sense, and plod on in the straight-forward path that leads to the thing he needeth; but it is plots, schemes, quaint devices, and delicate fine stratagems that shew the wit of man; and truly I was always willing to be in a plot, though I never could devise either to frame one, or, indeed, to get out of one when devised by another."

"I will disclose to thee a fine-witted, deep-reaching trick of invention, requiring valour withal," said De Verac.—"I pray thee then disclose it in level terms," replied the other, "and not as if thou wast rehearsing a troubadour's song, or reading out of a book of riddles."

"Thou hast read in the adventures of that wandering knight, Sir Eneas of Troy, painfully penned by the great magician Virgil."—"By my grandame's soul, I never read line or letter in the book thou namest."—"Sayest thou me so? and how chanced that, Sir knight?"—"Mass, I know not; except that I never was

taught to read.”—“A reason not to be impugned; list, then, and mark: there were in the train of this Sir Eneas two young knights, by name Nisus and Euryalus, sworn brothers; the one wore the favours of Queen Hecuba of Troy, the other those of the most royal lady, the Princess Cassandra her daughter, and both had vowed to do some high emprize in honour of their ladies. I will now describe their arms, devices, equipments, and caparisons.”—“Time will serve for that,” said Semonville hastily, “when thou hast found the end of thy tale.”—“The camp of Sir Eneas being besieged by a host of godless and malicious pagans, what does me young Sir Nisus and his comrade, but sally forth by night among them, cut off their heads as they slept, and carry back their arms and spoils to their own camp, where they were received with all manner of honours, as shouts, music, and other delights, and royally feasted by Sir Eneas in his tent, under a canopy wrought by Queen Dido, his leman.” “Marry, a pleasant figment; but where lieth

the plot?" said the literal De Semonville. "Askest thou? What hinders that we two sally forth under cover of night, kill and disperse the heretics, and trundle their heads before us, like so many tennis-balls, to the Castle-gate, where if my lady look not lovingly on our valour, and Sir Paladour shew not beside us like a holiday peasant's tin brooch to the topaz in my barret of tissue, say I am neither politic nor valiant."

Semonville, who was as rashly brave as he was dull and wayward, received the motion with eager delight;—"And for our more assurance of safety, and because we will not be wandering all night through mire and moor, I will borrow the squire of this Sir Paladour, under show of helping to furbish mine armour for the morrow. Men say he hath marvellous skill in the perplexed paths with which this region aboundeth." "It is colourable; it is semblable," said De Verac with a nod of assent.—"Thus shall his vain courtesy (for he refuseth nothing gently sought) work his annoyance and de-

feat.”—“ But,” whispered Semonville anxiously, “ how shall we make escape?—the craven lord of the Castle hath the drawbridge raised, and the keys of all the gates from barbican to postern brought to him, ere he sleeps.”—“ I have a plot too for that, which I will shew thee if thou wilt come to my chamber—slack not to borrow Sir Paladour’s squire, and follow me.”

The boon was asked with dogged reserve, and granted by Paladour with graceful courtesy; and the pair then retired to prepare for their sally from the Castle before midnight.

* * * * *

The lady Isabelle sat late within her chamber that night. She had determined on accompanying the Crusaders on the morrow, lest her farther refusal might expose her to the suspicion of heterodoxy (a charge which her conscience could not altogether disclaim, for pity in that age was heretodoxy, if felt for heretics); and she prolonged her orisons late, supplicating alternately for

the safety of the Crusaders, and the deliverance of the devoted Albigeois. Towards midnight she was disturbed by the sound of something heavy dropping into the court, and then of steps traversing it hastily. She opened the casement of her oratory, and looked out. The moon had risen; but the tower in which her chamber lay threw its vast shadow across the court, concealing those who trod it with speed and in darkness. They were De Verac, Semonville, and the attendant, with a damsel of her train. This female, who had been lightly won by the gorgeous habits and courtly language of Verac, had prevailed on her brother, the solitary warder of a neglected tower in the outer wall of the Castle, to assist them in escaping from a casement of it, and facilitating their passage over the moat, which was there nearly dry. As the lady gazed forth, another casement opened at some distance; and she paused for a space, irresolute whether to address a figure that appeared indistinctly at it. "Who is it?" at length

she said, "who watches at this late hour?" ---"It is your beauty's servant and ever-wakeful meditator," answered the voice of Paladour.

"Did you hear steps or see figures cross the court of the Castle?" asked the lady.

"I did, noble lady: they were doubtless menials whom 'tendance on the banquet held late, and who are hastening to their lodgings."

"Alas! Sir knight, hie you to your couch," said the Lady: "to-morrow will be a day of toil, if not of peril, and you must needs lack rest."

"I may not rest, noble lady: my heart is heavy with many evil bodements, and my brain is possessed with thick and gloomy fantasies. I have wrestled with, but cannot overcome them: a vague and shapeless pre-sage of some undefined disaster keeps me waking. Lady, for the love of Heaven, quit not these towers to-morrow!"

"I fear my uncle's chiding, the blunt scoffs of that rude lord De Montfort, and the solemn anger of the bishop, more than

aught of peril in to-morrow's encounter," answered the lady. "And now a fair good rest, Sir Paladour: I might be lightly held, were I to prolong this conference at such late hour. The best thoughts of the night, and the lightest slumbers, be about your pillow!"

"Farewell, bright saint!--and may the pure spirits that minister to virgins' dreams, weave thine of such hues and texture as glow in the visions of sleeping saints, who part dreaming of Paradise---to wake in Heaven!"

CHAPTER V.

———When my hours
Were nice and lucky, men did ransom lives
Of me for jests;—but now, I'll set my teeth,
And send to darkness all that stop me.

SHAKSPEARE'S *Antony and Cleopatra*.

THAT night was to the Albigeois one of unmixed consternation and horror.

The delegates returned with their answer of desolation. The devoted people saw their doom approach without the possibility of averting or retarding it; not a resource was left. If they attempted to pass into Aragon, or to seek the Cevennes, the army of the Crusaders interposed itself. Amid the rocks and mountains where they now wandered, they must shortly perish by famine. Beziers and Carcassone were in ruins. Their friends in Toulouse were unable to protect them, could they even reach that city in safety; and

the possibility of aid being supplied by Count Raymond had never occurred to them, for they were ignorant of his arrival in France. They saw "they were in evil plight." Some of the more enterprising leaders and enthusiastic preachers, among whom were Mattathias and Boanerges, suggested the idea of resistance; and even exhorted them to "resist unto blood."

But this proposal to an unarmed multitude, half of whom were women and children, only added to despondence the conviction of its helplessness. And after an evening of gloomy deliberation, they embraced with sore reluctance the last feeble chance of safety: this was, to separate into small distinct parties, and pursue various directions, some seeking shelter in the mountains, and some going towards Toulouse, that thus detached and divided, without appearance of union or resistance, they might afford less cause either for cupidity or hostility; "and thus," said Pierre, "if Edom and the armed men with him come and smite one

band, peradventure the other may escape, and a remnant yet be saved.”

But this melancholy resolution, which necessarily involved the separation of the robust from the feeble, of parents from children, and of husbands from wives, required strength from above to support the victims in the moment of its execution. With fainting hearts and wearied spirits they implored that it might be deferred till dawn, and that this, the last night of their earthly intercourse, might be passed in prayer.

Fearful of being molested in their devotions by some of the fierce and licentious train of the Crusaders, who still loitered in scattered bands on the plain, they removed some distance to a spot whose deep and secret solitude had often afforded them concealment, and from whence their “songs of the night” had often arisen, heard only by the ear of Heaven.

It was night when they entered the rocky defile which led to a spot that seemed the oratory of Nature. The narrow path sud-

denly opened into an area, enclosed on every side by vast masses of rock; these masses projected as they ascended, so that, though the space below could contain the whole multitude, the precipices, almost meeting above, disclosed but a small portion of the heavens, whose brightly-twinkling stars alone proved to the eye it could be visible there. These appeared intensely vivid, as if seen from the bottom of a well.

The projections of the rocks, intercepting rain and dew, had precluded all vegetation, except where a few wild ash-trees twined their knotted fantastic roots among the fissures. One or two dark rills tinkled down the sides of the rock, and meeting in a brown and stilly pool at the bottom, seemed to rest there; then struggling on, forced their way, with a hoarse and troubled murmur, through the defile by which the wanderers entered the valley. Here the Albigeois assembled for the last time, to all human conjecture. In this last hour of danger, the innumerable differences that had distracted them in hours

of comparative safety, and which, in the exaggerations of their zeal, had often appeared as important as the vital doctrines of Christianity, now appeared lighter than vanity itself. The endless divisions and subdivisions of restless and unappeasable polemics, the doubtful gloss, the minute distinction, the metaphysical subtlety, the verbal nicety—labour as profitless as the attempt to divide an unit, or discover parts in a point—were all forgotten. And with one voice and one heart the congregation called on their ancient pastor to offer up his prayers with and for them, peradventure for the last time.

In this hour of extremity not only were systems compromised, but all distinction of characters was absorbed, as bodies lose their varieties of colour on the approach of night. The petulant acrimony of the deacon, the stern enthusiasm of Boanerges, the fanatic fury of Mattathias, were all subdued, all silenced, and the pure faith and meek holiness of the aged Pierre rose like the ark triumph-

ant over the waves, under whose prevailing waters the tops of the highest mountains were covered.

Towards midnight the voice of Pierre ceased, from his exhausted strength; and the whole multitude prayed in silence with their faces to the earth. Such was their absorption of spirit and intensity of devotion, that a shriek from one of the females was unheard, till its repetition made those who were near her demand the cause. Apart from the rest, she said she had heard an arrow whistle past her, and seen it lodge among some bushes at the entrance of the defile. Some, upon hastening to the spot, found the arrow still quivering there, and exclaimed in terror they were betrayed, and the signal was given for the work of slaughter.

Pierre checked the alarm by pointing out to them that the arrow was purposely sent in a direction where it could do no mischief; and he ventured even to intimate his hopes that it might rather be the effort of a friend to warn them, than of a foe to molest them.

A few moments of agonizing expectation passed, while this hope was to be confirmed or defeated:—they were soon over. A second arrow came whizzing past them in the same direction, and those who watched its flight saw a scroll attached to it. An hundred hands were instantly employed in searching for this missile, whose friendly purport was no longer matter of doubt, even to the most desponding. It was found and unfolded, a light was quickly struck, and it was singular that amid this poor and illiterate multitude, there were more to be found who possessed the rare acquirement of being able to read, than in the Castle of the Lord of Courtenay—so intense had been their zeal for obtaining the knowledge of Scripture. The superscription was “To the Church which is in the wilderness.” And Boanerges, to whom it was given to be read, recognized the hand-writing of a chaplain of the Count of Toulouse; a man zealously attached to the cause of the Albigeois, and no less so to the Jewish phraseology, by which the more

enthusiastic of that day delighted to distinguish themselves. It contained the following words :

“Whereas ye are as men appointed unto death, and as prisoners in the hold where there is no water, and because many dogs have come about you, and fat bulls of Basan close you in on every side ; therefore now look up and lift up your heads, for your deliverance draweth nigh, for behold he whom men call Raymond, even the lord of Toulouse, hath confronted the man of sin, which is antichrist, whose palace standeth on the seven hills. And lo, he hath passed over from the South, and cometh up to the help of the Lord against the mighty, even as Barak, the son of Abinoam, came up from Kedesh Naphthali with ten thousand men at his feet, all of them mighty men of valour, men who draw the sword. And because ye have sent aforetime messengers to him saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants, but come unto us and help us, that we perish not ; therefore now be strong and of good courage, for, as

the Lord liveth, before the morning be spread upon the mountains, your help shall be swift and sure, and though ye mourn with a very great mourning, like the mourning of Haddrimmon in the valley of Megiddo, yet a little while and your name shall be no longer Bochim,* but your name shall be called Maher-shalal-hash-baz,† because of the prey and of the spoil which the Lord shall give you of your enemies round about. And behold I, even I, have sent a swift messenger (whose running is as the running of Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, who overran Cushy by the way of the plain, in the matter of Absalom,) and I have straitly charged him saying, make no long tarrying or delaying, and it shall be if the men, the children of Belial compass thee round about, that thou shalt make fast the letters to a swift arrow, and”—Here the manuscript was torn, and nothing but the signature was legible. “Written in the tenth day of the sixth month, even the

* Weeping. † Haste to the spoil—swift to the prey.

month September, by me Zerubbabel, whom men call Bertrand de Var.”

The effect produced on the assembly by the perusal of this letter was in its expression as single as it was profound: with one accord they threw themselves with their faces on the earth in a mute agony of solemn gratitude; and the thanksgiving for a deliverance almost miraculous rose from their hearts alone.

There was now but one voice and one resolution among the whole multitude; with renewed strength and rekindled courage they prepared to penetrate further among the hills in the direction where they might expect the approaching army of the Count of Toulouse, the van of which they hoped to meet before the dawn of morning, and under whose flank they might find protection during the awful day, for whose event they pleaded solemnly to the God of battles. In the elevation of sudden hope, Mattathias and some of the more warlike, even proposed to set forth and encounter the band, who, from the latter part

of the letter, it was plain had intercepted the messenger; and this proposal, though rash and untimely, was so eagerly embraced, that Pierre forbore his fruitless opposition, and about fifty, armed with clubs and arrows, set out on the expedition, accompanied by Boanerges and the deacon, who, with a sudden illapse of valour, joined them, exclaiming, that the "lame should take the prey." The rest commenced their progress into the mountains, and for some time hope supplying them with supernatural strength, the most dejected forgot their fears, and the feeblest their weakness. But it was soon found that physical obstacles long continued are an overmatch for the power of imagination, however excited: The strongest and most resolute had departed with Mattathias, and the multitude who were journeying onward consisted chiefly of those who were feeblest in sex and in age, in all the lassitude of weariness and inanition.

"With her child of yesterday
The mother went, and she whose hour was come
Fell by the way side." SOUTHEY'S *Roderick*.

The acclivities of the mountains seemed to become more arduous, and the mist that enveloped their summits seemed to darken as they approached them; many sat down in a mortal stupor, from which no power could wake them; and many, who still retained their intellect, with all the earnestness of suppliants implored that they might lie down and die. It was then that their aged pastor, and the ministering angel at his side, collected the last remains of their strength and spirits to sustain those whom hope and life were fast deserting. To those who were yet rational, he suggested the hope of deliverance; to the desponding, the consolations of religion: for every fear he had a word of alleviation—for every complainer a topic of comfort. He cherished every purpose of exertion; he fanned every spark of hope; and even when the lamp was gone out, he could supply it from the rich abundance with which faith had lighted his own. It was a rare and holy sight to see the weakest in sex and in years—an ancient man and a youthful maiden—concentrate in

themselves all the physical energy that could command success, with all the mental fortitude that defies despair.

Thus sustained and excited, the sufferers prepared for their last effort—it was made in profound silence; every one reserved his breath for the struggle—not a word was heard of fear or of hope, of comfort or of murmur. The effort was made—the summit was won—the mist that covered the tops of the mountain rolled slowly down its sides into the valley, where it lay like an ocean. A line of golden light fleckered the opposite horizon: it broadened—it brightened, till the sun burst forth in glory on the hills far eastward, and his first level rays glanced brightly on the broad banners and fair and widespread array of the army of Count Raymond of Toulouse.

The shout uttered by the Albigeois at this sight, resembled that sent forth by the crew of a vessel just going to pieces when day reveals to them a friendly shore, and boats

putting off to their assistance: it was a mixture of joy and desperation. The shouts that greeted them, on the other hand, were like those that hail the numbed and sunken-hearted mariner, inspiring hope and promising security.

All that they had dwelt on with anxious hope for many days, all that had sustained their spirits with distant and visionary comfort, was now realized in almost as many hours. To distribute nourishment, raiment, and cheering felicitations of safety and auguries of success, to assist those who were still able to reach the van of Count Raymond's army, and to encircle the hill with a band of archers for the protection of those who were not—to do all that the approach of danger would permit to be done, and say all that haste would suffer them to say, may easily be imagined as the prompt and joyful office of their friends.

Among multitudes thus singularly thrown together, there were many recognitions as

singular—mothers and daughters in the pastor's band recognized long-divided relatives in those who approached to welcome and protect them; and in the host of Raymond many a vizer was raised to gaze on countenances that seemed to them like those seen in a dream; and many a mailed arm strained in its clasp a form never expected to be embraced on this side the grave. But these endearments were short and mournful: clouded by the recollection of past calamity, and interrupted by the preparation for approaching danger.

It was not till the pastor had seen the feeblest of his flock supplied with the means of rest and refreshment, and the others content with the promise of them, that he began to sink under the fatigue that had already exhausted bodies far more vigorous and minds of more unyielding texture. Unable to descend the hill or cross the valley, he prepared to take the only repose the place afforded, by resting his head on the knees of Genevieve; who had seated herself on the ground beside

him, and whose white small fingers, clasped on his forehead, made delicate contrast to its deep furrows, dark hue, and dishevelled hoariness. Conscious of his exhausted strength, he replied to the importunities of Arnaud, and Genevieve's mute pressure of his hand, only by a faint smile, and a whisper, that that spot must be his Pisgah, since he was unable to enter into, or even (he added with a meek sigh) behold the land of rest from its summit.

The enquiries of Arnaud, however, soon discovered a sojourn less comfortless; and he hasted back with the intelligence, that if Pierre could summon strength enough to descend the declivity of the hill but a few paces, there was a cave, which had been inhabited by an eremite not long deceased, where he would be sheltered at least from the chill breeze of the mountains, and might rest on the bed of leaves its last inhabitant had left there. Supported by Genevieve and Arnaud, he struggled to make the attempt; and Genevieve, as they slowly approached

the spot, struck by its character of shade, seclusion, and quiet, mentally wished for such a retreat from the "sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war," where her pure existence might be passed in devotion, and sustained only by the herbs of the field and the stream that trickled from the rock. The hermitage was a cave scooped by the hand of Nature out of the rock; art had added one or two cavities for containing the crucifix and bed of its solitary inhabitant: to form these had been his only earthly employment. The entrance to the cave was shaded by some firs and pines; a small stream had worn its way down the upper cliff, and fell into a stone basin just at the entrance; above it rose a rude crucifix, formed out of the rock, but now clustered over with moss and ivy, so as to be almost indistinguishable: a few mossy branches of fir, once triangularly disposed, indicated a rude attempt at a belfry; but there was now neither bell nor hand to toll it! Genevieve, in spite of her creed, thought how holy and refreshing amid these

wilds, without track or tenant, its sound must once have been to the wandering traveller amid the shades of evening, or the wakeful religieux to whose ear it came amid the stillness of night. The door of wood still remained with its bolt and staple, apparently intended as a defence against the wolves or bears: its inmate was probably above the fears as well as the wishes that depend on, or are connected with, the agency of man. Here the pastor was conveyed, and here some of the more weak and weary were collected to congratulate and to partake of his retreat.

Genevieve had hardly spread the bed of withered leaves, and assisted the pastor to stretch his chilled and painful limbs on them, when a tumult of voices was heard without; and all hurried to the entrance to catch the sounds. Every ear was now as awake to the tidings of success, as they had been but a few hours before to the murmurs of despondency. In this case they were not mistaken.

The party of Mattathias and Boanerges

had surprised and led captive those who had been the means of scaring the messenger of Count Raymond's chaplain from approaching the retreat of the Albigeois; and were now returning with their prize, disputing the whole way how they were to dispose of them.

The captives were no other than the hapless adventurers De Verac, Semonville, and their ill-chosen guide, the squire of Sir Paladour, who still retained his boast of knowing every mountain-path and forest track in Languedoc, and his habit of leading astray every one who trusted to his guidance.

Long before they approached the cave, the shrill voice of Deacon Mephibosheth was heard exclaiming, "They shall be for a prey and a spoil, even as Shalman spoiled Betharbel in the day of battle: her infants were dashed in pieces, and her women with child ripped up."

The dogged and mortified tones of Semonville were heard in reply:—"Thou liest, foul knave! I am no infant; I would

thou wouldst know it; and if thou rippest me up for a woman with child, thou art no better than a notorious liar, and I will hang thee for it an' there be law in all Christentye, or Languedoc, which comes nearer to the matter."

The affectedly effeminate accents of Verac were then heard exclaiming, "Good knaves! good scoundrels! most worthy and absolute rascals! I pray you throttle me an' you will; but let it be with aught but your greasy fingers: a lady's garter will serve, if such commodity may be found here. Good goat-bearded apostle (to Boanerges), preach to thy hirsute brethren; thou shouldst have a fellow-feeling for my mustachios. I warrant me now thou hast no crisping tongs to countervail the damage they have undergone withal. Good fellow! good selvaggio! most dulcified and depilated Orson (to Mattathias), if thou wilt needs be near me, at least restore me my pouncet-box, that I die not the death of the unsavoury." All this time the deacon was drawing tighter the cords which bound the

hands of the luckless knight. "I thank thee; gentle squire, for the courtesy bestowed on my wrists; extend it so far, I pray thee, as not to profane with thy plebeian touch the tissue sleeve which—God's nails, and all other petty oaths!" he exclaimed with unrestrained vexation, as one of the rudest of the party, thinking he talked too fast and moved too slow, gave him a thrust *au derriere*— "God's nails! the villain hath not only made incision in my flesh, but hath rent my gambazon, quilted with thread of gold and lilac, in a most delicate and unnameable part. What, Bucolican Sylvan! deemest thou art goading an ox to tillage, or——?"

"Lead them on!" said the stern voice of Mattathias, "that we may hew them to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal."

"There is no such place in France, thou wordy fellow," said Semonville, sturdily: "and I would I might be hanged ere I consent to be hewed in pieces for any man's pleasure in outlandish parts; never trust me else: so look to it, thou wert best '

“ I pray thee, let us first examine them,” said Boanerges ; “ it may be that we may gather something out of them.”

Arnaud joined in this petition, which he enforced by strong reasons ; and Mattathias, though refusing to be convinced by either, leaned on his club at a distance, and growled a sullen assent. The party were then ushered into the cave. Pierre was plunged into that profound sleep which no tumult could disturb ; and Genevieve cast her eyes on the band only to see if Amand were yet alive, and among them.

Meanwhile others of the party were examining the splendid armour and ornaments which they had lost no time in despoiling their prisoners of. Mattathias was attempting to adapt to his giant limbs the corslet and cuisses of the slender De Verac ; and Boanerges was exclaiming that the richly inlaid vant-brace should be made plates of gold for the coverings of the altar.

“ And what hast thou won ?” said Arnaud to the deacon : “ I trow thou hast not been slack in the matter of the spoil.”

“Of a verity it is a kid,” replied the deacon; “even a kid of the goats, which the men, the sons of Belial, have roasted with fire, and would as it were have eaten very exceedingly; but now behold it shall lie on mine own platter, and be carved with mine own knife, and be unto me as a kid.”

Arnaud now commenced his examination of the prisoners. “Sir Crusader,” said he to De Verac, “your goodly mien and armour of price show you to be of high lineage.” ---“This is the only selvaggio who hath spoken to the purpose yet,” said De Verac. ---“Wherefore, if you deal truly with us in this matter, and tell us the numbers, purpose, and array of the Crusaders, we will hold you to ransom; but an’ ye will not, know that your life is merely jeopardded; and who is he that shall deliver you out of our hands?”

“Here’s a goodly catechising!” quoth the knight, in high disdain: “shall tissue be bound to answer frieze, and the jewelled barret courtesy to the woollen cap. I tell thee, vile churl, I scorn to parley with thee, wast

thou robed in goat-skins with the hair outward."

"Why, thou thing of velvet and feathers!" exclaimed Mattathias, fiercely, "thou mere fardel of an Italian pedlar, an' thou art not conformable, I will be myself thy tailor, and take measure of thee with this club, in such sort that thou shalt think the devil is broke loose:---thy doublet shall be slashed after a fashion of mine own devising;---the trunk pinked, not with needles, but with lances and arrows;---thy vest shall be seamed from collar to girdle by a curious two-handed sword;---and thy skin left hanging in slips about thee, like the points that truss thy hose withal."

"Send a thousand arrows through me, base churls!" said the gallant-minded coxcomb, "even the whole ammunition of your rascaille band, and then despair to hear aught from me but the defiance and disdain I utter now."

Here he attempted once more to fling himself into a graceful attitude; but feeling

the pressure of the cords, exclaimed in the double anguish of pain and mortified vanity, "Curse thee, peasant! undo me these cords: their damnable ligatures will not let me even die like a gentleman."

"Thou hast come to us, like Agag, delicately, and like Agag shalt thou perish," said the fierce warrior, raising his club.

"Oh, spare him!" cried Genevieve—"spare the gallant knight!—alas, for pity! Must he die for valour and good faith?"

"I do perceive," said Verac to himself, "that this heretic damsel hath a glimmering—as it were, a small light of discretion."

Mattathias suspended his blow, not at her entreaty, but at the uproar in another part of the cave, where a similar conference between Boanerges and Semonville was just arriving at a similar conclusion.

"Dolt-headed and unnurtured lord!" said the indignant preacher, "a club may convince thy skull; but it were vain boasting to say it could beat thy brains out."

"There's a jest!" said the literal De

Semonville ; “ as if a man’s brains were to be found any where but in his skull, I trow ; —but all’s one for that. You have despoiled me of mine armour, and pinioned me here, as men truss a capon for my lady’s trencher ; and if you beat my brains out, I would you would know I ever valued them the least of my possessings. Here’s goodly handling of a noble by a villain peasant !”

“ Better than thy meed, thou railing Rabshakeh !” retorted the preacher : “ what usage had we met at thy hands, had we fallen into them ? When did thou and thy godless companions spare the life of an Albigeois ?”

“ And reason good,” quoth the knight. “ Why, thou puzzle-headed knave ! is there no difference atween us ? Are not we sons of Holy Church, and ye vile heretics, whom we are licensed to slay, abolish, and demolish when need serves, and on lawful occasions ? What ! hast no sense ?—canst not make a difference ? with a pestilence to thee !”

Another pleading shriek from Genevieve

withheld the arm of Boanerges. "Oh, harm him not!" she cried; "shed not the blood of the helpless and the prisoner!"

"Mass!" said De Verac: "the light of the damsel's discretion is marvellously in the wane, when she pleads for such an ass as De Semonville."

"Maiden," said Mattathias, "thou hast no part in this matter. Befits it thee to mix in the council of the saints, or the deeds of warriors? Did Saul's daughter strive with the prophet when he smote the Amalekite?"

"Alas, no!" said Genevieve, timidly retreating; "but she saved the life of David, when Saul sent men to slay him."

"We waste time," said Arnaud, "with these foolish knights."---("I knew they would call me a fool," said Semonville: "it is passing strange how all men find out that, as if I had ever told them of it.")---"They know not the deliverance that hath been wrought for us: take them forth and let them behold the armies of the faithful covering the mountains, and then they will

gladly ransom life and safety at the price we name."

The prisoners were then rudely thrust to the entrance of the cave and bid to lift up their eyes and behold.

"Look forth," said Mattathias, "look forth, behold Israel is come up by tribes unto the battle, and the Canaanite shall perish out of the land."

"Look forth," repeated Boanerges, "for behold the mountains are covered with chariots and with horses of fire, like that vision of Elijah in Dothan."

The prisoners beheld the full array of the army of Count Raymond. "Woe, woe to you, clear and gallant spirits," cried De Verac, in the anguish of sudden conviction; "ye have perilled your lives and honour in vain. Some hundred armed knights against a host, and led by Raymond of Toulouse! Oh, for the men at arms that are slumbering within the fatal towers of Courtenaye!"—"What sayest thou?" said Arnaud. "It boots not to ask," said Matta-

thias, who drank-in the unguarded exclamation with ear and soul; “still less may it boot delaying: saddle me a swift horse that I may suddenly bear the tidings to Count Raymond. Thou wilt go with me, brother Boanerges?”—“Of a surety I will,” answered he:—“such tidings must not cool by the way.”—“I will also go with you,” said Arnaud, seizing on the horse of Semonville; “peradventure ye have taken up this matter unadvisedly.”

Mattathias returned no answer, and the party were setting off at full speed when the deacon, who had discussed his kid, seized the stirrup of Mattathias, exclaiming, “And who is to guard the prisoners?”—“Thou, if thou wilt,” said Mattathias, flinging him off: “what, are they not bound, and hath not the door of the cave a bolt and staple? Away to thy ward, Sir deacon, and I pray thee surfeit not thy prisoners by a too plentiful share of thy prize”—and he galloped off.

“I warrant thee for that,” said the deacon, looking after them: “they shall not have

a morsel to comfort their hearts— not a morsel. In, in; ye have heard your sentence, ye erring knights; look for no refreshment but the sweet word in season, which shall be administered to you abundantly.”

“Spare us thy cursed chattering,” said De Verac, “and we will hold all privation light.” “I would I had the golden legend here,” said Semonville, “or, indeed, any book of riddles; I never skilled to read, but my old tutor, who was a Benedictine monk, made me commit many of them to memory, and methinks to knock a hard text or a *l’envoy* about his head, would give me a huge delight.”

“In, in, I say,” cried the deacon, in all the pride of authority: “ye will not linger thus at the gates of Lucifer.”—“How should we,” said De Verac, “seeing we shall have so apt a porter as thou art? By the mass, this cursed door was made for the entrance only of shaveling hermits or hooded peasants. Nay, there be uses in calamity—had I my plumed cap of maintenance on, I must be fain to enter on all fours.”

CHAPTER VI.

I keep good meat at home, knave ;—

* * * * *

Yes, Sir, I will not fail you all next week.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER'S *Women Pleased*

IT was with terror that Genevieve saw the prisoners committed to such a hold and such a warder. They were both in the full vigour of their strength, their friends were perhaps approaching even if they were unable to liberate themselves, and their only guards were the aged and feeble Pierre, a young maiden, and the deacon, who, exclusive of his infirmity, was never suspected of carrying his courage to any dangerous extremity. From the disconsolate demeanour of the knights there was not, indeed, much to be apprehended. They sat gloomily down on a rude bench

of stone, where their bound arms, drooping heads, and *dos-à-dos* position, made each resemble the figure of the *tristis captivus in arcu* in an old Roman triumph.

“So here we are,” said De Verac dolefully, “like a pair of birds trussed for these cannibals. Men say, the filthy knaves stick not to eat horse-flesh, and even ass-flesh; what then may'st *thou* expect, De Semonville?” —“If they devour me,” said his companion, “never trust me an' I do not make shift to stick in their throats, let them take it how they will.” —“Instead of lying at peace on thy blazoned monument in effigy, thy feet resting on a greyhound, thy shield by thy side, and thy hands joined in a fashion as if thou wert praying, heralds blazoning thy 'scutcheon, priests singing mass, clerks penning goodly epitaphs” —

“There thou touchest me,” said Semonville, almost weeping; “instead of all this, to be wambling about in the guts of a filthy Albigois, like a frog in a marsh! Would that the

first morsel of me might choke them, or may I never see mine own castle again!"—"Not a morsel, not a single morsel," repeated the deacon, entering the cave after securing the door inside and out with the best of his care. "Curse thee, slave!" said De Verac, to whom the cupidity of his jailor had suggested a faint hope of deliverance: "Curse thee! dost thou think such mechanical morsels were ever intended for the food of a noble or knight?"—"Slander not my kid," said the deacon, "whose flavour, of a verity, was as delicious as if he had descended from the goats of Nebaioth, or the flocks of Kedar."

"Now if I could get this fool to join me," said De Verac; then raising his voice, "why, thou eldest child of famine and apparent heir of mere emptiness! thou who hast slept in a warren that thou mightest have visions of vermin; and hast given thanks over a second course of flies! who hast surfeited at the mere smell of a cook-shop, and lain drunk two days from winding a pipe of Malvoisie,

at the distance of a league ! I tell thee thou wouldst fall into a trance at the bare mention of the viands our sumpter-mule carried but last night.”—“Of a surety the good creatures should not be disregarded,” said the deacon, who hearkened with his very mouth ; “and now that I think on’t, what might your stores contain ? ”

“If I could but make this fool understand me now !” said De Verac : “rememberest thou, Semonville, the delicious contents of our”——“Mine,” said De Semonville, “held a piece of marchpane, an agnus, and a charm for the tooth-ache.”——“Thou dreamest or ravest,” said Verac ; “there was a huge nook of pasty, some half-dozen pheasants and partridge——”——“Were they red-legged ?” interrupted the deacon :—“As my lady’s fool in his new hosen,” said De Verac :—“a vast conger with a mane like a war-steed, and a sturgeon that the king’s fishmonger rode on up the Seine to Paris, as there was no boat large enough to hold him.”——“May this be

true?" said Mephibosheth.—“Have faith in it, I tell thee, thou unconvinced deacon,” answered Verac; “otherwise perish in unbelief, and be damned, like a heretic as thou art, to everlasting hunger.”

Semouville, who saw the turn matters were taking, had the sense to hold his tongue. “And may I hope to find these curious viands thou tellest of?”—“Thou wilt find them, that is, if thou make speed; otherwise the Crusaders, or some of thy own vile brethren, will taste of dainty fare ere long.”—“I will gird up my loins, and that suddenly,” said the deacon, with much trepidation: “foul shame and sin it were if any of the weaker brethren fell into a gin and a snare because of the savoury meats of the wicked. Surely for *them* to taste of the accursed thing in any wise, were exceeding sinful—it were abominable, and not good.”—“Peradventure the mule may have strayed a mile or twain into the forest,” said Verac; “in such case thou wilt not be slack to follow it.”—“Tell me not of miles,” said the deacon, “my feet

are as harts' feet, and as a young roe's upon the mountains."

Genevieve, whose terrors increased every moment, now at last feebly and fearfully attempted to detain him. "Can it be," she cried, "that thou art about to depart and desert us in this strait? Alas! how will you answer for your charge, left in the hands of a feeble maiden and a weak old man?"—"Woman," answered the deacon, "why troublest thou me? Are they not bound, and hath not the door a bolt? I tell thee, inasmuch as lyeth in me, shall the weaker brethren be saved from the snare, even though I devoured the viands myself; yea, all of them, or hid them secretly beneath in the earth."—"The fiend fly away with thee for a dissembling glutton!" said Verac, as the deacon departed;—"and thou," to Semonville, "couldst not aid me by a word to uphold his humour of luxury?"—"By holy Mary," answered the other, "thou didst utter forth such enormous lies about a sturgeon riding on the king of France and I

know not what, that at first I deemed thou wast crazed ; and I promise thee I never much affected lies, except they were told in the way of honesty, as lies should always be.” —“ Hush!—and to our task.”

The last sound of the deacon's halting steps was no sooner heard, than the knights began to apply the ropes with which their hands were bound to a sharp projection of the rock that was near them, and to try and cut them by the friction. For some time their industry was more painful than profitable, and their hands were stripped of skin and streamed with blood before a single rope gave way. At length knot after knot yielded, and the ropes began to hang in shreds about their wrists.

Genevieve saw it, and comprehended the extremity of her danger ; but terror, instead of paralyzing her strong mind, only stimulated it, and the very approach of peril suggested to her the means of escaping from it, and making a friend of the exigency.

Amand, whose romanceful wanderings had made him acquainted with every cave in the

hills of Languedoc, had availed himself of his short stay to point out to her that in case of danger there was a funnel or narrow passage winding upward through the rock right over where the hermit had lighted his fire of dried leaves. She now turned her eyes on it, and prepared to speak: "Noble knights," said she, in a faltering voice, "I see your purpose, and vain were it for a feeble maiden to say she could resist it. It is easy to cut the ropes that bind you, and easier to break through that shattered door; but as you value your lives, risk them not in such desperate purpose."

"What says the heretic damsel?" asked Semonville, tugging hard at his manacles.—"By heaven, I know not," said Verac, "but never did I hear such a silvery and lute-toned voice breathe from plebeian lips: I am rapt in listening, and am in sooth as one—" "Heed not now what thou art *as*," said the other, "but what thou *art* indeed:—say on, damsel;—the devil himself must have knit this knot."—"I say," said

Genevieve, her courage rising with her fears, “that a thousand lances will be aimed at the breast of him who dares present it at that threshold; and should you by miracle escape to the hills, ten thousand arrows, from bows that never failed, will pursue your flight, and nail you to the earth. There are, indeed, means of safe and secret escape, but they are known to me alone; nor will I sell the knowledge for nought.” “Show us the means, and thou shalt find us no niggards for the nonce,” quoth Semonville.—“I do note some lineaments of likelihood in the damsel,” said Verac; “some touches of love’s pencil, toys of Cytherea, and odd remnants of the Graces; that is, an’ her hood were better set, and her loose exorbitant locks were submissive to the hot rebuke and tortuous discipline of the silver tongs.”—“Oh, heed not me,” said Genevieve, tremblingly eager to withdraw their attention from herself—“think of your valiant lives, your precious moments: there is a path by which you may win the summit of the hill, beyond the reach of fleet arrow or

keen eye; and if I point it out to you, what shall be my guerdon?"—"I will straightway betake myself to it, to prove I am not unthankful," said Semonville; "and, moreover, I will fill thy hood with bezants—that is, when thy people restore me that they have robbed me of."—"Noble knight, I ask no gold," said the maiden timidly.—"Tush, I knew she would 'sdeign thy proffer," said Verac; "thou art fitter to treat for thy ransom with a greedy peasant or gold-gripping Jew, than with a damsel in the vanity of her rustical comeliness. I tell thee, maid, thou shalt have a mantle guarded with vair, a tunic of broidery, and a hood of such quaint and excellent fashion, that all the female heretics of thy party shall be converted, and say their prayers in Latin, *in sæcula sæculorum*, to the utter demolition of heresy!"

Genevieve's look of humble but expressive rejection showed that this gorgeous proffer was as little valued as the other. "In the name of all the devils," said Semonville, "what wouldst thou have, or what art thou?—for

woman thou canst not be, unmoved as thou art by gold or gay attire. So may Marie aid me, if thou be not some spirit of the woods or fairy of the mountains. Look to it, De Verac; she will ask of us anon a drop of blood, or a lock of hair, or something that will merely cost our perdition.”—“Oh no, no!” cried Genevieve, “mistrust me not: I will suddenly point out your way, and ask but for my meed,” uncovering the venerable head of the sleeping Pierre, “that when ye see a head so white as this, or meet a lone and lowly maiden like me, ye will do no despite to the feeble, no dishonour to helpless woman.” “This passes!” said Semonville; the phrase by which he always expressed his sense of whatever exceeded the range of his faculties, or the expansion of his sensibility.

“Fair nymph of the cave,” said the more gentle De Verac, “most polished sylvan, and indeed faithful heretic, doubtless thou art the daughter of a Catholic, and as such my orisons shall be breathed for thee to our lady Venus and saint Cupid.”

“ Breathe orisons for thyself the rather,” said Semonville, to whom Genevieve had indicated the way, and who had begun to ascend, “ for the way seems perilous, dark, and rugged.” De Verac followed, and his voice was soon heard exclaiming, in plaintive accents, as his drapery suffered in the rude ascent—“ Saints and angels, what a rent! mercy, good crag—gently, thou villain briar. By Heaven! the very rocks here are turned heretic, and delight to pierce the raiment of the faithful. I shall seem in this ragged attire like an ape that had run away from a gleeman, and ran wild through the country with his scarlet slops dangling about him.”

“ By the mass, I am stuck,” quoth Semonville, with a groan.

“ Go up.”

“ I cannot.”

“ Come down.”

“ I cannot.”

“ Then let me pass thee, and gain the entrance,” said the more adroit Verac; and,

as he spoke, he sprang upwards, and at one light and vigorous bound reached the aperture. — “What dost thou shout for,” cried Semonville, “thou traitor knight and false brother-in-arms, as if all the devils in hell were in thy throat?”—“The Crusaders,” shouted Verac, forgetting their peril in the enthusiasm caused by their gallant appearance—“the Crusaders: they wind down the mountain like a stream of gold. The great standard of the cross nods and blazes to the noon-day sun: wave all your banners, shout your battle-word, couch your lances, noble knights, valiant Crusaders—*Dieu et l’Eglise.*”

Semonville had now toiled to the entrance, and stood gazing on that gallant sight in despair. “Now Christ them sain and save!” he cried; “for living men they never will win back to the towers of Courtenaye this night:—now hie thee on, Verac, I will not be slack to follow;—perchance we may warn—” “We at least can perish with them,” cried Verac, bounding from the hill-top like a falcon from his stoop.

Him followed the *Sieur de Semonville*, wishing, at every stumble he made, *De Montfort* and his mad counsel at the devil.

“Safe!” cried *Genevieve*, as she heard the distant voices, and looked on her parent; “safe! thou from death, and I, perchance, from worse.”

CHAPTER VII.

To turn the rein were sin and shame,—
To fight were wondrous peril :
What would ye do now, Roland Cheyre,
Were ye Glenallan's Earl?

THE ANTIQUARY.

MATTATHIAS and his party lost no time in making their way to the presence of Count Raymond. As they passed along, they were loudly greeted by the men-at-arms, whose fair array and increasing numbers augmented their confidence, and whose greeting they did not fail to repay by hints that they bore tidings of much moment, such as justified their utmost diligence of speed. They had soon passed the vanguard, and were conducted into the presence of the leader of the host. Count Raymond of Toulouse was

seated on his war-steed, in complete armour from head to foot, in expectation of immediate action; he had neither caused his tent to be pitched, nor even dismounted, since break of day. He was surrounded by knights, all, like him, armed for action, and by preachers and pastors who were vehemently exhorting him to go up against Ramoth-Gilead, and prevail against it; and to whom he listened with the constraint of one who, weary of the importunities of a faction, still feels their influence indispensable. His demeanour was noble and martial; but when he spake, his hesitating voice, broken sentences, and undecided manner, verified the fickle, pliant, and irresolute character which historians have generally ascribed to him. On his brow might be seen traces of past calamities, of recent trials, and of dangers momentarily expected; and he looked, in truth, like one weary of playing the arduous part assigned him in life, but sadly resolved to sustain it with dignity to the close. In early youth he had been a zealous persecutor of the heretics, and sworn friend

to the brother of the Lord of Courtenaye, the father of the lady Isabelle, their unchangeable enemy: he afterwards became the patron of the Albigeois, and then commenced a scene of feudal hostility between the former friends, which ended in the Lord of Courtenaye surprising one of the castles of Count Raymond, and slaughtering his wife and infant children; for this he was rewarded by the King of France with that vast accession of territory which made the lady Isabelle the richest as well as noblest heiress in the land; and for this Count Raymond had deeply sworn against the house of Courtenaye a vengeance he had never yet been empowered to wreak. The rest of his life partook of that vacillating character which had marked its commencement—now making the most abject submissions to the Pope, and now heading an army against the Crusaders—now indignantly opposing the superstitions and the domination of the Church of Rome,—now revolted by the enthusiasm and daring pretensions of the Albigeois:—such was Ray-

mond of Toulouse, firm alone in his purpose of vengeance against the house of Courtenaye; yet was he not without noble and gentle qualities: he possessed valour, and had often proved it; and he had a heart susceptible of strong affections, for he had never ceased to mourn for the wife of his bosom and the children of his youth.

He received Mattathias and his party courteously, and forgot not even to enquire after the pastor Pierre, on the ineffaceable image of whose simplicity and sanctity of character his wearied thoughts reposed delightedly for a moment; but when, in the progress of their communication, they stated that by the intelligence of their prisoners the lives of his enemies were that day in his hand; and Boanerges added (more than he knew) that doubtless the Lord of Courtenaye and his household were among that devoted band, Count Raymond started in his seat and drew his sword; and his horse rearing at the sudden impulse of his rider, gave to the beholders the idea of an equestrian statue bounding

into life by the power of magic. Count Raymond rose upright in his stirrups; his eyes flashed through the bars of his helmet, and, waving his bright sword above his head, he vowed to God not to quit the field that day while a drop of the felon blood of De Courtenaye remained unshed on the earth.

Waving brands and banners afloat, and shouts that rent the air, hailed this declaration; and none was louder in acclamation than Mattathias, who dashed about his club and yelled in an ecstasy of ferocious enthusiasm. "Let us fall upon them!" he cried, "and overtake them; neither turn again till we have destroyed them: let their carcasses be as the dust of the plain, and their blood lie like dew on the valley."

"Bring forth my banner!" shouted Count Raymond: "sound all your trumpets, and lift your battle-cry like thunder among the mountains!--*Dieu et l'Evangile!*---we will rush upon them like the avalanche from the precipice, and bury them where they stand!"

“Hold! and hear me—even me!” exclaimed Boanerges, grasping the reins of the plunging and fiery steed—“hear me, I say, that thou quench not the light of Israel.” And as he stood checking the horse and his rider in their might, his head and feet naked, his beard and hairy garments streaming in the wind, while Raymond looked down on him with impatience and doubt, he was no mean image of an ancient prophet, a Micah, or a Jeremiah, withstanding a king of Israel as he made himself ready for battle. “Hath not the Lord delivered them into thy hand? and shall a hair of the head of the meanest of my lord’s servants fall to the ground this day because of them? Tarry till they are inclosed in the valley, where they thought to slay the flock with the shepherd: is it not a place of marshes and springs of water, where the feet of their horses shall stumble and be snared? And when they lie before thee like a wild bull in a net, then shoot out thine arrows and

consume them. Behold I, even I," he cried, exalting his awful voice---" I say unto this people, as Moses said unto the children of Israel when the Egyptians pursued after them, ' Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord this day.' "

" Thy counsel pleaseth me well," said Count Raymond, (as the last counsel he heard was always sure to do). " I would not," he added, muttering to himself, " that felon lord had even a chance of flight to save his forfeit life."

The situation of the ground was indeed eminently favourable to the mode of warfare suggested: hills above hills in endless undulation, some shrouded in mist, some sheltered by wood, afforded a thousand points of concealment to the army of the Albigeois, who had possessed themselves of their summits. At the foot of that where Count Raymond and his knights were posted, was a narrow and rocky valley, intersected with many streams, and closed at the extremity by a perpendicular mass of rock.

Here the Albigeois hoped that the Crusaders might direct their course, as the spot closely resembled that where they had retreated the preceding night ;---nor were they deceived in their expectations.

The band of knights, after riding for some space diffusedly, as men in search of pastime, began to approach the valley. With that infatuation which seemed to rule all their counsels and movements that day, they determined, in the very wantonness of their assured success, to feast under the shelter of some rocks during the heat of the day, and play at chess for the lives of the heretics, like Benhadad of yore carousing in his pavilion while his enemies were arraying their battle against him. Tents and tables were quickly spread by the attendants of the Abbot of Normoutier and of the lady Isabelle ; and this delay gave time to the forces of Count Raymond to possess themselves of every vantage-post and point of assault, also to refresh themselves, being weary as men who had marched all night.

The mountains had cast their shadows deep and broad into the valley, when the Crusaders, after placing the lady Isabelle and her attendants on a wooded knoll, and taking their leave with the joyous gestures and shouts of men who were parting to a feast, began to enter the valley. A disposition had been effectually made for their reception. Every summit of the surrounding hills was covered with parties of the Albigeois, screened by thickets or clumps of trees; even the low sides of that rocky valley were hung, wherever the shelter of a crag was interposed, with archers and slingers. A few of the fugitive Albigeois were posted conspicuously on the heights, as if they had just made their escape, so far as to tempt pursuit, by appearing to point out where the rest were concealed.

The Crusaders rushed in a wild, tumultuous train into the valley, desecrating a few fugitives on the rocks that enclosed it, and believing the rest had shrunk amid its ca-

verns and cliffs ; disregarding the fractured rocks that formed its bed, and the streams that divided them, and amid which their horses were now up to their haunches, now struggling for a precarious footing amid the stony paths, till they had almost reached its extremity, without discovering an individual, and their progress was checked by that perpendicular mass of rock, against which the foremost rider almost dashed the chevron of his barded steed before he perceived it was an unscaleable barrier.

The Albigeois watched their prey in silence : not an archer drew his bow—not a slinger raised his arm—till the last knight had rode into the defile. Then from hill, and cliff, and crag—from every thicket, bush, and almost bough—from front and rear—from flank to flank—down rained the arrow-shower, thicker than the mountain-rain ; and fast came mingled the sling-stones, like hail in a mountain storm : and every shaft had its mark—and every stone left its dint—and the whole assault seemed dealt by invisible

hands ; for not a shout, war-cry, or word issued from the assailants.

The Crusaders, entangled and disarrayed, still were undismayed, believing this a mere desultory attack of the fugitives---the flight of a few spent arrows. All, however, agreed on the immediate expediency of quitting the defile ; and with a wild and derisive, but still joyous shout, they attempted to regain the entrance, and recover the height from which they had descended. It was easier to quit than to regain it. Their array broken---their armour useless---their noble steeds galled, wounded, tormented by the broken and rocky ground ; backing, facing, rearing, and charging on each other---plumes rent---banners torn---shield clashing with shield---housings dyed in blood :---what a different group did they present from that which, but a few moments past, had rushed like a stream into the valley, flooding its rocky banks to their height with a rich tide of gorgeous chivalry ! Meanwhile the archers and slingers gave them not a moment's respite ; and when they had

at length struggled out of the valley, the men-at-arms came rushing from the hills on every side like mountain torrents.

“We are betrayed!” said Sir Paladour, riding up to De Montfort: “there needs swift counsel in this strait. Let some one be despatched to the Castle of Courtenaye, who may show of our perilous estate, and summon the men-at-arms to our aid without delay.”

“I will do your message full gladly,” said the Abbot of Normoutier, who rode up panting with fatigue and fear. “In evil hour did I ever ride with armed knights.”

“Haste then, lord abbot,” said Paladour: “and as thou goest, I charge thee seek the lady Isabelle, and convey her in safety to the castle; and tell her that her knight——”

“Nay, I will be no bearer of love-token or tidings,” said the abbot, darting his spurs into his steed: “is this a time for such fooleries?”

“Craven priest!” said De Montfort, who saw only this action: “is it thus thou flyest?”

Here comes a churchman of another mettle,² as the Bishop of Toulouse rode up to them.

“How now, my lord of Montfort?” cried the bishop: “how deem you now of the warning of last night? Do you still hold it a shallow and inefficient toy? That ‘Beware!’ had we marked it in time, had saved this day the noblest blood in France from washing the feet of base churls.”

“My lord of Toulouse,” said De Montfort, “I would at this season that you would thrust me through with your lance in earnest rather than with your bitter taunts in jest; for I perceive that I have this day brought evil on the valiantest knights in Christendom; whereof, I make a vow to Christ’s Mother, it repenteth me sore, so that my heart is nigh to burst mine harness for shame and agony of spirit.”

“Now foul befall the tongue that reproaches thee in an hour like this, noble De Montfort!” said the generous Paladour; “for surely it was the noble heat of a true

valour that lighted the flame that must consume us this day. So may my soul see Paradise, as it pants not to part in nobler company than thine!" De Montfort wrung his hand in proud agony, while a tear was seen to start through the bars of his helmet. With that Sir Aymer, his armour hacked and pierced, his face disfigured by a frightful wound which laid his jaw bare, flew past them like a flash of lightning, borne away by his steed, whom he could no longer rein, and who was maddening with the pain of two arrows that quivered in his bloody flank. As the knight passed like a spectre, he shook his hand, streaming with blood, at De Montfort, and exclaiming, "Lo! the issue of your mad counsel!" was borne from their sight.

This spectacle opened the mouths of the Crusaders, who now came gathering round De Montfort. "*Thou* the champion of the Church!" cried one; "lo, into what plight thou hast brought her champions!"—"Doff thy helmet for shame," said another, "and

borrow a coxcomb."---" Is this the noble chase," cried a third, "thou vauntedst of? Methinks the quarry stands at fearful bay."

De Montfort, as they thus assailed him, turned from one to the other with the fury of a baited bull on the dogs that are tearing him; then fiercely exclaiming, "I can bear your reproaches, but not mine own!" he tore the standard of the Cross from the bearer, and rushing right forward on the advancing body of the Albigeois, flung it with all his force among them, and plunged desperately after it. He sunk like a diver into the ocean; and a fearful space elapsed before the plume of his helmet was again visible.

"The standard of the Cross in peril!" cried Paladour: "no, by good Heaven! while an arm is left to win it. Who dreads shame more than death, follow me!" The spirit of the Crusaders rekindled as he spoke, and all prepared to follow him.

Paladour paused as he put his lance in rest, and addressing Amirald, "Dear knight and brother," he said, "we haste to our last

field: valour itself is fruitless here. Should it be my fate to fall first, stay not to bestride me; but bear this token, dipped in my blood, to the lady Isabelle, and say to her, he who wore it prized it more than life, and felt nought so bitter in death as the pang with which he resigned it."

"Courage! valiant knight and brother!" answered Amirald: "we shall yet see many a field; and the peril of this day shall be a theme for mirth in many a winter evening's talk;---but should it fall otherwise, I will be a loyal messenger to the lady of thy love." As he spoke, a stone from a sling, as if aimed by the arm of a giant, smote him on the head, shattering the cheeks of his strong helmet,---and he rolled in blood beneath his horse's feet.

The flight of the Abbot of Normoutier, with his ecclesiastical attendants, was not unnoticed by a party who were stationed on an adjacent eminence.

"Draw, Mattathias!-- draw thy bow!" cried Boanerges. "There speeds a missive

to the lord of Courtenaye; and if he reach the castle ere the shadows fall, the children of Belial will come up against us as the sand of the sea-shore for multitude, and Israel shall be swallowed up quick of his enemies before the sun goes down."

"Send not an arrow after him," said the milder Arnaud; "he is a churchman, and of noble blood."

The strong arrow of Mattathias whistled past him as he spoke; it passed through the body of the abbot's cross-bearer, who fell dead on the earth, the splendid ensign prostrated beside him.

"Another!" cried Boanerges—"a fleeter, and a surer. Lo where he flies with the rags of Rome fluttering around him. Speed to the South, false priest, and bid thy lord the Pope send forth his vassals the kings of earth to thine aid."

Another arrow flew from the ready bow of Mattathias, who stamped and ground his teeth for very rage as another of the attendants lay levelled beside the abbot's rein; who

grasping the mane of his steed, and striking his spurs to the rowel-head, galloped on without a mortuary prayer for his followers' souls.

“When have I seen thee fail thus?” said Boanerges. “Did not a man draw a bow at a venture and smite the king of Israel through the joints of the harness that he died?”

In the fury of disappointment Mattathias bent his bow, and aimed an arrow at the air; it flew not erring. At that moment the maddening steed of Sir Aymer bore his rider like lightning in the course the abbot had taken. The shaft struck the shoulder of Sir Aymer, whose horse fell dead under him as he rode. The old knight sunk stunned on the earth. With a feeble hand he unlaced his battered helmet to gasp for air, and stretched forth the other weakly, as if to feel for his dead steed; the hand at last rested on the bloody and heaving flank, and he withdrew it. “Mad knights—a mad enterprise—a mad world”—murmured Sir Aymer;—“and to perish thus!—done to death by vile peasants: it had been better—no matter *now*.

---And is this death?" he said, in a state between delirium and that tendency to deep reflection which the approach of death produces in the hardest and lightest minds;--- "the huge mountains dance around me like atoms; it is time for me to die when all Nature is departing." A short trance overwhelmed his senses; he recovered from it in spasms of deadly sickness. "Would I could shape a prayer, or weave my mind into a saintly frame! It is wondrous how lightly I deem now of that matter of controversy for which I have been perilling life all my days, and at length have lost it. I shall soon know all---more than man can tell. The battle wanes," he murmured, as his senses failed;---"I hear no shout, no clashing of arms. Is the field lost? Courage!"---his voice growing fainter; "Sir Aymer, to the rescue!---but it grows dark;---be sure you wake me by dawn;---we must fight again." A heavy trance fell on him as he struggled to rise---in vain.

The desperate valour of the Crusaders had "with many an inroad gored" the array of the enemy, and spread such panic, that for a space around them the field was for a moment cleared---the men-at-arms retreating on every side, and Count Raymond and his knights, sure ultimately of the field, fighting far aloof. The Bishop of Toulouse had from the first conceived the hope of effecting his escape from this desperate field, neither from cowardice nor indifference to the event, but from that ambitious selfishness that made him rate his own safety at a price above that of half his species; and he now attempted to realize it by the exertion of a strength and courage more than human: he clave his way right onward, every stroke of his battle-axe laying a foeman prostrate; while his war-steed, well trained to bite with tooth and trample with hoof, tore and trod out the small remains of life in those who fell---so the rider and horse passed on like the pale steed and him who bestrides it, having commission to

slay, themselves invulnerable. But De Montfort and Enguerrand de Vitry, his brother in arms, dealt round their blows with blind and reckless fury, making havoc of others without thought of their own safety : now unhorsed and fighting on foot—now mounted again and discharging blows to right and left, the very wind of whose impulse was enough to fell a man of ordinary strength ; their plumes and pennons appearing in the stream of fight like sails of gallant barks vainly contending with the might of a thousand waves. But ever Sir Paladour rode round the prostrate body of Amirald, whom there was neither squire nor page to bear from the field ; and when the foe, daunted, retired to a distance, he spurred his steed, and, wheeling in short and fiery circles, mowed down all within the reach of his sword, and then returned to guard the body of his friend, defending both with his shield from the shower of arrows that fell around them, and rested not.

It was towards night, the shadows of

which were deepened by the darkness of the surrounding hills, when De Montfort and his companion, wiping their brows with their bloody gauntlets, sat down amid a heap of maimed trunks and severed limbs, as two wearied woodmen sit down after the toils of the day amid the trunks and branches of a forest of felled trees, and looked round them to spy for succour while light yet remained in the sky. The towering form of the Bishop of Toulouse was still seen dimly on the verge of battle smiting with unabated force, but far distant from them. They saw Paladour also ; but, could even shout or bugle-sound reach him where he stood, they knew him too strict an observer of the laws of chivalry to quit the body of his brother in arms. Of the other knights, all were slain, or had deserted the field. They saw not where De Verac and Semonville, who had easily found steeds and armour on the field, still shouted their war-cry, though too late for all but danger and death, and still did the devoir of gallant

knights in such guise as might well redeem the foppery of the one and the sullen dulness of the other. There was a form they had beheld before, but knew not who he might be: it was a knight in black armour, who had late in the battle joined them and done valiant deeds;---but he seemed to fly from one part of the field to the other with a speed that prevented their either demanding his name or deriving hope from his succour. The arrows now fell in a slackened shower, the shouts came more distant, and this singular figure became more conspicuous from the increased desertion of the field.

“There come no succours from the Castle of Courtenaye,” said Enguerrand De Vitry, turning his dim eyes sadly westward:---“the lord abbot hath been slain or taken, and we are left alone --- to perish. The shadows lengthen as our term of hope and life waxes shorter.”

“Enguerrand De Vitry,” said De Montfort, “thou knowest I am not superstitious ;

and how I have borne me this day in the bloodiest field I think knight hath ever fought in, thou knowest well, and wilt report at need ; but, I tell thee, I cannot shake off the heavy presage that weighs down my spirits when I behold yon knight in black armour ; I deem him of no earthly frame or mould. Be confirmed that our death's-day is come, and that he comes a messenger from Heaven or hell to tell us so."

Enguerrand endeavoured to cheer his friend ; but at this moment the black knight rode by them like a storm, his horse's feet scattering splintered armour and lopped limbs like leaves in a gale ; and he shouted, " Linger ye here while your task is unfinished,---your destiny unfulfilled ? Follow !---follow me !"

De Montfort braced his helmet and grasped his lance once more at these words ; and his companion could see by the twilight that the flushed and sanguine hue of his countenance was exchanged for an ashy paleness : he had but short time for observation.

Count Raymond and his knights came rushing from the hills like a flood, and surrounded them on every side. Enguerrand was the first to fall, and De Montfort after a few desperate blows, every one of which cost the life of an assailant, was struck from his horse, under whose feet he fell so trampled and defaced, that the Albigeois vainly sought to recognize his body among the slain.

Sir Paladour remained last on the field; for De Verac and Semonville, deeming all lost, had taken flight in hope of succouring the lady Isabelle. He looked around him, and saw no one living on the field but himself. The short twilight was past; the bright stars came forth above his head; the mountains, with their sharp and ridged lines, stood strongly defined in the deep dark blue of an autumnal sky. The night-breeze that fanned his burning forehead congealed the blood on his wounds, whose pain became intense; and the sound of a thousand streams, that seemed to his fevered perceptions flowing near him, excited a sensation of thirst almost intolerable.

It was at this moment that his ear was struck by a singular sound,—it was the voice of an idiot, a fool of the Lord of Courtenaye, less than half-witted, but shrewd, gibing, and affectionate withal, whom neither persuasions nor blows could drive back from accompanying the Crusaders that disastrous day. When all was over, he sat him down on the summit of an eminence, and began singing a kind of triumphant song with the most lugubrious aspect imaginable: the words were—

De Montfort shall come from the hills above
And carry all before him—

This song of an idiot, heard amid the awful stillness of departed battle, heard where the valiant, the mighty, the eloquent, and the beautiful were dumb, had a strange meaning and power; but Paladour was no longer able to feel; a deep stupor began to creep over him. The last sensation he had was that of trying to fall so as to hide the body of Amiral, and even in death protect it from spoliation and indignity. The pre-

caution failed; the soiled and broken armour of Paladour offered no temptation to the plunderers, who now began to traverse the field, while Amiral'd's, who had fallen early in the strife, was still fresh and resplendent. The senseless bodies of the youths were soon torn asunder. The idiot died that night, and his dying song vibrated on the ear of Sir Aymer, who was awaking from his deep and death-like trance. "Ha, ha," said the old knight, rousing with his constitutional laugh, "there be greater fools here than thou.—I marvel that my squire comes not to arm me. God's mother! have I slept all this while, and never drew brand while there was battle so near me? Methought I rode with Crusaders in my dream.—How cold the morning sun is!" he muttered shivering, as the moon rose in pale and midnight glory over that bloody field, and the echoes of the hills resounded with the hymns of the triumphant Albigeois. These "watchers of the night" seemed to take up their song of rejoicing along with the host of Heaven, with those

who have "neither speech nor language, but whose voices are heard among them;" like them they lifted up their voices all that night from hill to hill; and while the rich sounds rolled into the dim and stilled valleys, a pure heart and ear might almost have deemed them the faint and far-descending echo of the inaudible harmonies of heaven.

CHAPTER VIII.

Blount and Fitz-Eustace rested still,
With Lady Clare upon the hill,
On which (for far the day was spent)
The western sun-beams now were bent.

Marmion.

THE lady Isabelle with her attendants had been placed by the Crusaders on an eminence when they set out on that disastrous enterprise, and she had waved her hand and scarf to them as long as Sir Paladour remained in sight. Though compelled to accompany them, she shrank from the sight of slaughter, and ordered her attendants to spread her awning or tent on the side of the hill opposite that by which the knights had descended.

Here reclined on cushions, which her damsels spread on the grass, she lay listening to tales of the Crusaders, among whose praises the maidens who knew how to soothe their

lady's ear, forgot not to reckon highest those of Sir Paladour. Her only attendants were Marguerite, Blanche, and Germonda, two pages, the driver of her horse-litter, and the Monk of Montcalm, whom the Abbot of Normoutier, when inflamed with wine, had vainly pressed to join in the assault. The dame and damsels were stretched at the feet of the lady; the pages and driver were ever and anon climbing to the summit of the hill, to look forth on the field; the Monk of Montcalm stood apart and told his beads till even-song, and then knelt and prayed fervently at a distance. Thus, beneath the silken awning there was a rich foreground of luxurious and reposing beauty; the picturesque habits and eager gestures of the young pages gave character and life to the group; and the thin ascetic form, the pale uplifted eye, and dark garments of the monk, as he knelt beneath the branches of a mighty pine, lent a dark and solemn contrast to the picture.

Evening came on, and the lady at length consented to the petition of her damsels, and

dismissed Germonda to the summit of the hill for tidings which the pages had failed to bring. It has been already told how all communication had been cut off by Count Raymond's army. It is, therefore, no marvel that the first intimation of her danger the lady received was from the cries of her attendant. "Holy heaven!" she cried, "the heretics are increased to tenfold their former number. They are pouring from hill and mountain like a flood."—"Thine eyes are bedazzled by the setting sun," said the lady, half raising herself from her cushions of silk; "screen them with thy hand, and tell me what thou seest."—"I see thousands and tens of thousands pouring down on the Crusaders."—"And were they hundreds of thousands," said the noble maiden, "they will cower like a flock of sparrows when the falcon is abroad. Is not Sir Paladour in the field? How fight they, and what arms do they bear?"—"Alas," said the damsel, wringing her hands, "they fight not with clubs and arrows, but with spear and sword, like armed men; and, as I may guess by plume and ban-

ner, no churl or peasant leads them on, but nobles and knights expert in war."

"Thou ravest," said the lady. "Would they not ere this have sent us tidings, if aught thou tellest of had befallen? Look forth again."—"There comes one who seems to bear tidings by his speed," said the damsel.

The lady Isabelle started from her seat, and leant over the brow of the hill, straining neck and eye to catch a view of the approaching horseman, from whose bearing and speed she and her companions drew such auguries as the distance and the windings of the hills allowed of. The horseman was the Abbot of Normoutier, who had escaped the arrows of Mattathias, and lain perdu amid a thicket till he deemed he could reach the towers of Courtenaye in safety.

"It is the Abbot of Normoutier who rides with good tidings," said Germonda.—"He rides not like the bearer of good tidings," said Blanche; "he seems rather the worn and wearied courier of a discomfited host and a disastrous day."—"What tidings, lord abbot?"

all exclaimed, as he checked his rein on the summit of the hill. "To flight!--to flight!" gasped the abbot;---"fly, lady!--all is lost! the hope of chivalry and of Christendom hath perished on yonder field. One hundred and fifty thousand Albigeois---I counted them every man---have either dropt from the clouds or ascended from hell, and tossed us about like so many tennis-balls over these cursed hills. Valour was a mock, and stout-dealing but child's-play against such numbers. If ever there was a lion in a cope and cowl, as such did I bear me this day; but all would not serve. One Sir Paladour would have had me quit the field to bear a love-message, or some such idle toy; but, I promise you, when I laid hand to brand, my fingers forgot it had ever a sheath."---"Where fights Sir Paladour?" cried Isabelle, starting as from a trance at the name;---"where is De Montfort?---where Sir Aymer?---what are Verac and Semonville doing?---where is the noble cavalcade that heralded me at noon to this fatal spot?---where is Paladour?---oh that

he had come to my aid instead!"—— "Alas, good youth!" said the abbot;—"he bore himself bravely, very indifferently brave;—then a sort of clubs came clattering on his helmet, and, as near as I could guess, some hundred arrows or so pierced through his mail where we stood together; he said no more but 'Commend me to the lady Isabelle;' and there he lay: I bestrode him—but what availed mortal valour?"—"What indeed!" said the lady Isabelle, with a sudden and fearful calmness of tone—"what availed it when Paladour fell?"

"Lady, betake thee to flight," said the abbot, terrified at her looks;—"if thou win the towers of Courtenaye ere night, thou wilt be glad woman*; for the soul of Sir Paladour, trust me, it is half-way to purgatory ere this, and that it halt not there long will be owing to the prayers I put up as I rode."

"Hie, noble lady, at thy utmost speed!"

* "Glad woman" is a phrase of that age.

cried the Monk of Montcalm ; “ the heretics prevail ; the cry of ‘ *Dieu et l’Evangile !* ’ comes loud on the wind.”---(The pages and the maidens gathered round the lady.)---“ Men say the devil, in the likeness of Count Raymond, is in the field,” quoth the abbot ; “ for myself, I value him not a straw ; I bear holy relics about me.” As he spoke, the horses were taken from the litter, and the lady Isabelle placed on the fleetest by her pages. “ Ride up---ride up !” said the abbot ; “ ride up, damsels, by your lady’s rein ; methinks she looks wondrous wan, and skills not to manage her palfrey.”---“ Dear lady and mistress !” cried the attendants, “ what ail you, and wherefore do you not betake yourself to flight ?” ---“ Nothing,” said the lady ;---“ I ail nothing :” and a fearful stupor pervading her, she added faintly, “ Lead me ---guide me even where you will ;---I know not what I say---I reckon not whither I go.”

At this moment the sharp whizzing of a score of arrows was heard at the foot of the hill, and the shout of ‘ *Dieu et l’Evangile !* ’

made the abbot set spurs to his horse, and the lady's attendants to hurry her off with what speed they might. Germonda and Blanche, springing on their steeds, were not slow to follow ; while dame Marguerite, who alone had been neglected in this hurried arrangement, with a spring and talons like those of a wild cat, darted herself, *en croupe*, behind the Abbot of Normoutier as he galloped along, and clung close as a vice to the body of horse and rider. The consternation of the abbot, who imagined that the whole host of Count Raymond were seizing on him, *au derriere*, was beyond all power of description. Demosthenes himself never shouted *ζωγρεῖ* in a louder voice than the abbot continued to exclaim, galloping all the while, " Hold me to ransom !---a bishop's ransom !---a king's ! --- it shall be paid ;---three thousand crowns of gold---the saints shall melt---altar-plate, pix, and chalice---cope, ring, and mitre ---abbey-lands and costly missals---six thousand crowns !---on the faith of a churchman ---eight thousand !---gripe not so hard ! the

crowns are to be wrung out of my purse, not mine intestines."---“ Does the lord abbot deem so hardly of a fair friend ?” said the mincing voice of dame Marguerite.---“ Fair friend !” quoth the abbot, then first venturing a glance over his shoulder : “ fair fiend !---fair succuba !---fair night-mare !---why clingest thou to me, vile hag ? An’ I had not thought thou wast a host of devils risen from hell to seize me, I am no true churchman !” --- “ Uncourtly abbot !” said the lady.---“ I tell thee,” said the abbot, interrupting her, “ thou or I must quit hold ; and when it comes to a question between me and thee in a case of mortal peril, it demands no skill to find the issue : I tell thee, I will stick by my steed.”---“ And I will stick by thee,” said the dame, fastening her fangs closer than ever. This movement renewed the abbot’s delirium, and he shouted aloud : “ Holy Saints ! save and succour me ! but this time --- this time only, I entreat ! ---and if ever I draw brand for Holy Church again, take me at my word, and let me be spitted on the arrow of an Albigeois, and

served up for Count Raymond's cannibal supper." So saying, he struck spurs more deeply into his steed, who, mad with his double burthen, galloped on furiously ; while dame Marguerite, at each succussion, rose like a tennis-ball from the croup, and sunk again with a motion, of which the celerity bore no imaginable proportion to the grace or satisfaction of the performer. In the end, the *gouvernante's* pertinacity proved more than a match for the abbot's horsemanship : he was left prostrate on the earth ; while the dame galloped on *seule*, with the air of a "damsel met in forest wide by knight of Logres or of Lyones."

The abbot, sore dismayed and much ag-grieved in all his members, was encountered about an hour after by the Monk of Montcalm, who was pacing his way to the Castle of Courtenaye. "Alas! and art thou here, lord abbot?" said the monk.---"Alas, and I am!" quoth the abbot. "I trusted thou hadst been at the Castle of Courtenaye by this."---"So I had trusted myself," said the abbot ;

“but thou seest how matters are. A certain fury, or goblin, sent by those heretics, who deal with the devil, and who owed me double spite for the valour I had shewed in the Church’s cause to-day, hath maltreated me as thou seest, and rode away on my horse in a flame of fire. I am bereft of the use of my limbs, and am clean spoiled for farther deeds of chivalry.”---“Nay, it is not so ill with thee, I trust,” said the monk, raising him; and in the effort the abbot appeared suddenly restored to the use of all his limbs, and eagerly proposed seeking the castle with the aid of the monk’s arm. “And how,” said he, gazing---“how didst thou escape, when churchmen were crippled of their limbs, and knights and nobles laid low, by the hands of peasants?---What spell dost thou bear about thee?”---“None,” said the monk, “but our Lady’s grace, and a conscience void of offence. I felt that the most ruthless of those called heretics would not murder one who had been a messenger of peace betwixt you both, and whose spoil would not prove a peasant’s ran-

som. I had nought to lose on earth: in Heaven my hope and hold was, above their reach or thought.”—“I tell thee what,” said the abbot, as he paced softly, leaning on the monk’s arm, towards the castle, “all that thou talkest of—thy not being summoned to heavy and high trials, like me, is merely owing to thy lack of faith—‘*Quos Deus amat, eos castigat.*’ Hadst thou been favoured like me with abundance of that precious grace, thou wouldst have had like me abundant exercise for it; wherefore I counsel thee, out of mere Christian love and brotherly zeal, to redouble thy macerations and abstinences, thy penances and pilgrimages, and, moreover, abate and chastise thy exorbitant spiritual pride, and so thou mayest be favoured with the chance of a crown of martyrdom from the hand of some heretic, which I, thy superior in rank and sanctity, was so near receiving this day.” The humble monk listened, and then suggested the necessity of expedition in their progress. “I tell thee,” quoth the abbot, “when I am occupied in giving

ghostly counsel, I would not wag a jot the faster, were the bell ringing for matins."---
"But I hear horsemen on the path behind us."---"That alters the case," said the abbot. "As thou hast no dread of Crusader or heretic, encounter them boldly; do thy devoir; as I urged the gallant knights to-day; while I esconce me behind this thicket, to assist thee with my prayers, which, having forgot in my overmuch valour to-day, it were foul sin to neglect any longer, when such opportunity offers." The patient monk stood confounded when the horsemen, riding up, proved to be two wearied and wounded knights. They were Verac and Semonville, who, on horses they had caught, were seeking their way to the castle. The monk proffered to guide them; and the abbot, as soon as he recognized their voices, sprang nimbly on the croup of the foremost, and, himself taking the guidance of the party, they made what speed they could for the towers of Courtenaye.

In the mean while the lady Isabelle and her

attendants had ridden fast and far, dame Marguerite ramping and galloping in the van, like Burger's Leonora, till a clump of chesnuts stopped their course ; from which a knight in black armour rode forth with courteous demeanour, and, accosting the lady Isabelle, prayed her to pause. " I bear a message from Sir Paladour," he said, " to the Lady of Courtenaye, if she rides in this company."

" Sir knight," said the lady, suddenly rousing herself, " say you that Sir Paladour lives, and that you are the bearer of tidings from him ?"

" True, noble lady : if you will vouchsafe me the hearing."

The lady Isabelle reined up her palfrey ; and the noble air of graceful confidence with which she prepared to listen might have disarmed the heart of mal-intent and treachery itself.

" Mark how she hears the deeds of that Sir Paramount !" quoth Germonda.---" See how she bends in courtesy to the message the stranger bears," replied Blanche.---

“ My velvet tire to a heretic’s woollen hood, if this Paladour yet quarters not his new-won arms with the noblest heiress in France.”

---“ Nothing but the gemmed bracelet from her wrist as the guerdon of such tidings.”---

“ Methinks he bows in return with an uncourtly favour,” said her companion.

The nice ear and fine tact of the lady Isabelle had discovered in the stranger-knight some touches of a rude unmurtured manner : he was profuse of polished language, but seemed to be speaking a comed lesson. But his credentials were not to be disputed : he bore the ring and dagger of Sir Paladour as his tokens. He assured the lady that Sir Paladour lived, though sorely wounded ; and sent to implore her, by those pledges, to escape by a secret path (known only to the dark knight) from the pursuit of the Albigeois, who, flushed by victory, were in full chase of the noble heiress of Courtenaye, whom at best they would hold at a queen’s ransom, and who might, perchance, dread worse dealing at their hands.

The message was so rapidly delivered, that the lady Isabelle could scarce comprehend her danger. She hesitated. "Lose not a moment!" said the black knight, seizing her rein. "For Sir Paladour's sake!--for your own!--amid the wounds that fester in his breast to-night, there is not one so agonizing as his fear for thy safety."

"The castle is near," said the lady, pointing to its towers.

"But the cursed heretics have intercepted that course!" cried the knight; "and think, lady, what may be thy fate if thou fall into their hands! I know the safe and secret path by which thou mayest win the castle, without risk from thy pursuers; it lies down this glen;--suffer me to guide thee." And, without waiting for permission, he seized the lady's rein.

They galloped down a steep and rocky descent, the strong arm of the knight sometimes grasping the rein, sometimes holding the lady on her seat: the damsels followed. At the bottom of this descent was a thick grove

of firs. The short twilight was over, and the moon, now risen, threw her cold white gleams on the rock they were descending; while the dark dell at the bottom received and returned not a gleam, and the trees and their foliage seemed to form one mass of solid and impenetrable darkness. The lady paused. "I am safe in the guidance of Sir Paladour's friend?" said she, trembling. The dark knight made no answer but by seizing the rein of the lady's steed, whom he dragged at full gallop till they entered the dell; then applying a bugle-horn to his lips, and winding a low and cautious blast, many men in vizards and dark houplands appeared from among the trees and surrounded the party. The dark knight, seizing the lady Isabelle, placed her on his own steed. She neither shrieked nor resisted, for she had swooned. Her damsels uttered loud outcries; but these were soon hushed by the menaces of the band, and by the rapidity with which they were hurried on, and which soon deprived them of all power of expostulation. Dame Mar-

guerite was treated with less ceremony ; the fellow to whose care she was committed flinging her across his horse, and galloping at speed to keep up with the party that preceded him, till the domains of Courtenaye were left far behind, and the drear prospect of a tract of barren sands and the waves of the Mediterranean beating on them, bounded the view of the fugitives by dawn.

CHAPTER IX.

And there are twenty weak and wearied posts.

SHAKSPEARE'S *Henry the Fourth*.

THE first tidings of the defeat of the Crusaders were borne to the Castle of Courtenaye the following night by Sir Aymer. The lord of the castle was in his hall inspecting the splendid banquet, the warders on the tower strained their eyes through the twilight to catch a glimpse of the expected messenger, and the men-at-arms and military retainers, fretting like caged lions, strode about the courts wild for intelligence, and swearing, had they been there, the news had not slumbered on its way. The slow and solitary tramp of a single rider was heard. The drawbridge went down with clash and jar ;

and beneath the raised portcullis, the fierce visages and warlike garb of the men-at-arms, flared out in the torch-light, borne by the crowding attendants. "What tidings?" cried a hundred voices. A single knight rode in like a spectre through the court till he reached the hall; there dismounting and clanking up to the deis, he sat moodily down, and flinging back his helmet, and disclosing his ghastly wounds, he answered, "Such as ye see, such as ye might expect. Sixty knights to charge six thousand men with that devil from hell, Raymond of Toulouse, at their head. Said I not so? What tidings?—Such as this torn jaw and bloody harness tell. De Montfort is down—Enguerrand de Vitry by this bestrides a corse—the Crusaders are cut off to a man. Amiral's lance will never more be laid in rest, and, by God's mother! all is stark nought.—You have my tidings. Now let me have a chirurgeon, or a stoup of wine, I care not how soon—the wine first, ere the rascal leech forbid it, and to qualify as it were the mountain dew I have been fain to swallow to-night, sorely

to the prejudice of mine orthodox lungs, which never imbibed such a heretic draught before."

As the knight thus harangued, casting his eyes round the deserted hall, he inquired for its lord. On the first intelligence of the defeat of the Crusaders, the Lord of Courtenaye in an agony of terror had secured himself in the highest tower of the castle, there surrounded by Thiband the astrologer, and a few menials. He gave and revoked orders, consulted and cursed the stars in the same breath, and finally would have shut the gates of the castle against the Crusaders, had it not been hinted to him that the first intimation of such hostility or repugnance might be fatal to himself. The repeated sounds of the horn, while the knight's wounds were dressing in a chamber apart, gave intimation of the escape and arrival of more of the Crusaders, and no remonstrances could prevent Sir Aymer from hastening to join them. "I tell thee," said he to the man of medicine, who represented the danger of farther exertion,—“I tell thee most learned leech, thou hast turned me into a

muming with thy salves and bandages already, and if I may not eat and drink, inter me quick at once—preach not to me of cullises and confections!—go cure chickens of the pip, and compound a charm for the tooth-ache, and find out the natural cause why we are cold when it freezes; but think not to cure me with aught but a draught of Malvoisie, and a stirring tale to wash it down,—that's your true *probatum est*." On descending to the hall, however, he found only the Abbot of Normoutier. "How, lord abbot," he cried, "are we the only survivors of this mad adventure?"—"There be also the Bishop of Toulouse, and the knights De Verac, Semonville, and Sir Paladour; but the bishop hath called for writing materials and shut himself up with a priest, meaning to send missives to Rome without delay."

"Then would I not stand in his report as De Montfort will, for the title of champion of the church," said the knight.

"De Verac and Semonville have hied them to their chambers."—"I conceive thee—where

the one will find solace in counting over his feathers and fringes, and the other in cuffing his lacquey till his valour be redeemed in his own opinion.”

“Marry, thou guessest well; they are confirmed in their resolve to pursue and redeem the lady Isabelle, who hath disappeared none knows how, save that the story that a spirit must be her bridegroom, hath gained much ground—I heard it long ago; but De Verac hath, in truth, returned to provide fair array on the quest, and Semonville to cuff his squire for misleading on their way:—for Sir Paladour (who rode here for aid to bear the body of Amiral from the field,)—when he heard that the lady Isabelle hath not yet been heard of, he made a vow that he would never return without tidings of her, and rode sadly away, scorning counsel or aidance, though such was the plight of steed and rider that I fear he will not lightly redeem his pledge.”

“Now, by the faith and fame of chivalry, done like an enamoured knight and a valorous!—And the lady Isabelle not heard of?—

this storm blows from all points. Ah, gallant Paladour! thou hadst not gone alone on thy perilous quest, had Amiral's foot held the stirrup still—Amiral," cried the veteran, his stout heart melting within him, and the tears falling fast over his hoary beard—"Amiral, brave and gentle boy, whose heart was as bold as thy favour was gracious, a blight came on a goodly spring when thou wast laid low—these white hairs had been a fitter crop for the grave than thy bright locks of youth—would God I had died for thee, Amiral, my son!"

"Worthy knight," said the abbot, "you have indeed cause to mourn for that youth—and the rather, as at your advanced years the loss must needs be irreparable; youth soon supplies its losses, but this misfortune hath befallen you when your body is enfeebled, your intellectuals weakened, your valour declining, your—"

"Beshrew thee for a comforter," interrupted the knight. "What, talkest thou of age? all mine ancestors were grey in their youth, and

your whoreson rheum is a villainous decayer of the teeth, and wrinkles come a man knows not how or why; but, bating these, what trace, what feature, what semblable proof of age canst thou quote in me? But I see how it is even with thee, thy understanding must be marvellously beclouded, or thou hadst not talked so long without a remnant of false Latin vilely applied. But what uproar have we here? does Hell keep holiday, or are the Albigeois broke loose again?"

The tumult arose from a difference between Verac and Semonville, who were each carrying matters to an extremity that threatened a dissolution of their brothership in arms, as hasty and motiveless as its commencement. On the intelligence that Sir Paladour had set forth, spite of his wounds and weariness, in quest of the lady Isabelle, they had instantly adopted a similar resolution, being no wise deficient in courage, or in that amorous devotion which was the character of the age; nor in that spirit of emulation with a distinguished rival, which is the character of every age.

But though they agreed in their object, they differed widely about the means of pursuing it; Sémonville insisting on setting forth instantly, after first giving due correction to Paladour's squire, who had led them astray on their path—and Verac, with equal tenacity, refusing to join in the expedition till certain costly garments he possessed, were well secured in his mails and sure to follow him as he ventured forth in quest of the lady—"for," as he internally said, "the fairest lady on earth may take her chance for thralldom or liberation ere I appear before her but in attire worthy of myself." The noise of their conflict had already reached the hall, where Sir Aymer and the Abbot of Normoutier, the former in spite of medical prohibition, and the latter in defiance of ecclesiastical rule, were, amid their differences on other points, completely agreed in draining every flaggon on the board, when the parties rushed before them, with an appeal for their counsel—Sémonville dragging in the false guide (as he termed him), and Verac calling all the

saints to witness, that never was lady delivered to her own satisfaction, to that of her champion and of Christendom at large, unless he were suitably arrayed for the enterprise.

The decision of those to whom they appealed, was suspended by the sound of a numerous train, unannounced by horn or herald, approaching the hall. This party had arrived late, no trumpet was blown in their van, no name or style proclaimed by har-binger; the warders hesitated whether to lower the drawbridge, and demanded whom they were to admit? "The corse of Simon de Montfort," exclaimed a female voice; "lower your drawbridge on the instant—the palace of King Philip might be proud to receive such guest." The drawbridge was lowered, the train admitted, and the Countess de Montfort, who had arrived too late for the conflict of the Crusaders, but had instantly set forth to seek for her husband's body, appeared preceding the litter on which the body of the champion of the Church, "gored with many a ghastly wound," was extended.—

Verac and Semonville, as she entered the hall, compromised their dispute, and whispered apart. Sir Aymer and the abbot rose (the latter with some difficulty) at the presence of the noble, martial-minded widow. She bowed not, nor looked towards them, while they stood like statues. The body of Count Simon de Montfort was extended on a table. The lady approached, and in deep and speechless anguish flung her arms on his chest---a faint respiration followed---Jane de Montfort started from the body in triumph---“ He lives ---he lives,” she cried; “ go, bear the tidings to the Bishop of Toulouse, (I know his purpose well)—tell him that De Montfort lives---the champion of the Church! and that his wife will wear corslet and poise brand herself, ere prince or prelate rob him of his title.”

CHAPTER X.

—— Arviragus,
'Thou hadst no sister near the bloody field,
Whose sorrowing search, led by yon orb of night,
Might find thy body, wash with tears thy wounds.

MASON'S *Caractacus*.

COUNT Raymond was not intoxicated with a victory, which he perceived to be owing solely to the temerity of the vanquished. He was aware also, that the first intelligence of the defeat of De Montfort and the knights would bring down the formidable force of their men-at-arms on the Albigeois—a force which, even without efficient leaders or skilful arrangement, threatened peril to the victorious party. Rejecting, therefore, the furious counsel of Mattathias, Boanerges, and their party, who, inebriated with success, urged

him to pursue his course even to the uttermost, and half promised that the sun should stand still on Gibeah, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, till the Lord had given his enemies into his hand, he issued his orders that the whole band should set forth towards the kingdom of Arragon, on his way towards which, he was in hopes of being joined by powerful succour from Toulouse.

This order was sufficiently grievous to the men-at-arms, who had by forced marches and desperate efforts, arrived at their present post ; and still more so to those they came to relieve. But both were sustained and recruited by a day's interval of refreshment and repose ; by the confidence of victory ; and by that hope of ultimate success, which, extravagant in itself, had that day received appropriate nurture from an event that completely defeated sober calculation, and laid the flower of chivalry at the mercy of the clubs and arrows of a scorned and excommunicated peasantry.

The submission to this order, though

strictly enforced, was marked with more humanity than the manners of that age generally admitted; the feeble and aged were to depart first, under a strong escort, and seek shelter with their protectors among the mountains; while the army of Count Raymond covered their retreat, and presented at the same time a formidable front to the enemy, whose pursuit was momentarily expected.

Among the first to submit to this order, though the least able to obey it, were Pierre and his granddaughter. Their progress lay through the field of the late slaughter, still strewed with the bodies of the Crusaders; and the diversity of the ground, every where broken by rocks, shaded by thickets, or intersected by streams, only rendered the spectacle of the carnage more terrible. To view a vast plain heaped with corpses, to see at once this ocean of the dead, and prepare to wade through, is, perhaps, a less fearful object to the imagination, than to totter along amid darkness and doubt, uncertain whether the next cavern does not echo the groan of

the dying, whether the shade of trees you approach does not wave over the dead, or the stream you tremble to cross is not tinged with the blood of the corse that lies pale and stark on its margin. Such were the feelings of Genevieve as, shuddering, she entered this valley of the shadow of death. Pierre, unable to walk, was supported in the arms of two of his flock; Genevieve followed, upheld by Amand, who trembled more than she did, but from a different cause. The path lay in darkness before them, but, as they passed a thick cluster of chesnuts, a light suddenly burst on their eyes. Count Raymond stood there in complete armour, dismissing his brief war-council; the torches held by his pages, gleamed alternately on the dark foliage of the trees and his polished cuirass and cuisses that shone like silver: round him stood dark forms, and darker visages, tinted by the torch-light, with the glow of fierce passions, and the glare of stern purposes; contrasting the pale and timid group that advanced trembling

at their intrusion, though commanded by duty.

“Who passes there?” said the count, with the quick and eager voice of one to whom suspicion and anxiety had become habitual. The attendants pointed out to him Pierre and Genevieve.

“I know that voice,” said Pierre, “though I must never behold the lips that utter it, in this life.”

Count Raymond recognized the sound, and caught in his mailed grasp the withered hand of the ancient pastor. “This hand pointed my way to life,” he cried, as he asked his benediction.

Of all the barbes or teachers of the Albigois, Count Raymond had confidence in Pierre alone, inspired and justified by the unearthly purity and apostolic simplicity of his spirit, character, and views; and the expression of this confidence was rendered more affecting by recent danger, and solemn from the circumstances of their meeting and the mute farewell which closed it.

“Israelite in whom, indeed, is no guile,” murmured Count Raymond, rejoining his band; “I have seen thee, perchance, for the last time, but when shall I behold thy like?” Thus honoured and greeted, the ancient man was borne on, and when they had wound their way through the defile, so fatal to the Crusaders the preceding day, Genevieve, dismissing Amand, prepared to follow Pierre and his attendants.

Their path was now less obstructed by corpses and broken armour, but often Genevieve shrunk from these objects which their loneliness rendered more ghastly; and she was alarmed by the distant and increasing tumult, which she guessed to proceed from the men-at-arms issuing from the Castle of Courtenaye, whose war-cries, calling on their fallen lords, rang wild and wide among the dark hills.

As grasping at the branches of the larch and fir, and the crags amid whose fissures they sprang, they toiled up their arduous way, a sudden blaze of light flashed on

them, and Genevieve, giving a sign to their guides to pause, gazed fearfully round her for the cause, and at a little distance beheld, under the shade of a gigantic ash-tree, a sad and noble sight. It was a woman, magnificently habited, who sat on the ground with the body of a warrior stretched on her knees. His helmet, gorget, and vant-brace, were off, so that all the lineaments of death were visible in his pallid but still ferocious aspect. Two priests stood by, who appeared too much terrified to pray; there were female attendants, who seemed to suppress their grief from reverence for the lady; and pages in silence held the torches, whose light, falling on the dark grey trunk of the ash-tree, gave a kind of ghastly background to the figures of the group. The lady sat gazing on the body; her hands were clasped on her forehead, and the jewelled bracelets with which her arms were bound, discovered her rank; her face was as pale as that of the warrior, and the silence of her

despair seemed to have awed her attendants into silence also.

“And is it thou?” she said at last, in a voice hoarse and broken—“this livid, cold, helpless thing—is this Simon de Montfort?”—and something between a shriek and a laugh burst from her lips. The women, seeming to take this as a signal, broke into lamentations.

“Hush,” she said, “weep for women or for babes; the warrior and the noble must have the death-groan of a thousand for his dirge.”

The priests then seemed to whisper consolation, or offer masses for the dead; she shook her head. “I knew thy bold spirit well,” she exclaimed, addressing the corse, “and if it retains aught of its former strain, it would joy less in Paradise for a hundred masses than for one war-cry thundered in battle. No, my husband—mine no more—for the tears of women and the prayers of priests, the blood of a thousand churls shall fall for every noble drop of thine, and thy tomb shall be the bravest warrior ever slept in—the bones

of a thousand enemies. So swears the widow of De Montfort, and Christendom shall see her oath fulfilled.”

Awe-struck by what she saw and heard, Genevieve attempted to hasten on, when the sound of a low and feeble moaning caught her ear; and near this spot she beheld an Albigeoise supporting her son, a dying youth, on her knees; she, too, was seated on the earth; but there were no attendants, no torches, no gems blazing around the figure of despair and passion. The mother wiped with her kerchief, from time to time, the blood and froth that gathered on the lips of her son, and often pressed her's to them with a brief agony she checked, to catch the hope which the sufferer tried to breathe, or to whisper it when that breath was suspended by pain. Her words betokened more anxiety about the immortal than the mortal part; she spoke, while yet she had hopes of being heard, of the blessed frame in which a believer should depart; she even, with choked voice and bursting heart, reminded him that for-

givenness of wrongs was the first requisite of that frame.

“Ill-fare the battle-axe of the Bishop of Toulouse!” murmured the youth; “it was that which laid me low.”—“Is it thus thou forgivest, my child?” said the mother.—“I could forgive them all—but bereaving thee of me: canst thou forgive them that?”—“I must!” said the mother.—“Then, I can,” said the boy.

A few moments after, by the motion of his lips (though he could not articulate distinctly) and the tossing of his weak limbs, the mother believed he might wish to say something, which she bent in vain to hear. “Thou wouldst say somewhat,” said she very slowly. Speaking with much difficulty and many intervals, the sufferer uttered:—“I—have—given you—sometimes—pain.”—“Never till now,” said the wretched mother, pressing a corse in her arms—“never, till this moment!”

Genevieve was rushing towards her, when her guides, assuming authority in their

turn, pointed out her way, and urged her vehemently to pursue it. She submitted when she looked at her grandfather; but she could not help exclaiming, "O that my corse may be bedewed with the tears of affection, not with the blood of vengeance!" As she spoke, she attempted to hurry on, till, her feet striking against a piece of armour, she fell; and when she rose with difficulty, perceived that her guides were at a distance, and that she had fallen near the body of a Crusader. The pale light fell full on the object, on which she could not help gazing with more than emotion. The plunderers had already rent away casque and breast-plate; the rest of the splendid armour announced the rank of the fallen warrior; but Genevieve was less struck by these than by the pale features and redundant hair of a youth of eighteen: his forehead was marked by a deep wound, and his white bosom was deeply gored by another. As Genevieve gazed on him, a choked and convulsive breathing announced that life

was not yet quite extinct. Genevieve bent over him involuntarily : the sigh was repeated more audibly ; and grasping at the hope of preserving one human life from the event of that bloody day, she had even the temerity to implore one who approached her, to assist in removing the wounded knight to the shelter of some tree or cave, “ where at least,” she said, “ the mountain-winds would not blow so unpiteously on his untended wounds.” The man, who had only returned to ask why she loitered, sternly refused her request, and demanded would she seek him to aid a Catholic, a “ persecutor and injurious ?” “ Alas !” said the maiden, “ he has no mother to hold his dying head—no noble widow to watch his corse. In the name of Him who *is* mercy, let us be merciful !—aid me to bear him but where he may die unpierced by the chill wind, and unrent by the wolf and the bear ! Alas, for pity !—in these bloody times the voice of war bids men hate each other ; but centuries ago

there was a voice that said, ‘Love one another,’ and to that voice I rather yield me.”

“I doubt thou dost,” said the speaker, whose voice betrayed Amand. “And is it thus, Genevieve, I find thee employed?”

“And how camest thou here?” said the startled Genevieve.

“Because I left father and mother to follow thee,” said the youth, bursting into an agony of indignant grief: “and would I had died ere I met thee thus!—the corpse of a foe is dearer to thee than the life of a friend.”

“I answer thee not!” said Genevieve, proud in the purity of her heart: “thou hast refused me thine aid, and I need not thy reproaches.”

“Reproaches! No, Genevieve!—nor shalt thou bear the reproach of the congregation through me. The secret of thy wishing to aid one of the accursed shall be kept as it were my own; though, were it told, it would

be a sin against thee and thy father's house to cut them off for ever."

"Do in that as thou wilt," said the maiden, who felt this promise somewhat like a threat: "for me, I am not a Jael to smite, but a Michal to aid in the time of peril and of escape. And weak as mine hands are, they may, in bearing this mangled frame to shelter, do more acceptable deed than the hands of those who laid it low this day." So saying, with her utmost strength she attempted to raise the wounded knight. A cry of pain, and an increased convulsion of the limbs, indicated that she gave only agony, but gave not relief. Amand could not see her straining her slender arms, and sighing as she resigned her helpless burthen without some touch of feeling; but when at the movement the blood again gushed from the wounds of the tortured youth, Amand forgot all his jealous feelings, and springing to her assistance, the body, with his added strength, was borne to a cave, where the young and graceful form lay pil-

lowed on stone as on a monument, and the thick clusters of the clematis and ivy hung bowring over it, like banners over a grave.

So said Amand, with perchance a sneer at the obsequies of chivalry, which he had been taught to hate and disdain. "And how," he asked, "wilt thou reward me for this toil?"—"With my prayers," answered the maiden, whose heart was lightened by this deed of mercy.—"Nay, a Catholic Beata could pay me with her prayers."—"Then, with my love."—"Ah, but thou lovest Heaven, the pastor—all but me."—"Then with my hand."—"Thy hand!" cried Amand.—"Yes, my hand," said Genevieve, with forced and mournful gaiety; "and give me thine in return to aid me to climb this steep; in sooth I cannot, without thy assistance—and it is to follow my father—and I am very weary. Nay," she added, straining her exhausted spirits to soothe his sullen mood—"Nay, frown not, Amand; would knight of chivalry refuse such favour from his lady?—and wilt thou reject mine?" He assisted

her in silence to ascend the steep; but the pressure with which he wrung her hand when she reached the summit, and the look he cast on her, visible even amid the darkness from its fierce intensity of expression, made her tremble. She knew not what she had to fear—but still she feared.

CHAPTER XI.

——— What if it lead you to the cliff,
And there assume some other horrible form,
That may deprive your sovereignty of reason.

Hamlet.

SIR Paladour set forward on his desperate search, mal-content and full of troubled thoughts. At the castle, or from the bands whom he occasionally met, he could obtain no information but that the lady Isabelle had been carried off by some unknown violence; and the Abbot of Normoutier, who might have been enabled to give a more particular account, he had not seen or conferred with. To prick forth alone, without guide or direction, in pursuit of a lady borne off by violence, was in the very spirit of the age, and,

if it had not, would still have been congenial to his daring spirit; but now he felt impelled to it by a wish to escape from a revisiting of those disastrous presages, which never failed to be awakened by the recurrence of recent misfortune.

Riding on, without path or hope, he found himself, towards midnight, on the verge of a heath, whose bounds were lost in darkness; and here, unknowing either region or track, he threw the reins on the neck of his weary horse, and, reckless whither he was borne, sat wrapt in his own dark musings. "Fate will no longer be mistaken!" Thus his thoughts ran. "She deals with me in oracles no longer. Evil befalls all around me,—and the flight of so many arrows shows at whom they are aimed. The lady of my love is the prey of violence!—the friend of my soul falls beside me in battle! This scattering of the leaves foretells speedy autumn. Would that the blast were come, and the despoiled tree were bowed to earth before it!" —"Many a tree in falling crushes the feller!"

said a voice distinctly near him, "and woe to him who lays axe to the root of that for which Heaven is whetting its own. Fear not, Sir Paladour, thou hast seen the goodliest of the forest strewed like willows around thee to-day, but the blast that shall level thy stately stem, is brooding yet in the treasury of heaven's own heaped and hoarded wrath."

Sir Paladour caught up his reins; the steed too, as if by instinct, started and stood sweating and pawing the earth. A form stood near him in shapeless darkness, but the sounds that issued from it rang in the ears of the knight, as those of a voice too well remembered. At any period to have encountered such greeting at midnight and in solitude, would require well-strung nerves. At that in which Paladour lived, it demanded courage almost superhuman. And in this peculiar instance, peculiar resolution was indeed necessary, for he recognized in that dark figure her who had piloted him over the lake, and whom he had afterwards encountered on a more fearful night, in the

vaults of the Castle of Courtenaye. The remembrance of the terrors of that night held him dumb, nor did the figure appear to wish to renew the topic, potent as it was: thus a singular silence was observed between them by a kind of mental and unexpressed compact on the subject of their last meeting, (it was, indeed, never discussed till a much later period,) and each seemed to prepare only for the present encounter.

The knight crossed himself, and repeated his credo and ave before he ventured to look round.

“Thou didst not tremble thus to-day,” said the shape, approaching and almost laying its hand on his rein. “Why tremblest thou at the voice of a being like thyself?”—“Mortal I scarce believe thee,” said the knight, “for when did aught mortal touch me with fear such as I now feel?”—“Yet mortal I am,” answered the voice, “for I suffer, and I come to announce suffering. Lackest thou other proof of my being one of thy own wretched race? Fling all your warn-

ings, voices of the dead, cries heard in the still night, or whispers from the tomb, all that terror has taught, or credulity believed, in one scale, and weigh it against the denunciatory voice of the living, who announces woe and can verify the announcement, and see how the scale inclines."

"In the name of all that is sacred," said the knight, in whose ears the voice of his strange pilot over the lake became more and more distinct, "whence comest thou, and where art thou sped?"—"Whence I come," answered the voice, "I know not; whither I go, I reckon not. But for thee, Paladour, I can tell whence thou comest, and whither thou speedest. Thou comest from a feast where thou wast at once viand and caterer; the feast of war, where fools are food; where life is lavished we know not why, and eternity risked we care not wherefore. Thou comest from fighting against the fools who make pleasure a crime, in the cause of those more desperate fools

who make crime their pleasure. Thou comest from that mart of deadly traffic, where deeds are given in security for words, and he who believes he knows not what, signs the bond of his blind creed with his blood, and dreams that the Almighty will ratify the contract and repay the loss. From such spot thou comest, and thou art hastening where the frail idol of thy earth-bound heart is held by a stronger arm, and kept in cage where thy beak may be blunted, and her gay plumage soiled, ere its wires be broken, and the bird be free."

The knight, overpowered and appalled as he was by her words, caught in the last a hope to which the very fibres of his heart clung; yet, dreading alike to provoke or attempt to soothe one whose malignity seemed so unappeasable, and fearing that his betraying solicitude would be the very means of its defeat, he tried to speak with evasive caution.

“Thou hast truly said why I am here, now tell me as truly wherefore thou art?”—
“To serve thee, to serve thee, doubtless,” she answered; “Oh, wherefore else do I live,” she repeated with a frantic laugh, “but to be thy slave and work out thy purposes at the risk of these miserable remains of withered life and ruined intellect? I tell thee, Paladour, I can point thee to the very spot where the lady of thy love was borne this night.”

The knight shrunk back in horror at the thought that the fate of the lady Isabelle was in the power or even the knowledge of such a being. The female mistook the cause of his emotion.

“And shrinkest thou, Sir knight of the bloody cross? Craven knight! could not one stamp of my foot have overset the bark when I rowed thee on thy way to the Castle of Courtenaye? Could not one breath of my lips bring around thee the heretic warriors, who wander yet on the verge of this heath, and would count thee an acceptable sacrifice to

their vengeance, and call it an offering to the Lord?"—"Cease, accursed hag!" cried the knight; "into the hands of heretics themselves would I fall, rather than into thine."—"Choose thy next guide thyself," said the shape, turning from him. "Nay, hold, hold!" as she rushed away, "hold and turn," he shouted; "I yield me to thy guidance, show me but the path where she hath been borne, the hold where she is constrained—the one I will pursue at my life's dearest peril; the other, were it guarded by fiends, I will assail, were my soul's safety on the issue."—"Life and soul!" said the figure, returning, "a goodly risk, and manfully perilled;" and she strode on with a step rapid, yet light and firm.

They were in a sandy morass, where his guide, who knew the track, bounded from one tenable spot to another with incredible celerity, while the wearied and heavily encumbered steed flounced from moss to mire, and from stone to turf, embarrassing himself and his rider.

“Alight,” said the figure, “and leave thy steed here; he shall be tended. What! afraid again? and of a woman? and yet deep reason hast thou to dread woman,” she said, speaking to herself; “and deeper still hath woman to dread thee; yet fear not her who partakes neither of the weakness of her sex, nor the brutal strength of thine, who has ceased to hope, or fear, or feel; who has no remaining link to bind her to life, save that which throbs with pain—who knows not that she lives but when she feels she suffers.” —“I understand not thy words, nor dare to scan their meaning,” said the knight alighting; “but it never shall be said that fiend, in the form of woman or man, repulsed Paladour from peril or adventure. To our dear Lord’s grace and Mary’s might I commit me in this strait; but I had rather follow the fallen banner of the Cross in ten such fields as were lost this dread and disastrous day, than guide like thee, save in such cause.”

As he spoke, the female began ascending a cliff, that suddenly rose amid the swamp,

with a speed and strength almost miraculous; and the knight, though well nigh exhausted, and encumbered with his heavy armour, followed with a vigour and celerity which he owed partly to a frame that united the most knitted muscular strength with boyish lightness, and partly to an excitement which strung his nerves with preternatural energy. The female, who saw him almost overtake her in the wild bounds and desperate graspings of a track known but to herself, and where no step but his would have dared to follow, seemed from time to time to look back on him with a kind of reluctant admiration. “And must it be so?” she muttered to herself, “so fairly fashioned—so clear and bold a spirit!—See how he bounds from crag to crag—how he grasps at a tuft of withered grass, and, now that it fails, springs upward with the whole strength of his gallant frame! That was the arm that struck the giant De Montfort to the earth in the lists—that was the foot that held its stirrup last in the bloody field—that was the

ample chest from which thundered the war-cry of La Croix Sanglante, when prouder voices were hushed, and more boastful tongues were cold. Welcome, welcome!" she exclaimed, as if priding in her victim, who had toiled to the summit of the cliff; then suddenly turning on him, "Now dash thyself below---leave thy body in ten thousand fragments to be snatched by the vultures, and commit thy soul to heaven! Thou shudderest, but be warned, (I warn thee in mercy,) and follow me no farther."

"I ever deemed thee a fiend, and thine is a fiend's counsel," said the knight, as he stood on the steep, dizzy with toil, famine, and fatigue; "but whither wouldst thou indeed lead me?"---"*To thy wish, fool,*" said the female: "now judge if I give thee not kind counsel to perish rather. She who points a sudden and desperate death to the sufferer, perchance shows him mercy; but she who guides thee to thy wish, guides thee to wretchedness, so bitter, so inevitable, so deadly, that---knit not thy brow, or handle thy brand---

thou hast already determined. One moment's pause of feeling came over *my* heart---one moment of reflection was allowed *thee*---both abused, both lost, there remains but this---now follow me," and she plunged from the summit of the crag, like an eagle from its eyry. The knight followed more slowly, yet reached the plain almost at the same moment; it was a waste extent of sand interrupted sometimes by rocks, over which the female seemed to glide, ever beckoning her wearied associate to follow. It was now near morning; a pale grey light gleamed on a range of headlands and promontories, broken by deep and sinuous bays full of sands heaped up to a formidable height, and so curved, that the point one seemed to touch with the eye, required a mile's toil to reach. The distant thunder of the breaking surge was heard, but so faintly, that the knight heard distinctly the hissing of the sands under his mailed feet; and this sound so calm and monotonous formed almost a fearful contrast to the deep silence of his guide. Suddenly, his companion springing

on a ledge of rock which rose in their way, and motioning to him to follow, extended her arm towards an object faintly seen in the hazy light, and exclaimed, "There is l'Aigle sur la Roche, the hold of that fierce outlaw who keeps thy lady in thrall." Paladour, straining his sight, could scarce discover a mass of rock that projected far into the sea, and seemed to be terminated land-ward by a morass, thus forming nearly a peninsula. On its summit arose something of which the eye could scarce ascertain whether it were edifice or rock piled on rock, so much did its massive and perpendicular structure seem like a part of the cliff it was perched on. Its aspect was so dreary and formidable, that the knight, as he withdrew his eyes from that unassailable hold, and turned them on his own solitary and unaided person, could not prevent a heavy sigh of despondency bursting from his bosom.

"Yes, yonder is l'Aigle sur la Roche," said his guide, as if answering his thoughts; "and when thou canst win the eagle to drop the

lamb he has pounced on, still despair to rescue the prey from the fangs of the outlaw; and when thou hast caused the Alps to rock to their foundations, then dream of making a pinnacle fall from the battlements of your tower.”—“ Then,” said the knight, with re-kindled eye, “ are those walls doomed to ruin as sure as the light of heaven’s sun is rising on them this hour! for never yet did aught perilous or desperate invite me to the encounter unfoiled; nor need I higher assurance of victory, than to hear that my foe is invincible.”

At this moment, as he fixed his eagle eyes on the tower, at which already they seemed to take fatal aim, something was seen moving on the summit of the rock, which the distance prevented their distinguishing as human forms; but the next moment the blast of a horn that woke the thousand echoes of the shore, suggested to Paladour the thought, that perhaps at that moment, the lady and her attendants were entering the hold of the outlaw. They were, indeed, the prisoners

whom Adolfo and his band had seized the preceding day, and whom they were now conveying to their fastness.

From the moment of her recovery from the swoon into which her terror had thrown her, the lady Isabelle had in vain supplicated to know in whose power she was, or whither she was to be borne; her entreaties, aided by the louder cries of her attendants, were heard in silence, and the horsemen pursued their course at full speed, treating their prisoners, however, with all the gentleness their situation rendered possible. Towards midnight, conceiving themselves beyond the reach of pursuit, they slackened their pace, and at length halted in a valley, where, spreading their mantles on the ground, and assisting their prisoners to alight, they invited them with no uncourteous gestures to partake of the refreshments with which they were spread. This was the only interruption to their journey, till by dawn they reached the tower of l'Aigle sur la Roche. After passing the gate, they were conducted into a rude hall, without

windows or any light, except through a narrow slit near the door. The walls were of unhewn stone, and the floor was flagged in compartments to resemble a chess-board. On this some of the band were stretched and playing, as the party entered: their oaths and vociferations were hushed in a moment; they rose and retired respectfully, and the lady and her attendants remained alone with their captors, who stood in silence round them, without either removing their masks, or throwing off their mantles. It seemed as if they knew not how to deal with their prisoners, while the latter stood trembling, not knowing what danger they were to deprecate first, or to whom they were to make their appeal. The lady Isabelle alone struggled to resume that air of insulted dignity, of which fatigue and terror had almost deprived her. Accustomed to command, she considered the expression as equal to the habit, and the assumption of it did for a moment awe the rude and lawless men who surrounded her. At this moment, dame Marguerite, who had collected her

breath, advanced, and with grimaces that seemed to the lady to indicate insanity, welcomed her to *her* castle, lamented the hardships of her rapid journey, and assured her that her reception should be worthy of the noble knight, her bridegroom, who——Here dame Marguerite, on a sign from the principal of the band, was borne in a moment from the hall; while after a pause he advanced with an air of embarrassment, and, pointing towards a narrow door at the extremity of the hall, seemed to intimate his wish that she should ascend a staircase of stone on which it opened. The lady, who saw she could not choose but obey, cast a look of agony round her, but, perceiving that her damsels were permitted to follow, began to ascend, declining all proffer of assistance from the dark knight, which the steepness of the stair seemed to require, while its narrowness rendered the ascent of more than one at a time impossible. Thus, with steps whose falterings she tried to conceal, and with a heart whose tremblings she scorned to betray,

the noble beauty, wrapt in her veil, ascended the stairs in silence, rejecting all aid, but ever casting a watchful wistful look on her damsels, who followed close behind.

The tower of l'Aigle sur la Roche, built by a predatory baron of the preceding century, rose eight stories from the rock in which its foundations were sunk, and which was impregnable to any mode of assault known in those days. Each story contained a large square apartment roofed and floored with stone, and furnished with small recesses, hollowed in the solid walls, of various shapes, some wholly dark, some lighted only by a loop-hole. The apartment on the ground-floor was a kind of guard-room; that above it, a rude banquet-room; the recesses, or niches rather in both, serving the banditti for the purpose of sleeping in. The upper apartments were occupied as armouries or store-rooms for plunder; but the topmost had been formerly fitted up with some care for the favourite of the lawless man who built the tower, and was the only apartment in the whole

structure that could boast of a window, or rather casement, whose stanchion of stone and shattered panes seemed rather to tell of the comfort and elegance it was intended once to bestow, than to afford either now. All these apartments communicated by a spiral staircase of stone, whose only level landing-place opened on this apartment, while a few ascending steps led to a bartizan, from whence the piercing eye of the outlaw could discern (it was said for miles) his prey, land and sea, and arm his band or man his bark to seize whatever spoil either element might afford. It was to this apartment the lady Isabelle ascended, and it was evident that it had been furnished for her reception with a kind of rude and hasty splendour. Tapestry was hung on the walls by wooden pegs stuck between the interstices of the stones, but in many places those walls of ragged stone were totally bare. A vast wood-fire blazed on the hearth, and a lamp, suspended by a soiled and tarnished chain from the raftered roof, hung swinging to and fro as if but re-

cently placed there. The bed, with its silken canopy, was worthy the chamber of a princess, but there was an incongruity, a want of appointment in the chamber, which, with all its coarse and lavish display of splendour, reminded its unfortunate visitor too strongly of the well-regulated magnificence of her bower in the Castle of Courtenaye. The damsels, too, shuddered when they observed there was not in the apartment, either a vessel for holy water, a crucifix, or an image of the Virgin. The outlaw, after pointing the lady to a bench covered with tapestry, and placing before her a trivet covered with refreshments and costly wines, and by gestures inviting her to partake of them, retired.

The lady Isabelle, who had continued speechless from terror, indignation, and the nameless dread of what their expression might expose her to, if she opened her lips, sat in silence for some moments after he had departed; then rising, as with an instinctive movement, she approached the casement, and flinging it open, gazed with fearful earnestness

on the prospect below. The tower here rose perpendicularly from the rock ; two hundred feet below its foundations the waves of the Mediterranean were beating the rock, which, rushing out into a promontory, increased the agitation of the waves, that roared like exhausted thunder at its base, and tortured by the crags and cavities, tossed their spray, like the bound of sea-monsters, to a terrific height on the terraces into which the rock had been hewn for the accommodation of the outlaw's men. The lady Isabelle looked down in dizzy terror on a sight she had never before beheld, an inscaleable rock, and the ocean in fury foaming at its base. She closed the casement, and, turning from it, advanced a few steps into the apartment. She spoke not, but despair was in her features. Her damsels, who had watched her looks, now flung themselves at her feet, and grasping her robes, as if for protection, burst into those wild expressions of grief, which reverence for their lady, and hope derived from her, had hitherto suppressed.

The noble maiden, at this sight, felt her long-sustained courage and high-wrought spirit fail, and, after vainly pressing her hands on her bosom, as if to aid her painful respiration, she burst into an agony of tears.

CHAPTER XII.

I will marry her, sir, at your request; and though there be no great love in the beginning, yet heaven may decrease it on more acquaintance.

SHAKSPEARE'S *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

IN the mean time, the other apartments in the tower were filled with their various occupants, all intent on their own pursuits. The bandits had retired to calculate on the princely ransom of the heiress --- Adolfo to drink with his comrade---and dame Marguerite had been at an early period of her arrival borne off to another apartment by one of the band, to whom Adolfo had given a sign. This apartment was no better than one of the recesses we have before mentioned; its form was that of an acute angle, of which the vertex ended in a loop-hole not more than six

inches wide, but being *bevilled* inwards, the immense thickness of the wall allowed it to effuse more light through the recess than its narrow aperture promised, but that light fell only on rugged walls, a stone bench, and an ill-carved image, which was once intended for a crucifix. On this stone-bench was dame Marguerite seated perforce, and pouring forth loud reproaches against her uncourteous conductor. "My lord," said the bandit, who had his lesson, "requires that all this be received and understood as the testimony of his infinite respect for the virtuous and discreet Marguerite."

"Respect me no respects!" cried the gouvernante: "respect hath flung me across a horse, as a miller's boy would a sack of flour---respect hath shaken mine entrails to a jelly---respect hath dislocated every joint in my frame---respect hath rent my veil and head-gear to rags---respect hath torn my tunic and skirt in a fashion shameful and piteous to behold---respect hath thrust me into no better than a dog-hole;---and then comes respect to

hope that all is to my liking :---the foul fiend fly away with such respect ! I have been treated with civil rudeness once and again, and have borne, yea, and made civil return, when there was no offence done but such as gentlewomen might and ought to bear with in civility ; but thy respect, knave, I cannot away with.”---“ Perchance all was done in curious delicacy, to prevent the suspicions of the lady Isabelle, who might be jealous of service done to one who so far excels her in beauty.”---“ She was indeed strangely jealous of me,” said dame Marguerite, propitiated by this homage to her incredible folly ; “ and had I not deemed that seeing me preferred by a young and valiant knight would have been a wholesome lesson to her vanity, I had never encountered such trial. Marry, the issue has cost me more than her for whose behoof it was undergone : this is what we get by aiming at the good of others. But, mercy of Heaven ! what place is this they have borne us to ? Where be the fair attendance, the noble knight, the love-suit, and

the gallants waiting? Meseems, this is more like a robber's hold than a knight's castle--- more like what I have fearfully heard men tell of l'Aigle sur la Roche, or some haunt of bandits."---"Nothing can escape thy penetration, sage Marguerite," said the robber; "thou art indeed in the fastness of that outlaw, whom courtesy forbids me to name, terrible as the sound must be to ears feminine." The scream uttered by the wretched woman at this disclosure certainly pierced the robber's ears, but had not the same effect on his feelings, for he listened with perfect *sang-froid* to the exclamations that followed. "What! am I betrayed?" shrieked Marguerite. "Did not this Judas appear among the train of the Abbot of Normoutier?---did he not win mine ear with a tale of a noble knight who loved and would make me his bride?---did he not say that he would the lady Isabelle might be there to witness the bridal?---and did I not do him to wit how she might be seized when her attendants were away but yesterday, when the

Crusaders went on their mad course? And is this the reward of my faithfulness and loyal dealing? Where is the castle to receive me? --- where is the bridegroom to welcome me? --- where is the promise that the lady Isabelle should bow herself before me? An' it had not been to chastise her vanity, as it were, thou hadst never seen me here."---"The chastisement may not be thrown away, though it hath missed the lady Isabelle for the present," said the robber: "in the mean time be not discomfited, amiable Marguerite; for, I swear to thee, thou shalt meet thy promised bridegroom to-night, though it be in the walls of l'Aigle sur la Roche."---"Nay, if I am to meet him to-night," said the gouvernante, "that mollifies. But, now that I think on it, I am and will be discomfited; I have had nought to breakfast. Send me suddenly a manchet and a cup of pigment, and let the lady Isabelle, or one of her lazy damsels, attend to arrange my coif and veil; else look to it, knave;—and, dost thou hear? tell the knight, my lover, to

cause some tapestry to clothe these walls and cover this unsightly bench of stone ; for of a truth, since my so speedy journey, this seat feels like aught but a bed of roses." The answer of the robber was interrupted by three blasts of a horn, wound at short intervals. Starting at the sound, he hastened to the hall, where Adolfo was, leaving Marguerite to dream of tapestry, pigment, a new coif and tunic, and the lady gazing with envy at her bridal magnificence.

The outlaw was carousing in the hall, or guard-room, with Gerand, the second in command, a sullen and ferocious character, but desperately brave ; and both were revelling in the pride of success and the wantonness of rude luxury. "A health," shouted Adolfo, "to the brain that devised, and the hand that wrought, the boldest emprise that ever crowned an outlaw !—a health to the eagle who holds in his talons a prey that makes him indeed the king of birds ! Now pledge me deeply, Gerand ! I have a glorious vision of the huge coffers of the Lord of

Courtenaye yawning like opening graves, and yielding up to a joyful resurrection some thousands of bezants and golden crowns that have slumbered there for centuries.”

“Thy rashness had well nigh lost us the sight of that beatific vision,” muttered Gerard. “What a plague hadst thou to do to thrust thyself amid the Crusaders and the heretics, like some fantastic knight of adventure in a troubadour’s song, and set lance in rest when thou shouldst have laid spur to flank. An’ thy foolish humour of valour were not near marring the game and missing the prize, I would I might never rob pilgrim again !”

“By St. Dennis of France !” answered the outlaw, “I went with purpose to have secured the lady first ;—but when I heard the war-cry shouted and the bugles wound, and saw the banners stream and the knights charge, I could not choose but share the feast to which I had such noble invitation ; and hadst thou tasted of it, thou wouldst

have marvelled how one in harness could quit it so soon."

"This valour of thine at times leaves thee no better than a common man," said Gerand sullenly. "When the lady and train were borne hither, thou stoodest before them abased and mute, like one who knew not whether thou wast their prisoner, or they thy thrall, as I am a true man!"

"Say rather, as thou art a false knave!"

"All's one for that. I was about to ask thee whether we were not best to convey them to their castle back again."

"By the mass! and if thou hadst, at that moment I would have said, 'Marry, with all my heart!' I am not one to blench for the threats of man or the tears of woman;—but when I saw that noble lady, standing so beautiful and pale and helpless, amid a band of rude, lawless knaves like thee, I stood before her like a chidden urchin, and felt *that* tug at my heart-string which I am a fool to tell thee of, who couldst as soon con thy breviary as give utterance to one gentle thought."

“ Here be fit time and place for gentle thoughts !” said Gerand, as the blast of the horn made both spring to their feet and grasp their daggers instinctively, and the robber who had just left Marguerite, rushed into the hall.

“ How now !—thy tidings, knave ?”

“ A band of pilgrims, wealthily laden as I guess—for they travel slowly, and have armed men in their company—are about to cross the morass,” said the robber.

“ We will take order that the weight of their baggage do not sink them. Now, honour to the Saints ! they bring us ever our best visitors. A pestilence on those peevish Albigeois ! Did their cursed heresy prevail, there would not be a pilgrimage in the land to pay toll to the warders of our lonely tower. Fie on them ! I say. Where be our masks and mantles ? Summon our men ! These pilgrims have full wine-bags to be pressed, and boxes of costly reliques, and, perchance, purses of bezants. Foul shame it were if the holy men laboured under their

weight long, while quick hands were near to lighten them. St. Dennis so speed me in this essay, as I will dedicate on his altar four wax-candles, each of bigness enough to be the pillar of a church! Ever most generous Saint! send me a company of jolly pilgrims, and it shall go hard if thy altars be not the brightest in every church in France. And for the rest, so help me Heaven! I will clear off all next Easter with the Abbot of Normoutier."

"These be thy gentle thoughts," said Gerand with a sullen sneer. The outlaw laughed: "I warred with knights yesterday: do thou engage with pilgrims to-day:—each to his destiny."—"But not to his choice," said Gerand gloomily, as he masked himself.

The outlaw was following, when the messenger grasped his arm. "The prisoner within," said he, "hath become outrageous. She says, she will be wedded to-night."—"Then wed her thyself!" said Adolfo, flinging him off, "and rid me of her and thee."—"Wed her!" quoth the robber; "I would

sooner hang her, withered succuba !”—“ Then hang her, an’ thou wilt, so thou molest me not.”—“ Marry and will ; from the highest pinnacle of thy tower thou shalt see her like a kite nailed to a peasant’s barn, and her kirtle floating like a banner, on thy return.”—“ Hark thee, knave,” said the outlaw, flinging back his houpland, and fixing the full force of his commanding eye on the speaker, “ I will have no cruelty. She is a fool, and treacherous ; but though thou mayest mock, thou shalt not abuse her ;—she is a worthless fringe on the garment which I kiss with my heart’s lips. I yield her to thy sport, but not thy barbarity ; and for the rest, on thy life meddle not with the female prisoners.”—“ Ay,” said the robber, when he was out of hearing, “ by his own good-will he would never have any one meddle with the female prisoners but himself.”

The lady Isabelle, from her casement, saw the brigands depart, and clasped her hands in a short moment of ecstasy ; and she even augured well from the frequent demands for

aid from the tower. Troop after troop poured out ; while the tower rang, from base to summit, with the hasty step of those who rushed to seize their arms, and made the port and drawbridge ring with their steel-shod steps. The conflict seemed a dangerous one ; and it was late in the twilight of that evening that the horn was blown, and faintly answered by the wearied party who wound their way up the rock. The iron voice of the outlaw was heard through the eight stories of the tower by ears quickened by terror. “ Fling the pilgrims into the dungeon ; let them see if their beads will ransom them ! Bear the wounded knight to safe tendance : give me a draught of wine : an’ he were not a Crusader, I would fling him from the summit of this rock, wounded as he is. We will hold him to ransom, and he shall pay in gold for every drop of blood he hath cost us to-day : but for his mad aid, we had won that band of pilgrims for saying ‘ Stand !’ A cup of wine, knaves ! and stick a torch in yon niche of the hall, that I may do myself right

when I am pledged to myself alone, and ye are howling over your paltry hurts, like maimed curs in a peasant's cottage. But look to the wounded knight, I charge ye. He bore him bravely. I would not see him suffer wrong for twice the value of this day's booty."

The wounded knight (who was no other than Paladour) was borne insensible in the arms of two of the robbers, who, still smarting under the wounds he had dealt with no sparing hand, were not in the mood to treat their charge too gently.

"Where have ye left the prisoner?" said Gerand, who saw them descending the stair by the light of a torch Bertran (one of them) carried. "Where best beseems his valour to be," said Bertran. "He fought to-day like a devil, and we have bestowed him where he will have devils enough to fight with,—in that dark chamber where the fiend is heard to yell so fearfully at night. Being a Crusader, he is doubtless armed with a spell or relique, or such godly gear as will

prevent the fiend, and save us from being tormented before our time.”—“Tarry, and lend me thine arm, knave,” said Gerand: “my wounds begin to ache, and I am not in the mood for the fierce revel that Adolfo is to win courage to accost the lady with. He hath sworn he will treat with her for her ransom to-night.”—“Hasten back,” said Bertran to his comrade, “and I will treat thee with a scene of mirth worth all the feats of a jongleur, or the moralities played by the priests at Easter.” His companion soon joined him, and they proceeded together to dame Marguerite’s cell, who saw with delight the gleam as it appeared through the many crevices of her door. “Noble lady,—for so we must call you now,” said Bertran, with a low obeisance,—“we come to conduct you to the presence of your noble and enamoured knight.”—“In good time,” said the dame; “for here have I sat all day, like an owl in the hole of a ruined wall, with no companion save the wind whistling through the loop-hole—no couch save this seat, that would mortify the

limbs of a hermit—no food but a sorry loaf and a pitcher of sour wine,—with sundry other lacks that a gentlewoman cannot signify. Truly this knight of thine had needs be valiant and loving, to make amends for all I have borne for his sake.”—“Thou wilt find him all that troubadours sing and maidens dream of, and, moreover, impatient to clasp thee to his bosom.”—“Nay, I will not be so fiercely handled,” said the dame.—“I doubt thou wilt,” said the other outlaw.—“He is, perchance, very young, then,” said Marguerite, simpering.—“Thou wouldst not credit me if I said how young,” said Bertran.—“He was but three when he was caught,” quoth the other.—“Caught!” echoed Marguerite.—“Alas! noble lady,” said Bertran, winking at his comrade, “he is, like thyself, a captive: two years hath he been the thrall of Adolfo, who now repents him that he hath held him so long prisoner, and will shortly set him free ransomless.”—“Nay, for that matter,” said the dame, “an imprisoned knight hath a rich charm for the fancy of a

maiden like me, who always loved a romaunt better than her breviary; and, as long as he is a thrall, there is less fear of his escaping from me. But, faithful squire, you have never painted to me the goodly favour of your knight.”—“Marry, for his looks,” said Bertran, stroking his chin, “there be those who like them not; but, nevertheless, he hath somewhat, methinks—I know not how, as it were, to phrase it—somewhat that strangely resembles thine own favour, noble lady.”—“Then he is not altogether uncomely,” said the dame, spreading her hand before her face.—“Every whit as comely as thou art,” answered the other.—“And he is of an ancient noble stock, thou tellest me?” said the dame.—“Nay, of the most ancient family in France:—men say his ancestors were lords of mountain and plain ere the forefathers of King Philip were known; and that all our nobility were the sons of yesterday, compared to his high and unknown descent.”—“Young, noble, and enamoured—and a prisoner!—lead me to him,

and I will yield what solace an afflicted maiden can give," said Marguerite.—“ Yet how shall I present myself to him, my tunic rent, my coif disarranged, my hair disordered, my—” “ Trust me, noble lady,” said Bertran, “ he would better like thee all disarrayed.”—“ You make me blush,” murmured Marguerite.—“ That would be a task to defy the devil,” said the comrade.—“ How meanest thou?” said the dame.—“ He means,” quoth Bertran, winking again at his comrade, “ that the devil himself could not raise a blush on a cheek like thine, unconscious of aught but the glow of maiden pudency.”— So saying, Bertran supported one arm, while his comrade lighting a splinter of pine at the torch, caught the other, and led the dame, nothing loth, through a paved passage, near the centre of which was a circular aperture covered by a stone, about the size of that through which the Cardinal de Guise was thrust into a dungeon, and afterwards murdered, and which a modern traveller declares to be no larger than that of a hole in the

pathways of London for admitting coals. The party, as they approached the brink of this precipice, might have presented a group for a Gothic Hogarth. The fierce light that gleamed from the splintered pine, fell on the figures of the robbers, who were half-armed, their steel-caps and breast-plates clasped, but in coats of buff leather; and between them minced the dainty form of dame Marguerite, her head-gear aside; the ringlets, that should have shaded her forehead, streaming on her shoulder, and her whole costume *tout-a-tort*.

“ Here rest we,” said Bertran, stopping at the circular stone. “ Here waits thy bridegroom.”—“ Where?” exclaimed Marguerite.—“ Even where I stand,” said the robber; “ and here thou must descend to meet his embraces.”—“ How, in the name of all the devils, am I to descend,” quoth the irritated *gouvernante*, “ through a hole that would not admit a weasel?”—“ Noble lady, thou dost cruel wrong to thy slight form in saying so,” said Bertran; “ divest thee of thy superfluous trappings, and thou mayest defy a score

of weasels.”—“ Spare my veil,” cried Marguerite.—“ It might be rent by the craggy stones of the vault,” said Bertran.—“ But my kirtle and tunic—nay, this is going too far.”—“ Thy knight will love thee best so disarrayed.”—“ But my skirt ?”—“ And how couldst thou with that monstrous skirt, hung round with pouncet-box, fan, and God knows what fooleries, make thy way to thy enamoured knight down such a narrow passage?—doff them altogether.”—“ Nay, ye have doffed me of them already, but wherefore those ropes ? I will not be bound.”—“ Ay, bound for ever to thy knight by these ropes, which thou shalt henceforth call silken cords, that form the steps of thy ladder of ambition and desire :—how should else thy taper waist and slender limbs be visible to thy knight, who howls and maddens in his apartment below to grasp thee ?”—“ Bind me, then, if it must be,” said Marguerite, as, winding the rope round her waist, they lowered her through the aperture, and then heaving up the flags on both sides of the hole, held the pine-torch far

downwards to watch her reception from her noble lover.

The unfortunate Marguerite found herself in a vault of narrow dimensions, of which the faint gleam of light from above enabled her only to descry a portion ; judging, however, that a noble and enamoured knight lay captive in the dungeon, she prepared to address him :—

“ The light of beauty, it is said, can irradiate the darkest prison, and I have heard troubadours sing that the gleam of their lady’s eyes could pierce even the dungeon’s darkness, in which knights were held captive by cruel Saracens ; how much more then, noble though enthralled knight”—a hideous howl, or rather yell, here burst on her ears.—“ Take not thy captivity so to heart, noble prisoner ; here is one who will turn thy thrall to pleasure—thy chains to—Oh, God ! how his eyes glare—this is no knight—how his yell appals me—it is—it is a demon”—as a wolf that was kept in the dungeon for the purpose of terrifying the prisoners, or perhaps

for a more horrible one, sprang at her as far as his chain allowed him. The shrieks of Marguerite actually drowned the yell of the savage. "Take me up! take me up!" she screamed, "or ye shall be hung from the highest battlement of your tower."—"Nay, is it thus thou flyest from thy bridegroom?" cried the banditti, laughing at her terrors; and they continued to repeat in succession,— "Consider his ancient descent—his youth—his resemblance to thyself—his wish to clasp thee to his bosom—his captivity," till Marguerite, mad with terror, made a desperate spring to catch at the hole of the vault, and, on their raising her from it, darted instinctively towards the staircase; and half-dressed as she was, lost not a step, or suffered one scream to overtake another, till she had reached the door of the lady Isabelle's apartment.

CHAPTER XIII.

He threw her on a milk-white steed,
An' himsel' lap up behind her;
An' they are awa' to th' Highland hills,
An' her friends they canna' find her.

Old Ballad.

THOSE screams, which might have awakened the dead, broke the deep trance of one who was almost so. Paladour had been savagely flung on the stone-floor of one of the chambers of the tower by the bandits. The wound he had received in his encounter with the robbers had stunned him; it was dextrously directed at the fracture in his helmet, which the clubs of the Albigeois had left the preceding day. Our knight was no hero of the troubadour's songs, who could fight three days and nights in his stirrups, sans intermission, and undergo wounds without pain in suffering, or difficulty in healing—he was mortal both in frame and feeling.

He had toiled among the Crusaders in sweat and blood, during the day of which the Albigeois had reaped the bloody harvest—his night had been one of travel, terror, and weariness. He had joined at dawn the pilgrims who were assailed by the band of Adolfo, against whom his lance had been driven with resistless force, till, yielding to lassitude, his arm began to droop, and, his armour pointing him out as a prey to the robbers, he was borne to l'Aigle sur la Roche, and, in a state between swoon and sleep, lay apparently senseless till awakened by the shrieks of dame Marguerite. Then a dim vision rolled over his clouded senses—he thought himself among the Crusaders, and struggled to shout his war-cry, “*La Croix sanglante!*” Then came on that horrid feeling of obtuse pain that men experience between sleeping and waking, when they begin to know that they are to awake in pain, to the recollection of suffering that has been endured, or the anticipation of suffering that is to commence.—Then

the distinct recollection of his having been engaged in a wild adventure for a party of pilgrims—of his being struck down—he knew not by whom, and borne he knew not where.—Last, as if to soothe him into the belief that all had been a dream, came the bright image of the lady Isabelle, “smoothing the darkness of his vision till it smiled;” when the wild screams of dame Marguerite burst on his ears. He started up; then believing it one of those sounds which might be heard by night and day with little notice in an outlaw’s hold, he tried with the tossing agony of one in pain to turn to rest.

Another cry reached his ears. The sound last heard was, apparently, one that never issued from human lungs; it was the howl of a wild animal. The chamber in which Paladour lay, was one which seemed, like the rest, to occupy the square of the tower; but beside the stair which communicated with all the apartments, there were others hollowed in the depth of the wall,

which, in many similar towers, bear testimony not only to the masonic skill with which they must have been constructed in so rude an age, but to the patience with which the gigantic race of former days must have submitted to modes of entering doors, and threading stairs, that would have puzzled modern dwarfs.

The howl—it was no human sound—was repeated. Paladour started up, and gazed round his chamber. The walls were of unhewn stone, the floor was broken, the ceiling rudely vaulted; one door visible to his bewildered eye straightly closed on the outside, no means appearing of opening it to the possessor of the apartment; but the moonlight gleaming brightly through a stone aperture barred with iron, fell on a niche, in which there appeared a pointed arch formed in the wall, and originally intended for the construction of another door, where none, however, was inserted, and in whose shadow stood a shapeless form, that grinned

and nodded at the knight some time before his weakened sight could descry it.

“Art thou man, or fiend?” said Paladour at last. “I have, methinks, dealt with both ; but thy shape, and the sound thou utterest, defeat conjecture.”—“I am neither,” said the figure, “though oft I deem I am the latter. Tell me now the deeds and motions of your fiend, what be his appetites, the food he loves, the foul thoughts he dwells on, the hours at which his howl is heard piercing human ears and thrilling human hearts.”—“I know not how to answer such fearful questioning,” said the knight. “Then I will answer it for thee,” said the figure. “My loved hour is night, my food is torn from the grave ;” and he held in his hand what seemed horrible confirmation of what he uttered ; “and my voice thou hast heard before,—it hath made the boldest hearts in this tower of guilt quake to their core, and the murderer grasp at his unsheathed weapon in his dream—wouldst thou hear it again?”

And by a strong exertion of his chest and dilation of his mouth, he seemed prepared to utter another of those fierce howls which Paladour had heard before. "Thou'lt drive me mad," said the knight, stopping his ears; "in the name of all the devils, what art thou?"—"Mad," repeated the figure eagerly, as if grasping at the interpreting sound; "Mad, ay! that is it: I am a mad wolf;" and with hideous grimaces and wild leaps he bounded towards Paladour. The wounded knight had no defence to make; yet he half rose from his couch of stone as if to grapple with the fearful being who approached him, when the latter suddenly stopped and exclaimed, "Do you not see I am a wolf?—look, examine me." A strong gleam of moonlight darting through the aperture, disclosed the form of the horrible querist. It was that of a human being, low and coarsely formed; his beard and hair almost concealed his countenance; something like a wolf's skin was wrapt about him, and his

hand held too evidently the proof of his demoniac appetite.

The knight sunk shuddering back on his couch. It was evidently a man in the most horrid paroxysm of lycanthropy, a distemper now unknown, but well authenticated to have existed at a far later period than that of our tale.

“Examine me,” said the unhappy wretch; “I tell thee I am a wolf. Trust not my human skin—the *hairs grow inward**, and I am a wolf within—a man outward only. Slay me, and thou wilt be satisfied of the truth. The hairs grow inward—the wolfish coat is within—the wolfish heart is within—the wolfish fangs are within;—yet, still, here is the food, and I cannot gnaw it as a wolf should:”—and he made the execrable morsel again visible.

“Sir wolf,” said Paladour, gathering strength and courage for this fearful encoun-

* This declaration was actually made by an unhappy wretch in the most rabid, but still conscious stage of the disease.

ter, and suddenly conceiving a hope that inspired and augmented both, “dare you shew me your den?”—“That will I, gladly,” said the lunatic; “there be choice morsels there on which thou mayest feed, and howl between at the moon, that throws her greedy beams through the iron grate.”

Paladour, shuddering, attempted to rise from his couch and follow his fearful guide, as the latter hobbled and capered before him with hideous imitation of the paces of a wolf. On a sudden he placed his back to the wall, and uttered a howl that made the hair of the knight stand on end. “And wherefore is that horrid cry?” he exclaimed, stopping his ears.—“It is to scare other wolves from my den,” said his companion; “for, wot ye, there be many in the clifts of this steepy rock:”—and he pointed to the various stories of the tower (for they were now on the stair) with a distinctness that shewed, though his intellect was destroyed, his observation and memory were unimpaired.

Paladour, though unacquainted with the

horrors of the haunted chamber, into which he had been purposely flung by the bandits, began to conceive that the dreadful secret of this wretch's lycanthropy was closely kept and employed as an engine of terror by the chief; he also conceived that this unhappy being was probably conversant with all the secret passages of the tower; and from these circumstances he derived new hope and heart, having such a fearless spirit that he would have followed the fiend himself to the rescue of the lady Isabelle. Weak and wounded as he was, he leaned against the wall, and, summoning a quick apprehension and invincible spirit to his aid, he demanded, in terms suited to the perverted capacity of his miserable companion, whether these wolves did not sometimes prey on lambs, and whether there were not some prisoners of that harmless breed immured in the tower?

“Thou wottest well of the wolves that tenant here,” said the wretched being. “I heard lambs bleat far—far above me this night;”—and he pointed with strong gesture

to the upper story, thus designating the prison of the lady Isabelle. "But what of them? there be morsels below to feast the palate of a prince. Come with me and feed."

"So will I," said the knight, "an' thou first show me the lambs that were seized to-day, and are held in this fastness."

A wild laugh burst from the maniac as he pointed, with frantic gestures, upward and downward the stair. "There," he howled, "is food for thee and me. Wilt thou come and feast? Above and yonder is another feast prepared. Wot ye, here we are all wolves; and some feast on the dead, and some on the living. Which will ye feed on?—choose ye."

Paladour saw the necessity of humouring the wretched being, and, though he recoiled at the effort, replied:—"Sir wolf, thou hast doubtless a grudging towards the choice morsels in thy den. I will not contend with thee for them: thy fangs and claws might soon make me repent my daring." Here the wretch shivered and mowed

with horrid delight. “ Now, sir wolf, show me but where the prey lies which hath fallen into other clutches, and I will not disturb thy repast.”

The cunning, rabid appetite, and eager malignity of intelligence displayed in the features of the lycanthrope at this moment defy all power of description. He was evidently proud of his secret, anxious to betray it, fearful of being imposed on, and longing to partake of his own fearful food undisturbed. After a short pause, obeying the most powerful of these impulses, and glancing a downward look on his *den*, he motioned to the knight to follow him, and trotted with his horrid ambiguity of motion up the dark and narrow stair. The knight followed. His fearful guide paused suddenly, and made a motion to Paladour to follow his example, while he thrust his face through a crevice between the stones of the wall, and withdrew it in a moment. Paladour applied himself to the crevice, and saw an object which made him gaze with soul and eye ; nor could

he withdraw what might be called the *grasp of sight*, till the wretched being muttered to him, "Thou hast thy prey!—may I feed on mine undisturbed?"

"Accursed brute!" said the knight, "feed on what thou wilt; howl where thou mayest;—but begone!"

With a faint howl the lycanthrope disappeared down the stair. The knight remained rivetted to the spot. The crevice between the stones of the wall, in a place where they were unshrouded by tapestry, gave him a full view of the interior of the apartment: it was that to which the lady Isabelle had been conducted, and which we have described as furnished with all the rude magnificence that a robber's hold could afford. The group within might have indeed fixed a less anxious gaze than that of Paladour.

The lady Isabelle sat on a low seat covered with tapestry; her splendid habit was deranged, and her fine hair floated on her shoulders; and, descending far lower, seemed to supply the place of her silver-tissued veil

that lay in a heap beside her. Pride and terror, anger and supplication, passed across her beautiful features, like storm and sunshine over a landscape in autumn ; but pride predominated still : there was a trembling dignity about her, that seemed intended rather to impress the idea of power than to be conscious of it herself ; her cheek was as pale as that of the dead, but her eyes were burning with a light, that even fearfully contrasted that paleness.

A little behind her stood her damsels, trembling as much at their lady's emotion as at the cause of it, towards which their eyes, like hers, were directed, and grasping the folds of her mantle, with an attitude that seemed as if they sought at once to give and receive protection. In a corner of the apartment stood the figure of the outlaw, in an attitude between defiance and alarm, his features inflamed with intoxication and fierce passions, yet awed by the sight of beauty in despair, and struggling to hide from himself and her that he trembled

before his own victim, and that victim in his power. It seemed that the lady, by her broken respiration, had but just ceased speaking, but had been unheard amid the screams of Marguerite; louder than those rose the voice of the incensed outlaw.—“Haughty lady,” he cried, “remember thou art in the talons of the eagle, who never pounced on prey that he resigned.”—“Slave and villain,” said the incensed beauty, trembling with passion and terror; “such another word, and these walls that enclose me shall prove my grave. Thank Heaven they are hard enough to dash this slight frame into atoms before thy very sight!”

A laugh of rude derision burst from the outlaw; but his inflamed eyes menaced more than scorn, and he seemed advancing to fulfil their threat. The damsels shrieked. At this moment, a slight but determined movement of the lady Isabelle (who half-started from her seat), her compressed lips, and the fixed and fearful bending of her eye on the walls of her prison, made the bold outlaw shrink

before her. At the same moment, a sound was heard that seemed like a groan heaved from the bosom of a giant ; it was followed by a shock that made the strong walls ring. It proceeded from Paladour, who, maddened by the sight of danger he could not avert, and of indignity he could not avenge, uttered a groan of agony, and fell in the full weight of his heavy armour on the spot where he stood.

CHAPTER XIV.

Marry, Sir, sometimes he is a kind of puritan.

Oh! if I thought that, I'd beat him like a dog.

SHAKSPEARE'S *Twelfth Night*.

OUR wandering tale now returns to the Deacon Mephibosheth, who had set out in pursuit of the dainties promised by De Verac, which were as apocryphal as Sancho Panza's islands and earldoms. For a weary day did the deacon pursue this scentless track, leaving literally no stone unturned to find the partridge, pasty, and marchpane, promised him in those deceitful visions. Often and high did he rear his nostril, expecting ever and anon to be treated with that delicious flavour which was to exhale from the viands to which his imagination attached such luxury of enjoyment. "Jour-

neying with this intent," the deacon was alike surprised and disappointed, when, at the close of evening, he found himself bewildered amid a labyrinth of rocky hills and glens, which drove him from the thoughts of his expected repast, to the more immediate consideration of how he might effect his return to his party.

At this moment, which, considering the state of the country, might have proved a trying one to a man of more metal than the deacon Mephibosheth, his ears were greeted by the sound of the feet of mules or horses, and that of human voices, and still more by the conviction that, from the slowness of their pace, and the tranquillity of their tones, the travellers were men of peace. A few moments after, emerging from behind a hill, rode forth two men on mules and one on horseback, who seemed debating of their way, and who agreed finally to refer it to the first traveller they might meet. The deacon caught the names of the places as they spoke, and along with them a knowledge both of where he himself was, and of

his capacity of being their guide.—“ *Quem queritis, adsum,*” said he, suddenly appearing: “ I know the place you wot of, and will guide you thither, on well assurance of my safe conduct, it being parcel mine own way.” —“ This guide must be trustworthy, forasmuch as he greeteth us in Latin,” said one of them.—“ Do as thou hast said, brother, with speed, for the night is closing in.” —“ Nay, take me with you,” quoth the deacon, “ the labourer is worthy of his hire. I have fasted all day in this desert, and lack refreshment, such as, doubtless, those ample bags are stored with ;”—for this part of their equipment had not escaped his observation.—“ Marry, thou hast guessed right, nor shalt thou lack other guerdon so thou keep touch with us,” said the foremost rider.—“ Touch not, taste not, handle not,” said the deacon ; then suddenly checking himself, he assisted the speaker to empty the contents of a bag or wallet that lay on the shoulders of his mule, on which he fastened with infinite eagerness, the riders halting the while, and the conversation being

strangely divided between their enquiries and the deacon's late reminiscences and present occupation. "And how far, sayest thou, must we fare, ere we reach ——?" "A red-legged partridge," muttered the deacon, discussing a capon, which his imagination was comparing with the delicious viands promised by Verac.

"He hears me not," said the horseman; then raising his voice, "Many mountain streams cross us in our way?"—"A tun of Malvoisie," said the deacon, devoutly applying himself to a leathern bottle, but still dreaming of Verac's golden promises.—"And who the devil is to guide us across them?" said the querist:—"A conger-eel," quoth the deacon.—"He is stark wode," said another rider.—"He swam up the Seine to Paris on the back of the king's fishmonger, or how was it?" said the deacon. "Ah, I remember me now, it was all a device of Satan's to lure me into the snares of the enemy, but I have defied him and prevailed; and lo, here is spread for me a table in the wilderness."

So saying, he dispatched the capon, a huge cheese, and the contents of the leathern bottle, and then rising with all the speed his lameness permitted, demanded the bones of the former, and the skin of the latter.

“Even wear them thyself as trophies of thy victory,” said one of the riders, “for never did knight on foughten field earn them more hardly, or merit them more.”—“Sayest thou me so?” said the deacon, disposing them in different parts of his garb, “then shall not they or thy counsel be cast away. And now, sir traveller, I am for you, over heath or hohn, glen or rock; through mountain mist, or fog of the valley.”—“We have a mad guide towards,” said the traveller, drawing up his rein; “but how wilt thou, being on foot, keep pace with our mules, slow-paced as they be?”—“All’s one for that,” said the deacon, “the path to home lacks half its length to the foot that treads it, and I shall, perchance, quit you on the way with some spiritual dainties for your temporal refection.”—“He

is a pardoner," whispered one of the party.—
"Rather a pilgrim, who hath been foundered,
wandering from shrine to shrine," replied his
companion. — "Whoever he be," said the
third, "he hath promised us safe guidance,
and it is time we put him to the proof—the
sun is far behind the hills, and the way uncer-
tain, if not perilous."

The deacon, as he halted beside his new asso-
ciates, had full leisure to note their appearance,
for the inequalities and deviations of the track
made him, spite of his infirmity, a match in
speed with the best mounted of the party. The
two who rode on mules were wrapped in
houplands, which hung on the flanks of their
beasts, but under their hoods might be seen
the folds of a monk's cowl: the third, who
was a horseman, seemed to have nothing ec-
clesiastical about him, save in the peaceable-
ness of his demeanour. He wore a dark cas-
sock, and a short cloak, with a cap of cloth on
his head, but he managed his horse with the
air and spirit of one used to long journeys
and rough encounters with wild roads, and

the animal that bore him over them:—this was no other than the celebrated Guillaume de Rusbriquis, whose travels into Tartary were then the theme of all tongues*, and whose adventures prove that there are no æras in savage life, as at the distance of centuries it presents just the same picture of the caprice, insolence, cowardice, and vacillation that may be found in Lord Macartney's and Lord Amherst's recent embassies to China, or Cox's residentship in the Burinhan empire. With these companions did the deacon set on, though we will do him the justice to say that he abhorred the monk's cowl as he would the devil's hoof, and therefore by no means suspected of what company he was the associate:—"And now I pray you, sir stranger," said one of them, "resume your tale of foreign lands; methinks, while I hear you, I am presently there myself, which, in faith, I had rather be by proxy than presence,

* Monstrous anachronism! Rusbriquis lived, I believe, 150 years later.

lacking the courage to travel, and the skill to read. The passages which befell me," said Rusbriquis, "at the court of the Tartar king, I have already told."—"What king saidst thou?" interrupted the deacon.—"I said the king of Tartary."—"Out on thee for an impostor!" cried Mephibosheth, "thinkest thou to put the change upon us with tales and tricks of Ind and the Antipodes? We have heard of a king of England, a king of Aragon, nay of kings of Northern countries, whose names our language knows not; but who hath ever heard of that outlandish king thou namest?"—"Peace, and let him proceed, thou bold fellow," said the monk; "I uphold that there is a king of Tartary."—"It is a figment," said the deacon, "shew me such a place as Tartary in the Scriptures."—"On leaving* the king," said the traveller, "I was had into the chief temple, where the priests were doing service to their idols: these were small figures of men and women sorely smutched by reason of the

* Vide Rusbriquis for this curious passage.

lamps that burn there continually; before them hung pieces of scarlet cloth, to which were fastened waxen effigies of various parts of the body, offered by those whom the idols were said to have healed, being evil-disposed in their limbs. Some of these poor heathens were bowing themselves before the figures of the idols to the ground, while the priests went on chanting, or rather moaning, in slow cadence, their idolatrous liturgy; but what they said I know not, nor, perchance, would it have well liked Christian ears to hear them. Some also were making vows for the recovery of those who were sick, or the return of the absent, offering money, flowers, or gums to the idols; the priests instructing them how to make these offerings, keeping the money themselves, and carefully presenting the smoke to the idols, the silly laics counting them benefactors for the same, and much extolling the goodness of these priests."

The monks crossed themselves at this account, which had a very different effect on

the deacon.—“ Now loud thou liest, sir traveller,” said he, “ loud thou liest, as I told thee at first ; thou dost bear us in hand with tales of Tartarus or Tartary ; and lo ! thou tellest of what may be seen in every idolatrous steeple-house in France at this day.” “ How ! what meanest thou ?—what sayest thou ?” said the three eager voices of the travellers, in a kind of unison trio.—“ I say that I will testify against your abominations,” quoth Mephibosheth : “ need we go to Tartary, or how callest thou it, to witness what thou tellest us of ? have ye not in your churches muttering priests, a chanted mass, rags and reliques, vows, pilgrims, penances, and processions ; censers with incense, and vessels of flowers, and offerings of silver, and offerings of gold, which ye keep for yourselves, giving the smoke of your tapers and the smell of incense to your idols on the high places ?—And is *this* idolatry among the paynim folk, and *latritia* and *dulia* when practised by monks and friars ?”—“ In the name of all the devils,”

cried the monks, "whom have we got for a guide?"—"A guide in truth," said Mephibosheth, "not a guide over mountain and moor, but a guide that will make the crooked straight, and cause that your feet stumble not on the dark mountains:—I am one that am raised up to testify against an idolatrous generation; I am as one appointed to remove the high places, and to cut down the groves, and to break in pieces the brazen serpent, and call it Nehushtan. At the voice of my crying, Bel shall bow down, Nebo shall stoop, and men shall cast the idols of silver and the idols of gold, which they made to worship, to the moles and to the bats."

Here the monks crossed themselves in horror, and Mephibosheth, who had an excellent memory, took advantage of their silence to repeat the forty-fourth chapter of Isaiah from beginning to end, without missing a word by the way. This gave them time to recover from their amazement, and the first use they made of their hands, after they had recovered

from their uplifted position, was to seize on the deacon, whom they held fast, without, however, being determined as to the mode in which they would express their gratitude for his exhortation. — “What means this, my masters?” cried Mephibosheth, vainly struggling with them; “why do ye lay hands on me; will ye rend my raiment? will ye slay me?” — “Thou hast, indeed, spoken matters that should be answered with thy life,” said one of the monks. “By the faith of my order!” said the other, “he is either an incarnate fiend, or an heretic, and in either case must be dealt with: if the one, by a cunning exorcist; if the other, by those means which the legate well handled in his *Serino de hæreticis comburendis*.” — “And is this my guerdon for your safe guidance?” quoth the unfortunate deacon; “am I thus quitted for leading you by the right path where your footsteps slipt not?” — “Marry art thou,” said Rusbriquis, who was assisting to tie his hands, “and it is but doing reason and fair quittance withal.

Thou hast been their guide in carnal things, and they will be thy guides in things spiritual; so follow, Sir Catechumen, with what stomach you may, for yonder are the towers of the abbey of Normoutier;” and the travellers indeed drew near that stately pile of which the monks were inmates.—“Stomach!” murmured the deacon internally, “alas! I have followed my stomach but too far!—Ah, Mephibosheth, Mephibosheth, thy god hath been thy belly, and a devil of a god he is likely to prove; better hadst thou fared gnawing a fragment of goat’s-milk cheese, though it were hard enough to split thy teeth in splinters, and quaffing whey, though sourer than all vinegar, than to have gone after their feast of fat things, and desired their dainty meats. Oh! for a mess of pottage and a draught of water as it were in safety, or perchance a savoury quarter of a kid of the goats, or peradventure, portion of a stalled ox, or store of feathered fowls! The Lord rebuke that prating, vapouring gallant, with his apo-

cryphal conger and legendary venison, thus to send me a whoring after the flesh-pots of Egypt, when I might have fed on manna in the wilderness!—Behold now I am brought into captivity, and led unto the death.”

They were now at the gate, on which they smote with their riding rods, and, to the enquiry of the porter, “Who knocked so late?” replied, “Open quickly, for we are brothers Austin and Hilary, with the traveller the famous Rusbriquis, and a prisoner, of whom we know not well whether he be heretic or only devil incarnate.”—“If he be heretic,” quoth the porter, whose voice announced him very drunk—“if he be heretic, I will not undraw a bolt for him—marry if he be devil, he is dearly welcome, for we have chosen an abbot of misrule, the revels are held in the chapter-room, and we lack a devil for the nonce.”—“Truce with thy foolery,” said the monk; “we bring thee wine from Beaucaire.” No talisman could sooner have opened the doors of an enchanted palace in romance, than these few

words did the gate of the abbey; and the monks, hurrying Rusbriquis and the deacon along with them through a cloister that ran round three sides of the outer court, flung open the doors of the spacious chapter-room, which the brotherhood, in that cold season, preferred as the scene of their revels to the vast refectory, where, erewhile, had feasted the band of the Crusaders. As the doors were flung open, a sight burst on the eyes of the astonished deacon that made him for a moment imagine himself a Daniel summoned to the idolatrous feast of Belshazzar.

In the absence of the Abbot of Normoutier the brotherhood had agreed to hold a species of revel, then not inadmissible within conventual walls, had elected their abbot of misrule, dispatched missives in search of lemans and costly wines; and the relaxed character of the abbot gave them little cause of fear that their frolic, however it might pass the bounds of decorum, would transgress the limits of his patience. The scene disclosed by the open-

ing doors surpasses all power of description. In this monastic masquerade some had assumed the habits of classical, others of scriptural personages, and all appeared preparing for a dance, however dissonant their characters or unassociating their costumes might be.

They were all arrayed in dresses which, whether appropriate or not, were wildly fantastical, and even exaggerated into a kind of frantic extravagance, and the faces of most of these revellers were covered with gilt vizors, which, concealing all resemblance to the human countenance, diffused a strange and horrid glitter over their featureless faces; their language, too, was a squeak or gibber, and their dialogue, carried on rather by gestures than by words, seemed a kind of diabolical short-hand. Torches, held by the lay-brothers, who laughed, however, too heartily at this metamorphosis to hold them quite straight, shed a red and smoky light on the wild group of these clerical masqueraders; and in a corner others were holding back the

dogs belonging to the abbey, who, terrified at the strange appearances around them, would have flown at them unless withheld, and whose ceaseless barking made a kind of concert with the general uproar of this monastical festival—their eager eyes, pointed heads, and the stretched arms, and the encouraging voices of their young excitors, making no bad background to the painting. “Now Heaven protect me!” said the unfortunate deacon, “that these fiends tear me not in pieces!—alas! I am finely holpen.” The abbot of misrule, who was distinguished by his tinsel mitre, crosier, and ring, and a superior portion of extravagance and absurdity in his vestments and gestures, demanded of the travellers who they were that sought admittance to the solemn rites he was about to celebrate. “Two poor monks of the order of St. Benedict,” answered the ecclesiastics, “who return from pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Bacchus of Beaucaire;” and they produced the well-filled skins that testified the success of their mission.—“Relics of value in truth,” said the

abbot, "and that shall be meetly enshrined ere long," as he stroked his ample paunch at sight of the wine; "and whom bring you to this our cloister of misrule?" "I am Guillaume de Rusbriquis, the famed traveller," said Rusbriquis, entering into the spirit of the revel; "I have journeyed from pole to pole—have helped the sun to go on horseback in the east, and held his stirrup when he alighted in the west—have been shipwrecked in the frozen ocean, and anchored on the back of a kraken, deeming it to be the main land. Marry, if ye doubt the truth I tell, here is my fellow-traveller," pointing to Mephibosheth, "who came by this halt in his gait from sojourning overlong in the land of Antipodes, and wholly forgetting to walk on his feet."—"He speaks brave matter," quoth the abbot, "and must needs be a traveller by his lying;—and thou who standest shivering and groaning there, art thou what he delivers thee?"—"I am one," said the deacon, "who am led captive into a strange land, and sit down to weep by the waters of Babylon."—"There

thou liest," said the abbot, "for there is not a drop of the waters of Babylon in the abbey or its neighbourhood: we know no such strange wines—take heed, fellow, for I do grievously suspect thee, from thy speech, to be as it were an Albigeois, in which case there were no more words but to hang thee; yet, that thou mayest perceive we are a merciful lord abbot, dance a-round with us, and it shall be thy purgation."—"Surely I will not dance," quoth the deacon, whose courage rose with opposition; "it is an abomination more befitting the daughter of the harlot Herodias than a deacon of the holy congregation. All dancing is evil, very evil, exceedingly evil, and not good—but to dance in the tents of Kedar and the tabernacles of the idolaters, to be set up on high among the ungodly, and dance in the high places, were an utter abomination:—wherefore I say, Down with the filthy squeaking of pipes, and the lewd jarring of crowds*, and—"—"So please

* Subaudi, *viols*.

you, my lord abbot," said one of the monks, "let us drown this peevish fellow's noise, and cause him to dance with us:—your true sour heretic (and your lordship perceives he is no better, though I shame to name such vermin before your lordship) needs no other martyrdom than the sight of free honest mirth."—"Thou sayest well," said the abbot; "he shall dance and die the death of the spleenful:—for the rest, let such of the nine worthies as be sober, lead forth Deborah, Judith, and Queen Dido—the three children in the furnace shall dance with Nebuchadnezzar to make up their old grudge—Susanna shall pace with one of the elders, and the Goddess of Chastity with the other—ourselves, the Abbot of Misrule, will lead the lady of loose-delight, with her paintings and her pouncings, her mincings and her mockings—and the heretic shall dance with the devil, and there is a company meetly sorted. Strike up, my masters."—Here the hapless Mephibosheth was seized on by a hideous figure enveloped in a black garment, with cloven feet of flame colour, a tail that

swept the ground, a mask equipped with "eyes that glow and fangs that grin," and a huge pair of horns starting from the forehead. All his struggles availed nothing with his frightful partner : he was dragged into the circle, compelled to perform numerous pirouettes, which were more remarkable for velocity than grace, and if he relaxed for a moment in his exertions, a swinge of his partner's tail, a kick of his cloven foot, or a blow with his horns, set him prancing again with pain and terror till his strength was exhausted, and he fell to the ground. At this moment the cook was seen entering the hall, attended by the lay-brothers groaning under the heavy dishes they bore, and shouting in unison the monastic chorus---

Caput apri defero,
Reddens laudes Domino ;
Qui estis in convivio,
Plaudite cum cantico.

The revellers instantly surrounded the tables, covered with delicious fare, and flaggons of the choicest wines ; and down sat pagan gods,

Christian martyrs, devils and angels, promiscuously. Susanna pledged the elders, while they could undergo her challenge—Queen Dido did reason to St. Dennis for France, in potations deeper than those Virgil describes her indulging in when she feasted Æneas—the three children in the furnace prayed to sit near Niobe—and Moses and Satan, observing they were the only persons of the drama who were accommodated with horns, agreed to sit together, and, to the vast amusement of the group, instead of carving, tore up a pasty that was before them with their horns.

“Fast and furious” waxed their mirth, till in a pause of laughter that had threatened to be inextinguishable, one of the party demanded whence that groan had issued? “It is a sigh breathed from a hole in a vessel of clay,” quoth the disconsolate deacon, who sat panting on the floor after his involuntary exercise, and wistfully gazing on the feasters.—“Yea, and a lame broken vessel,” said Rusbriquis—“And an empty vessel, I trow,” rejoined the abbot,—“how sayest thou, heretic?”—“It is

even so," said the deacon; "and I pray you, since I am become a by-word and mock, let me eat a morsel of savoury meat, and drink a cup of wine, lest I become like them that go down to the pit."—"By the mass, well prayed and in good season," said the mock abbot: "thou hast been as Daniel in the den of lions, but now thou shalt be as Daniel in the palace of the king of Babylon, and shalt think scorn of the water and pulse thou feddest on in thy peevish mood, and raw perverse nonage." The deacon hesitated not to accept the permission, and in a moment the humour of tormenting their prisoner was exchanged for one of feasting him: his trencher was filled with the choicest morsels, and his cup oft and mischievously replenished with wines, of whose power he was as ignorant as of their flavour.

The persecution thus disguised had its full effect; the good wine "did its good office soon," and the revellers with triumph perceived the increasing intoxication of the sullen heretic, who, preaching between every

mouthful, and hiccuping between every word, presented a spectacle of maudlin gravity, uncouth hilarity, zeal truly without knowledge, and eloquence without the power of speech.—“Thou wilt chant a roundelay, or a hymn to the Lady Venus now?” asked Rusbriquis.—“Yea, that I will, to be conformable,” quoth the deacon: “any thing in conformity, and to do reason.”—“And thou wilt dance a round with us, if need be?” asked the abbot.—“Surely I will dance,” said Mephibosheth, “that is, in the way of comfort to the weak; I will dance, yea, dance very exceedingly—so that it shall be said hereafter, his dancing is as the dancing of Mephibosheth the deacon, for he danceth furiously;—but only in the way of comfort, mark ye me—otherwise not a grice, though fat bulls of Basan closed me in on every side.” “And thou wilt whisper a love-tale in a fair leman’s ear?” said another “Why, there it is,” said the deacon, with an ineffable leer, “I yield it that thou hast me there; I was always the lovingest soul, and could skill of music in my youth; but away

with these vanities !—Hold, fellow ! I meant not the trencher and cupfull of new wine--- Tell not me of fair women : if thou wilt pledge me in a cup of wine, so,---if not, would all the women in the land kept their own counsel and were sober—As for me, tears have been my meat day and night”---and he burst into a violent fit of drunken grief, which was drowned in the shouts of laughter that rose on every side. All gathered round him assailing him with invitations to eat, to drink, to dance, to sing, in the same moment, while others called as loudly on him to preach, that they might be converted by his doctrine : then their passions changing, they began to revile him ; curses and foul terms were heard on every side, and those who were distant began to throw fragments of the feast at him. This moment completed the distraction of the unfortunate deacon !---his senses reeled, his perceptions became confused, he saw false colours, and mistook one object for another---he answered the curses with a vacant laugh, and reviled those who still jested with him.

At length his habitual reminiscences, struggling with this temporary delirium, he snatched the huge knife from the hand of the sewer, and exclaiming, "I will break down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers," began to demolish the figures of the saints with which the abbot's chair of state was richly and beautifully wrought. In a twinkling, St. Lucia once more lost both her eyes, the head of St. Dennis dropped from under his arm, where he was carrying it; and the Abbot of Misrule himself narrowly escaped a blow that clove his mitre in twain—"Bel, bow down; Nebo, stoop, I say," shouted Mephibosheth, redoubling his blows, "for I am he who will bring the idols low, and will purge this house of Baal, and make it a draught-house unto this day;" and at the same moment, with unlucky dexterity, he flung two massive goblets at the painted windows, which missing not their mark, left the gorgeous and costly compartments in shivers.

The horror with which the monks beheld an act they deemed sacrilege, kept them at

first motionless ; but, recovering themselves, they rushed on the deacon, and holding him fast, looked round them in an impotence of rage, that knew not how to vent itself---“ Accursed wretch !” said the abbot, who first found breath, “ vile heretic, and worse than an infidel ! what have thine excommunicated hands done ?---but thou shalt die the death.”

The deacon, but half recovered from his delirium, gazed with lightless eye and vacant face around him, “ How will the abbot chafe when he sees the spoils of his goodly seat,” cried he of Misrule, holding his cloven mitre with both hands,---“ and the defeature of those glorious windows, the pride of the houses of God in all Languedoc,” rejoined the monks. “ This it is,” said Rusbriquis, “ to seek to tame a wolf, and have your fingers bitten off for your guerdon.”---“ To death with him !” cried a hundred voices at once, amid which the abbot’s was heard loudest ; and the only question was now what punishment was adequate to his crime. The mode of dealing with heretics was summary as it was cruel

then : it was suggested to fling the wretched Mephibosheth into the enormous fire that burned on the hearth, and which might have consumed Goliath, while two or more held a huge bar of iron across the aperture, lowering or heightening it to prevent his escape, while his tortures admitted of the possibility of his making the attempt. This horrid proposal was negatived only by the abbot's remarking that the screams of the victim would disturb them at their revel.---“ Let his tongue be first plucked out,” said one of the monks.---“ And how shall we purify the chamber ---- this chamber royal in our palace of misrule, from the noisome smell of burning bones !” said the abbot---“ foh ! we do amerce thee in a cup of wine, for giving such unsavoury counsel to thy liege.” ---“ Let him be flung from the highest tower of the abbey, and let the hogs feed on his carcase as it lies i' the court,” said another.---“ The night is over cold to stand shivering on the battlements of the abbey tower,” objected the abbot ; “ and he who rises betimes to see the hogs at breakfast,

breaks the first law of our realm of misrule, which sets forth that all its loyal subjects must be a-bed at noon, and a-foot at midnight; wherefore, my censure is, that we hang up the heretic *curia sedente*:---yon grimly-carved visage that frowns from the ribbed arch of the door shall serve for gallows; his partner in the dance shall howl him a black *santis* for shrift; and with so many knaves in the convent, it were hard if a rope were lacking for the nonce."

This sentence was received with acclamation, probably because it promised the enjoyment of witnessing the prisoner's death without quitting their seats; and the rope was provided, flung over the giant-visage that projected with an ominous frown over the arch of the door, and held strongly on the other side by two brawny lay-brothers, before the hapless deacon understood for whom this fearful note of preparation was sounded.---
"Wherefore am I led unto death?" he cried with a ghastly gaze; "look to it, and mark well what you do, for my blood will be re-

quired at your hand."---"Is the rope well plaited?" said the abbot; "look that ye put forth all your strength, and wince not for his struggles."---"Hold yet for a space," said the deacon, "for a moment, hold!---ye have made me drunk with new wine; ye have caused me to speak unadvisedly with my lips---cut me not off in my transgression; grant me a space to cry for mercy; destroy not soul and body, spare me for a moment." His lips grew horribly white, and he wrung his damp hands.---"The confessor we have appointed thee," said the abbot, beckoning to the hideous figure that personated the devil, "will rightly handle the texts concerning thy departure, and expound to thee the promise of thy soon encounter with him. Wherefore delay ye to knit the rope?"---"It is knit and cast," answered the hoarse but jocular voices of the executioners. The doomed wretch, flinging himself on his knees, and seeming to grow to the paved floor (for no force could rend him from it for a space), poured forth in his despair all the dreadful denunciations against

blood-shedding contained in the Jewish law, accompanied with strong additions of his own.---“Cursed be the men of blood!” he cried, “cursed be their wrath! for it is cruel ---may the avenger of blood overtake them while his wrath is warm, and may the city of refuge be far from their path! Cursed be they with the primal curse, the curse of the first sinner out of Paradise, who was a murderer! Cursed be their morning, for its breath is groaning, and cursed be their evening, for its dew is blood! Cursed be the earth that shakes beneath them, and cursed the heaven that frowns on them!” “Depart, cursing and accursed,” said the abbot, “and con over thy blasphemies with him from whom thou hast learned them.”

The rope was twined round the neck of the victim, the executioners pulled with their full strength, placing each one his foot against the clustered pillars of the door.—Some of the revellers had the cruelty to hold a torch full in the face of the victim. There was a slight convulsion, a brief tremor, a

gush of perspiration that dyed face, neck, and hands of a livid hue; the next moment the rope broke, and the deacon fell on the floor apparently lifeless. He was raised instantly, and there was a kind of sportful strife among the assistants. "He is dead," said one; "he is not dead," was the reply. "How can he be dead when the rope has scarce left a mark on his neck? Can mere imaginings work so strongly, or hath the rope done its office sooner on him as an heretic?"—"Ye know nought," said Rusbriquis, "of the flittings of life in extremity, toward and forward, like a flame hovering on and off the wick of a lamp;---and still less wot ye how habituated savours will cause the vanished soul to return to her dwelling like a bird to its spray, when lined with such sweet poison---for a proof," applying the savour of a richly-composed dish to the nostrils of the deacon, whose associations immediately testified the power of the luscious condiment and the sagacity of the traveller. He sneezed, opened his eyes, and extended his

hand towards the dish as if instinctively.---
“ Look that the rope be stronger, and that ye ply it well,” said the abbot ; “ this heretic fox shall yield us sport at another chace.”---“ Lord abbot,” said Rusbriquis, who, if not more humane, was at least more considerate, “ may not this fellow, who seems a leader in this pestilent heresy, deliver some secrets touching them that may prove a ransom for his worthless life ? Men say that Raymond of Toulouse is again in France, and that the Crusaders have fled before him.”---“ Thy counsel is good,” said the mock abbot, “ such report hath reached us, and I would give my mitre to hear how our jolly abbot hath fared in the encounter : perchance his mitre hath been found of as brittle matter as ours---Speak, fellow, for thy life, and divulge to us what thou knowest ?”

This injunction was repeated several times to the stupefied deacon before he could hear or understand it ; but when he did, in that agony of mind which makes the pretenders to religion set a frantic and exaggerated value on

that life which it was their habit to speak of with lofty disregard, he eagerly offered to disclose important matter, if *his* were spared. "Important matter," said the abbot, "we list not to hear; our royaume of misrule prizes but two commodities --- old wines and youthful paramours:---touching the former we count thee ill-provided, for, perchance, thou hast never till this night tasted it;---for the latter, thou may'st win mercy by being our purveyor---speak for ransom of thy life: knowest thou a heretic damsel worthy of a churchman's love?" "In all the land," said Mephibosheth, "there is no woman so fair as Genevieve, the daughter of Pierre the pastor ---of all the daughters of men there is none to compare with her for comeliness and wisdom, for gracious favour and goodly gifts."--- "And canst thou win this priceless demoiselle, to share our reign of Misrule with us?" said the abbot.---"Of a truth," gasped the deacon,---"the women and the weak ones journey in the van, and it may be that I may lead, if life be spared, where they can be

found, and, peradventure, led away into captivity even as the Syrians went out by companies, and took away a little damsel who waited on Naaman's wife."---" She shall minister to Naaman, not his wife," quoth the abbot ; " and on such condition do we spare thy life ; but mark me, heretic, that life depends on its fulfilment.---Doth thy accursed creed allow of an oath to bind thee withal ?"---The unfortunate wretch uttered an oath the most tremendous and inviolable, and in so doing fell prostrate and exhausted again at the feet of the abbot.

His swoon did not interrupt their festivity long, but several days elapsed before the fever that was the consequence of the terror, agony, and excitement of the unfortunate deacon, enabled him to undertake the accomplishment of his promise, by leading a band of monks in the direction he had indicated.

CHAPTER XV.

Thou tree of covert and of rest,
For this young bird that is distrest ;
Amid thy branches safe he lay,
And he was free to sport and play,
While falcons were abroad for prey.

WORDSWORTH.

THE danger to which the unprotected females of the Albigenses were exposed, from this meditated assault, was tenfold increased by circumstances that had since occurred without their knowledge, or even that of their persecutors. The Bishop of Toulouse seized, with prompt hand and watchful eye, the moment when the hopeless state of Count de Montfort, (who still lay at the castle of Courtenaye in a state of stupor, his wounds healing, but his faculties and physical power totally annihilated,) and the dispersion of the Crusaders, in the equally hopeless pursuit of the lady Isabelle, left a

powerful disposable force of men-at-arms in his hands ;—the Countess de Montfort, herself, compromising her jealousy of her husband's honour in her zeal for the cause, and giving up the command of those she led to the bishop, while Sir Aymer promised his aid the moment he was able to bear his armour, and sit his war-saddle (and his influence was too extensive to be despised), and the vassals of de Courtenaye were armed, and impatient for action. He seized, moreover, the opportunity to direct and dispose of this force, by representing to the court of Rome that the cause had been ruined in France by the madness of the champion of the Church, and the ascetic apathy and inoperative neutrality of the monk of Montcalm ; that the reins dropt so suddenly, by an unskilful and desperate hand, must instantly be seized by a powerful and active one, or the race would be run and the goal won by the antagonist. He prayed forgiveness of the holy father for his over-confidence in the measure of putting himself at the head of what remained of the

crusading army in Languedoc, in terms that rather courted praise for his courage, than pardon for his temerity; and ere it was possible that his couriers could have reached the Vatican, the bishop had placed himself at the head of all the men-at-arms, who still sojourned in the castle of Courtenaye, or its neighbourhood, and set forth against the retreating army of Count Raymond of Toulouse. Such were the terrors that impended over the heretics: but of these they were as yet ignorant. On the night following that of the further retreat of the Albigois into the fastnesses of the mountains, Genevieve, with trembling heart and limbs, after the pastor had composed himself to rest, sought the cave where the wounded Crusader lay. The path was so intricate and tangled that she had less to fear pursuit or detection than the possibility of retracing her steps again; and to have seen her slender form and delicate limbs as she struggled through entwining weeds, matted brushwood, and interlaced and slowly disparting branches of trees,

and then tremulously placed her slender foot on the stony path which often betrayed it, one might have imagined her a banished oread or dryad tremblingly haunting the scene of her former sylvan existence.

Through all obstructions, however, her slender form and resolute will made way : she reached the cave---he raised the thick foliage of wild ivy and clematis that embowered its entrance---she entered, but there was no one there---no trace even of the wounded knight, no fragment of armour or shred of scarf or plume showed he had ever been an inmate there. She paused for a moment in amazement not unmixed with terror, and both were increased by observing the entrance of the cave darkened by the figure of a man who approached her---it was Amand. He did not speak, but he gazed on her intently, and a smile which she trembled at, severed his lips for a moment---“What hast thou done?” she said fearfully---“Oh! what hast thou done with the wounded knight?--Where have you borne him---or is he indeed yet alive?”---

“Canst thou misdeem of me as that voice would imply?” said Amand, with impassioned reproachfulness---“I cannot behold aught pitied by thee that I do not pity, or aided by thee that I would not aid. Last night I lingered behind thee to bear the wounded knight to fitter shelter ;---I pulled the leaves for his bed, and bound his wounds, and spread my own garment over him where he lies ;---but, oh ! Genevieve, I felt two hearts in my bosom. I could,” he added, “even while I bore his body in mine arms, have dashed it against the rock, when I thought of the look with which thou didst gaze on it last night.”---“Alas !” said the maiden, shrinking from his vehemence, “tell me, at least, where you have borne him, that I may myself minister to him ---men tend not men with that gentleness that women can---nor do ye bear those thousand waywardnesses which break from a spirit galled with the body’s sufferings ; nor know ye to invent and apply those petty cares and nameless comforts that are to the sufferer more than the drugs of many skilled

leeches.”—“ I doubt not thou wilt be a tender nurse,” said Amand sullenly ; “ but are there none to be tended among thine own people, that thou seekest to minister to an alien and idolater.”

“ If I tend the afflicted of mine own people,” answered Genevieve, “ what do I more than others? but if I bind up the wounds of the enemy of my faith and my life, that faith alone can supply the motive—or the reward.” “ Thou deceivest thine own heart, Genevieve,” said the youth, shaking his head ; “ but though thou canst not deceive me, thou canst overcome by thy pleadings. Better were it for man never to contend in words with woman, for she will prevail by that sweet wilfulness that makes reason a mock to itself ; so I will lead thee where lies this wounded knight, and, oh ! may he inflict on his leech no hurt more deadly than those thou canst heal !”

He beckoned her to follow him as he spoke, and Genevieve followed trembling, anxious and silent, to a deeper recess in the woody glen than she had hitherto explored. “ Why

dost thou pause?" said Amand abruptly as they reached its darkest part; "the object of thy care is here,"---he flung back the boughs that closed: and she found that Amand had not exaggerated his good offices. He had removed him to a deserted hut, such as the shepherds in mountainous regions erect during the summer season, and leave on the approach of autumn, when they drive the flocks lower into the valleys: it was concealed from the Albigenes by the approach being thickly matted with brushwood and weeds, and was provided within with a heap of dried leaves, and a woollen garment. Stretched on these lay the body of the young knight; and Genevieve saw with gratitude, that the long and clustering hair had been cut away from his forehead, and that the wound he had received was such as to cause deep stupefaction without peril either to life or reason: that on his bosom caused still less alarm, for Genevieve was mistress of all the vulnerary medicaments of the age, and, presaging hopefully of his recovery, she applied salves and bandages to both,

(the patient giving no signs of existence save faint tossings and low mutterings), and then implored of Amand to conduct her to the same spot every night, till the wounded youth was restored to his strength. “Genevieve, thou triest me too hardly,” said the young Albigeois, sternly; “I have done more than man hath ever done—I have borne more than man—more than I can bear; I have seen thee, when I parted to mortal fight, tearless—I have seen thee weep over mine enemy and thine.”—“It is so sweet to save an enemy’s life,” murmured Genevieve.—“An enemy’s, indeed!” said the jealous youth. “If the pale and pleading beauty of those light locks and pearl-like skin won thine eye, even when he lay as one dead before thee, how will they seem when he appears before thee in all the loveliness of life, blushing with gratitude and blessing his preserver? Then, deluded maiden!—then will his enmity prove most perilous and most deadly!”

Genevieve, alarmed by his agitation, but wholly unconscious of its cause, averted her

head in silence; her pure heart suggested to her but one motive for her compassion, and she was unable even to comprehend those which were alluded to by Amand. Her gesture was mistaken by him: he imagined she was dwelling in cherishing silence over the picture he had drawn, and he passionately exclaimed, "This is the last night I will visit this spot with thee!"—"Then I must visit it alone," said the maiden.—"And wilt thou dare to visit it alone?" said Amand.—"I dare do aught but neglect a life left to my sole tendance:—if thou *canst* desert me, I will win my way as I may; yet thou wilt regret thou wast not here to aid me with thy better strength, and, perchance, to smooth that rugged path to my bleeding feet."—"And wouldst thou wish, wouldst thou suffer me to be present at thy meeting with this—stranger?" cried Amand, his jealousy half dictating, half forbidding the question.—"Alas! did I not solicit it?" said Genevieve, in the simplicity of her heart. Amand made no answer but by twining her arm in his

and, as he led her away, muttering between his closed teeth, "Thou most tormenting, delicious being! thy simplicity sometimes showing like subtlest art, and thy sole art being true simplicity—thou canst do aught and all thou wilt with me, making me slave to my very victim,—and," glancing back at the spot they were quitting,—“perchance a victim to my very slave!”

From this period, the visits of Genevieve to the wounded knight were unremitting; and her care was at length rewarded by seeing him in safety, though unable either to recognize or thank her. Every evening it was her task to conceal part of the provisions, which, from the liberality with which they were now supplied, could be done without detection—to prepare her simple materials for dressing and binding his wounds—then, as twilight was fading into night, to steal forth to his retreat, watching every sound, and shrinking from every object, till she gained the spot, and, with broken respiration and palpitating heart, sunk on the floor beside her patient; then to apply the food to

his lips, to chafe his numbed limbs, to attempt to add ease to his posture and comfort to his retreat, repaid her for all danger and weariness, till the few moments that she could allot to her visit had elapsed, and she hastened to return, trembling, but glowing; anxious, but elated. The contemplation of this visit became a dream of delightful anticipations all day, and its performance the cherished solace of the evening.

That delicious picture of secret contemplation—that “joy of its own which the heart knoweth and a stranger doth not intermeddle with”—that hidden treasure which we retire to contemplate and sum in secret with a miser’s joy and a miser’s jealousy—is above all the enjoyments that ever were generalized by participation, or weakened by diffusion. Could mortal eye have beheld them, they would have presented a sight like that described in lines of mystical and magic beauty,

* * * * *

Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound
In slumber soft,—and on the ground
Sadly sits th’ Assyrian queen:—

while Amand stood the sullen, jealous sentinel of these moments, ever warning Genevieve that they had elapsed almost from their commencement --- ever menacing her with the consequences during their hurried return, and often withholding his aid from her faltering steps, in jealous waywardness of spirit. Meanwhile, the damp confinement, and want of all accommodation suited to his state, delayed the perfect recovery of the knight long beyond the time that his youth and vigour promised, and in spite of the skill and assiduity of the leech ; and it was not till the fourteenth evening of her visits that her patient seemed to evince some touch of consciousness, and feebly to attempt to discover and thank his visitor. That night an autumnal blast had strewed her path ankle-deep with leaves, which heavy rains had converted into mire ; the roof of branches had been torn off the hut, and Genevieve trembled as she approached it, lest the storm should have disturbed the sufferer. To her astonishment she found him with both faculties and speech

restored, and anxious to be led forth into the light even of the frowning and stormy heaven, murmuring, as he tossed on his bed of leaves, that nothing could restore his health but the free open air of heaven.

“And thou shalt breathe it, if mine arm have power to support thee,” said Genevieve. ---“Is it the touch of mortal or spirit that I feel pressing my burning brow with such delicious coolness?” answered the knight: “it feels like a wreath of fresh flowers around mine head.”---“Angels do not now visit the desert,” said Genevieve, “as they did in the days of holy men of old: our sins have banished those heavenly visitants;---it is a mortal who supports thee.”---“If I may judge by the clear music of thy voice, and the silky softness of thy touch,” said the youth, “doubtless one of a noble race.”---“Of the very humblest of fallen mortality,” answered Genevieve, with a firm sadness: “a peasant maiden; one to whom a noble knight would blush to owe a courtesy, and a Crusader would think it foul scorn to be in-

debted, even for life." She spoke with deep emotion; for, by the stronger light, as they approached the rude aperture that served for door, she recognized in the wounded knight the youth who had preserved her the night she had been seized on, and she anticipated the effect which the disclosure of her birth and religion must have on a knight and a Crusader. "I understand thee," said the knight: "thou art of that unhappy faith which——" "Which teaches me, wherever good can be wrought, or mercy shown, not to pause to ask who is my neighbour," said Genevieve, forgetting that this scriptural allusion was probably lost on the hearer.— "Thy faith, whether true or false," said the knight, smiling faintly, "owes me somewhat, even the preservation of a fair female heretic from the assault of ruffians, who menaced not, in truth, her life, but might have left her nought to prize in the life they spared. Mine arm," he added, reclining on the support of Genevieve, who proffered it more tenderly than ever—"mine arm was stronger

then ; yet still, I think, it could fell to earth aught that approached with touch of maculation that holy beauty."---"Dost thou remember her?" said Genevieve, in a voice scarce audible ; " could a peasant damsel fling such spell over the memory of a noble knight and a Crusader?"---" On my bed of leaves," said the youth, " that vision was with me. Oh, so lofty was her demeanour---so sweet and thrilling her voice---so purified and earth-abstracted the whole saintly vision, that I have sometimes thought an angel had descended among the heretics and worn her form, to win them back to heaven ! Now, mock me if thou wilt, damsel ; but in my wanderings I have often thought that a voice like her's breathed in my ears --- that a hand like her's smoothed my bed of leaves --- that *she* was with me in my lonely wretchedness."---" She was with thee, she is with thee, she thanks, she blesses her preserver, but never, never can she repay him." And, as she spoke, Genevieve threw back the hood that had hitherto concealed

her features, and the full glory of that face to which earth had given its noblest modulation, and heaven its holiest character and expression, burst on the eyes of Amiralde.

He gazed on them intently for a moment, then clasping his hands, attempted to bend his knee in the attitude of worship, but his strength failed in the effort, and he fell prostrate at her feet. Terrified at this prostration, which she ascribed to his weakness, Genevieve was attempting to raise him, when the voice and eager gestures of Amand, who was rapidly descending from a hill, announced to her that not a moment was to be lost. Genevieve, accustomed to these pulses of terror, caught the hand extended to her, and casting one look of regret behind her, followed Amand, till her failing steps and broken respiration made him pause from compassion, which she had not breath to solicit. "There is danger and disaster in thy speed," said his panting companion at length, "nor dare I ask what it is this fearful haste announces."—"Men say that the

Bishop of Toulouse approaches with a mighty host," said Amand hastily, "and messengers have come from Count Raymond, commanding that the women and the children be sent farther into the mountains till this evil be overpast; and half I rejoice," he added in a voice of constrained passion, "at these hasty and fearful tidings, for now must thou see this stranger no more, nor shall mine eyes waste in their sockets beholding your meetings; ere morning, distance and deserts will be between you."—"But that will not deprive him of thy aid?" said Genevieve: "Now know I of an assured surety, that thou wilt not desert him, for never was good deed coupled with peril but it seemed lovelier in the eye of the brave."—"Thy flattering words win me not," said Amand obdurately; "I fear the wrath of the congregation because of him. Shall I become an Achan and a troubler of the camp for this stranger, because his favour is fairer than mine? Knowest thou not, that they who aid our enemies in any wise are cursed with a

curse ?”—“ It is vain for man to curse what God hath blessed,” said the maiden; “ there is a prior and unwritten law of love and mercy in thy heart, Amand, which thou mayest neglect but canst not efface; what is enjoined in that law? how readest thou ?”—“ I see how it fares with thee,” said Amand, his eyes flashing with a fire visible even in the increasing darkness of twilight—“ I see how it fares with thee; thou hast loved strangers, and after them wilt thou go. Neither distance nor danger, impassable paths nor the terrors of night, the prayers of thy friend nor the wrath of thy people, can avail to withhold thee from forsaking the guide of thy youth, and forgetting the covenant of thy God.”

Affrighted at his violence, and wounded by his reproaches, Genevieve forbore to plead, and at this moment the murmurs of many voices in various accents of alarm, grief, and anxiety, announced to her fresh cause for concentrating her resolution, and banishing all cares but those of meeting the present

emergency. It was a night of tumult, terror, and distress to the unfortunate Albigenses, the feeble and female part of whom were preparing, on the approach of night, and amid the stormy gloom of autumn, to penetrate farther into the mountain fastnesses, and seek amid the haunts of the wolf and the bear, that shelter which was denied them in the abodes of man. Their progress, however, was checked by another messenger from Count Raymond, requiring that all the males capable of bearing arms should immediately repair to his camp, as the forces of the Crusaders, headed by the Bishop of Toulouse, were fast approaching, and threatened to intercept all communication between him and the advanced body of the Albigenses. This order, with which it was indispensable in the present exigency to comply, completed the despair of the unfortunate women, as it deprived them not only of guides and protectors in the "howling wilderness" they were about to traverse, but of those to whom they were entwined by every tie of nature and of

passion : husbands took brief and sad leave of wives, and parents of children, committing them to Him, whom they invoked to be their pillar of flame in the desert ; and the cries of warlike preparation and solemn intercession were heard on every side, mingled with the wailings of unappeasable mothers, and the ceaseless moan of scared and wearied infancy. Amid the tumult, Amand invented a thousand causes of delay (for which his courage was not overpraised), till his topical knowledge, eminently serviceable amid scenes like these, where wild and perilous exigencies were to be encountered only by as wild and perilous expedients, had enabled him to recognize a spot where his adventurous step had often scaled alone, and where no force of man could reach those who had obtained access to it. It was a perpendicular rock which closed the extremity of the gorge or ravine, which they had reached in their dismal progress : it was ascendible only on one side by a stony path broken by many interruptions ; and this path, which wound

like a natural stair to the summit, was so overshadowed by bowery plants of laurel, and genistum, and weedy tufts of lavender, and thyme, and ivy, that tapestried all the rock, as to be invisible to all eyes but those of the restless pursuer of Nature into her deepest loneliness. On the summit there was a level space of considerable extent, in front of which the rock rose like a parapet or the battlements of a castle, and above towered another clothed with fir and pine, its summit presenting a chance of escape or shelter even to those to whom this fortress, hewed by Nature's own hand, should prove not impregnable. The moment Amand pointed out this retreat, Genevieve implored him no longer to delay hasting to join the forces of Count Raymond. Amand viewed her with a doubtful eye and a bitter smile, and then hastened with the utmost exertions of his strength, and the most fearless risk of his own safety, to conduct her companions to the summit. Genevieve was last; as he aided her to ascend, he

whispered, "One word, only one word with thee."—"Aid the feeble and those who need thee," said Genevieve, trying to ascend without his assistance.—"Thou *shalt* hear me," said the impetuous boy, grasping her arm.—"Well, then I must," replied the maiden trembling; "but what is it thou wouldst say?"—"For thee," said Amand, in a choked and agonizing voice, "for thee have I perilled life, soul, and what I value more, thank thy new creed of chivalry for the lore."—"I understand not thy words," said the affrighted maiden.—"Understand this, then," replied Amand; "I have perilled my life to find shelter for thee, for what step but mine could have scaled this rock? I have perilled my soul, for I have concealed thy backsliding from the congregation, who would have burnt thee with fire had they known that thy pity had watched over a Crusader; and I have perilled more than both, for I have been as a coward in the eyes of men and of women, to find a place of safety and shelter for thee; and mine eyes are opened and I see

that valour is all that women prize in man, and, in yielding me a coward, and one that shrunk from the battle, I have done that for which thou owest me dear recompense."

—"Thy words bewilder me," said the maiden: "an evil and troubled spirit seems to speak from within thee; I pray let me ascend this steep."—"Not a grice till I have named my recompense. I am going to perish in the desperate battle, from which thy late remorse cannot save me: for all I have done, for all I shall yet do, if action be available in this life, or intercession effectual in the other, grant me but this—promise that thou wilt visit that stranger no more."—"Surely I will not promise it," said Genevieve, "for in so doing, I should sin against mine own soul." As she spoke, Amand seized her arm, and hurried her up to the summit of that terrassed rock, without speaking a word or remitting his speed for a moment.

Genevieve stood at last on the summit, panting and tottering as he released her—"Thou wilt not promise?" he repeated in a

voice scarce articulate; “Genevieve, I and the stranger are on a precipice—one of us must be flung from it to save the other—shall it be I, or thy minion?—choose while a moment’s choice is allowed thee.” The blast of a horn, floating far on the hills, was heard as he spoke; it was the signal for departure: all the fires of hell seemed to blaze in his visage, as exclaiming, “Thou wilt *not* speak, then the choice is mine,” he darted from the cliff, and was lost to her sight in a moment. This moment was one of exquisite anguish to Genevieve: she began, for the first time, to fear that she had carried her gratitude to the Crusader too far; and her imagination tormented her with the fear, that this gratitude might be exposing him to dangers greater than those she had saved him from; but her feelings, never habituated to dwell on *self*, found speedy and ample employment in soothing the terrors and hushing the murmurs of her hapless companions. No situation could indeed be more desolate than theirs: perched like hunted birds on a bare rock, which,

though it afforded concealment, gave no shelter; deprived of their guides and protectors, uncertain how long their absence might continue; and trembling lest the event of another hour might make it eternal, these unhappy women had still an aggravation of their sufferings—the want of that excitation that had now become the habit of their existence, the food and fuel of their hearts—the want of the prolonged evening exhortation, the choral hymn, the enthusiastic anticipations of their final triumph, and, not less welcome, the denunciations of prophetic vengeance against their enemies; the agony of prayer, the simultaneous spreading out of hands, as if to take heaven by storm; the accordant murmur of a thousand voices, like the rush of mighty waters; the pause more awful than that human thunder in its loudest bursts—the want, in effect, of all that forms to weak but susceptible and highly-excited minds, what may be called the drama of devotion, and stands in place of the usual employments and relaxations of life, which the

enthusiast is compelled by his creed to resign. The want of this pressed sore on the wearied and dejected spirits of the helpless women.

It was at this moment that Genevieve, who had often been accustomed to give the word of exhortation in the absence of the Barbes, and always to lead the hymn, in which her voice, whether in supplication or in praise, seemed to “sing at heaven’s gate,” suggested to her companions the seasonableness of fervent prayer. She reminded them of the night when Paul and Silas prayed and sung praises in a dungeon; and during the holy conflict, *every man’s chains were loosened*; they acquiesced, and the holy maiden burst into a spontaneous effusion, that was in truth more like the outpouring of the spirit on the handmaids, than words uttered by “mortal mixture of earth’s mould;” but among her trembling and heartless auditory, there was no voice, nor any that answered: one was intent on hushing a wearied infant, another on tending a sick one, many were shivering

with cold, and all with terror; some were stupified into dumbness and apathy, and those who could yet feel or speak, felt or uttered but one wish, "Would God it were morning." With such a congregation, a Miriam must have failed; she might strike the chords of inspiration, but there was no daughter of Israel to follow her in the song.

She sung, they found no comfort in her song;

She pray'd to strengthen them, they were not strong.

MONTGOMERY.

Repulsed, but not wearied, she turned to the children, and soothing some by caresses, and calming all by the tones of a voice whose speech was music, she succeeded in diffusing a momentary tranquillity among the most querulous; the wearied children at last slept; their mothers slept also. Genevieve seized this moment to examine what possible defence their present dreary position offered: she saw that the rock, a natural breast-work, rose as high as the battlements of a castle in front of the terrace they occupied; and she observed that several of the stones which formed this

parapet were loose, many of them having fallen from the cliff above; and others being retained in their place only by the weeds that mantled between the apertures, and the clay and sand which rains had swept from the upper cliff and lodged in the numerous interstices, and might therefore prove a means of defence, or at least of desperate menace, should they be assailed from below. While thus occupied, her failure in that eloquence of consolation and inspiration of prayer, which had so often soothed and elevated the congregation to whom, in such moments, her face was as the face of an angel, struck her with melancholy force; and she shed a few tears less for the loss of her powers, than for the privation that loss must cause to others. "Perhaps," said she, "it is a just rebuke to my spiritual pride; I, who sought to be a mother in Israel, must learn to be mute and helpless: but *Thou* who canst give waters in the wilderness, though thou hast dried up this brook, thou canst cause the stones of these rocks to cry out, the floods of the

valleys to clap their hands, the trees of these mighty forests to break forth into singing, and the very stars in their course, though they have neither speech nor language, to cause a voice to be heard among them." Thoughts like these, solemn as the hour and pure as its light, began to visit her soul; her meditations became more intense, her thoughts more elevated—she gazed upwards, and wondered at her fears and weakness. Before the power whose visible agency surrounded her on every side, all other power shrunk into nought; before the thoughts that filled her soul, all other thoughts or cares seemed a profanation and vanity; one bright gleam of consolation rose on her after another, as stars arise in the night, till her whole soul glowed within her, and her mind became as resplendent with internal light, as the midnight heaven was with the numerous glory of all the stellar fires. In this holy frame, amid peril and privation, in a desert, and at midnight, she sunk into a slumber that seemed like a continuation of the rapt and trance-like mood that

had preceded it—the same visions hovered in it, and she felt, as she reviewed their images, like a traveller who looks on the same landscape in sunshine and in twilight. From this slumber she started with the feeling of one never accustomed to rest long, or to awake in safety, and perceived her companions already roused. It was day-light, but a heavy mist hung on the mountains, and lay like an ocean in the valleys; sounds of steps were heard approaching, but the thickness of the vapour rendered those sounds obtuse and confused, while it prevented the possibility of their discovering who were approaching. All, however, agreed in encouraging each other to believe they were friends; while each concealed in her heart a fear that contradicted her expressions; but when the mist yielded gradually to the increasing light, the figures of the deacon and of a few others mounted on mules, and wrapped in long cloaks, appeared at the foot of the precipice.

CHAPTER XVI.

Woe worth, woe worth ye, Jock my man,
I paid ye well yeer fee,
Why pu' ye out the ground-wa' stane,
Lets in the reek to me.
Ye paid me well my hire, Ladye,
Ye paid me well my fee,
But now I'm Edom of Gordon's man,
And I maun do or dee.

Edom of Gordon.

GENEVIEVE gazed on the former with amazement, as he eagerly recognized her, and testified by uncouth gestures his pleasure at the interview. "If the mountain mists, or the spirits who are said to raise and rule them, have not abused my sight," said she, "thou art Mephibosheth the deacon."—"Of a truth an I damsel?" said the deacon, "and I pray thee to tell me how I may climb

up to thy place of strength, which is unto thee as the high hills to the goats, that so I may speak words of counsel and of comfort unto thee."

"Thine absence hath been so long, and its cause so strange," said Genevieve, "that I would rather first hear what thou hast to tell, and whether thou comest as friend or foe."—"Surely, as a friend," said the deacon, "and, 'as a brother is born for adversity,' so come I to warn thee of peril thou mayest best avert by submission, not by defiance; for, behold, the man whom they call the Bishop of Toulouse, is come up against ye, and he vaunteth of his strength and of his mighty deeds, and he saith of Beziers and Carcassonne and all fenced cities where the brethren fought and perished, 'Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad, and of Sepharvaim?'"

"Thou dost well," answered Genevieve, with holy indignation, "to borrow thy menace from the mouth of that idolatrous king, who

in his arrogancy, threatened not man but heaven. Remember also the answer given to him, and take it for mine—to Him who inspired that answer of old, to Him who can inspire it even now, I refer thee—even Him who in one night turned the host into dead corpses, and caused him to perish in the house of his idol gods, and by the hands of those whose parricide, while it punished his guilt, filled up the measure of their own: but for thee—for thee, Mephibosheth, whose lips should have kept knowledge, who should have been a stay to the weak, a shelter to the weary—how shall I read thy words aright, or believe, indeed, it is thou who utterest them?” — “Even as thou wilt,” said the deacon—“yet to thee they are words of truth and of safety. Can the rock afford thee shelter, or can it give thee food? Wilt thou abide there till thou famish, till the vultures peck at thee and the bears howl round thee, and thou faint for lack of water? Behold, a city of refuge is open to

thee—even the Abbey of Normoutier, where thou shalt eat of the fat and drink of the sweet, and whither I, even I, am come to lead thee. Wherefore should women delight in the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war?”

“Mephibosheth,” said the maiden, “I ever held thee earthly and sensual, but now do I deem thee devilish; for surely, unless it be a minister of the evil one who is permitted to assume thy form, thou speakest words which befit none but his servant. Wast thou a master in Israel, and is such thy counsel to the daughters of the captivity?”—“Where is the confidence wherein thou trustest,” said the deacon, abashed and incensed at the firmness of a woman contrasted with his own apostacy and vacillation: “I tell thee, those who have built their nest in a rock, have been humbled to the dust, and shalt thou be delivered? The mighty and the eloquent have been abashed and put to silence—a Moses hath erred with his lips, an Aaron hath yielded to the sin of the congregation, and

shall a Miriam alone strike her timbrel and sound praises to her own constancy and courage? Daughter of pride, come down and sit in the dust : thou shalt be like one of us—thou shalt be weak as we are. Bow, ere the golden sceptre is changed for the rod of iron.”

“It shall crush me in pieces first,” answered the maiden ; “even on the timid ears and failing hearts of women, thy base eloquence of fear hath failed of its power. From their hold of the rock, from where they battle with the eagle for his eyry, and with the fox for his den, women defy and despise thee. But oh, Mephibosheth, what depth of scorn must she feel, what bitterness of reproach should she utter, who rememberest what thou once wast ! Is it *thou* who comest to snatch away the support of Aaron and Hur from the uplifted arms of the prophet, even though thine own being depends on their being upheld ? to make the wheels of our chariot drive heavily, when thou shouldst lay thine utmost strength to the load ?—to trouble the host, when thou thyself shouldst

be first to show the lamp and blow the trumpet, and shout, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.'"

The deacon shrunk before the voice, the attitude, the inspired beauty, and the sacred eloquence of the young prophetess; for such she appeared.

"The truth is with her," said he, retreating among his companions; "and I cannot contend with or prevail against it."

"On again," said one of the monks of Normoutier; "or we will goad thee on with our spurs and riding-rods to the assault."—"On, on," repeated the rest, "and seek how we may climb to this den where the heretic wolf hath hid his mate and her young. An' thou lure not down that bird of the rock, whose note is so much braver than her plumage, and teach her other song ere long, thou art but a lost deacon."

Thus urged, the unfortunate deacon once more approached the rock, at the foot of which the monks were exploring the traces of that concealed path which we have before

described. "Hear, ye wretched women," cried Mephibosheth, "deliver up this damsel to us, with the young maidens of your company, and we will depart; but if ye will not, we will heap up the ling and the dry heath, the fir-tree and the pine-tree together, and cause the flame thereof, and the smoke thereof, to go up even to your hiding-place, that ye be consumed and perish." At these words, Genevieve looked round on her companions, her features radiant with the light of pure perfect confidence. With horror, she perceived there was no animating answer of a corresponding expression. The dejected and dismayed women looked on their children and then on each other doubtfully.

"Are ye mothers?" cried Genevieve: "do ye clasp children to your bosoms, and those children daughters, and can ye hesitate? Oh, fling me rather from the spot where I stand, a crushed and breathless mass of horror at their feet, than even think for a moment on the alternative. Your crime will not be so great, and my suffering will be far, far less.

But ye do not think of it---ye cannot," she cried, raising her voice. "No---tempter---no ; all here are women, women in soul as in sex ; and to those who have either soul or sex, such crime were impossible and unnatural !"

The women excited by her appeal, testified the revulsion of their feelings by a shrill and piercing scream of defiance. "What, are there none but women in that nook," cried the loose monk, who had acted the Abbot of misrule, "and stand we at the foot of the nest, to hear the hen-birds crow in our mere defiance ; up, up and seize them where they stand. Thou, deacon of the damned, ordained by Beelzebub himself, shalt climb first, and look thou show some tricks of thy old vocation in skipping from rock to rock like a chamois ; we shall be nothing slack to follow, and leave these tough hens not a youngling to cackle or ruffle for." As he spake, the monk made good his word, springing at hazard up the precipice, followed by his companions, dragging the wretched deacon along with them.

The monks were vigorous and active: they calculated every step of their perilous ascent with steady eye, sprung with light foot, and grasped with firm hand, while the deacon, after one or two premonitory suspensions over a crag, where his companions held him half in mischief, half in mockery, bounded upwards with a speed that justified his persecutors in urging him to it, and displayed an excess of grotesque activity in the effort, at once ludicrous and terrific.

Genevieve saw their progress with terror that concentrated her resolution. "Hear me," she cried, "hear me at peril of your lives! Look up at these masses of rock, so mighty that their fall must crush the children of the Anakim; so lightly poised as to yield to the touch of the feeblest woman. Advance but another step, and as He liveth in whose might I trust, and in whose spirit I speak, they shall crush your bodies into fragments, that the vulture shall utter a famished shriek as she passes by them."---"Hear me," cried the gasping deacon, "thou Zipporah;

thou Athaliah ! Art thou unsexed ; wilt thou be zealous unto slaying ?"—“ Unsexed men make women forget their sex also,” cried Genevieve : “ when the protector turns the oppressor, the unprotected forget aught but their safety ; and thou shalt feel, that woman in the cause of her faith and her honour is mightier than man assailing them.”—“ Of a verity I will not advance,” said the deacon : “ was not Abimelech, that mighty man of valour, slain under the tower of Thebez, by a stone cast by a woman ?”—“ On, thou losel !” cried the monks : “ thou mightest as well heave the Abbey of Normoutier from its foundation with thy little finger, as the slender arms of that damsel lift those rocks from their base.” They ascended, and came near. “ Now God aid me in mine extremity !” said Genevieve, applying herself to her task : “ your blood be on your own heads,” she cried ; while the united strength of her companions, joined with hers, shook, loosened, and finally detached, the vast masses of stone, which, bounding, smoking, and rattling from

crag to crag, dragging with them a forest of crashed boughs and brushwood, and sending before them a cataract of splintered rocks, and fragments of stone, trees, and clay, thundered into the valley, and sent their echoes far and wide among the mountains. With dizzy horror, Genevieve gazed on the downward progress of the ruin, and beheld, almost with a sensation of joy, the monks escape with miraculous dexterity the fate that threatened them, and stand trembling beside the course of that stony torrent as it flashed and thundered through the ravine.

They had brief space to congratulate themselves on their safety, for at this moment another danger menaced them. A large body of the Albigeois appeared on the summit of the opposite hill, and the terrified females caught an omen of hope and safety from their speedy return. To shout in joyful unison with their cry, to dart into the valley, and send a score of arrows after the fugitive assailants, who plied spur and riding-rod amain, was the work of a few minutes; and

as they sped through the valley, their eager gestures and increasing shouts testified they had been the witnesses, and were the intelligencers of some welcome event. The tidings they brought were as joyful as they were important. The Bishop of Toulouse had, indeed, put himself at the head of the remains of the crusading army, but the military followers of the fallen Crusaders had deserted almost universally, as was the custom of the age, when they were no longer commanded by their individual leaders; every man making his best speed to gain the territory or castle of his fallen or wounded lord, and leaving the bishop to meet the Count of Toulouse at the head of troops flushed with recent victory, with a band of unorganized and disarrayed vassals, instead of men-at-arms. King Philip besides, who on the throne of France trembled at the power, character, and views of the ambitious prelate, refused to recognize him as champion of the Church in place of Simon de Montfort, till his title was admitted by the court of Rome. The missives

from Rome were hourly expected, but the bishop not brooking the delay, and hoping to awe both the King of France and the Pope by the promptitude of his movements, and the rapidity of his success, had forced his diminished army through the mountain passes, and encountered so severe a check from the advanced troops of Count Raymond, that he was compelled to retreat again towards his episcopal castle and city of Beaucaire, and there await aid from the Crusaders. The way was thus left free for the movement of the females and children towards Arragon; but the Count had, in the mean time, been apprised that the King of Arragon had been excited to strong hostility against the Albigeois, by the missives of the bishop; and stimulated by the exhortations of the preachers who outnumbered and outvoiced the military men of his host, he entertained the hope of again becoming the lord of his native territories, establishing the heresy, as it was termed, within the walls of Toulouse, and rebuilding Carcassonne and Beziers.

To effect this work, the preachers, amongst whom the foremost were Mattathias and Boanerges, assured him a day of fast and supplication was necessary ; and to this, after their more favourable intelligence had been communicated, the party came to summon and conduct the females, whom it was no longer necessary to keep at a distance from the main body.

According to the habits of the community, a summons to a solemn act of humiliation and fasting was deemed, even by the females, like an invitation to a festival.

Not Deborah uttering her inspired song to a host of triumphant warriors, not Judith calling the elders of Bethulia to the gate to witness the event of her daring deed, felt more pride than these females, lately so persecuted and bewildered, when they heard of the solemn assembly which they were about to join under the protection of their relatives, and in the security of brief tranquillity.

Genevieve alone, who retained in a memory

rendered more faithful by the energy of her character, and the intensity of her feelings even when a child, the images of the horrors of Beziers and Carcassonne, shuddered at the thought of the desperate effort to establish the rights of the Count of Toulouse, and the exercise of the persecuted faith in his territorial city; and while she joined the train which now wound slowly and in safety down the precipice, foreseeing nothing but danger arising from courage, and calamity overtaking success, she wished "for the wings of a dove that she might flee away and be at rest." She felt, as all that are deeply religious must feel, that its exercise should be calm and tranquil, a "communing with the heart and in the chamber," and a "being still;" nor was she a little disturbed at the thought of being produced as the heroine of her party, for an effort which her habitual timidity made her almost consider as a crime, now that her spirits had subsided, and her mind had lost the high tone it was strung to in that emergency.

The hints of this had already reached her ; and when, with the acclamations of all the females, Arnaud placed her on his mule, while two men-at-arms of Count Raymond rode beside her, and Amand purposely entangled his hand in her rein that he might be near her, she shrunk from their hold, and whispered her wish to Arnaud.

“ It shall not be so,” said Arnaud, in answer, “ why art thou disquieted, damsel ? Behold the women shall go before thee with songs and with dances, and they shall praise thee with the praise of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because thou hast smitten the enemy by the hand of a woman ; also the old man thy father, behold he is yet alive, and he shall bless thee with many blessings, because thou hast been strong and very courageous for the truth, passing the strength of woman.”

“ Then I shall be blessed,” said Genevieve ; “ for I say to thee, reverend Arnaud, that one blessing from lips that tremble with affection—from lips that perchance may be closed

ere they utter another, were to me worth the shout of the congregation, even of a very great multitude.”

Amand, who had not spoken till then, but walked patiently beside her rein, said eagerly but whisperingly to her, “Haste then, if thou wouldst have his blessing.”—“What meanest thou?” said Genevieve.—“Nothing : I mean nothing—I *am* nothing, nothing in thy eyes ; but, reverend Arnaud, art thou sure that the damsel will, indeed, be greeted with a blessing, even the blessing of Pierre the pastor ?”

He spoke in a tone that made Genevieve tremble and Arnaud regard him with a look of consternation. “If it be so,” he added, gnashing his teeth, “may I be accursed—but that I am already ! Go, go,” he continued flinging back the rein, “go and see what blessing awaits thee : go and see if even Pierre will bless thee.”

CHAPTER XVII.

A sentence ; come, prepare !

Merchant of Venice.

THEY journeyed all that day in safety ; and about its close, their way, winding round a rock, suddenly disclosed to Genevieve and her companions a view of the valley where the Albigeois had assembled on what they termed their holy convocation, and which the preachers named the Valley of Jehoshaphat. It was now evening, and the shadows of the mountains had struck far into the valley, shedding the gloom of twilight over the dark and mingled groups who were assembled under its shadows. The solemn exercise, which had commenced with daylight, was still carried on : those who had breath and perse-

verance for the task were still pursuing it, and those who had not could yet add their gasping Hallelujah, or their faint So be it, to the petition which they could no longer hear. The valley where the Albigeois were assembled was one intersected by a narrow stream, increased by many rills from the surrounding mountains. Some spots in the valley were clothed with rich verdure and vegetation even in Autumn; many more were desolate and bare: the stony and broken path that wandered through the valley was sometimes obstructed by water, sometimes by broken branches of trees, and oftener by fragments of rocks that had fallen from the hills above;—but wherever a spot was to be found where two or three might gather together, there were the pastors, or Barbes, exhorting and praying; the congregation bearing audible response, and frequently leading the devotions they should have followed. The teachers were as diversified as their respective groups of listeners: the veterans of Count Raymond's army, who were of the

newly-adopted creed, enforcing it on their hearers with all the authority of established preachers, yet sometimes finding that authority shaken or questioned by some young champion in the lists of theology. Thus amid the centre of one group was to be seen a mailed warrior, his helm and visor doffed, his grey beard floating over his armed chest, his hand on a parchment scroll containing the New Testament, explaining it to a group of hearers ; while all his allusions and analogies, according to his own construction, were drawn from the Jewish Scriptures ;---while a beardless youth, cased in arms, would hold deep controversy with him, till the distracted audience knew not how to decide between the young Daniel come to judgment, and the masters in Israel, who were charged with not knowing these things. In another group the Barbes were seen with their woollen garments, their hoods resembling those of monks and their long beards : these were more dogmatical and imperative than their lay coadjutors. They hushed every murmur, permit-

ted no voices to be heard but their own, and by their powerful intonation, eager gesture, and denunciatory vehemence, seemed to exercise as absolute authority over their congregation as the power which they denounced and execrated could have aspired to in its utmost ambition of spiritual domination.

The visages of all these men were marked with the strongest lines of fanaticism and military enthusiasm combined. Cowl and helmet, when withdrawn, showed the same deep and stern character : some were distinguished by religious austerity, others by martial ferocity ; but all bore the traces of long and severe suffering—all announced wounds of the heart or of the brain—all spoke of that hope deferred which maketh the heart sick, or that terrible reminiscence of evil inflicted, which seeks or feels no relief but from the power of redoubling the infliction on others. Among them were many whose faces were marked with a character of deep reflection and indomitable resolution : not one of them who was not, from hour to hour, prepared for the loss

of mortal life, and engaged as frequently in the most awful questions relating to future existence. Hovering thus, as it were, between the living and the dead, they seemed to look on their earthly tenure with scorn; and to the future they had familiarized themselves by the intense and solemn exercise of all their faculties and feelings on "those mysteries which Heaven will not have man to know." So "under the shade they walked; now solemn stood." These groups were scattered promiscuously wherever they might find space; but far above them there was an ample auditory. The Albigeois, to the number of thousands, crowded the hills that enclosed this valley: they sat in patient silence, catching from time to time the sequel of a prayer, or a denunciation, and echoing it in voices that, numerous and distant, added an awful solemnity to their close; and above *them* still were seen the tents of the army of the Count of Toulouse, hanging like flakes of snow on the tops of the hills; while low and dim in the valley burned the lights that

glimmered from the cavern, where the elders of the congregation had met to debate on the projected expedition to the city of Toulouse, and to bless or ban it, according to their various views and feelings, whose influence was permitted an operation which had hitherto produced but diversity, dissension, and hostility. Of this, Genevieve had not as yet been a witness; and the glorious sight which the first view of thousands of people worshipping amid rock and mountain, under the canopy of Heaven, and by the light of the rising stars, which glow like suns amid those mountain regions---the pealing answer of the thousand voices to a single prayer---the choral hymn that woke the echo of a mountain "seated in hearing of a hundred streams"---the glorious and innocent pomp of this primitive worship, in a temple of which earth formed the foundation, the eternal mountains the walls, and Heaven the roof,---struck on the high-toned mind of Genevieve, and she could not help exclaiming: "Such, such was Israel once, ere God descended to dwell in.

temples made by hands---even when He was fitly worshipped in his primeval and heaven-domed shrine in the wilderness---when the sands of Arabia were pressed by the knees of six hundred thousand worshippers, and her rocks echoed nightly to the songs that made them vocal with the name of the Holy One of Israel. My God, leave to thy people the Heaven, which is thy throne, to appeal to; and the earth, which is thy footstool, to kneel on; and we will not envy the glories of the Temple, where thy presence descended in fire on the altar, and thy voice was heard between the trembling wings of the cherubim !”

As she spoke, Arnaud led her to the entrance of the cave, where the Barbes, with some of the military leaders, were engaged in prayer, interrupted by eager dispute about the movements of the host. Barbe and chief were fiercely at work : text and war-cry were levelled at each other, as when “ arrows clove arrows in the air, and darkened all the sky.”—“ Nay, let me rest here,” said Gene-

vieve, glancing a look into the cave, “of a truth I am wearied and sore-worn; and I feel somewhat like a presage of evil hanging at my heart, that I can neither define nor banish.”—“Genevieve,” said a voice low and close to her, “go no further—enter not the cave.” The voice was Amand’s; but so altered by some powerful emotion, that she was compelled to look stedfastly on the speaker before she could recognize the voice. “And wherefore not?” said Genevieve. He repeated the interdiction in a voice still more agitated, broken, and terrific; “Go no further—enter not,” and unable to articulate the word “there,” he pointed, with action alarming from its violence, to the cave. Genevieve rose in terror; and Amand, mistaking this movement for a resolve to enter, grasped her arm and repeated, “Go not, I command!—no, I implore thee, unless thou wouldst hear that which will transfix thee where thou standest:” and he rushed away; yet, before he was out of sight, turned again, and by an

attitude of deprecation the most vehement, seemed silently to beseech her not to go; he then disappeared.

“Is the youth insane, or is he distempered with strong wine?” said Arnaud, gazing after him. “Alas! no,” said Genevieve; “an evil and unhappy spirit troubles him, and prompts him to utter he knows not what.” The sounds of contention fierce and loud that had issued from the interior now suddenly ceased, and a deep voice was heard speaking alone, “Yet tarry, maiden,” he continued, seeing she was about to advance, “peradventure there are things spoken within which may be heard only by the ears of the chief of the congregation, and in a council of war, or deep debate on mysteries, the presence of a maiden were unseemly and unnecessary: tarry a while that I may go in;” and he left her. Arnaud returned in a few moments, his countenance was very pale, and averted from her. He took her hand without seeming to know that he held it, and attempted hastily to draw her away.

“Wherefore is this?” said Genevieve, “surely I will enter, for what evil can befall me—if Pierre be there?” Arnaud beheld her for a moment with an aspect, in which doubt, regret, and pity were struggling, and then dropping her hand departed without speaking.

Genevieve, thus left alone, after a momentary pause, approached the interior of the cave. She did not enter, but stood leaning on a crag of the rock, which concealed her from the view of those within. They consisted of Mattathias, Boanerges, and some of the more fierce and zealous both of the pastors and chiefs;—Pierre was also there, seated on a block of stone, himself appearing turned to stone also; his clasped hands resting on the top of a staff, and his sightless eyes turned towards heaven. Mattathias and all the rest were standing: he was silent, but he appeared, from his peculiar and terrible expression both of face and attitude, to have been uttering some tremendous imprecation as he stood. The rest were gazing on him silent also; but

amid the horror that marked every pallid visage with a deeper shade, a stern satisfaction was visible. The barbes threw back their cowls, and the warriors leaned on their swords, all fixing their stern and eager looks on him.

Mattathias had been disclosing to them the crime of Genevieve, of which he had been informed through a channel that may be guessed at. He was now winding up the period of his denunciation against his victim, while she herself was involuntarily and invisibly the witness of her own condemnation.—From what she had heard, she understood what had been already said, and perhaps already determined; and as if she had been present and pleading among them, she gazed on every iron visage and cold fixed eye, but read no relenting in them: she clasped her hands and recoiled. The next moment Mattathias, though with a reluctant pause, announced death to be the punishment.—Death—death—repeated many voices. But

some of those voices echoed the word in horror — some pronounced it in the mere agitation of the moment—some in doubt of what they heard, some in direct question, but not one in vengeance,—save that of Mattathias. The stern zealot repeated the sound.—“And she must die, then; she *must* die!—must she die?” repeated Pierre, dropping his staff, and rolling his lightless eyes round the assembly, as if trying to examine their countenances by the long-lost power of vision. “By the law,” said Mattathias, “such ought to die.”—“By what law?” asked the trembling parent; “by a law long abrogated—the law of the Jews. I appeal to Christians—I appeal to *men*—to fathers, and to mothers!—Speak, for I cannot see you—Oh, strike not the staff from the hand of the decrepid; quench not the sole light of the blind! Must my child die?”—“Yea, and thy hand should be first upon her,” cried Mattathias, “for malediction and for death;” and he seized the arm of the ancient man, whose exhausted frame fell senseless at his touch.

“ Oh !, not his—not his !” cried Genevieve, as she rushed into the cave, and prostrated herself beside the pastor——

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