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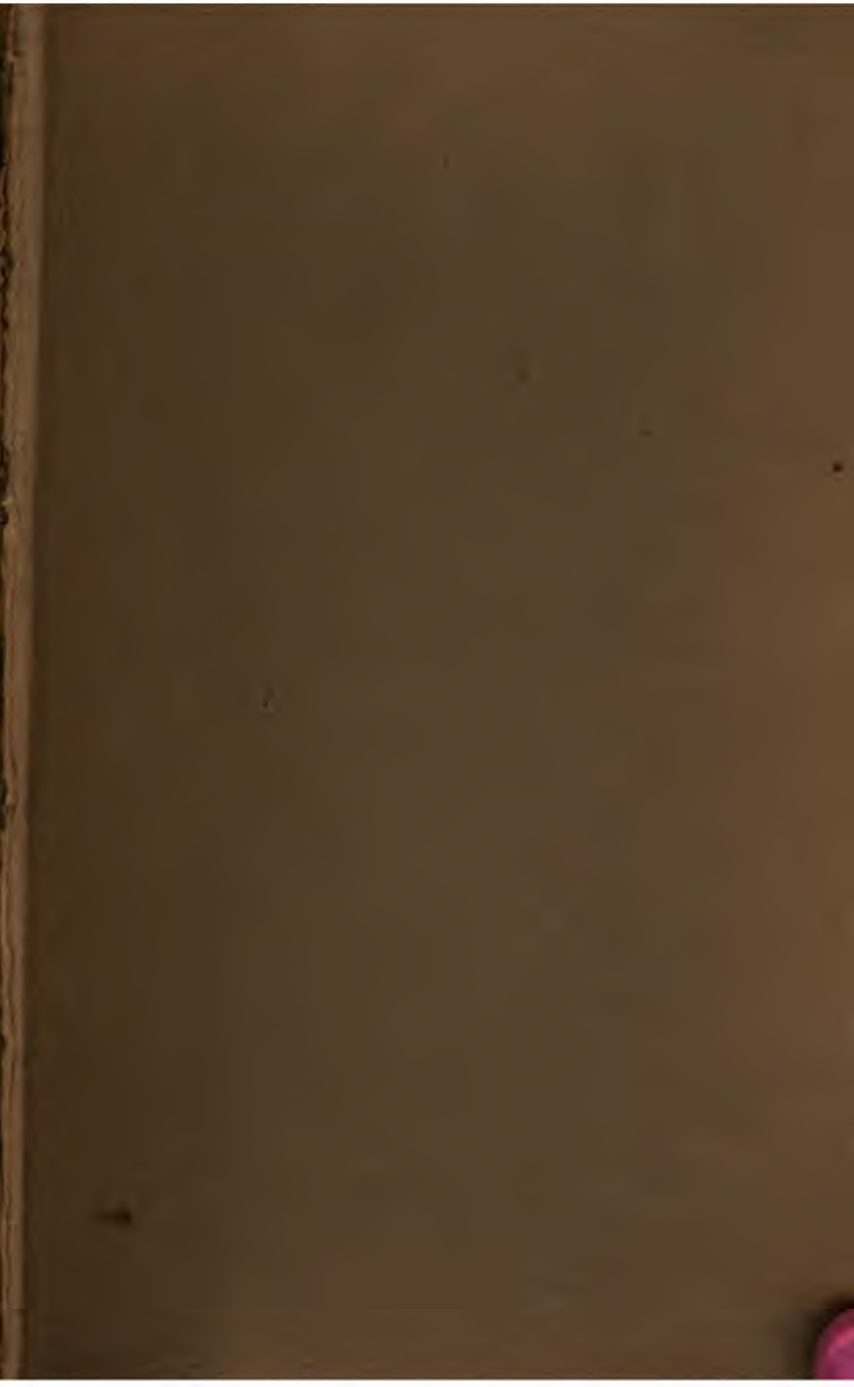
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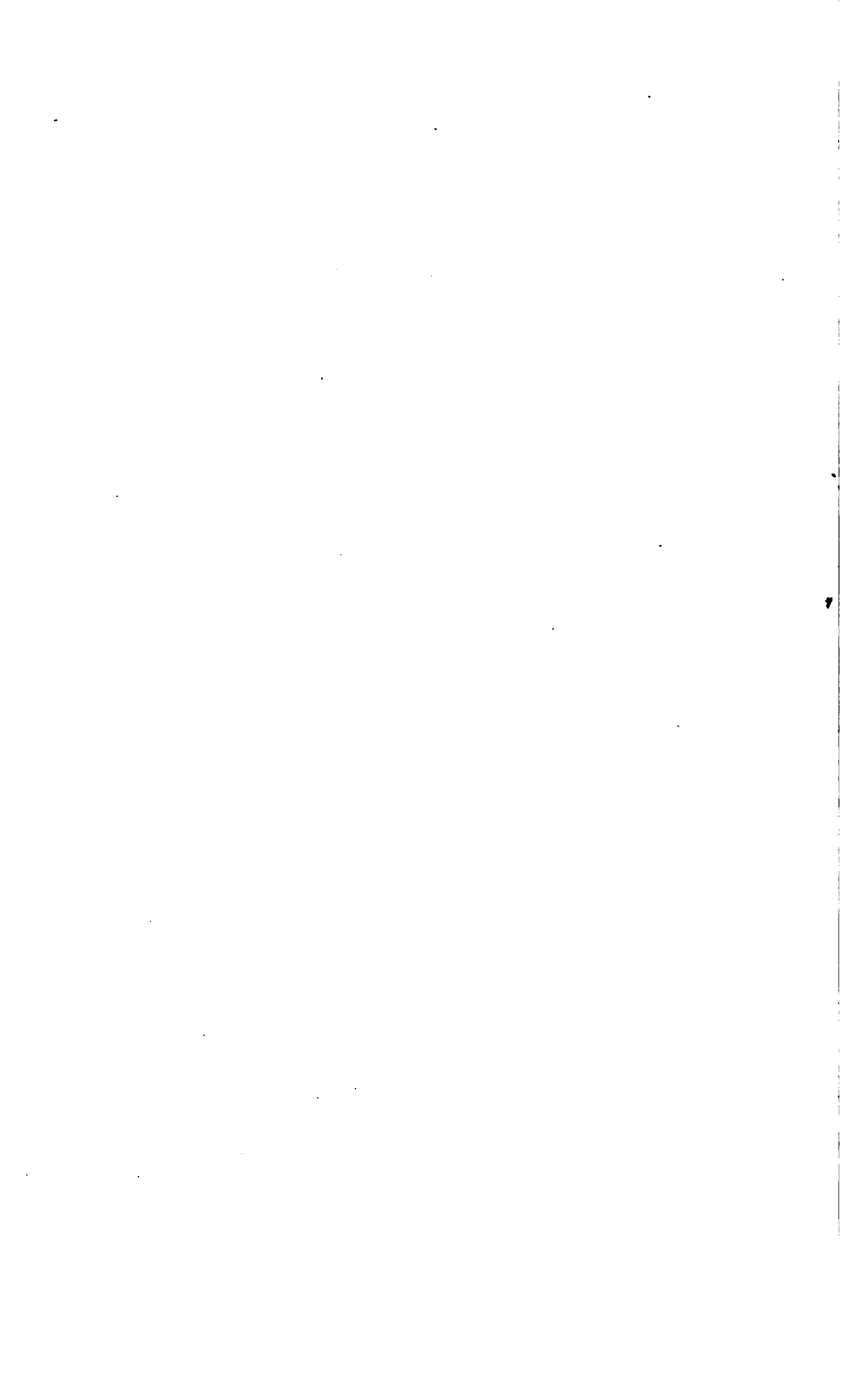
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THE
JACQUERIE;

OR,

THE LADY AND THE PAGE:

An Historical Romance.

BY

G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

"THE GIPSY," "THE ROBBER," "THE GENTLEMAN OF THE
OLD SCHOOL," ETC. ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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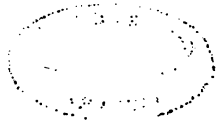
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P R E F A C E.

I HAVE ventured in the following pages to present to the reader a tale relating to remote times, though not so remote by more than a century as those which have already afforded me a subject which became very popular. Periods of history with which the reader is not already well acquainted are not the most favourable for engaging his attention, and exciting his interest in a work of fiction; but very few persons who are likely to read this book have not heard of the famous insurrection of the peasantry, called the *Jacquerie*, and do not know something of its horrible details. Amongst those details, dreadful as they were, many points of deep tragic interest are to be found, some of which I have endeavoured to display in

the following pages; while, at the same time, I have striven to keep in the shade the more revolting excesses of the insurgents.

Whether, in my anxiety to avoid that extravagance of horrors, of which we are all too fond in the present day, I have diminished the tragic effect of some of the incidents, I cannot tell; but I would always rather be accused of under-drawing than over-drawing such pictures.

Historians have taken very different views of the great event which forms the subject of my work, some regarding the revolt of the peasantry as a grand political convulsion, brought about by complex and deep-seated causes; while others look upon it merely as an accidental burst of brute force against the trammels in which it always has been, and always must be, held by superior knowledge and intellect. Under not less different points of view have been considered and judged the character and motives of the leader of the insurrection. By some, he has been pronounced a hero; by some, he has been painted as a demon; by some, he is represented as a mere savage; by some, he is

elevated to the rank of a philosopher and a politician.

That he was a man of superior education to those by whom he was surrounded, I can have no doubt. That he was a blood-thirsty and ferocious monster, the records of those times prove beyond the possibility of refutation; and it is very fair to conclude, as he was undoubtedly possessed of considerable abilities, skill, and information, that some strong personal motives, some particular passion or desire, led him to use the miseries and wrongs of his fellow-sufferers for the attainment of his own objects. Of course, in the ranks of the Jacquerie there were various classes of intellect, and various degrees of education. There might be one or two persons who saw beyond the immediate efforts of the day; there might even be some who proposed to themselves objects superior to any selfish gratification; but I am bound to say, that not the slightest trace of vast conceptions, projects of public good, political reasoning, or even any purpose of generally benefitting their kind, is to be found amongst all the accounts

which we have received of these insurgents. It is more wonderful that they achieved great enterprises with such objects than with such means. There is not in the annals of the world an instance in which, if we are to believe the statements of contemporaries, so much barbarous brutality and so little mind was displayed by any body of rebels against existing authority. We know not what was the account that Caillet gave of himself, but we find that a number of others, when interrogated, could assign no reason for their rising, but that *they were miserable*. The very words are striking, and, coupled with the fact that these men proposed to themselves no object but the slaughter of the nobility, gives us, perhaps, the true secret of the Jacquerie, and shows that, with the mass, it was the frenzied outbreak of despair.

The events to which this insurrection gave place, the dangers, the perils, and the sufferings of some of the best people in the land, and the ultimate overthrow and destruction of the insurgents by a mere handful of gallant gentlemen, form the materials from which the following pages

are composed. In my management of the subject, while I have endeavoured to bring the scenes before the reader's eyes as far as possible as pictures, and have introduced some of those little traits of the times, which give identity and verisimilitude to a tale, making the reader familiar, as it were, with things afar off, I have likewise tried to avoid those long details of customs, ceremonies, and dresses, which please a few readers and fatigue many. While I trust I have not violated historical accuracy, I have laboured more to depict the men than the habits of the age; and in so doing I have generally kept away from those broad and striking contrasts, which are met with *occasionally* in human life, so that we may *occasionally* introduce them, but are nevertheless so rare, that we should not make use of them frequently.

Thus, in Albert Denyn and William Caillet, I have given one of these contrasts, bringing into strong opposition a selfish and a generous character, and endowing both with those intellectual powers, and that moving energy, which are necessary to carry out the pecu-

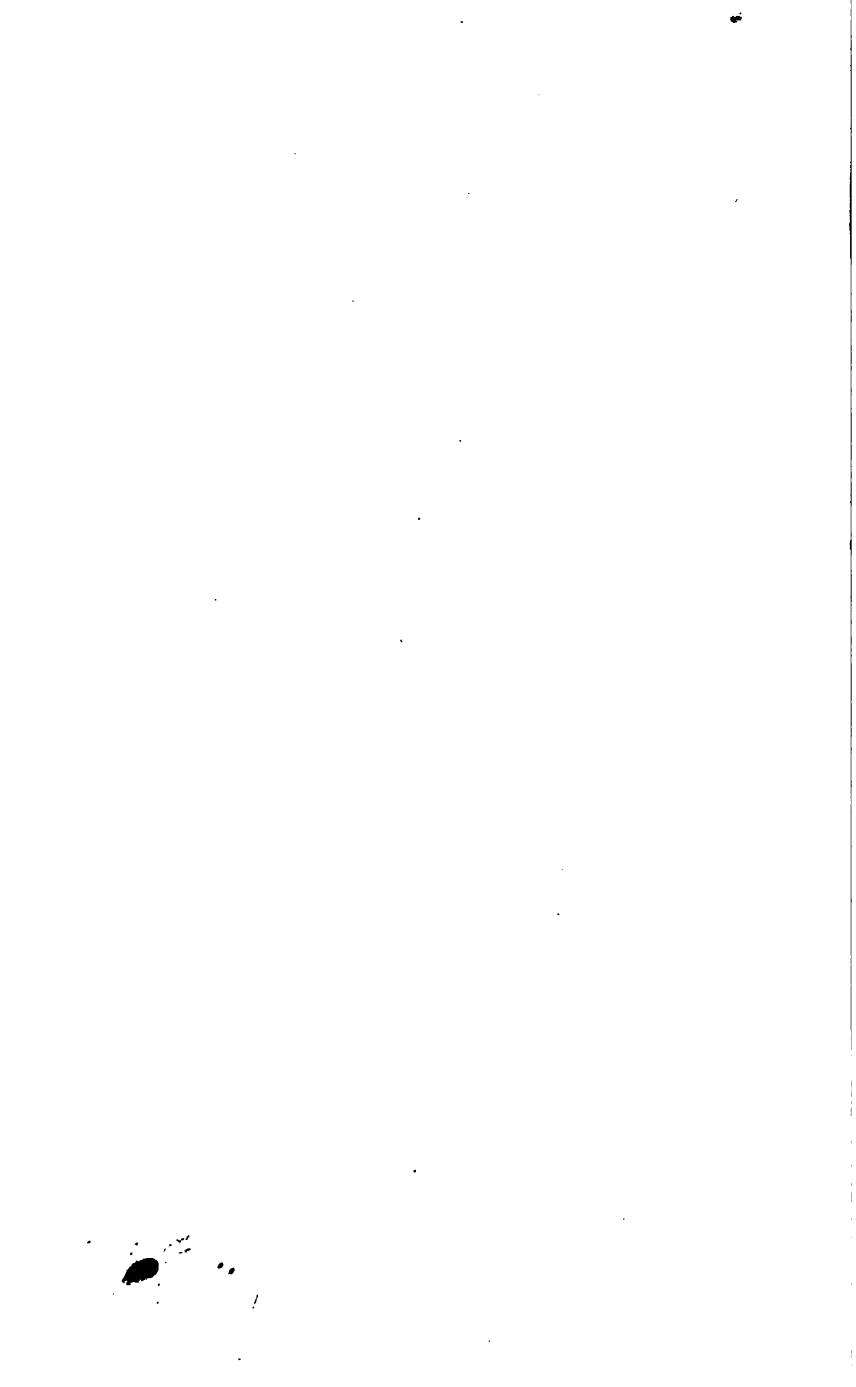
liarities of any particular disposition to an important result. I have endeavoured also to trace the effect, the original bias, upon the conduct, and upon the fate of each, making the same passion which leads the selfish man to all that is base, violent, and criminal, conduct the generous one to all that is high, virtuous, and noble.

In the other personages of the tale I have attempted, without losing sight of the peculiar spirit of the chivalrous ages, which threw, as it were, a uniform tone or hue over society, to mark the slighter distinctions of character, so that the Lord of Mauvinet may be different from the Captal de Buch, the captal quite distinct from the Count of Foix, and the count from the Lord of St. Leu. I have aimed at the same in the female characters, though they are few in number, and of less importance than the others.

In regard to the conclusion of the tale, I have adhered to the plan of the work that I had originally formed, which certainly renders the plot more complete and more in accordance with the general taste of the day,

than another termination which suggested itself to my mind while I was writing, the nature of which the reader will easily divine if he reads the book to an end. Nevertheless, I was greatly tempted to adopt the latter, and even doubt now that I judged rightly.

In depicting the historical personages, who from time to time figure on the scene, I believe I have adhered strictly to truth, making them such as they were and no other; and if I may seem to have carried chivalrous generosity too far in the character of the Captal de Buch, let the reader remember some of the ascertained points in his history — that he was the bosom friend of Edward the Black Prince — that he was one of the founders of the Garter — that he remained for many years in prison rather than promise not to fight for England — and that there is every reason to believe that he died of grief for the loss of his friend and his commander. Such things can be told of few upon this earth, and those who have been so distinguished may well be represented in somewhat dazzling colours.



THE
JACQUERIE.

CHAPTER I.

EVEN in the middle of the fourteenth century the tint of age had overspread the vast old church of St. Peter of Montvoje, some twenty miles from Tours. The stone, which had once been light grey, was stained with many a dingy colour, and the sharp cutting of the mason's chisel had been rounded away by the obliterating hand of time. Indeed, so tall and shadowy was the building, that, although in its first newness the exterior might have appeared bright and shining, amidst the green woods that covered the surrounding country, the interior

never could have given the spectator the idea of freshness ; but in its dim obscurity must have looked old even from the first. It had been built in that style mistakenly called Norman, but at a period when the round arch was gradually declining, and the long lancet-shaped window, the lofty column, and the horse-shoe arch, were occasionally used. The lighter forms, indeed, of a later period were not there to be seen ; and all was heavy, massive, and stern, scarcely relieved by the many mouldings and rich ornaments of the arches, and the quaint and ever-varying decorations of the capitals. The tall windows afforded but a faint and uncertain light, except when the full sunshine of the summer poured at noon through the arch of the southern transept, and even then the stained glass softened and saddened the blaze, giving a sort of unearthly hue to the rays, as they fell upon the checkered pavement. Round the chancel ran two dark side aisles, which received none but wandering beams, that found their way thither from the body of the church — except, indeed, when one of the

small, low-arched doors, that led into the cloisters of the neighbouring abbey, opened, and the daylight, for a few moments, streamed in, displaying the figure of a priest or monk, and casting his long shadow upon the floor.

In this church, one evening in the autumn of the year 1357, just when the light was growing faint, ere the going down of the sun left all in darkness, was a tall, handsome young man, of four or five and twenty years of age, with his arms crossed upon his bosom, and his eye bent down upon the ground. The dark aisle of the transept in which he stood was too shadowy for any one to have distinguished his features, or their expression, had there been other people in the church, but he was quite alone. Neither priest appeared at the altar, nor penitent in the confessional; and the flickering of a faint lamp before one of the shrines was the only thing that looked like life within the walls of the building.

Though no one saw his features, it may be necessary that the reader should see them with the eye of imagination, and also requisite that

he should mark the peculiar expression which those features wore. The lines were all good, except perhaps about the mouth, where a certain heavy fulness of the lips took away all beauty from that part of the face. The forehead was broad and capacious, though not remarkably high; the brow strongly marked, but finely shaped; the eyes large, sparkling, and full of thoughtful meaning; the nose small, but beautifully cut, and the chin perhaps a little more prominent than is exactly symmetrical, but still rounded into that form, which the Grecian chisel was delighted to display. The hair and beard, which were all short, were of a rich brown colour, and curled about the face in many a graceful sweep; but the form of the head was in itself remarkable, being nearly spherical, though there certainly did appear a degree of fulness behind the ears and at the back of the skull, which diminished the beauty of the whole.

Could any body have watched the expression which the countenance we have described wore at that moment, he might have been more puzzled than ever he was in life before, to in-

terpret the meaning of what was written on that page. Dark and stern it certainly was; but at the same time, there was a mingling of scorn and melancholy, too, with that look of fierce determination, which had a strange effect. The brow was knitted into a heavy frown; the full black eye fixed upon the pavement, though nothing was to be seen there but the dim shadow of the aisle; the nostril was curled as if with strong contempt for some object in his own thoughts; but the turn of the mouth was that of deep sadness; and thus he stood for several minutes, till suddenly the whole aspect changed, and, though as mingled as before, the expression presented elements entirely different. A low suppressed laugh caused his lips to part; a gleam of triumphant joy lighted up his eye as if from the anticipation of some difficult success; the knitting of the brow passed away, and the only part of his former look that remained was the scornful turn of the nostril and the upper lip.

It may seem strange to the reader that I have paused to give so minute a description of

the features of a man who was dressed in the garb of a villein or serf, attached as domestic to some noble house; but so it was, and such in fact was the condition of the personage now before us. The dress that he wore was of brown *bure*, as it was then called, but it fitted him well; and, with a certain degree of vanity as well as taste, he had contrived to give it so much additional smartness, that it became his person as well as more lordly robes. Each sinewy limb was shown to the best advantage, and the symmetrical grace of his whole person was displayed, rather than concealed, by the close-fitting garments which covered him.

In saying that his station was that of a domestic in some noble house, I do not mean to imply that it was inferior, as compared with that held by others in his own grade of society. It must be remembered, that many of those tasks of personal attendance and service which are now performed by hired servants were in those days executed by young nobles of the highest rank and fairest prospects, either in the dwelling of their own parents, or in the

castles of the friends and relations of their family, where they appeared as pages or squires; and to wait upon their lord's person, to clean his armour as well as the dressing of his horse, the service of his table, and various other acts now considered menial, were then part of their daily duty. Many other functions, however, were assigned in every large mansion to serfs or villeins, who sometimes, in the house of a liberal and kindly master, were raised to offices apparently higher than those which were conferred on the young nobility of the household. There was a distinction, however, which perhaps we do not very clearly understand at present; and although a villein might fill the post of chaplain, almoner, and counsellor, and sit at his lord's table*, while the sons of princes poured the wine or carved the meat, yet the serf could not, except in default of noble hands, bear his lord's shield or spear, could not give him the water to wash

* This fact is proved by various particulars given by the Sire de Joinville respecting the household of St. Louis.

before dinner, or hand him the cup out of which he drank.

The dress of the person whom I have described was good, fine in the texture, and such as none but one highly favoured would have been permitted to wear, though it was still that of the villein, and showed that, although the form and the features might all be as high and refined as Grecian sculpture ever displayed, yet the taint of slavery was in the blood, and that the wearer was a serf of the soil.

By this time, however, great changes and ameliorations had taken place in the condition of that class, and they stood in a very different position from that in which they had been placed at the time that Europe first issued forth from the darkness of the ninth century. Many wise and good monarchs had willingly and anxiously contributed to add comforts to the situation of the lower orders, and if not actually to unbind the fetters from their hands, at least so to regulate the relations between the lords of the soil and them, that those fetters might not be made more galling. Many unwise

and vicious monarchs, too — for God often uses the wicked as instruments of good — in their quarrels with the baronage, which sometimes trod rather hard upon the skirts of the royal mantle, had endeavoured to punish the obnoxious class, by giving back some of the privileges of man to those on whom that class trampled; and thus, though the villeins upon the lord's estates or territory were still nominally his chattels, as much as his horse, his dog, or his hawk, yet he was restrained in his dealing with them within certain limits and by certain rules: their property was protected, their lives and persons were under the safeguard of the law, and they were no longer a mere herd of cattle, to be dealt with at the pleasure of a brutal owner. The cultivators of the soil, the mechanic, the manufacturer, the merchant, the inhabitants of all villages, and many of the dwellers in towns, were generally classed as villeins. Though, long before the period of which I now speak, the formation of communes had introduced a distinction, and the free commons of a great number of cities pre-

sented an intermediate class between the baronage and the serfs, they were still ranked as villeins by blood, though enjoying all the rights of freemen, without the privileges of nobility. In rural districts, however, many a terrible and degrading badge of slavery still remained fixed upon the peasant. In one place, the *right of the lord* implied one degrading service, in another, it comprised others; and in times of trouble and disaster, when the strong hand of lawful authority was removed, and the arm of the law shortened, exaction, pillage, oppression, and tyranny, resumed their full sway: the dearest rights and most sacred feelings of human nature were set at nought; and the only safeguard of the peasant was the honour, virtue, and benevolence of some of the chivalrous lords of the land. That safeguard was sufficient to protect many, but it was not sufficient to secure all; and although, in some instances, the noble châtelain was a father to those below him, ever ready to succour them in sorrow or calamity, to shield them from danger, and to avenge them against wrong, yet in others, the

feudal lord was the enemy of all around, the tyrant of all beneath.

The times I write of, too, were amongst the most terrible that ever the fair land of France beheld. Her king was a captive in a foreign land, her nobility, overthrown in the terrible day of Poitiers, were scattered, disunited, and dismayed, her fields overrun with bands of lawless adventurers, living alone by plunder, and inured to massacre and bloodshed, as a trade, her finances ruined, her young prince powerless, insulted, and betrayed, struggling with a fierce faction and ambitious demagogues in the capital, and not one bond of union existing throughout the whole land, but that of similar language, manners, and faith. The latter, alas ! was suffered to have but little sway either in moderating men's passions or directing their actions. In the turbulence, the excitement, the disorganisation of the day, the functions of religion were reduced to the task of affording consolation and nourishing hope ; but even this was a blessed privilege where all else was sorrow, wretchedness, and despair.

It may easily be conceived, then, that while

such a state of anarchy existed in the land, the condition of the peasantry in many districts daily became worse. Though the law existed, there was none to administer the law, or to enforce it between the lord and his serf, and thus the will of every man became the only rule in his own territories. *Jacques Bonhomme*, as the insolent nobles called the unfortunate cultivator of the soil, sowed in fear and reaped with pain; and in many places ills more burthensome than human nature could bear ground the labourer to the earth.

Such was the state of France at the time when the personage whom I have described stood alone in the dark aisle of the church of St. Peter at Montvoye, musing bitterly over many a topic of deep and terrible interest. By his dress one might perceive that he was of the class of serfs, and that he was some favoured domestic in a noble house. From the scenes that are to come, we shall gather the character of his mind, and see more of his condition and feelings, as well as learn those actions, which gained him a place, though a sad one, in the history of the times in which he lived.

CHAP. II.

SUDDENLY the door at the end of the aisle opened, and a ray from the setting sun broke in upon the darkness, tinting the manifold columns and arches as it passed, and casting a sudden brilliance down the long perspective of the pavement — like one of those bright and wonderful thoughts, which sometimes, in the mental world, burst upon subjects that have remained obscure for ages, discovering to the eye of a Newton or a Herschel a long chain of beautiful facts, all lighted up by the removal of one dark obstacle.

The opening of the door disclosed to the eyes of him who was standing in the church two forms entering from the cloistered quadrangle of the abbey adjoining, and he instantly drew back into one of the small chapels, and bent his knee before a shrine, though, to

say sooth, he prayed not in his heart, but gazed between the pillars that concealed his own person at the others, as they paused for a moment in the archway, with the light shining round them as if in a picture.

The two figures were those of an old man and a young one : the first was dressed in the long robe of a grey friar ; but the loose heavy gown—even when massed in the dark shadow, as he stood with the light flowing in from behind—could not conceal the calm dignity of his person ; while the ray, catching upon the bald head, and streaming through the white hair, showed enough to account for a certain bend of the whole form by the heavy pressure of the hand of time. The younger man, who stood beside him, was tall and upright, with an air of easy grace and commanding power in every line, and as he advanced with a step firm but noiseless, and slow to suit the pace of his more aged companion, he offered a picture of vigorous manhood in its early prime, such as might well busy the hand of a skilful artist to depict.

As the latter turned to speak to the good prior of Montvoye, for such was the monk who walked by his side, the light caught upon his face, and displayed a countenance decidedly handsome in feature, but deriving its great beauty from the expression, which was very peculiar. It was calm, thoughtful, and even gentle, with a flickering smile hanging at that moment round the lip, which seemed to denote a quick and playful fancy; but the tranquillity of the expression had nothing of weakness in it: as did his whole figure and carriage, it gave the idea of high mental and bodily powers, great energy and activity of character, though those qualities were for the time in repose.

The complexion was fair rather than dark; but the face was browned with much exposure to the sun and wind; and a distinct line across the forehead showed where the casque or the cap had shaded the head from the summer heat. The eyes were hazel, and fringed with long dark lashes, but the hair and beard were of a light, rich brown.

He was speaking as he came forward; but the

only words which caught the ear of the person who remained kneeling in the neighbouring chapel were, "I am right glad it is so, father, for I have myself known what it is to lose those who are most dear. Not only is your noble brother living, but in good health. His wounds are now healed; but he is one of those who could not survive a field like that, without some worthy marks of having done his duty."

"You do him justice, noble lord," replied the prior: "Maurice de Mauvinet * will never shame his race. We have mourned for him as dead; and well may we now rejoice to find him living."

The prior said no more for the moment, but walked on by the side of his more youthful companion, musing as he went. Both paused, bowed, and crossed themselves as they traversed the nave before the high altar; and then, taking their way to the opposite door of the transept,

* Maurice de Mauvinet was seneschal of Touraine, and was taken prisoner, severely wounded, at the battle of Poitiers. He is one of those particularly mentioned in the letter of the Black Prince.

they issued forth upon the steps of the church ; before which stood a glittering train of men-at-arms, calmly talking with some monks and serving men, or arranging the caparisons of their horses and soothing the eager fire with which the chargers fretted to depart.

The young nobleman turned as if to take his leave ; but the prior spoke first, with a thoughtful smile. “ I will not detain you long, noble sir,” he said, “ for the evening is at hand ; and night is no time to travel in this poor land of France ; but yet I would fain hear another word or two of my dear brother’s fate ere we part, though to-morrow perhaps I shall meet with you again.”

“ Nay, speak boldly, my good father,” replied the knight : “ I fear not the darkness. What would you know more ?”

“ First,” said the prior, “ I would ask, when we may hope to see my brother back ?”

“ Nay, that I know not,” answered his companion : “ right soon, I trust, good father. He may come whensoever he will. ’Tis now some six weeks since that, journeying by

Poitiers, I first had reason to believe the letters he had written, as soon as his wounds were healed, had never reached his friends in France. It is no marvel that such has been the case; for where no law remains, and it would seem that all rule has been done away with here, letters often find other hands than those for which they were intended. However, I wrote to the noble lord at once, and sent the packet by a trusty messenger — who I know has since reached the good city of London — telling him what I had heard, and beseeching him to come over hither and seek his liberty himself, lest men should say I had acted so discourteously as not to put a worthy prisoner to ransom. It never crossed my mind, however, that his near friends and children themselves were all this time ignorant that he was in life, till last night, at Tours, I heard, by a mere gossip's talk in the inn, that he was mourned as dead, and his young son, called Count of Mauvinet, in his place."

"The boy will gladly give his countship up," replied the prior, "to see his small image in

his dear father's eyes again. — But one question more, most noble captal. At what sum have you fixed my brother's ransom? We will raise it speedily, and with right good will."

"Faith, my father," answered the other, "it was not I who fixed it; 'twas himself. The simple facts are these. After the battle, when night was just approaching, I went out to seek for the body of my sister's son, who had fallen. We found it amongst a heap of dead, and, lying near, was what seemed the corpse of my good Lord of Mauvinet. They had stripped him of his arms and clothing: but I knew his face, for we had held a conference the day before on some matters regarding a truce; and, thinking it were but an act of charity towards his friends, I bade my people raise his body, too, and bear it to my tent. Ere we reached the camp, however, I found that the spark of life was not yet extinct, and therefore we gave him such tending as the time admitted. He recovered, as you know; and I scarcely held it just to put a man so captured to ransom. He, however, fixed the

sum himself at five thousand marks of silver, and reckoned on having it right speedily. However, believe me, my good father, it was not seeking his ransom that I came; it was merely, that, hearing you all believed him dead, I thought it but a pleasant ride to turn some twenty miles from my way, and, by the tidings of his safety, to light up joy in hearts that had long been desolate."

"Joy, indeed, do you bear with you, noble captal," replied the prior, "and glad will be the welcome that waits you at my brother's house, when once the news that you bring is known; but yet, as at this hour, and in these times, I fear you would not easily get admission within the gates of a castle whose châtelain is a boy of six years old, and whose lady does not yet number nineteen, unless you were accompanied by some known friend. I have therefore——"

"I should but have to ride a few miles farther," replied the knight, interrupting him with a gay laugh. "The truce holds me from storming the castle; and if they will not have

the good news I bear them to-night, they must wait till you carry it to them to-morrow morning."

"Not so, noble sir," replied the prior; "for although, as I told you, the abbot being absent at this moment, I cannot to-night have the satisfaction of accompanying you to Mauvinet myself, yet I have provided means for insuring your reception. I have just sent for a youth, now at the abbey. He is well known in my brother's house, and greatly trusted by us all, who will both serve to guide you thither, and open the gates to you when you arrive. He has not yet come up, I see; but I suppose he was taken by surprise, and has some small preparations to make for his journey."

The knight thanked the good monk for his care in simple terms, and then remained plunged in silence, for he had many another thought to busy his mind withal; and the things that were now passing round him formed as yet but a light episode in his existence. The prior himself resumed the discourse, however, saying, after a short pause, "In behalf of the youth

who is coming I would bespeak your kind consideration, my lord ; for though I must not say that he is of noble blood, yet he is in all things far above the race of mere peasants."

"The son of some citizen?" asked the knight, with an air of indifference.

"Not exactly," replied the prior. "His father held lands in Normandy, but fell under some false suspicions during the troubles in that district, and was put to death by his lord unjustly. His wife and child fled hither, where they found a protector in my brother ; and the mother dying, the youth has been brought up partly at the abbey, partly at the castle."

"There have been so many troubles in Normandy, good father," answered the knight, "that I know not well which you mean ; but if you speak of those that occurred a few years ago, when your good prince, King John, held what we call *the bloody feast of Rouen*, arrested many noble gentlemen at his son's own table, and after dinner struck off their heads in the field behind the castle — if you mean those troubles, all I can say is, the

unjust lord of this good youth's father had a goodly example of cruelty and tyranny before his eyes."

"It was previous to the time you speak of that these events took place," replied the prior; "but I beseech you, noble sir, cast no harsh censure on my king, while he lies yet a prisoner in a distant land. So long as he was able he was ever ready to meet in arms, as a monarch and a knight, those who gainsayed his deeds, but now——"

"I was wrong—I was wrong, good father," replied the captal: "he is as valiant a prince as ever drew a sword, and I should not have blamed him when he could not answer to the charge."

"He may have had good cause for what he did, my lord," replied the churchman. "There runs a whisper amongst us, that the false King of Navarre had seduced the inexperience of the prince to rise against his father, and that the Lord of Harcourt was privy thereunto."

"Still the king confounded guilt and innocence together," replied the other, "and

put noble gentlemen to death without a trial. — But here comes the youth of whom you spoke I suppose. He seems a likely stripling, and more fit to make a man-at-arms of than a monk.”

“ In truth, my lord,” answered the prior, “ it is plain to see that he has no great taste for the gown. We have done the best we could for him — taught him a world of learning, if he would use it wisely : but, to say sooth, he has ever shown himself fonder of watching the tilt-yard, and secretly practising with the sword and spear, than reading theology or singing in our choir. He was generally at the castle till my brother marched for Poitiers ; but since then I have not well known how to dispose of him — for here we cannot do as in England, where persons, not of noble birth, can bear honourable arms, and gain a high renown.”

A kind and ready answer sprang to the lips of his companion, but a moment's thought made him determine to pause a while ; and he turned to examine more particularly the person of the young man who approached.

He was a very different being from him whom we have already described as lingering moodily in the aisle of the church. He was not by four or five years so old as the other, and his countenance bore the expression of youth, which is a very peculiar one, and which once lost can never be regained. It was not that his face was without traces of thought, for with all its cheerful sunshiny look there was reflection, and imagination, and mind in every line; but it was, that there were none of the furrows of care, anxiety, and grief upon it, none of the lines that show that the heart has been used, and a portion of its freshness taken away. There might, indeed, come a shade of melancholy over his brow from time to time, but that shade was as a floating cloud over a summer sky, and not the dull grey expanse of a chill autumn day. Neither were there on that countenance the branded stamp of fiery passions, nor the harsh traces of gnawing discontent. It was frank and open; changeful, but not moody; thoughtful, but not sad. The complexion was rather fair than dark;

the limbs light and active, though giving a promise of great strength; and there was in every motion, as in every look, a breathing spirit of young exuberant life that had something wonderfully prepossessing in it to the eye.

His dress was that of the richest class of peasantry; but that he had received an education far above his birth was evident, from the grace with which he moved. As he approached the prior and his companion, he uncovered his head, listened with respectful but not servile attention to the directions that he received; and then, as soon as the knight had mounted, laid his hand upon the saddle-bow of a horse that had been prepared for himself, and without touching the stirrup bounded into the seat.

CHAP. III.

THERE was a castle upon a slight rising ground in the midst of a wide basin in the hills. It was strongly fortified, according to the military architecture of the fourteenth century: barbican, portcullis, moat, and drawbridge defended it sufficiently on all sides against the ordinary means of attack; and the tall walls and towers, with their crenelles and loopholes, threatened an approaching enemy with sad annoyance in his advance. Sweeping down the lower slopes of the neighbouring uplands, indeed, were various scattered woods, leaving wide open fields between them; but they came at not point so near to the castle as to give a coming foe the means of concealing his proceedings.

The moat, or piece of water which surrounded the fortress itself, was somewhat more than fifty

yards broad, and was indeed one of its best defences; for only one means of traversing its deep water existed, which was by a narrow causeway, not carried straight across, but with a bend or elbow in the middle, so that any inimical troops which might attempt to force their way over, before they reached the draw-bridge and barbican, must necessarily expose their flank, first on the one side and then on the other, to the whole artillery of the castle walls.

Those walls themselves, at the point opposite to the causeway, approached close to the edge of the water, and in some places the grey foundations dipped themselves therein; but on the three other sides a crescent-shaped slip of meadow stretched out between the château itself and the greater moat, together with a small piece of ground cultivated as a garden, and one or two old trees. The breadth of this field was no where more than thirty or forty yards, and between it and the walls was a narrower moat, cut from the other, and crossed by two or three drawbridges which led to

posterns in the towers, sufficiently wide and high to permit the passage of a horse; for in truth the green meadow that we have mentioned was used—in times when it might be dangerous to cross to the other side of the great moat—for the purpose of practising those chivalrous sports which were a part of the daily life of that period.

It was about half past eight o'clock when the party, which we have seen quit the Abbey of Montvoye, paused for a moment on the slope of one of the neighbouring hills, and the young guide, who had not quitted the side of his noble companion during the ride, pointed with his hand towards the valley below, saying, “There, noble sir, is the castle!”

The moon had risen little more than an hour above a line of dark wood that skirted the distant horizon behind the castle; and her living beams showed the whole dark masses of the ancient feudal building cutting clear upon the luminous sky behind, while the wide moat, except where the shadow of the towers fell, shone bright and silverlike in the white

moonlight. A long row of windows in the lower part of the keep appeared illuminated by lights within, and from the casement of a chamber in the story just above came forth the rays of a lamp.

“ You see, noble sir,” continued the youth, after they had paused for a moment, “ you see they are still waking. That is the chamber of the Lady Adela, above the knight’s hall.”

“ You have guided us well and quickly, good youth,” answered his companion : “ let us spur on, however, lest we have yet to wake the lady from her slumbers.”

The young man followed rapidly, but still a step behind the knight ; for though he had been treated with kindly courtesy, there had not been wanting that tone of conscious superiority in the captal’s demeanour which he was well entitled to assume, both by station and renown in arms. The youth felt it somewhat painfully, however, even more, perhaps, than he would have done from those whom he knew well, and who had not the habit of treating him as

the mere peasant, whom the churl's blood excluded from all courteous consideration. I have said, indeed, that he had not been so used by the knight, who had addressed him often, and asked him many a question, showing more interest in him than most men might have done so circumstanced. But still, the moment the answer was given, the captal had relapsed into a state of apparent indifference, remained silent for several minutes, and then speaking of something totally different.

Why he should expect more attention from strangers than from those with whom he was familiar, the youth could hardly tell; but yet the cold want of interest with which the knight heard his replies seemed to show him, more sensibly, the dark spot of the serf's blood: it was as if each man he met marked it upon his forehead, and treated him accordingly. His nature was a generous nature, however: he might grieve without anger; he could feel pain without bitterness; and although he longed to conquer his fate, it was by great and noble deeds which would shame the world

for fixing on any class of men the odious name of villeins.

When they had reached the bottom of the descent, the knight again drew in his horse and paused to look up at the dark towers, as they rose majestically against the sky. The light was still shining from the window above, and a faint strain of music found its way out into the air of night.

“ She sings ! ” said the captal, speaking to himself. “ She sings ! So soon do deep griefs pass from the mind of youth ! ”

To his surprise, the young man who rode by his side, and who had never ventured to address him, except when he himself was spoken to, now replied somewhat sharply, saying, “ It is a hymn ! — Hark ! ”

The captal made no observation, but paused and listened ; and now distinctly heard that the strain which he had taken for a light song was, in fact, a solemn address to Heaven. He did not answer the youth’s observation, however, but only crossed himself, saying, “ God hear her orisons ! Now, we must seek ad-

mission quickly. Over this causeway seems our nearest way."

"It is the only way," replied the young man; "but take care how you try it, till I have blown my horn, for you might have a flight of arrows on you, such as fell at Poitiers."

"Now Heaven forbid!" replied the captal: "wind your horn, good youth!"

The young man raised his horn to his lips, and blew a long and cheerful blast. A moment after, a warder on the barbican answered in the same tone, and shouted out a welcome in reply to the well-known sounds, but at the same time demanded aloud, "Who have you got with you?"

"I know not your name, noble sir," said the guide to his companion "All I know is, that you are a friend of my good lord the prior."

"Say it is the Captal de Buch," answered the knight, "who comes with good tidings to the house of Mauvinet."

"What, the noble Captal de Buch!" exclaimed the youth, gazing up in his companion's face, "who led the English horse

against the battle of the constables at Poitiers?"

"The same," replied the captal, "the same, young man; but be sure you say he brings good tidings: for my name is not too well loved in France, and may not gain me admission, without something added."

"Your name is honoured throughout the world!" replied the young man, "but I will do your bidding, if you will wait for but a moment here;" and riding on alone he approached the barbican, and after a few words was admitted by the warder.

The Captal de Buch remained in a musing mood, sometimes gazing down into the glistening waters of the moat, sometimes looking up to the moonlight sky, sometimes scanning the dark towers, and, while his spirit was in truth busy with other things, taking in vague impressions of their military strength; for in despite of all that has been said against it, the mind is not only capable to a certain degree of carrying on two operations at once, but generally does so; and we continually find, that while we are revolving one definite train of

ideas with all the intensity of deep reflection, the casual sights that pass before the eye, and the sounds that fall upon the ear, are each marked and considered in a general manner as if by separate powers of perception and thought within us. The armed attendants of the knight in the meanwhile remained at some short distance behind, the younger and more impetuous fretting at the brief pause, and the old and veteran followers of the great leader calmly enduring a delay which they were well aware proceeded but from necessary caution, gazing up with curious eyes at the battlements, and thinking how such a castle might be best attacked.

There was another person present, however, who had joined the party at some distance from the abbey, and who after speaking a word to their young guide had fallen behind. This was the remarkable man whom we have described in the first chapter, and who after overtaking the troop had shown no disposition to converse or jest with the light-hearted men-at-arms of the capital's train, during the whole journey

they had made together. His eyes were now neither turned to the sky, nor to the moat, nor to the castle, but were either fixed upon the ground, or busily engaged in scanning the forms of his temporary companions. The same scornful bend was still about his lip, and it might curl somewhat more strongly at some of the words which he caught, but he uttered not a syllable in reply.

At the end of about ten minutes the delay seemed to be long even to the captal, and from time to time he turned his eyes towards the barbican, while his horse pawed the ground impatiently, as if wondering what stayed his impetuous rider.

At length, however, the light of torches appeared in the gate; the drawbridge was once more let down, the portcullis was raised, and by the flickering glare of the flambeaux might be seen a number of armed men arraying themselves on either side of the causeway, while the youth, who had guided the party thither, came forth and announced to the captal that he was welcome to the castle of Mauvinet.

Ere he entered, however, one of the old soldiers of that great officer's band rode up to his lord's side, and begged him to remark the armed throng which lined the portal of the barbican. The captal, however, merely replied with an impatient "Pshaw!" and touching his horse slightly with the spur rode on across the causeway, passed the outer defences, and bowing with a courteous inclination to the soldiery as he proceeded, entered the gates of the castle upon horseback, and dismounted in the court yard. Here he found stationed several old officers to receive him; but the youth, who had guided him thither, still acted the part of his chief conductor, and led him forward up the steps to the great hall of the building, which was known by the name of "the knights' hall."

Although the room contained many lights, yet the part where they first entered was comparatively dark, but at the farther end was an object, which instantly attracted the captal's attention, and seemed to surprise him not a little. It was the form of a girl, apparently of nineteen or twenty years of age, habited in garments

of deep black, and followed by a waiting-woman in the same sombre garb. The captal could not doubt for a moment that the lady before him was the person whom he came to see; and the surprise, which he evidently felt, must have been excited either by the beauty and grace of her form, and the loveliness of her face, or by the expression of wondering hope and joy which lighted up her countenance.

He advanced quickly towards her, however, while she on her part came forward with a hasty step, exclaiming, "Welcome, welcome, my good Lord Captal. Albert tells me, you bring me glad tidings — I know it; I know it! My father is alive! — A thousand welcomes for such happy news!" And in the eagerness of her joy, according to the simple custom of that day, without shame or reserve, the lady approached the knight and kissed him on either side of the face; while her eyes beamed forth the delight that was in her heart. At the same time, however, as if doubting her own hopes, she repeated twice, "Is it not true? is it not true, noble knight?"

“Yes, lady,” replied the captal, “it is true. Your noble father does live, is well, and will soon be restored unto you. I have brought you the tidings myself, that I might have the satisfaction of witnessing the joy which I now behold.”

“Joy, indeed,” replied the lady, “joy indeed! the greatest that has entered these gates for many a day; but I must send for my poor brother! Though the dear child sleeps, it is no sin to wake him with such news as this.”

I will not pause to detail the farther conversation of the knight and the young lady of Mauvinet. It lasted nearly an hour, and in the course of it, all that the captal had to tell brought forth on her fair face a thousand varying and beautiful expressions, which caught the eye of one not insensible to beauty, and made him long to know more of the bright heart, from which such gleams seemed to issue forth.

With graceful courtesy and kindness, though with some timidity of manner, the lady caused refreshments to be set before her guest, and pressed him to his food, while several of the old

officers of her father's household stood around the table, and others went to prepare lodgings in the castle for the knight and his followers.

Adela de Mauvinet was soon joined in her task of entertaining her unexpected guest by her young brother, a boy of six or seven years old, whose gladness to hear of his father's safety seemed even beyond his years, and increased the recompence which Adela's joy had already bestowed upon the captal for the glad tidings which he had brought.

It was not till after he had told the story twice, and added many a little anecdote to gratify the children of his prisoner, that the great leader retired to rest; but if we must say truth, the thought of Adela de Mauvinet, of her beauty, and of the varying changes which had come over her countenance while he told her of her father's safety, somewhat disturbed his repose, and made his slumbers more dreamy and disturbed than they were wont to be.

Let it not be supposed for one moment that the captal was already in love. Though those

were days in which such a thing was quite possible — when the Romeo and Juliet love, brought forth, like the lightning from its cloud, in a single moment, often produced effects as fierce and keen as that of heaven's bolt itself, rending the stubborn heart, and spreading desolation round—yet the captal was of a different nature, and loved not easily though long. Still the beauty and the grace of her whom he had that night seen for the first time touched his imagination, though not his heart, and he lay and thought for more than one half hour of Adela de Mauvinet, and dreamed of her in sleep.

CHAP. IV.

THERE had been a light frost upon the ground, but the morning was bright and clear, and some of the soldiery of the castle had been wrestling and playing at backsword and buckler in that open space between the walls of the castle and the great moat, which we have already mentioned. It was a fine sight to see them in the clear fresh air, with their strong and muscular limbs cast every moment into some new and graceful attitude; and several of the followers of the Captal de Buch, who came at first merely to look on, soon entered so fully into the spirit of the contest, that, when invited by some of the wrestlers to take part, they joined in and tried a fall with the rest.

There were two persons, however, who gazed for some time on the sports, but took no part therein, remaining aloof at some distance,

and with crossed arms and bended heads watching the exercises, in which they were unwilling or unable to mingle. Those persons were no other than the youth who had conducted the Captal de Buch to Mauvinet, and the man whom we have described as lingering in the church of Montvoye. Very different, however, was the expression on the countenance of each, as they stood there and gazed. The face of the younger displayed a keen interest in all that he saw going on before him, while that of his companion was unmoved, and calm, and seemed rather to hold the wrestlers and their sports in contempt, than to derive any pleasure from the sight of their pastime.

“Come, Albert,” he said at length, addressing the other, “come, let us get away from these brawling fools. To stand here and watch them does no good either to you or me. You would fain join them, and be such another as themselves: I despise them, and would not be one of them if I could. Come, Albert, come and let us talk over poor France.”

“ I might join them this moment if I would,” replied the other; “ you know they are all very kind to me.”

“ Kind !” replied his companion with a bitter sneer upon his lip, and at the same time walking slowly away; “ kind !” and you are content to take from kindness that which is your own by right.”

The young man to whom he spoke started, and looked inquiringly in his companion’s face. “ Mine by right !” he exclaimed; “ how is it mine by right more than yours?— What is it that you mean, William Caillet? How is it mine more than yours ?”

“ I said not that it was yours more than mine,” replied Caillet; “ but come away where we cannot be heard, and I will explain to you my meaning.”

As he spoke, he moved away with a slow step and a careless air, as if unwilling to let any of those around see that there was in his bosom deeper thoughts than were displayed by the mere surface. The other followed him across one of the small bridges, and by a pos-

tern into the castle. Caillet paused not within the building, but crossed the court, and sauntering through the great gates approached the barbican. He walked on with an air of listless indifference, spoke a few words to the warder that let down the drawbridge for them, and then, seeing that his companion lingered, as if unwilling to go on, he said, "Come, Albert, will you not take a walk this fine morning? See how bright the sun shines: you will find matter for some new song."

The youth, whom he called Albert, smiled and followed him, merely replying, "I cannot go far, Caillet, for I have charge to wait upon the noble Captal de Buch till the good prior comes."

"The captal will not want you for an hour or two," replied Caillet, "and you have plenty of time for a walk. Come, if you be willing; if not, stop behind. Good faith, it is the same to me. I seldom seek better company than my own; for nowadays one's thoughts are one's best friends."

The other made no answer, but accompanied

him in silence, and Caillet took his way through the meadows on the opposite side of the moat, and walked on up the slope of the hill to some trees a little in advance of the wood, which crowned a spot where a precipitous bank of no great height afforded a full view into the valley with the castle and all the adjoining lands. There the two sat themselves down; and for several minutes Caillet spoke not a word, but continued gazing with a meditative look over the fair scene spread out before him.

His companion's eyes rested long upon the landscape also with much real enjoyment of all that is fine in nature; and, to say truth, attaching no great importance to the words of Caillet, he had totally forgotten all that had previously passed between them, when the other again resumed the subject, saying, "I asked you if you were content to take as a favour what is yours by right; and you seemed as much surprised at my saying that it is yours by right, as if you were as ignorant a peasant as any of all the many who hug their chains, scarcely knowing that they bear them."

“ Still I do not understand what you mean, Caillet,” replied the other. “ I have no right to meddle with the sports of a rank above myself unless I am invited.”

“ They have thrown away much teaching upon you to very little purpose !” replied Caillet in a tone of scornful wonder. “ Is it possible, that you, Albert, who have had all the learning the monks of the convent can give, and have been taught every thing that even a knightly education can bestow, should be so blind, so dull, so stupid, as not to know, or so base as not to feel, that yours are the same rights as those of any other man on earth ; and that these proud nobles, in their gilded garments, are but of the same clay as you and I, without one difference between us and them, except that some braver and more powerful robber than themselves chanced to be the founder of their race, and to snatch from our ancestors the lands that they now possess. To prevent us from ever taking back our own they have called us villeins—serfs ; they have prescribed to us certain garments as a badge

of our slavery, forbidden us the use of all but certain weapons, even to defend our lives against the beasts of the forest, or the field. They have denied us practice and skill in arms, lest we should use those arms against themselves. They keep from us all knowledge, too, lest we should learn our rights as men, the tyrant vanity of their pretensions, and their feebleness and baseness when stripped of the advantages which circumstances have given them.

“Nay, nay,” replied his companion, interrupting him, “they do not keep from us all knowledge! Are we not both instances of the contrary? How very many do they themselves educate? And how very, very many of the church have sprung from our own class?”

“Ay, of the church!” replied Caillet with a look of scorn, “granted of the church. Nay, more, my short-sighted friend, I will concede more still: they are ready, they are anxious, when they see any one of more genius than the rest—when they see any one whose mind is fitted for great things, whose spirit and nature empower him to accomplish great enterprises, they are

ready, I say, gladly to educate him for the church."

"And is not that noble and kind?" cried Albert, interrupting him.

"It might be so," answered the other in a sharp tone, "were it done with a good motive; but why is it they do this? Is it not to bind down both the souls and bodies of the great and high-minded to a profession which affords the surest safeguard their usurpation can have, which bids us still endure in patience, and cuts us off from all those ties of kindred which would make us feel for the wrongs of our fellow-men? The hands of the clergy cannot bear arms against the cowards that enslave us; the voice of the clergy must not be raised to bid the serf shake off his chains, the villein to cast off his bondage. This is the cause why, whenever a child is perceived of somewhat greater powers than the rest of his race, he is sent to the convent or the seminary, and bred up in the trammels of another sort of servitude, more lowering, more debasing, than that from which he escapes, be-

cause it is the servitude of the mind, because it is the villeinage of the heart. — And why is all this? why is it, but because they are afraid of us; because these insolent men, who, when they meet the peasant in the field, scatter the dust over him with their horses' hoofs, and call him in contempt *Jacques Bonhomme*; because these very men are cowards at their hearts, and fear the very worms they tread upon."

His young companion had listened with a thoughtful brow, a somewhat gloomy air, and an eye bent upon the ground, with sensations that prevented him for some time from making any reply. He felt that there was some truth in what Caillet said; but he felt, also, that it was not all true, and yet did not at once see where lay the line between the truth and falsehood. At length, however, when his companion accused the nobles, whom he had been accustomed through life to honour and to respect, of cowardice as well as tyranny, he burst forth with a laugh, not altogether gay: "Nay, nay," he cried, "nay, nay, Caillet, some of them may be tyrants, bloodthirsty, cruel tyrants — nay,

we know that it is so, but they are no cowards. I would fain see you, my good friend, try your hands with one of these who you say are afraid."

"Some day, perchance, you may," replied the other; "and wherever the fear lay, Albert, it should not be on my part. But enough of that! I am no boaster; and when the time of trial comes, I shall not be found wanting. You say they are no cowards: would that France could find it so! for if she did, these proud Englishmen would not thus be riding over the land as lords and masters. Would that France had ever found it so! for then we should not have seen King John's whole host scattered like a flock of sheep by a poor handful of famished English knights; we should not have seen eight thousand men chasing a host ten times their number; we should not have seen men drowning themselves in the fords for very terror. Out upon it! Will you tell me that, at Poitiers, the cowardly nobles did not betray their king and sell their country? Shame, shame upon France! If the villeins had fought at Poitiers, instead of their lords, history would have had

to tell another tale, and this young tiger of England, this black prince, Edward, would now be in chains in Paris. Out upon it, I say, that we should thus be sold by dastards into the hands of our enemies !”

He had spoken so vehemently, that his companion had not an opportunity to interrupt him, though he had been very willing so to do. The moment the other stopped, however, he exclaimed, “ No, Caillet, no ! you are wrong, you are quite wrong. Who does not know that courage without conduct is nothing ? Look at our own King John : did not the great prince, who conquered him, pronounce that he had done to the utmost his duties as a knight ? Did you not hear the herald tell in the castle-hall, how the English prince himself served him the cup at supper, and declared that he had won the fame of the best knight in that day’s battle ?— Then look at our own noble lord, found upon the field with twenty wounds upon him : was that like a coward, Caillet ?— All the eight thousand noblemen, who died where they stood, did they show any lack of courage ? ”

“No,” replied Caillet, with a bitter sneer curling his lip; “no, they certainly did not. But what think you, Albert, of the twenty thousand, who fled without striking a stroke? what think you of the thousands and the tens of thousands — ay, the hundreds of thousands — that were seen flying over the plains of Poitou, with nothing but their own fear pursuing them? I have said, and say again, that at Poitiers France was sold to England, not for gold, but for a worse price — fear !”

“Nay, nay,” replied his companion, “you do them wrong. Have we not all heard, how often, in every period of history, a momentary panic has overthrown a host?”

“Perhaps,” replied Caillet, “had you been there, you would have fled too.”

The young man’s cheek turned red; but Caillet proceeded, before he could reply, adding, “No, Albert, no, I am well aware you would not — there is not one of us that would; and therefore it is that I say, if the peasants of France had fought at Poitiers, England would not have won so great a victory.”

“ I know not,” replied his companion, “ I know not that ! All I am sure of is, that thousands of our nobles did their duty gallantly, fought well, and if they did not conquer, died, or were taken prisoners, when they could resist no more.”

“ And is that all that you am sure of, Albert Denyn ?” continued his companion, in a stern and reproachful tone ; “ is that all that you have learned ? you, who so lately have travelled all the way to Poitiers, to inquire about our lord ? Do you not know, that the country is in misery and starvation ? Do you not know, that the peasantry are oppressed and ground into the dust ? Do you not know, that even where the cruel lord of the land spares the countrymen, the bloody hand of the adventurers, who ravage the country, plagues them at their very hearths with fire and sword ? Do you not know, that the misery, the agony, and the distress of the people, can reach no higher point ? that they labour in the fields with their terrified eyes looking round every moment for an enemy ? that they pass by the château and the town in

haste, lest the scourge of their oppressors should reach them on the way? that they dare not sleep even in their wretched cabins for fear the robbers should be upon them? and that they lie through the miserable night in boats moored in the river, or the lake, lest murder, and violation, and wrong should visit their habitation in the darkness? Do you not know all this, Albert Denyn? and do you find nothing to pity in the state of our brethren throughout the land?"

"I have heard that such things do exist," replied the other, in a sad tone; "but on the road to Poitiers I saw little of them. I saw the effects of war: I saw desolated fields, and people in distress, and much mourning, and many a noble castle ruined and destroyed; but the peasant seemed to have suffered less than his lord; and I was told every where that the adventurers made war upon the palace, but not upon the cottage. Yet I say not, Caillet, that your representation is not just: I am aware that such great miseries exist: I am aware that want and starvation reign in some of the finest

parts of France; and, from my very soul, I grieve for and pity the poor creatures who are so suffering."

"Ay," said Caillet, in a musing tone, "I have been told, that on the side of Poitiers the famine is not so bad; but I will tell you, Albert, what I myself have seen. I have seen a dying child clinging to the cold breast of its dead mother, and seeking nourishment in vain, while the famished father sat by, and saw, and could give no aid, because he had not seen food himself for many a day. This was the first sight I beheld, when I was lately sent to Brie. A little farther on I came to a brighter scene, a spot in the hills, which seemed to have escaped the scourge of war, and to enjoy as much happiness as yet remained in France. The fields were rich and plentiful — it was then, you know, the time of harvest — and abundant sheafs of corn loaded the ground. I even heard a peasant singing—a sound that had not met my ear for many a day; but suddenly I saw a band of men come down from the neighbouring castle with carts and waggons, many a train; they

came into those fields; they took up that harvest; they loaded their waggons therewith; they asked no man's leave; they gave no man an account; all they said was, that it was for their lord's ransom — their lord, who had been taken while flying like a coward from the field of Poitiers. I turned to look for the man who had been singing, and saw him sitting with the tears flowing from his eyes, thinking of the coming winter, and the misery of his wife and children. I rode on as fast as I could go, for the sight was terrible to me; and at length I heard the sound of merriment, the tabret and the flute, and my heart rejoiced at the sound. Dismounting from my horse, I went into the village to see what good fortune could make people so happy in the midst of misery and sorrow. It was a marriage going on, and the farmer's daughter was being led back from the church to the sound of the pipe. All that her parents could spare had been given to deck her out upon her bridal day. She was as fair a young creature as ever you beheld, not unlike our own sweet lady of the

castle ;” and as he spoke, Caillet fixed his eyes keenly upon the countenance of his companion, repeating, “ not unlike, I say, the Lady Adela. Her bridegroom walked beside her, and ever and anon he turned to gaze upon her, thinking that she was his own, and never to be parted from him again. But at that moment came by a gay troop, with glittering garments, and gold, and furs, and all the good peasants bowed them lowly down before the lord of the village and his guests. So the noble stopped to speak, and to gaze upon the peasant’s daughter in her bridal finery ; and he said a world of gallant things to her, and told her she was as fair as any lady in the land ; and then she blushed to hear such praises, and looked lovelier than before. At length he went away ; but ere he had been gone half an hour, his people came down, to summon the young bride up to the castle, without father, or brother, or mother, or husband ; and when she trembled, and would not go, they took her by force ; and when the bridegroom strove to rescue her, they struck

him with a partisan upon the head, and left him as one dead upon the ground."

"And was he dead," exclaimed Albert, with his eyes flashing fire; "and was he really dead?"

"I know not," answered the other coldly, but in his heart well pleased to see the eagerness which he had raised in his companion; "I know not. It was no business of mine, you know, Albert;—they were but peasants—villeins—serfs.—'How now, Jacques Bonhomme!' cried the lord's bailiff, as he struck the bridegroom on his head with his partisan. 'Dare you resist my lord's will?' and I heard the iron strike against the bone of his skull."

"But was he dead?—What became of the bride?" demanded Albert, eagerly. "You did not leave them so, Caillet. Was he dead, I say?"

"Better for him if he had been," replied Caillet, in a solemn tone: "he lived, but how long I know not. His bride did not return for several days; and she was dead ere I passed by again."

Albert Denyn pressed his hands upon his

eyes, and remained for several minutes in deep thought. Caillet took care not to disturb his reverie, adding not another word to those which had produced the effect he wanted. At length Albert raised his head suddenly, and started up from the spot where they were sitting, exclaiming, "It is time that I should go, Caillet: it is time that I should go."

"Nay, nay," replied the other, "you have half an hour yet, and I have much to say;—but I know whither you would go, and I cannot blame you. Though I grieve for you, Albert, I cannot blame you—for she is well worthy of love."

"Who? What do you mean?" exclaimed Albert Denyn. "I know not what you would say, Caillet."

"You know right well, Albert Denyn!" replied Caillet; "but don't let me pry into your secrets. Once we were friends, but now you give me not your confidence; and yet I wish you well, and would fain see you happy. You might be so, too, were you other than you are; but they have taken care so to enthrall you with

prejudices, that I fear you will not dare to strive for the prize, were you even certain of winning it."

Albert gazed at him for a moment, and then resuming his seat, once more covered his eyes with his hands, and seemed to fall into deep thought. Caillet also bent his look upon the ground, in a musing mood; but he turned his gaze from time to time for a single moment upon his young companion, calculating all that was passing within, till, at length, judging that what he had said had worked in his mind sufficiently, he once more renewed the subject.

"I cannot blame you, Albert," he said, "and you might be happy, if you would; but with your feelings and your thoughts in regard to our tyrant masters, what you dream of is madness, and every thought that you give to her is but adding to your own misery."

"And it is madness in you to speak thus, Caillet," replied Albert, suddenly rising again; "utter madness! You know not what you speak of! You do *not* know my feelings, nor my thoughts! You fancy that I imagine things

impossible, when no such ideas ever enter into my mind. It is phrensy, William Caillet: I tell you, it is sheer phrensy in you to talk thus; and would be worse in me to listen to you."

"Stay, Albert, yet stay a moment," replied Caillet, laying his hand upon his arm. "You must listen to a few words more, as you have heard so much already. You need not go to the castle yet: the captal is with the lady Adela; and if I judged his looks last night aright, he will not thank the man who interrupts him. You may well spare me a few minutes more; and ere you again say that I know not the feelings of your heart, be a little more sure that the assertion is true."

"You do not know, you cannot know," answered Albert, vehemently, but still with a sudden degree of hesitation and sinking of his voice, which showed the keen eye of his companion that he was afraid the inmost thoughts of his bosom were really discovered. Gently drawing him by the arm, Caillet made him once more sit down by him, saying, "Albert Denyn, it is a friend who speaks to you. Listen, and

I will show you what I know, or, if you like the term better, what I fancy."

"You are wrong — you are wrong," replied Albert, as he sat down; "but speak on if you will, it matters not: I am not the madman that you think;" and while his companion proceeded, he gazed forward upon vacancy with an abstracted air, as if he would fain have persuaded himself and Caillet that he was utterly indifferent to the subject of discourse.

His keen companion was not to be deceived, however; and he went on, saying, "Do you think, Albert, that I have gone on in the same dwelling with you, except during the time that you have been away at the abbey, for nearly ten years, without knowing something of your mind and character? Do you think that I have lived with you so intimately the last four years, watching you every day, marking your every action, and hearing your every word, without knowing the passion that has been growing up in your heart, without seeing that in some sort it is returned?"

"Hush! hush! Caillet," replied his com-

panion. "Returned!—what mean you by returned?—But I must not pretend to misunderstand you. Yet you are mistaken;—in all this you are mistaken. Passion!—It cannot be passion that I feel; it is too humble, too lowly, too hopeless. — Oh! no, Caillet, no; call it by some other name — deep, deep devotion, if you will — respect, admiration, love — yes, love; — love such as the most humble may feel to the most high, but love without even a dream of hope, without an expectation, without one presumptuous thought. — Oh! no, Caillet, no; call it not passion, that is not the name."

He spoke with great agitation and eagerness, and when he had done, pressed his hand upon his brow, and bent down his head upon his knee. "Call it what name thou wilt, my good Albert," replied Caillet, with a slight sneer: "thou art far more learned than I am, though the chaplain vowed I was a good scholar, too. — But, I say, call it what thou wilt. So that my meaning is clear, it is all the same to me."

"Returned!" continued Albert Denyn, again raising his head, and heeding not the words of

his companion, but going on in the train of his own thoughts; “returned!—Vain, vain imagination! Surely, Caillet, Satan must have put such a vision in your mind to tempt and grieve me. Oh! no, as we have spoken thus far, I must speak farther. I believe you love me, Caillet: I am sure, at least, you would not injure me; and I will not deny that, to me, there seems about that sweet lady’s looks, and words, and movements, some spirit almost divine, which hallows the very ground on which she sets her foot. How often have I stood, and watched for the hour of her coming forth, as weary travellers look for the rising of the sun! How often have I stood, when I could not, or dared not, join the gay cavalcade, to gaze upon her from some distant tower, as she followed her father, while he flew his hawks over the plains round about! How often have I contented myself, since I have lately been at the abbey, by standing in yon meadow opposite, and watching the light in her chamber window, and thinking that she sat there at her orisons, while I prayed Heaven to pour its blessings on her, too!”

“And has she not marked that service, that devotion?” said Caillet, more in the tone of an assertion than a question. “Has she not marked it, and rewarded it with smiles, such as she bestows on none of all the household but yourself?”

“Smiles,” replied Albert; “oh! yes, she smiles kindly and sweetly, because she sees that I would fain please and serve her; but they are cold, cold smiles, Caillet — cold to what I feel. It is but the approbation that she gives to the devoted servant of her house; a passing casual glance, with one kindly look upon him, who the moment after is altogether forgotten, but who never forgets her — no, not for one moment throughout the livelong day. Yes, Caillet, you have seen her smile upon me gently and placidly; but as the moon shines on the water — bright sweetness, without warmth. Oh! no, Caillet, no; that is no return for sensations such as mine.”

Caillet laughed, and answered, “And yet you disclaim all passion, Albert. You own, however, that she smiles upon you, and all who see her

know it. You acknowledge, too, that you love her, and none who have eyes and see you near her can doubt it. Nor do I deny that she is worthy of all devotion, though she deals proudly with me, as you well know. Though when she passes by me, her head is carried more haughtily, her eye assumes a deeper fire, — though to me she takes all the air of one of the proud tyrants of the land, yet I deny not — nay I willingly allow, that her beauty is worth the attachment of any one, whether rich or poor, noble or serf.”

“Oh! more than her beauty,” exclaimed Albert; “her gentleness, her kindness, her true nobility of nature, — those are worth love indeed. Were she not beautiful, I could love her full as well.”

Caillet smiled again. “Had she not been beautiful,” he said, “would you have ever felt so, Albert?”

“Oh! yes,” replied the other, “beyond a doubt. How many things would have made me love her, — how many acts of kindness has she shown me, — how much goodness that I have

not deserved! Thanks be to God, that I have neither known sickness nor much care in life; but when her father's horse struck me on the shoulder, and cast me down upon the ground, what a cry she gave, and sprang forward to see if I were hurt! — When have I asked for any favour at the hands either of our noble lord or the good prior, without her seconding my prayer, and ensuring its success?"

"And yet," said Caillet, "you would have me think that she does not return your affection."

"I say again, it is but simple kindness that she feels," replied Albert; "when I tell these things, I speak selfishly. Are there not a thousand other motives for loving her besides these? I will ask you, Caillet, you yourself, who judge so harshly — I will ask you, I say, whether there was ever any one so tender, so gentle, so beneficent to every one who approaches her? Have we not all seen her tend upon the sick bed of a poor peasant with as much care as if that peasant had been a prince? Do you not remember, when the poor girl Marritonne died,

how night after night she sat by her bedside, watching her pale face, and giving her the cool drink to quench the terrible thirst that she endured?"

"I know nothing of it," replied Caillet somewhat impatiently; "I visited not the girl's sick chamber; and you, good Albert, can but know this tale from the report of some of the serving women."

"Nay, nay," replied Albert, "not from their report, but my own eyesight, Caillet; for I was sent many a time by my good lord to call the lady from a task which he feared might injure her health. Twice, too, I went with him myself; so that I speak from my own knowledge, Caillet, and not from the tales of any one, however true those tales might be. But why should I pause upon one instance? Do not you as well as I know a thousand such acts? You do not doubt them any more than I do, Caillet. You but affect to do so."

"Nay," answered Caillet, "I neither doubt, nor affect a doubt. Have I not already said that I hold her to be worthy of the love of any

one?—and only grieve, good Albert, that you are mad enough to love her, or foolish enough not to take the way of winning her.”

“Winning her!” exclaimed the other with an indignant scoff; “you are indeed mad now, Caillet, to talk of such a thing. We have heard, it is true, of rich peasants marrying the daughters of poor lords; and the fabliau of the Villein and the Lady shows us how the daughter of a noble can shrink from such an union. But for a poor peasant like me, depending solely upon his lord’s bounty, without even a title to claim that—as I was not born on this good lord’s lands—for one whom he first received and protected from charity, whom he has educated from kindness, and who is wholly indebted to him for his daily bread,—for such a one, I say, to dream of winning one whom the whole country is ready to seek,—for whom knights, and nobles, and the princes of the land might well lay lance in rest, were somewhat worse than madness, Caillet.—Try not to put such visions into my mind. You know, as well as I, that such things are quite impossible.”

“ I know the contrary,” replied Caillet in a calm determined tone. “ I know that they are possible — quite possible ; but I will admit that they are impossible *to you*, for you will not take the means to bring that prize within your reach which is but at a short distance from your grasp. I see that it is so : and though I do not regret that I have spoken to you thus, yet I fear, Albert, I fear for your own happiness that it will be in vain. Come, let us go back.”

Thus saying he rose, and walked slowly towards the castle, with his companion at his side, both musing and silent for some way ; though Caillet, notwithstanding the air of indifference which he assumed, watched the countenance of Albert eagerly though stealthily, and tried to read thereon each passing emotion which the dangerous words he had uttered called up in his young comrade’s heart. He spoke not, however, thinking that he had said enough for the day, and that at some after-period he might return to the same theme.

But Albert himself was too much moved by all that he had heard to let the subject drop

there; and ere they had reached the foot of the slope, he said, "Would to Heaven, Caillet, that you had not spoken to me all you have this day, or that you had said more."

"I will add more, if you desire it," replied his companion. "I know that with you I am safe in uttering all that I think; but as to your wishing that I had not spoken at all, that is a weak wish, good Albert. Why should you entertain it? Is it because I have made you look into your own heart, and see things in it that you never beheld before?—Is it because I have made you look around at your situation, and shown you that you are placed within reach of honour and happiness, where great glory and joy, and a bright name are to be gained, if you will but seek them, although there be difficulties and dangers in the way, strong resolutions to be taken, and great exertions to be made——"

"I fear no difficulties, I fear no great exertions," exclaimed Albert, eagerly; "but you have not shown me this——"

Caillet went on, however, without heeding,

his fine countenance assuming an expression even more stern than that which it usually bore.—“ Or is it because I have placed before your eyes that which every Frenchman should know, whatever be his rank, whatever be his class ; namely, the dreadful state to which the land has been reduced by the baseness of the class that call themselves noble—because I have shown you how shamefully they abuse the power that they shamefully possess,—how the poor peasant groans throughout the land—and how dark a debt of crime and sorrow is daily accumulating against the rich, the powerful, and the great, which must one day be paid, and that ere many years be past?”

Albert heard the latter part of Caillet's speech in silence; but in the end replied, after musing a moment or two over what had been said, “ Caillet, I do not understand you clearly ; but it is none of all these things that I wish I had never heard. The words you have spoken this day have kindled thoughts in my mind which but for you could never have been there. You are right well aware that hope once roused can

sleep no more, and that whatever she has seized remains in her grasp for ever. Why or wherefore, you know best; but I see, Caillet — I see clearly, that you have carefully tried to raise hopes up in my bosom which should never be there, and which it must now be the study of my life to forget. Would to Heaven you had never done this! But as you have, you must tell me why it has been done, why you should seek to encourage feelings that you know can but make me miserable — thoughts that are worse than idle vanity, — that are wicked, presumptuous, evil!”

Caillet gazed upon him for a moment in silence ere he replied, with a look that had something contemptuous in it. The expression of scorn, indeed, was so constantly upon his countenance, that it was difficult to tell whether the curl of his lip proceeded from some secret emotion of the mind, or merely from an accidental movement of the features; but Albert, who knew him well, saw that look, and was not pleased with it; and although it passed away in a moment, he remembered it when it was gone,

and recalled it afterwards, when many circumstances had changed their relative position to each other.

“ My answer to your question,” said Caillet at length, “ is very simple. I have done all this that you say, in the hope of promoting your happiness. I have done it because the feelings that you speak of need not necessarily produce evil, or sorrow, or disappointment — because, if you would yield to reason, give your own mind sway, and exert those talents that God has bestowed upon you, the very wishes and the hopes that you entertain might lead to the greatest results, and be beneficial both to yourself and to your country.”

“ Still, still,” replied Albert, “ I know not what you mean. I must hear more, Caillet, — I must hear all.”

“ You shall,” answered Caillet, “ you shall hear all, Albert, and I would fain tell you all now; but, lo ! there comes the train of the good prior over the hill, and we must both return to the château. One word, then, for all, before we go. The state of misery in which France exists

cannot endure much longer; the bondage in which we, the peasantry of France, are kept, must soon come to an end. Ere long, the rights now withheld will be struggled for and regained; men will recover the privileges of men, and will cast from them the yoke of others not more worthy than themselves. We are on the eve of great events; and when they come to pass, if you but choose the side of honour and freedom, you will win your own happiness, as well as give happiness to thousands.—I ask you to take no active part,” he continued, seeing a cloud come over his companion’s brow at the vague hints which he gave,—“I ask you to take no active part *as yet*, but merely to watch events as they arise, to judge sanely, and act nobly.”

As soon as he had uttered these words, Caillet—fearful that anything more might startle and alarm his companion—left what he had said to work out its effect, and to familiarise the mind of Albert Denyn with thoughts of change and strife, with which ideas he had, as we have seen, contrived to mingle hopes and expect-

ations the most likely to have effect upon a young and inexperienced mind. Without pausing, then, to permit any farther questions to be addressed to him at the time, he hurried his pace back towards the castle, which they reached not long before the arrival of the train of horsemen whom they had seen coming over the hill.

CHAP. V.

THE sweet hours of the morning ! There is nothing on earth like the sweet hours of the morning ! It is the youth of the day ; and the childhood of all things is beautiful. The freshness, the unpolluted freshness of infancy, hangs about the early moments of the dawn ; the air seems to breathe of innocence and truth ; the very light is instinct with youth, and speaks of hopes. Who is there that loves beauty and brightness, and does not enjoy the early hours of the morning ?

Such at least was not the case with the Captal de Buch. Of all the heroic followers of that heroic prince, whose deeds occupy so great a space in the annals of British glory, one of the most feeling, one of the most imaginative, one of the most chivalrous, in the best and highest sense of the word, was that

famous leader, who led the small body of horse which by a sudden and unexpected charge contributed so much to win the battle of Poitiers. His whole life proved it, and his death not less so.

Although I know not that he has left any thing like verse behind, yet it is evident that his heart overflowed with the true spirit of poetry; and often in the camp or the fortress, when he had spent a great part of the night in watching, he would rise betimes like any common soldier in the army, to mark the bright dawning of the day, and enjoy all the fresh beauties of the early morning. It was so even now in the castle of Mauvinet; and with the first stirrers in the place he was on foot, and gazing forth from the window of his chamber upon the clear, grey coming of the autumnal day. Each object that his eye rested on suggested some new train of thought, excited some fresh current of feelings; and he stood for more than an hour, sometimes turning his eyes upon the soldiers below, as they wrestled and pitched the bar, sometimes gazing up towards

the hills, and marking the gleams and shadows which the floating clouds cast upon the meadows and the woods.

In his fanciful mood he compared those meadows and woods to man and his ever-changing fate and fortunes, — now looking bright and smiling, now plunged into gloom and obscurity; and all by objects which are but vapour, blown hither and thither by the breath of accident. For the autumn colours of the woods, too, he would have a likeness; and he thought that that rich brown was like the hue of mature life, when the vigorous fruits of judgment and experience are succeeding to the green leaves and fresh flowers of youth. All things, in short, excited his imagination at that moment, even more than was usually the case; for the fair being with whom he had passed a few short hours on the preceding night had awakened sensations, which always, more or less, rouse fancy from her slumbers even in the most dull and unideal breast.

As he thus stood and gazed, he marked the youth who had conducted him thither on

the preceding night, walking forward, as we have shown, with his companion towards the hill; and when once his eye had lighted on him, he continued to look after him,—not exactly watching his movements, but with a certain feeling of interest, for which it was difficult to account.

“It is strange,” he said to himself, after a time,—“it is strange how we sometimes feel towards persons, the first time we behold them, sensations totally different from those which we ever experience towards others—affection, dislike, confidence, esteem! I remember once being told by an old priest, who thought much of such things, that when we find such an interest suddenly arise in our hearts, without being able to discover any real cause, either reasonable or unreasonable, we may be sure that our fate is some way connected with that of the person who has excited it; and that sooner or later, perhaps many years after, our weal or woe will be affected by our acquaintance with him. I must hear more of that youth; for it is strange why I should experience sensations

towards him different from those called forth by any other peasant that one meets with every day. Who is that with him, I wonder,— a tall powerful fellow, who would make a good billman in case of need?”

The captal continued to gaze for some time, till at length a sewer, with one of his own attendants, summoned him to breakfast; and descending he found the whole of the party of the castle assembled in the hall, except the young Lady Adela, who sent him kindly greeting, but did not appear herself.

An old knight, whose years and station placed him highest in the household of the Senechal of Touraine, led the captal by the hand to the seat of honour, and then sat down beside him. But as it is not the object of this book to describe the particular customs of the day, and rather its intent to deal with the men than the manners of the times, I shall pass over all the ceremonies of the breakfast, though those were days in which ceremonies were not few, and proceed at once to the moment when the captal, having finished his meal and washed his

hands, the old knight we have mentioned invited him, in his lady's name, to visit her in her own apartment.

The captal followed willingly enough; and when he saw Adela de Mauvinet by the morning light, he thought her still more beautiful than on the preceding night. Her young brother was with her; and again and again they both thanked him, not only for the good tidings that he had brought, but for the kindness which had prompted him to bring them that intelligence himself. The captal, according to the custom of the day, denied all merit, but yet was not sorry to hear such words from such lips; and as the boy was very like his sister, he bestowed on him the caresses that he could not offer to her. A short time thus passed joyfully; but the interview was not destined to be long uninterrupted, for a few minutes after, the door opened, and Albert Denyn appeared, with a familiarity that somewhat surprised the captal.

He was received by the lady with a smile, which for an instant made a strange feeling of displeasure pass through the warrior's heart, though

he would have laughed if any one had told him he was in love with the lady, or jealous of the peasant page. The demeanour of the youth himself was all respect and reverence; his countenance was grave, and even melancholy, and all his tones were sad.

“ I come, lady,” he said, as soon as he entered, “ to tell you, that my lord the prior must be even now at the gates. I saw him riding over the hill with a large train, and hastened to inform you, as I thought you might wish to meet him on the steps.”

“ Oh ! yes, yes !” cried the Lady Adela, joyfully, “ let us go, let us go ! You know my dear uncle already, my lord captal,” she continued, “ and can well judge what joy his presence gives me whenever he can come hither.”

“ I have seen him but once, sweet lady,” replied the captal; “ but after that once I need no assurance that his disposition is one to win love as well as respect from all who know him well.”

“ You do him but justice,” replied the lady, suffering him to take her hand, to lead her

down; "you do him but justice; as you will each day feel more and more, when longer acquaintance shows you his heart more fully."

The train of the prior had not yet passed the causeway, when the Lady Adela, the captal, and the lady's brother, followed by Albert Denyn, reached the steps which led from the great gates down to the open space between it and the barbican. A number of the retainers of the castle were already congregated there to receive the brother of their lord; but with confusion somewhat unusual, they were gathered into separate groups, speaking low together, and fixing their eyes with a degree of anxiety upon the troop that approached, which was certainly larger than the train with which the good prior generally travelled. All made way, however, for the lady and her company, and she paused upon the steps while the new-comers advanced across the causeway, three abreast, and then passed the barbican.

As they came nearer, however, the eye of the captal lighted up with a look of eagerness. The young Lord of Mauvinet laid his hand

suddenly upon his sister's arm, and the next instant Adela herself, with a cry of joy, darted down the steps like lightning, and in a moment was clasped in the arms of a noble-looking man, who followed close upon the right of the prior. Her little brother sprang after her as fast as his young limbs would carry him, and he, also, with tears of pleasure, was pressed to his father's heart, while the acclamations of the retainers round about rent the air; and the glad faces that every where presented themselves told how truly loved a feudal lord might make himself, if he chose to exercise the great power that he possessed with benevolence and humanity.

As soon as he had received the welcome of his children, the Lord of Mauvinet turned to the Captal de Buch, and greeted him as a well-loved friend; but his next salutation, to the surprise of that nobleman, was given to the youth, Albert Denyn. To him the count extended his hand; and though the youth bent down to kiss it respectfully, the senechal pressed his with fatherly kindness, saying, "I have heard, Albert, of all that you did to discover me, or at

least to find my bones, at the peril of your own life and liberty. I knew, my boy, that your love would not fail me, and I thank you much."

The young man heard him in silence, without venturing a word in reply; but tears rose in his eyes, while his look spoke how happy his lord's commendation made him; and bowing low, he retired speedily amongst the throng, with a reverence to the prior as he passed, and one brief glance towards the captal and the Lady Adela.

From feelings that he could not explain, the captal watched the youth with perhaps more attention than he had ever before bestowed on any person of the same rank; but, just and generous under all circumstances, he admitted to his own heart that the young man's demeanour fully justified that affection and esteem which the whole family of his lord displayed towards him.

As may be well supposed, after his long absence and supposed death, there was many a one to claim the Lord of Mauvinet's at-

tention, and to congratulate him upon his return; and for all, he had some kindly word, which sent them away content with the attention which they had received. Amongst the rest the baron remarked Caillet, spoke to him kindly and familiarly; but not in the same terms of confidence and regard which he had used towards Albert Denyn. His notice, however, called the attention of the captal to the striking person of the young peasant; and he gazed at him for some time, examining with keen and experienced eyes a countenance, which might well afford matter of curious speculation.

It would appear that the result was not satisfactory to the captal, for his brow became slightly contracted; and walking beside the prior's mule, he asked him, "Who is that strong, well-looking youth, my lord prior, with whom your brother is now speaking?"

"His name is Caillet," replied the prior: "he is a young man of great talent, born on my brother's estates in Beauvoisis. The good chaplain tried to make a priest of him, but

failed : not for want of quickness on the part of his scholar, but from somewhat too great quickness and a strength of determination not easily mastered. What he thought fit to study he acquired with surprising ease, and much he learned that good Father Robert would fain have prevented ; but what he did not choose to apply to, nothing on earth would make him look at."

" I should judge so," replied the captal, " from his face : a sturdy and determined spirit is written in every line, and no slight opinion of himself."

" He is not humble," replied the prior, but made no other comment.

When they had passed on into the château, one of the first tasks of its lord was to beseech the Captal De Buch to spend some short time as a guest in the castle of Mauvinet ; and, to say the truth, the captal had no strong inclination to refuse ; for bright eyes were there which had about them a strange fascination, that the heart of the gallant knight was not well calculated to resist. He agreed willingly, then, to

spend ten days with his noble prisoner in the forest sports of those times; and the Lord of Mauvinet sincerely rejoiced to secure the society of one whom he had learned to love and to respect during the tedious hours of his captivity in England.

Let us leave the count for a time, however, in the embraces of his children, and the first delights of his return, and turn to others with whom we shall have more to do than even with that nobleman himself. The captal, on his part, knew that there are moments when the society of any one, however friendly, may be a restraint upon feelings which require full indulgence; and not long after they had entered the castle he drew the prior of Montvoye aside, saying, "You have ridden far this morning, my good lord prior, otherwise I would claim your company for a walk in the sunshine yonder under the castle-wall; but if you will be a guest of my chamber for half an hour, I would fain ask you a question or two about my young guide of last night, and make you a proposal about him, which may, perhaps,

meet your views and his, perhaps not, but which you shall decide when you have heard it fully."

"I am no way fatigued, my good lord," replied the prior, "and will willingly be the comrade of your walk. Albert is as good a youth as ever lived, and right gladly shall I hear any thing for his advantage."

Leaving the count and his children, then, alone, the prior and the captal issued forth, and took their way through the many square courts of the castle—into the depth of which, enclosed as they were by tall buildings, the sunshine rarely found its way, except at noon—till they issued forth by one of the posterns upon the meadow under the walls, which we have already more than once mentioned. They there again paused to gaze at the scene around, both enjoying greatly the picturesque beauties of the landscape.

It would be an egregious mistake to suppose that in that age, however rude and barbarous in some respects, there did not exist a love for, and fine appreciation of, all that is beautiful in

1 this world, in which our lot is cast. The very architecture of the time shows that such a feeling of the graceful and the sublime existed: the fifteenth century followed soon after, with all its miracles of art; and even at the time of which I speak there were many persons living who had in their own bosoms as much of the spirit of the picturesque as a Prout or a Turner, though they had not a knowledge of how to represent for others that which they felt so keenly.

After having gazed, then, for some moments, over the fair prospect which was to be seen from the meadow, the captal turned to the prior to resume the subject of their discourse, first commenting for a moment, as was natural, on that which had just occupied his attention. "This is as sweet a spot, my lord prior," he said, "as ever I beheld — calm, bright, and beautiful!"

"Heaven keep it peaceful, too!" replied the prior. "We have as yet luckily escaped here many of the horrors of war; and I trust it may be long ere we know any thing of that desolating power. But you, of course, noble

capital," he continued, "cannot look upon the sad pursuits of strife with the same horror that I do."

"I suppose not, good father," replied the capital: "each man has in this world his vocation; and I cannot but think that war, when honourably waged and justly undertaken, is the most noble calling that man can have. So it would seem, too, thinks the youth of whom we were speaking. From what you said, I took an interest in him, and I asked him some questions on the road last night. His answers pleased me well: he seems frank and true. But I have lived long enough in the world, good prior, to know that frankness is sometimes assumed as one of the *cunningest* cloaks for *cunning*; and I would fain know from you what is this youth's real disposition."

"He is truth and honour itself, my lord," replied the prior. "In no rank have I ever found so much sincerity, so much unvarying uprightness of heart, so scrupulous a regard for plighted faith, so knightly a scorn of falsehood."

"The character you give him is high, in-

deed," replied the captal; "doubtless, too, he is brave—at least he has the air, the eye, of a brave man."

"Ay, and the heart," answered the prior. "After that sad field of Poitiers, when terror and consternation spread over the whole kingdom, and every day brought past this place parties of fugitives, each full of wild tales of English bands pursuing, ravaging the country round, and slaying all they met with—when the dauphin himself scarcely dared to pause for half an hour, to take some light refreshment here, and when his own attendants told the same tale of the whole land being covered by your troops—that lad, when no other would go, went boldly to the very field of Poitiers itself, to seek his lord, and, at no persuasion, would take the cognisance of the house of Mauvinet from his bonnet."

"He was quite safe!" said the captal—"we warred not with peasants."

"True, my lord, true, my lord," replied the prior; "but that sad disease, terror, has its delirium, like all other fevers; and our pea-

santry fled as fast or even faster than many of their lords. It was vain to argue, it was vain to reason with them. Day after day brought new rumours, each more wild and foolish than the former. No man consulted his understanding—no man believed aught but the last tale of terror which the day brought forth; and, in some parts of the country, the fields and villages were quite deserted. Why, the very ferries over the river were, in many places, left without boats or boatmen. But, in the midst of all this, Albert pursued his way, and searched for his lord, far and near, for several weeks.”

“He is such as I thought him,” replied the captal; “and what I was going to propose as a favour to him, I shall now ask, my good lord, as a favour to myself. His taste, it seems, is for arms. In France he can never hope to rise higher than a mere common soldier of some commune, or, at best, the constable of a band of burgesses. In England, such distinctions are not to be found. The noble, it is true, is still noble, but we have no such things as

villeins; they have been long done away in that land, though, at one time, the custom did exist there as well as in France. With us in Gascony there are villeins enough; but if you will give the youth to me, he shall serve in my band till I can get him better service in England. And as I must pass my leisure time, whilst this truce exists, in seeking some feats of arms elsewhere, doubtless he may gain some renown, which will obtain for him consideration in a country where great deeds are always honoured, let the doer of them be who he may. This is the proposal that I have to make, my lord prior, in regard to your young client. I thought of offering it last night, when you spoke about his wish for arms, but I judged it better to wait till I had seen farther. What say you; shall it be so?"

Somewhat to the surprise of the Captal de Buch, the prior hesitated ere he replied, and then answered, "I must consult my brother first, my good lord. It is he who brought up the youth, not I; he has only been resident

with me since the battle, when I thought it best that he should be at the abbey."

"May I inquire, good father," demanded the captal, "was there any thing in his conduct to show that he could not be trusted except under your eye?"

"No, no!" answered the prior, eagerly; "nothing of the kind, my good lord. But my brother, who had his own views for him, being supposed dead, I saw no fate before him but the cloister or the priest's office, and it was with the object of providing for him thus that I took him. Now, however, that the count has returned in safety, he of course must act as before, and I must either refer you to him, or consult with him upon the subject myself, before I give you a reply."

"Consult with him, by all means," answered the captal; "if you think what I have proposed advantageous for the youth, well! I am ready to do my best for him; if not, it is well also; only I do beseech you, my good lord prior, do not make him a priest against his will; for if you do,

the community will suffer fully as much as himself."

"Far be it from me," replied the prior, smiling, "and I feel very sure that I might at once accept your offer; for I know that my brother seeks nothing but Albert's good, and your proposal is most generous and kind. Nevertheless, there are some things to be considered, of which I will speak with you more hereafter; but in the mean time, I thank you gratefully on Albert's part for the bounty that you show him."

The captal bowed somewhat stiffly; for from what the prior had said the day before, he had not doubted that he would eagerly avail himself of any means to promote the young peasant's wishes for a military life. And it must be remembered, that the offer of the knight was one that might well be received with gladness, even by a youth of the very highest rank. Renown in arms was then the first claim to reverence from all classes; and the fame of the captal, as a commander, was scarcely second to that of any one in the days wherein he lived. In

that famous order of chivalry, which, both from its priority in point of time, and the renown of those who have borne it, leaves every other but a mere shadow, I mean the order of the Garter, his name stands fifth amongst the founders, and with only one subject between him and princes of the royal blood; and, in those times, that distinction was held far higher than even now. Well might the captal think that the offer he made in favour of a mere French peasant was one of no slight kindness; and well might he feel somewhat surprised that the prior should receive it with any hesitation, however slight. He pressed the matter no farther, then, at the time; but after speaking gravely with his companion on other subjects, he returned with him to the hall, jested for a few minutes with some of the French gentlemen present, displayed his great muscular powers and skill in one or two feats of strength, and then retiring to his chamber, was heard singing to an instrument of music, which was always borne with him by one of his train. At dinner, too, he was somewhat grave; but afterwards, as the shades of evening were

beginning to fall, he was seen walking with the prior and the Count of Mauvinet, and bearing a lighter countenance, while all three spoke in somewhat low tones together, and the attendants kept far behind. They were at this time beyond the great moat, and under a small hanging wood. As they proceeded, something was heard to rustle amongst the brown leaves within ear-shot of the pages. "There is a wolf!" cried one of the boys, throwing a stone into the covert; but the sound instantly ceased, and they passed on.

CHAP. VI.

NEARLY a fortnight passed over in the château of Mauvinet without any one incident worthy of remark, and yet there is much to tell. The small things of life are often more important than the great, the slow than the quick, the still than the noisy. The castle, and the palace, and the church stand for years the raging of the wind, the beating of the rain, the red bolt of the lightning, yet crumble down beneath the quiet touch of time, without any one seeing where and when the fell destroyer is at work. There may well be no great incident, and yet a change the most happy, or the most disastrous, may have taken place in the space of a few short days.

There was then, as we have said, much to tell, though there was no marked event upon which the pen of the narrator can dwell. There had been forest sports, the hunting of the boar and

the wolf; there had been the flight of the falcon over the valleys and the plains around; there had been gay autumnal evenings within the castle-walls, with the blazing fire, and the cheerful tale, and the song of chivalry and love, and the sharp *sirvente*, and sometimes the merry dance. In fact, the time had passed so gaily, that one might almost have forgotten the terrible state of the country around, had it not been that from time to time a report reached the castle of outrages committed by this and that band of marauders, and once rumour brought the adventurers so near that the Lord of Mauvinet and the Captal de Buch both rode out armed to give them the encounter, and drive them forth from Touraine. The report proved false, however, and was, in fact, merely one of those tales of terror which circulated from mouth to mouth throughout the land.

On all these things it is unnecessary to dwell longer, as they afford no matter of interest but for those who may be inclined to study deeply the manners of the times; but day by day, and hour by hour, and moment by moment, feelings

were coming into the bosom of Captal de Buch, such as he had never before experienced. Ere a week was over, he had fully determined to demand the hand of Adela de Mauvinet, and the rest of the fortnight he employed in eagerly seeking her regard.

Love in a young and timid man may often, from its very newness and intensity, baffle its own endeavours; it may obscure high talents and bright qualities, and weigh down the eager and the ardent spirit, and even the active and powerful mind, so that the lover may appear in the very worst light to the person he most wishes to please; but with knowledge and experience of the world, and that confidence in one's own powers, that just appreciation of ourselves which nothing but such knowledge of the world can give, love produces none of those results, but, on the contrary, stimulates every nerve to exertion, acuminates every faculty of the mind and the body, and teaches us to display to the very best advantage every grace or perfection that we may happen to possess.

Such, then, was the case with the Captal de

Buch ; he certainly loved deeply and well ; he felt for Adela what he had never felt for any one else — and his whole mind was bent upon obtaining her regard. But those very sensations only induced him to put forth his great power of pleasing, called into activity the vigour of his mind, and taught him to use all those means which, he knew right well, are the most successful with the female heart. He was constantly by her side when the opportunity naturally presented itself. The tone of his conversation was that which seemed best to accord with the general character of her own mind ; and yet the brilliancy of his thoughts, the richness of idea which had been acquired by seeing many scenes, mingling with many events, and frequenting many courts, gave a sort of sparkling effect to his conversation, even when, as I have said, it took its general hue from the character of her with whom he spoke. It was as if his mind was a magic mirror which reflected hers, but gave additional brightness to all the images it received.

And yet — for generally in this world there

is some fatal abatement to the pleasure of the day—and yet there was something in the manner of Adela that surprised, disappointed, and grieved the captal. That she did not dislike his society was evident; that his words, his manners, and accomplishments were justly appreciated by her, was also clear; but still there was an indescribable something in her manner which showed him that he did not make that progress in her heart which he so ardently desired.

On almost all subjects she spoke with him willingly, cheerfully, but there was one on which she spoke not at all. When he talked of love she was silent—love, I mean in the abstract, or with reference to others; for his own love towards her he had never yet ventured to tell. The moment the subject was mentioned Adela replied not, unless she was forced to do so, and when such was the case answered but vaguely, and generally fell into a fit of musing, from which the captal found it difficult to rouse her. He knew not how to account for such conduct; it appeared to him strange, and

certainly alarmed him, but still he was quite sufficiently in love to listen eagerly to any thing that hope whispered. He thought to himself, "She is so young, she knows not yet what love is;" and still he went on in the same course, with little fear of ultimate success.

To those who knew her well, however, a change might be seen in Adela herself; she had become graver, more thoughtful: at times even somewhat sad. She showed no distaste to the society of the captal: how could she to that of a man who had saved her father's life, who had been his friend in adversity, and who had cheered for him the hours of captivity and sorrow? but still there was not that alacrity in going forth with him which might have been expected from her character in times of old. The bounding joy with which at one time she would have sprung to meet the deliverer of her parent was no longer seen.

The count himself remarked that it was so, and he too thought it strange, although he doubted not, and could not doubt, the affection of his child. Still it struck him as extra-

ordinary, the more so, indeed, from all he knew of Adela's character. There were others, who marked the difference likewise, and on whom it made the same impression. To Adela no one said any thing, however; and she remained not only unconscious that the coldness in her demeanour towards the capital had been perceived, but in truth unconscious that there was a coldness. Had she known it she would certainly have been greatly grieved, — but whether she would have changed or not who can say?

Thus passed the time with her. With her father it might be somewhat different. It seldom happens, I believe, that parents, even the most anxious and careful, become aware of the attachments which their children inspire, or of the affections which they feel, till the time to prevent the danger is over. Loving Adela, as he did, the count thought naturally that she was worthy of all admiration; and in the capital's attention towards her he saw nothing but what might naturally be expected from so gallant a knight towards so fair a lady. In the

end, indeed, he thought that there was sometimes a sparkling brightness in his guest's eyes, which betrayed a greater degree of warmth than the mere courtesy of the day required; but he marked it little, though others marked it much, and he gave no thought to the question, of whether it would please him well to see his daughter united to the great English leader.

There was another, in regard to whom we must also trace the passing of the time, although he may seem a very insignificant personage amongst those of whom we have been lately speaking. That personage was Albert Denyn, and he had also undergone a change; he, too, had become sad, and thoughtful, and gloomy. Smiles had nearly forsaken his countenance since the captal entered the castle of Mauvinet; and he was seen, day by day, wandering through the woods and over the hills around, with his eyes fixed upon the dull ground, as if questioning his mother earth of his hard destiny, and finding no reply; or sitting gazing on the hilt of the sword, which he, as well as Caillet, and several other favourite attendants

of the Lord of Mauvinet, were permitted to wear; as if demanding why the hand which could use it as bravely as any lord in the land, should not be held as noble as that of others less worthy.

He seemed to avoid the society of all. The tilt-yard and the meadow, where the soldiery used to practise, and where he himself had a sort of prescriptive right to mingle with others of nobler birth, now beheld him no more; and even Caillet, who, though he in general sought conversation with few in the castle, now looked for every opportunity of speaking with him, found none without great difficulty, and even when he did obtain a moment, met with some interruption almost as soon as their conference began.

The captal, from motives secret even to himself, watched the young peasant, whenever he happened to be in the same chamber with him, and, more especially, when Adela was there; but he saw nothing but what the youth's station in the household of the lady's father warranted. There was deep respect and

reverence, zeal and affection in his manner ; but humble and calm withal, without presumption in look or word.

The captal took it for granted, in the end, that the youth's melancholy was habitual ; but others knew better ; and more than one of those who had been accustomed to see him the gayest of a thousand gay hearts, now questioned him regarding his sudden gloom. Amongst the rest was the prior ; but the good father — forced to reside at the abbey, and paying but short visits to his brother's castle — saw not many of those slighter traits which might, perhaps, have directed his judgment aright, could he have watched them ; and thus he attributed Albert's sadness to motives far from the real ones.

“ My dear son,” he said, one day, when he was riding over to the castle, and found the youth upon the hills by the way, “ I have remarked, with grief, the gloom that hangs upon you ; for I cannot but ascribe it, in some degree, to what my brother and myself have yielded to, out of kindness for you, with-

out dreaming that it could produce pain and sorrow instead."

The youth started and turned red, but instantly became pale, demanding, "What mean you, father? I know not to what you can allude."

"Nay! my son," answered the prior, "I saw this sadness fall upon you the moment we mentioned what we considered the splendid offer made in your favour by the noble Captal de Buch; and I have marked the gloom coming deeper and deeper every day since, so that I cannot be mistaken."

Albert paused a moment, but his heart was too pure and true to suffer him to take advantage of the good prior's mistake, even to hide the many feelings within his bosom that he dared not avow; and in this, as in all things, he spoke the plain truth. "Indeed, dear and noble sir," he said, "you are mistaken. When you told me of the generous offer of the captal, I became grave, perhaps, because my heart was filled with two strong emotions—joy to see what I had scarcely deemed possible ful-

filled, and yet sorrow to part with many dear and true friends such as I shall never find again. Oh! my lord, can you suppose that, after all the kindness you have shown me, I can think of the hour that must separate me from your paternal care, perhaps for ever, without a painful feeling of apprehension and regret? Can I either think of leaving my noble lord, your brother, or our sweet lady Adela, without deep grief? Oh! no, my lord. This, I assure you, was all that called a shadow over my face when first you told me of the captal's offer; and, since then, perhaps other things — fancies — wayward fancies — apprehensions of never seeing those I love again, or seeing them changed towards me — or — or — a thousand idle dreams, have made me sad; but this will all pass away when I am gone."

"Fear not! Albert," replied the prior, gazing on him with a look of approbation and regard — "Fear not! We shall meet again, and, perhaps, in happier circumstances than the times admit at present. Fear not, either, that you will find us changed. We are not of a race that change.

Only act honourably wherever you may be, and you will learn that we are still the same under all circumstances."

"I trust I ever shall act honourably, my lord," replied Albert. "I have but one apprehension; and that is, that I may, at some time, be compelled to lay down those arms which I am now about to bear, by being called to use them against France; and should that be——"

"No fear! no fear!" exclaimed the prior: "the captal has plighted his word that such an act shall never be required of you, my son. If that idea has disturbed you, let it do so no more; for you know that his word is never broken."

The youth kissed the good monk's hand in sign of gratitude; but, notwithstanding such assurance, Albert was not gayer than before. For the day, indeed, he made an effort, but ere night fell he had sunk back into deeper gloom than ever. Even in the hall, after supper, a dark fit of thought came upon him, and he stood silent and sad, with his gaze fixed upon the

pavement, while all were laughing and jesting around, till suddenly raising his head, he found the eyes of the Lady Adela resting upon him with a look little less sorrowful than his own. He started, and turned away, and strove for the rest of the evening to assume a more cheerful air when he passed the spot where she sat; but the sight of the Captal de Buch placed beside her, and striving by every means to win her attention and regard, was not calculated to cheer the heart of Albert Denyn.

On the morning following, however, from one of the windows at which he had watched the sun rise with eyes that had not been closed all night, he beheld the captal and the Lord of Mauvinet walk forth together unattended; and knowing that at that hour the great hall of the castle was likely to be vacant, he proceeded thither to indulge his thoughts more at ease, than in the narrow space of the small room which he tenanted in one of the turrets. Intense thought may take place in narrow chambers; the mathematician may pursue his calculations, the philosopher his reasonings, the politician

his schemes, within the straitest confines; but, where strong emotions of the heart mingle with the deep workings of the brain, the spirit within us seems to pant for space, and the movement of the mind requires room for the movements also of the corporeal frame. Albert Denyn felt relieved in the great hall, where he could now be quite solitary: it seemed as if the busy thoughts within his bosom found freer play. There he walked to and fro for some minutes alone, stopping from time to time to gaze out of the window, till at length seeing the captal and the count on their way back towards the château, he paused for a moment to consider whether he would wait their coming where he was, or retire again to his own chamber. He felt, however, that his thoughts at that moment were too painful to endure the presence of others, and turning away, he passed along the corridor which led from room to room by the principal apartments of the castle, intending to mount to the turret in which he slept by a small staircase at the end.

Ere he reached the farther extremity of the

gallery, however, he beheld the Lady Adela coming towards him, and for an instant he hesitated what to do ; but he soon saw that she had remarked his presence, and he advanced, making a lowly bow as he approached her.

Adela, however, paused when he came near, cast a hurried glance around the corridor to assure herself that they were alone, and then said, " Albert, what is it that makes you so sad ? why are you so changed, so gloomy ? has any thing gone wrong with you ? "

" Nothing, lady, nothing, indeed, " replied Albert ; " far from it, all has gone well — well in a way that I could not hope. "

" Then what is the cause of your gloom, Albert ? " she asked ; " what is the occasion of the melancholy that hangs upon you ? "

Albert Denyn was shaken with agitation, so that his very limbs trembled ; his countenance was as pale as death, and his breath seemed to come hard. Adela marked all those signs of strong emotion, and as he did not answer, she added in a gentle tone, " Nay, nay, Albert, you must speak : we have been brought up together

almost all our lives, and you will not surely refuse to tell me — me, Albert — me you will not refuse to tell !”

Albert could bear no more. “ You ! you ! ” he exclaimed — “ Oh ! lady, you are the last that I ought to *tell* ! ”

The words had scarcely passed his lips, when the Captal de Buch entered the gallery alone and thoughtful, with his eyes bent upon the ground. The moment he came in, however, he raised his head, and saw Albert Denyn advancing towards him, while the Lady Adela turned away with a glowing cheek and agitated air. But Albert had at once regained his calmness, as soon as he became aware of the presence of a third person, for there was a depth in his sorrow which gave vigour to every effort of his mind ; and he came slowly but firmly on towards the captal, reaching the spot where the knight stood, at the very moment that Adela quitted the corridor by another door.

In those days there was a sort of parental power in great military leaders over the young men who attached themselves to them, which

gave a right to question and to govern them, in a way that might not otherwise have been submitted to by hot and fiery spirits in the heyday of youth. It was in this tone, rather than in that of a master, that the Captal de Buch now addressed Albert Denyn, saying, "What has agitated the lady, my young friend?"

The captal himself was not free from emotion as he spoke; but Albert replied calmly, "Why she is agitated, my lord, I cannot pretend to inform you. All that passed was, that she was kind enough to ask what had made me so sad, and whether any thing had gone wrong with me. I assured her that such was not the case — but she would not believe my assurance; though, as you know, my lord, from your own noble offer, all has gone better with me than I ever could have dared to hope."

The captal bit his lip, and then fixing his eyes upon the ground, remained in thought for a moment or two. He had thus continued, till Albert doubted whether he ought to retire or wait his further commands, when raising his eyes proudly, the knight added, "If you are still

inclined to accept my offer, young man, it would be as well for you to know that I shall not remain here many days longer; perhaps even to-morrow may be fixed for my departure. Are you still desirous of accompanying me, or not?"

Albert gazed in the captal's face with evident surprise. "Most gratefully! most thankfully! noble sir," he said: "I should ill deserve your favour, did I even hesitate."

"You are the best judge," replied the captal, in a sharp tone, and passed on towards his own apartments.

Albert remained for a moment or two where the captal had left him; and then retiring to his own chamber, spent an hour in thought.

Ere we turn to new events, however, and more active scenes than those in which we have lately engaged, we must pause to relate the conversation which had taken place between the Captal de Buch and the Count de Mauvinet during their morning walk;—a conversation which, as we have seen, had made the former forget in a degree that courteous kindness for which he had ever been celebrated.

Not unmerited praises of the Lady Adela de Mauvinet, on the part of the captal, began his conference with the count; and her father certainly heard those praises with pleasure, although by this time he had learned to apprehend some proposal on the part of his friend, which might give him pain either to refuse or to accede to. He replied, however, cautiously, and in such a manner as he thought might perhaps check expectation; but the captal went on and told the tale of his love, ending with a demand of the hand of Adela de Mauvinet. It often requires more courage to encounter a painful proposition such as this, than any corporeal danger; and the Lord of Mauvinet would more willingly have met an enemy in the field than have heard the wishes of the Captal de Buch.

Nevertheless when it was once pronounced, he met it decidedly. "My noble lord," he replied, "and my dear good friend, it would be less grievous to me far, to lie once more upon the field of Poitiers amongst the dead and dying, than to say what I must say. If I had been asked not many months ago," he proceeded sadly, "whe-

ther I would ever consent to give my child to one who had aided, as much as any man now living, to overthrow the hosts of France at Poitiers, I would have answered, No; it is a thing utterly impossible — of which I can never dream. Those feelings have been changed by your generous kindness. But if any one asks me even now, whether I will consent to give my daughter to a man who still remains an enemy of my country, I must repeat those words, No! it is impossible! Could you, my lord captal, quit the cause of England, espouse the cause of France, cast from you all the ties that have long bound you, and become a faithful subject of the same land as myself——”

“Impossible, impossible!” replied the captal — “never! By the side of that noble prince under whose standard I have fought for years — whose very name is renown, whose spirit is chivalry, whose heart is honour, and whose look is victory — by him will I stand to the last day of life and glory, in the companionship of Edward of England!”

“Right well, my lord, I know it must be so,”

answered the Count de Mauvinet: "so noble a spirit as yours could never quit, even for the smile of the brightest lady in all the land, the standard under which he has won fame; but, alas! in knowing that such will be your conduct, I must also feel that my daughter can never be the bride of any one but a friend to France, and an enemy to France's enemies. My lord captal," he continued, "think me not ungrateful; but put it to your own noble heart how you would act, were you placed as I am; put it to your own heart, I say, and answer for me truly and straightforwardly. As knight, and nobleman, and man of honour, I charge you tell me how would you behave?"

The captal stopped suddenly in their progress, bent his eyes sternly upon the ground, and, for nearly two minutes, seemed to put the painful question to his own conscience. Then, starting from his reverie, he wrung the count's hand vehemently in his own; and, as if that gesture were sufficient answer to the question, he added not a word more, but darted back at once to the castle.

CHAP. VII.

WHEN the Captal de Buch had left Albert Denyn in the corridor, he walked on straight to his own chamber, passing through the ante-room, where some of his pages and attendants were stationed, and closing the door carefully behind him. He then advanced towards a great chair, which was placed near the window, but he reached it not, pausing in the midst of the room, and remaining there with his eyes bent upon the ground in deep thought. He continued in this meditative mood for several minutes, perfectly motionless and still, though with a knitted brow and heavy air, showing evidently that the matter of his reflexions was any thing but pleasing or calm. At length, however, he lifted his head with an air somewhat melancholy, yet somewhat proud, saying aloud, as he did so, "It is well! It is well as it is! Better far not

her hand, than not her love! Better far, better far! Farewell such fantasies, they shall soon be forgotten."

Yet he spoke with a sigh; and after he had done, he sat down, and seemed to think sadly and bitterly over all that had just passed.

That day had been appointed for a long expedition to meet the Prior of Montvoye, at a small chapel attached to the abbey, some seven or eight miles from the castle, and the captal had looked forward to the ride with no small pleasure in the anticipation. He had thought how he would keep by the side of Adela de Mauvinet, and what he would say — ay, and what she would reply; and with the fond fancy of love he had pictured to his own imagination her bright looks, and the sunny smile that sometimes came into her face when she was well pleased with any thing that met her ear or eye. But now, alas! the captal's vision was broken, and the prospect of the journey presented to him nothing but pain. At one time he hesitated as to whether he would go; but then again he recollected that it might seem weak and unmanly in

the eyes of the Lord of Mauvinet, and even of Adela herself, should he give way to such feelings; and then he thought that, at all events, he might enjoy the satisfaction of being with her for the time. Thus he would gradually have reasoned himself into once more looking forward to the expedition with pleasure, had there not been from time to time a painful recollection of the glowing colour, which he had seen upon Adela's cheek, when his sudden coming interrupted her conversation with Albert Denyn. The remembrance, as I have said, gave him pain, and he loved not to let his mind rest upon it; but yet the importunate memory thereof would not be denied; and for more than an hour he remained calling back every look that he had seen pass between Adela and the young peasant. How long he might have remained thus I cannot tell, had he not been visited at the end of an hour and a half by the Count de Mauvinet himself.

“The horses are prepared, and in the courtyard, noble sir,” he said, “and I have come to be your esquire; but I trust that you will not

go this day, to do me pleasure, if it accord not with your own inclination."

"I am most ready and willing, my lord," replied the captal, starting up; "but I had fallen into a fit of musing. I am with you in a moment, however;" and making some slight change in his apparel, he hastened to descend with his friend to the court-yard of the castle, where horses and attendants were already prepared and arrayed to set out upon their expedition to the chapel. Amongst the foremost stood the beautiful white jennet which had been brought out for Adela de Mauvinet; but she herself had not yet come down to take her place in the cavalcade. The count sent a page to call her, and after a moment's delay, she too appeared; but it seemed to the captal, as he gazed at her for a moment, that there were traces of tears upon her cheek. They had been carefully wiped away, however, and during the ride no difference from her ordinary demeanour showed that she had been grieved or agitated during that morning.

When they had passed the drawbridge and

the barbican, and were proceeding over the causeway, three abreast, the captal looked round for Albert Denyn, but the youth was not with them; and perhaps with some curiosity, to see what effect his words would produce upon Adela, he turned towards the Count of Mauvinet, inquiring, "Where is the good youth, Albert Denyn? he has not gone with us to-day."

"He asked my permission," replied the Lord of Mauvinet, "to remain behind, in order to see some cottagers, with whom he was placed in his infancy, after his father's death. They were very kind to him, and Albert is not one to forget kindness from any one."

The captal fixed his eyes upon Adela, and then fell into a fit of musing, but made no reply to the words of the Lord of Mauvinet. He taxed his own heart, however, with want of courtesy and benevolence, in feeling pain at hearing the commendation of any good man.

"This is not right," he said to himself, "this is not right. If the youth deserves praise, praise let him have — ay, and win honour and renown too, if God so wills it!"

Let us not pause in this place upon the expedition which was now undertaken by the party from the château. The circumstances under which they went were distressing to all of the principal personages concerned. The feelings of the count and the captal may be easily conceived; and could any one have seen into the bosom of the fair girl who rode between them, her state of mind would have appeared even more painful; for from various minute facts, which had come to her knowledge in the course of the preceding day, Adela had discovered that the deliverer of her father entertained towards her a passion which she could not return. His conduct had lately alarmed her; and though for some time she had striven to shut the facts from her own eyes, yet the truth had forced itself upon her at last, and she had become convinced not only that the captal loved her, but that he would demand her hand. What might be the decision of her parent she knew not, but she felt but too well that she could never entertain for the captal that affection which a wife should feel towards

a husband. When she discovered such sensations in her own bosom, her first question to herself was why her heart was so cold and indifferent to one well calculated to please and to win. He had all that could attract—beauty of person, grace, and courtesy of manner; high qualities of mind; dignity, and command in his whole air; he was renowned in arms, kind, generous, gay, wise, faithful, just, and true of heart; and Adela again and again asked herself why it was she could not love him. It was early on that morning that these things were passing in her mind; and busy with such ideas, she had lingered beyond the hour at which she usually visited her father's chamber, to wish him health and happiness through the day. When she went, she found that he was already gone forth with the Captal de Buch; and a cold sensation came over her heart when she thought of what might be the subject of their conversation. As she was returning, she met Albert Denyn, as we have shown, and the brief conversation which we have related, took place between them. After it was over, Adela

asked herself no more why she could not love the captal, but she sat down in her chamber, and wept.

She had sufficient command over herself, to prevent the feelings of her heart from affecting her demeanour in any great degree : but it may be well believed, that her sensations were not a little sad ; and the day which had been intended to be a day of pleasure, proved, in most respects, one of pain to almost all the parties concerned.

When they had visited the chapel, paid their devotions at the shrine, and again taken leave of the prior, the Count de Mauvinet somewhat hurried his pace ; for several delays had occurred during the morning, and the sun was beginning to decline. Those were times, too, in which, as we have before shown, it was neither safe nor agreeable to travel late at night, although the proximity of the castle of Mauvinet, and the general tranquillity of that part of the country, seemed to promise the party of the count full security on the way. He had with him, too, a stout band of attend-

ants; and the very presence of Captal de Buch himself was a host.

The sun had just touched the edge of the sky, when they again came within a mile of the castle; but here they were detained for some time, by an incident of deep interest to the Count de Mauvinet himself, and little less so in the eyes of the captal. They found the road at the top of the hill crowded with peasantry of the richer class, wealthy farmers, and landholders on the estates of Mauvinet, all dressed in their holyday costume, and bearing a certain expression of pleasure and satisfaction in their faces, that seemed to speak of some occasion of much joy. Two or three of the principal persons were collected in front of the rest; and as the count's party approached, one of them advanced a little before the others, and respectfully stopped their lord as he was coming forward.

“What would you, good Larchenay?” said the count, bending his head a little, and addressing him with a well-pleased air. “Is

there any thing in which I can serve you, my good friend?"

"Yes, my lord, much," replied the farmer; "and, indeed, we have all met here to make you a humble request, which we trust you will not deny us."

"I am not accustomed, my good Larchenay, to refuse you any thing in reason," replied the Lord of Mauvinet; "and so glad am I to find myself amongst you all once more, that I am little likely to be hard-hearted now."

"Thanks, then, my noble lord," replied the peasant: "our request, I see, is half granted already. We have heard that to-morrow you propose to pay your ransom to the noble Captal de Buch, and yet your faithful peasantry have not been called upon to bear a share therein. It was never yet known, my lord, that the poor tenants of so noble a gentleman as yourself were refused the right of contributing to redeem their good lord; and we have collected together and brought hither our little tribute of gratitude and attachment to one who has ever been a kind master to all—who

has aided us in sickness, has spared us in adversity, and protected us in danger. We know not, my lord, the exact sum at which your ransom has been fixed, but we have gathered amongst us here some ten thousand crowns, which we come to offer with a very willing heart."

The affection of his peasantry brought tears into the eyes of the Lord of Mauvinet, and he thanked them in words which were evidently not words of course, although he would fain have declined the aid tendered to him. "The peasantry of France," he said, "have suffered too much already, my good friends, for me at least to press upon them more, whatever others may do. This was the reason why I asked no assistance from my people; not that I doubted in the least their love for their lord, or their willingness to help him in a time of need. My ransom is provided, my friends; half is ready here, and half must be prepared by this time in Beauvoisis; and, as I fixed it myself, when my noble friend here, the Captal de Buch, would scarcely accept of any, so would I also fain pay it myself, although you offer me such an aid."

The farmer, whom he had called Larchenay, heard him in respectful silence, and drew a step back with a disappointed air; but an older, and somewhat ruder looking man, stepped forward, and said in a bolder tone, "My lord the count, you have never taken from us more than was your due, very often much less. It is seldom that we have an opportunity of showing our thanks. It has pleased God that you should be taken prisoner, while you were gallantly defending your country, and when others had basely fled and abandoned her cause. Depend upon it, my lord, one reason why you have thus been suffered to fall into the hands of the enemy was, that your faithful peasantry might have an opportunity of showing that the poor people of France can be grateful to those who love and protect them. I beseech you, my lord, do not refuse our request, but let us pay our master's ransom, right glad as we are to get him back."

"Oh, my father," said Adela, seeing that the count still hesitated, "pray accept it: I am sure there is not a peasant on the land who

will not feel happy and proud to have contributed to your deliverance."

"Well, be it so, my good friends," said the count, with a voice trembling with emotion, "be it so. It seems as if I gained my liberty twice, when it is my people that give it me. Come then, come to the château, and we will speak more of all this. I would fain thank you, my friends, better than I can now when words fail me, and my heart is full. Larchenay, come hither, and, as we go, assure me, that in these times of difficulty and distress this gift does not press upon you too hardly."

"Oh, no," replied the good man, "on my life it does not. Thanks to your kindly care, and that of your good brother, there are no peasants in France who have suffered so little as we have done. The enemy has never visited our fields; famine has never been felt amongst us; if we ever have wanted any thing, it has been supplied to us, my lord, by your bounty; so that we are wealthy as well as contented; and we know that we owe that wealth to you."

Thus conversing, the Lord of Mauvinet and his peasantry, with the rest of the company, which had accompanied him during the day, proceeded slowly back towards the château, while the sun set, but left the sky glowing with the glory of his departing light. They reached the foot of the slope, and were beginning to cross the meadows, which extended from the hills to the moat of the castle, when suddenly a quarrel from a crossbow struck the horse of the Captal de Buch, and the noble animal, with the blood flowing in profusion from a wound in his side, reared, and then staggered under his gallant rider.

The captal, however, though taken by surprise, sprang to the ground before the charger fell, exclaiming, " My Lord of Mauvinet, that was meant for you. — Draw round your lord."

Even while he was speaking, more serious cause of alarm appeared; for from the hanging wood, which we have already mentioned, rode forth at full speed a large body of men-at-arms, bearing down with levelled lances upon the little party which was crossing the

meadow. The peasantry were defenceless, and one of the first thoughts of the Lord of Mauvinet was for them. He himself and all his armed attendants, as well as the Captal de Buch and his followers, hastened to cast themselves into the front and meet the shock of the enemy's charge. But the number of the assailants was far superior to their own; and it was very evident from the order in which they came on, that they were all experienced men-at-arms.

“Your horse, your horse,” cried the captal to one of his men: “give me a spear, St. John. Keep the line there, my men, keep the line. My Lord of Mauvinet, if you take ground a little to the right, our flank will be protected by those trees. Stand firm, stand firm! St. George for merry England!”

Almost as he spoke, and while he was yet mounting the horse which had been brought up for him, the body of adventurers, for such were evidently the assailants, came up at full speed, expecting, undoubtedly, to find all give way before them. In this, however, they were

greatly mistaken; the veteran attendants of the captal and the Count de Mauvinet presenting a firm and unwavering face to the enemy, and the captal himself causing his horse to passage, by a hard stroke of the spur, at the very moment that one of the heavy-armed leaders of the enemy's troop came impetuously upon him, suffered the man to dash between him and one of his retainers, but at the same time, with his shortened lance, struck him fiercely in the throat, and hurled him bleeding to the ground.

“A good stroke!” he cried, as gaily as if the dangerous strife were but a May-day pastime. “A good stroke! St. George for merry England!”

Notwithstanding the skill of the captal and the Count of Mauvinet, and the bravery and determination of their own personal followers, the advantage was still on the side of the adversary, who, besides numbers, had the hill in his favour; and although, where the two leaders were, the line was kept firm and no ground lost, yet the centre even of their

short phalanx was beginning to waver and give way, when some cried aloud, "They are coming from the castle! They are coming from the castle!"

The captal, even while he struck down one of the adventurers with his heavy sword, turned his eyes towards the château of Mauvinet, and saw a straggling band of men galloping over the causeway at full speed; but far before them was a horseman who seemed to gain ground upon those who followed every moment, and the captal thought he recognised, though the light was now becoming faint, the form of Albert Denyn.

"Courage! courage, my men!" cried the great leader — "aid is at hand! Hold firm there in the centre! By heaven, they are breaking in! Down with that green plume! strike him on the head, Martin! down with him! down with him! — It is too late!"

And he said truly, for, notwithstanding a vigorous effort made by the men in the centre to recover their position, a strong body of the adventurers forced their way through, and the

line was completely broken. At that moment, however, the first of the horsemen from the castle arrived, proving, as the captal had imagined, Albert Denyn. His body was undefended, but his head was covered with a plain steel cap, such as the commons usually wore in the field, and in his hand was a heavy battle-axe which he had caught up in haste. His eye ran rapidly over the conflict as he came up; and although the Lord of Mauvinet cried, "Hither, Albert! hither!" he directed his course to the rear of the peasantry, forced his way through the midst of the frightened multitude, and cast himself between Adela and the man in the green plume, who had nearly reached the spot where she stood.

"He is right, he is right," cried the Captal de Buch, spurring on his horse, and leading forward the soldiers who were near him, to attack the flank of the enemy.

All he could do, however, was to break their line as they had broken the small band of the Count de Mauvinet; and the whole became a scene of strife, confusion, and disarray, in which

each man was soon found fighting for his own life, and little heeding the proceedings of his comrades.

In the mean time the retainers of the house of Mauvinet were every moment reinforced by fresh arrivals from the château; and the adventurers speedily found that the day was going against them — a discovery which soon led to an attempt to rally their forces and make their retreat in an orderly manner. But the party whom they had attacked had become aware of their own advantage, and of course were but little disposed to suffer them to retire in peace.

As they drew out, and endeavoured to form, the Lord of Mauvinet, seeing many of his poor tenants either wounded or killed, and indignant at the very fact of an ambush being laid so near his own castle, eagerly arrayed his men to pursue the assailants, and only paused to give one glance round, in order to ascertain that his daughter was in safety.

At the moment that he thus turned to gaze, she had dismounted from her horse, and

was bending, in no slight terror, by the animal's side. The space around was not yet absolutely cleared of enemies, but they were now only seeking to retreat; and before her stood Albert Denyn, with his foot planted on the dead body of the man with the green plume, who had led the party of adventurers, which first broke the ranks of the vassals of Mauvinet. The battle-axe which had slain him was bloody in the youth's hand, and his horse's bridle, cast over the other arm, seemed to show that he had sprung to the ground for the defence of his young mistress.

Feeling that Adela was now safe, the count hesitated no longer, but, uniting his men with those of the captal, he urged the pursuit of the enemy fiercely, slaying many, and taking several more, though, in truth, few condescended to ask for quarter. In the mean time, Albert Denyn paused for a moment by the side of the Lady Adela, inquiring eagerly, though gently, whether she were injured.

“ Oh, no, no, Albert,” she replied; “ thanks to God, I am not; but oh! help my father,

Albert, help my father. See, he is pursuing them fiercely. I fear only for him."

Albert looked around, saying, "It is growing dark, lady; I cannot leave you without protection."

Adela, however, again besought him more earnestly than before to fly to the assistance of her father; and some of the peasantry around exclaimed, "We will guard her to the castle, oh we will guard her;" but Albert did not feel well satisfied with the protection that they could give, till William Caillet, forcing his way through the rest, approached Albert, saying, "Leave her to me, Albert, I will defend the Lady Adela in case of need: you know that I can do so well."

Albert hesitated for a moment, though he knew not why; but at that instant the lady repeated, "Go, Albert, go! See! they are surrounding my father. Go! Oh go all of you! I shall be very safe now."

Albert Denyn paused no longer, but, setting his foot in the stirrup, sprang upon his horse's back, and galloped at full speed after the

Lord of Mauvinet and his party, His aid, however, was scarcely required, for the adventurers were in full retreat, and Adela's eyes had deceived her when she imagined that her father was surrounded by any but friends. The increasing darkness, too, soon put a stop to the pursuit, and the Captal de Buch, drawing in his horse, said, with a faint smile, "This is but a scurvy jest, my Lord of Mauvinet, and I fear your poor peasants have suffered."

"I fear so, too," replied the count in a sad tone, while he turned his horse to return to the castle.—"Ha, Albert, where is Adela? why did you leave her?"

"She would have me follow you, my lord," replied Albert Denyn; "and Caillet, who was there, promised to guard her back."

"Then she is safe! then she is safe!" said the Count. "Come, my good lord captal—I must give you some better entertainment than this, or you will call me churlish;" and thus saying, he led the cavalcade homeward.

CHAP. VIII.

“You had better mount, lady, and get back to the castle with all speed,” said Caillet as soon as Albert Denyn had left them: “Peter the horse-boy promised to bring me out a horse, but I fear the knave has failed me.”

“No, no! there he stands,” cried one of the peasants who heard what was said, “there he stands, and the horse with him.”

“Let me help you, lady,” continued Caillet, offering to assist her to her saddle, and beckoning for the boy to bring up his horse; but Adela motioned him back, saying, “I need no aid, William Caillet,” and at the same time she sprang upon her well-taught jennet, which remained perfectly still till she was in the seat. “I see not,” she continued, speaking to Caillet, “that you need a horse to accompany me to the castle. You can walk at my side.”

“But in case we should be obliged to make more haste, lady,” replied Caillet. “The enemy are still scattered about, madam. See there! and there!” and as he spoke he, too, leapt into the saddle.

“Then we will go quick,” said Adela shaking her rein, and turning her jennet’s head towards the castle.

Caillet rode on also, not, as might have been expected from his station, a step behind, but close to her horse’s side, and Adela only the more eagerly urged the beast forward. Just as they were within two hundred yards of the moat, however, some five or six horsemen passed between them and the castle at full speed, and Caillet, laying his hand on Adela’s bridle-rein, exclaimed, “This way! this way, lady!”

As he spoke he turned her jennet’s head towards the wood that skirted the hill; and as there seemed no other way of avoiding the party of adventurers, Adela bewildered and confused suffered him to do as he pleased, thinking that as the men were evidently flying the danger would soon be over.

In the mean while the group of peasantry, which had remained on the slope of the hill, continued gathered together on the same spot engaged in the various sad occupations that such an event as that which had just taken place naturally left for them to perform. There were dead amongst them to be mourned; there were wounded to be tended; the adventurers had found time, even in the midst of bloodshed and confusion, to strip several of the money which they had brought for their lord's ransom, and that also had to be lamented and commented upon. But upon the little knoll, from which Adela and Caillet had departed for the castle, four or five men stood apart talking eagerly together, and not paying any attention to matters which might well interest them as well as their companions. Their eyes were fixed upon the course taken by Caillet and the lady, whom they continued to trace by Adela's white jennet, which could still be seen, notwithstanding the increasing darkness of the evening.

"Yes, yes," said one, "it is all right: you see he is going straight to the castle."

“ Watch him still, watch him still,” cried another : “ I love him not at all. As the lady said, why should he take a horse, to go back with her a five minutes’ walk ? see how he rides close to her side, too, as if he were the Captal de Buch. Some one has certainly betrayed us into the hands of these companions, otherwise they would never have come so near the castle, and I as well as Larchenay doubt him much. He was the only one that knew of our intention of bringing the money here, as far as I know ; and when I was speaking with old Tourmont, the warder at the castle, just now, he told me that Caillet had been absent all this day and yesterday, and he said, he wondered that our lord let him go on so.”

“ So do I,” replied an old peasant who formed one of the group ; “ and I am determined, for my part, to tell my lord the count that I found him persuading my second son Charles that I did not treat him well : he has been a mischief-maker in more than one house, and it is time that the thing should be stopped ! So I shall let my lord know the whole without ceremony. But look

there, look there, Larchenay ! He is leading my young lady towards the wood : he is bent upon some mischief, depend upon it."

"I will stop him," cried Larchenay : "if he goes up there, I can cut him off by the well path. Come with me, Peter John, come with me, quick, quick — Santa Maria! there is a scream."

Thus saying he darted away up the side of the hill, took a road through the wood, and ran at full speed for some two or three hundred yards along the narrow and intricate turnings and windings of the forest ways. He was then pausing for a moment to take breath, when another scream at no great distance reached his ear, and rushing on as fast as possible, he suddenly came to a spot where two paths met. Along the one crossing that which he himself was pursuing, was coming up at the moment with furious speed the very person whom he sought, William Caillet, leading on the jennet of Adela de Mauvinet. It was in vain that the poor girl attempted to pull in her horse; for Caillet had contrived to grasp the bridle in such a manner that she had no longer any power over

the animal; and he continued galloping on, without paying the slightest attention either to her remonstrances or to her cries for help.

The instant Larchenay beheld such a scene, he darted forward and attempted to stop the horse of Caillet. Nor was he altogether unsuccessful, for, catching the bridle, he checked the animal for a moment. But, without uttering a word, Caillet struck him a blow on the head, with a heavy mace, which hung at the saddle-bow, and laid the poor man senseless on the ground.

The villain then spurred on at full speed as before, making no reply to the entreaties and tears of the lady, and indeed not even seeming to hear her, till at length, finding herself carried farther and farther from assistance, Adela exclaimed, "If you do not instantly stop, you will drive me to spring from the horse."

Caillet merely looked round, replying, "If you do, you will kill yourself. You had better submit quietly to what cannot be avoided. — I tell you," he continued in a sharper tone, seeing her resolutely disengage herself from the

saddle and trappings of the horse for the purpose of casting herself off — “ I tell you, if you do, you will kill yourself.”

But even while he spoke he relaxed in a degree the horses' speed, and Adela seizing the opportunity, after hesitating in terror a single instant, summoned all her courage and sprang from her jennet to the ground.

She had been taught to practise such things, when a child in sport, and she had often done it with ease and safety; but the case was very different now: she was cast violently forward and fell; nor can there be a doubt, that she would have sustained severe injury had not the path been covered with long forest grass.

Caillet reined up the horses violently, and springing to the ground bent over her with a look of alarm and grief. “ You have killed yourself,” he exclaimed: “ rash girl, you have killed yourself rather than fly with one who loves you to madness.”

“ Leave me,” said Adela, “ leave me; if you are sorry for what you have done, leave me, and provide for your own safety. Some one will be

here soon, and I shall have help ; leave me, then, leave me, for I am resolved to go no farther ; so that, if you are wise, you will now think only of yourself."

"No, lady, no," exclaimed the villein — "I have not done all this to be now disappointed. You are not so much hurt, I see, as your rashness might have brought about, and you shall go on with me, if we both die before to-morrow."

"Never," replied Adela, firmly, "never, while I have power to resist." Caillet answered merely by a laugh, and raising her like a feather from the ground in his powerful arms, he placed her once more upon her horse, in spite of her screams and tears, strapped her tightly to the saddle with one of the stirrup leathers of his own charger, and then, remounting, proceeded with the same furious pace as before.

Adela clasped her hands in despair ; she could no longer escape ; she saw that if she now attempted to cast herself down, certain death would be the consequence ; for, dragged along by the band which fastened her to the saddle, she

must evidently perish in the most horrible manner; and yet she asked herself whether it would not be better so to perish, than to remain in the power of one so hateful to her in every respect; one from whom she could expect neither mercy nor consideration; who had incurred by the very act he had that night committed the inevitable punishment of death, if taken, and who had consequently nothing else to fear, let his acts be what they would. She asked herself whether it would not be better to die at once, horrible as the mode might be, than to continue in his hands and at his mercy. She felt that it would be so, but yet her heart failed her; imagination painted all that she would have to suffer — the lingering agony of being dragged along upon the ground, till life was extinguished — the probable chance that, maimed and injured, she might still remain in his power, without absolute death bringing her relief, and at the same time hope, persevering hope, yet whispered that some help might come — that her father, or the captal, or Albert Denyn, might learn her fate in time to save her from Caillet's hands;

and thus, for many minutes, with agony of mind inconceivable, she struggled between terror and strong resolution.

Her fall, too, had hurt her, though not severely: she had suffered much fatigue as well as apprehension during the day; and at length as the last ray of twilight went out and left her in utter darkness, in the midst of the deep wood, and in the power of a man whom she detested, strength failed as well as courage; her head grew giddy, and exclaiming, "Stop, stop, I shall faint, I shall die," she fell forward upon her horse's neck.

When Adela's recollection returned, she found herself still in the wood, but seated on the ground at the foot of an old decayed beech tree, with none but William Caillet near her. A large fire, however, was blazing before her, branches of the trees, thickly piled up with leaves, were under her head, and various minute circumstances showed, not only that some care had been taken to recall her to consciousness and to provide for her comfort, but apparently that a considerable period of

time must have elapsed, since the moment at which memory and sensation had left her.

As she opened her eyes, she gazed around with fresh terror and dismay; but no consolation, no hope, was afforded by any of the objects on which the poor girl's glance fell. Caillet was standing before her, gazing upon her. At first he was apparently moved with pity, but the moment that he saw she had fully recovered from the fit of fainting into which she had fallen, it seemed as if some demon, which had rested for a time under the command of a better power, roused itself again to triumph in her misery and distress; and his usual sneering curl came upon his lip as he said, "You are well now, lady, and no doubt you will soon get reconciled to your fate, though it may seem a hard one to you at present."

Adela, for a moment, covered her eyes with her hands, and strove to recall those powers of thought which for some time had been utterly extinct, and were still feeble and wavering. "My fate?" said she, wildly; and,

speaking more to herself than him, "What fate?"

"To be mine," replied Caillet, watching every look and gesture of his victim — "ay, lady, to be mine. — Yes!" he continued, seeing an involuntary shudder come over her as he spoke, "yes, to be mine — mine, whom you have treated with contumely and contempt because I dared to love you, and, if not to avow, to let you see that love — mine, whom you trod upon, at whom you looked indignation and scorn, while on the weak boy, who neither dared to speak nor show his love, you smiled continually, encouraging him in a passion which you would have scoffed at as soon as it was displayed. — Ay, you may tremble, lady! but I tell you you are mine! No help can reach you here — mine, and on my own terms."

He paused a moment, gazing full upon her by the fire light as she sat with her hands covering her eyes, and the tears streaming rapidly down her cheeks; but at length he added, in a softer tone, "Listen to me. Moderate your pride; cast away the evil spirit of your class; and perhaps you may have some comfort."

“What? what? Oh what?” exclaimed Adela, eagerly; “I have no pride! William Caillet, you have no right to say I have any pride.”

“Well, then, listen to me,” he repeated, assuming a kindly tone and an air of tenderness, which, to say the truth, sat not ill upon his fine features — “listen to me, Adela; for between you and me — and ere a few short months be over, between lord and serf through the whole land — the terms of master and dependant must be at an end. Listen to me, and I will tell you how you may save yourself much pain, and save me from a harsh determination, which I seek not to display, unless I am driven to it.”

As he spoke, he drew nearer to her, and seated himself beside her at the foot of the beech tree; but Adela started up with a look of horror which she could not repress, and drew far back from him, gazing at him with terror and apprehension, such as the bird may be supposed to feel, when it finds the fatal eyes of the serpent upon it.

A bitter frown came upon the face of Caillet

as she did so, and he too rose, saying, "Am I so hateful to you, lady? Then I must use another tone — Down by my side, I say! You are the serf here, and I am lord. Do not think that I have risked death and torture, and cast behind me every ordinary hope of man, to be now mocked by a weak girl. Down by my side, I say! To-morrow, the idle rites of the altar shall unite us for ever; for I would fain see whether, in case of misfortune, the Lord of Mauvinet will slay his daughter's husband. Ay, to-morrow you shall be my wife; but ere to-morrow comes, you shall humbly thank me for granting you that name."

Adela had gazed upon him while he spoke with a look of horror and apprehension which she could not repress, though she hardly understood the meaning of his words; but when, as the villain ended, he made a movement towards her as if to seize her by the arm, she uttered a loud scream, and darted away down the forest road; the profound darkness, which, at any other time, might have terrified her, now seeming a refuge from her brutal pursuer.

Ere she had taken ten steps, however, and while the light of the fire still shone upon her path, a living being — but whether man or beast she did not at first clearly see — came out rapidly, but quietly, from amongst the trees on her left hand, and stood in the way between her and Caillet.

The villain, for a moment, recoiled, so strange was the sight presented to him by the red glare of the fire. At first he, too, doubted whether it was a human creature that he saw; and had his been an ordinary mind, or had his education been that of a common peasant, he might have supposed that some of the numerous evil spirits with which the fanciful superstitions of the times peopled the forests and the mountains now stood before him. He soon perceived, however, that though nearly covered by the long and tangled beard and the grey locks which hung in wild profusion over the brow, it was the face of a man which glared fiercely upon him. The form, indeed, was scarcely human; the height not more than four feet; the breadth great; and the arms exceedingly long and powerful; but the

whole frame contorted, and more resembling the knotted trunk of some old hawthorn tree than the body of a man. He was covered, too, with untanned goat-skins for clothing, which added to the wild savageness of his appearance.

Caillet paused only sufficient time to see that it was one of his own species, and then sprang forward again to grasp the poor girl, who fled half fainting from his pursuit; but the strange being which had crossed his path stretched out its long arms from side to side of the road, exclaiming in a deep loud voice, "Stop!" and as Caillet, fearful of losing the object for which he had played so rash and daring a game, rushed on, his knees were suddenly twined round by the sinewy limbs of this new opponent; and feeling as if he had been clasped tight in bands of iron, he reeled and fell headlong as he endeavoured to disentangle himself.

His adversary relaxed his grasp as they fell together, and both started up at the same moment; but still the wild-looking creature which had interrupted Caillet in his course was be-

tween him and the way she had taken; and, brandishing a huge axe which had hung at his back, he barred the road, saying, "I have let thee stay for the last hour by my fire, and stable thy horse under my trees, and use my fountain of pure water; and now, brute beast, not knowing that there was any one that watched thee but the high unseen eye of God, thou wouldst offer violence to innocence even in my presence.—Get thee gone! lest I slay thee! Be-take thee to thy horse's back and flee, or I will dash thy brains out where thou standest."

Caillet made no reply, but taking a single step back, laid his hand upon the hilt of the sword which he wore, and drawing it from the scabbard, aimed a sudden and violent blow at the head of his adversary. It was instantly met by the staff of the axe, however, and the edge cut deep into the wood; but ere it could be returned, sounds met the ears of both the combatants, which, for a moment, suspended the encounter.

CHAP. IX.

ADELA DE MAUVINET paused not, to ascertain who or what it was that interposed between her and her abhorred pursuer. She saw that he was delayed, and [even a moment gained, seemed to her a blessing so great as to give fresh strength to her weak and fainting steps. She flew on, then, down the road till the darkness caused her to stop for an instant and ask herself whether she might not plunge into the thick wood which stretched out on either hand, and, like the timid hare or the wild deer, conceal herself amidst the underwood till the return of light enabled her to find some place of refuge, or brought her some help.

As she thus paused for a moment, she heard the blast of a distant horn, and her heart beat almost to bursting with renewed hope. She thought at first only of rushing on; but it was

far off: — the person who blew the blast might take some other path: Caillet was sure to overtake her ere the other could come near; and she turned hastily towards the thicket. For another instant she listened again, holding the stem of one of the trees for support. The horn was not heard; but she caught what seemed fierce words from the other side; and, at all events, it was clear that her enemy's pursuit was stopped for the moment.

The horn sounded again, in a moment or two, but it was still very distant; and Adela was drawing gently back from the road amongst the brushwood, when there came a flash along the path, as if some one bearing a torch were approaching from the side nearest to Mauvinet. Her first impulse was to spring forward and meet it, and when she heard horses' feet, too, coming rapidly, hope rose high; but then she thought of the attack upon her father's band, and her heart fell again. It might be the adventurers — it might be some base confederate of Caillet, and she drew farther back amongst the trees,

but not so completely as to deprive herself of a view of the road.

Eagerly did she gaze towards it for the next few minutes, the light increasing quickly, and the horses' feet sounding near and more near. At length it came in sight; and Adela, uttering a cry of joy, darted forward, exclaiming, "Oh, Albert, Albert! — you have come to save me!"

Albert Denyn sprang to the ground, and cast his left arm round her, while his right hand grasped the torch, and with eager eyes and a look mingling fierce indignation with anxiety and alarm, he asked hurriedly, "Has he injured you, dear lady? — Where is he? Where is he? — No hand but mine must punish him. Tell me quick, Lady Adela; for your father and the captal follow fast behind, and I would fain be the first."

"Oh, leave him to them, Albert!" exclaimed Adela. "He is strong; he is well armed: — he fights for existence. Some one has stopped him, or he would have pursued me. Leave him, Albert, leave him, at least till some others come to aid you!"

“Hark!” cried the youth, not heeding her entreaties, “I hear voices there on before. — Dear lady, you are safe. My lord the count will be with you in a moment. Let me — let me, I beseech you, give him his due reward;” and, without waiting to hear more, he pressed his lips respectfully upon Adela’s hand, and burst away.

Darting forward like lightning, Albert soon heard the clang of steel, and caught a glimpse of the fire from beside which Adela had fled. It shone faintly through the trees, indeed, for the road had taken a slight turn; but it was sufficiently bright to show him two dark forms, engaged in what seemed a struggle for life and death, the light flashing occasionally upon the blade of the sword, or the head of the axe, as they whirled round and round the heads of the combatants.

With his whole soul burning with anger and indignation the youth rushed on, exclaiming, “Leave him to me — leave him to me. — Villain! traitor! is this all your boasted zeal? Turn upon me, Caillet, turn upon me;

leave him to me, old man; I will punish him."

"Ha! ha!" cried the strange being who had interrupted Caillet in his pursuit of Adela — "art thou come hither to deal with him? So be it then; deal with him thou shalt."

Almost at the same moment, Caillet exclaimed, with flashing eyes, "Now, then, meddling young fool, you shall have your reward, though doubtless you are not here alone. You have not courage to be aught but the lackey of some pitiful lord, or to wait upon a lady's serving woman. Serf by choice as well as fate, come on, I say! I may, perhaps, have time yet to give you a chance, like the fools you so proudly serve, of dying for a lady love, if not, at least I can die myself, and I well deserve it, for having suffered either pity or remorse, or any other such idle dream, to make me miss my opportunity. Come on, though I well know you have cowardly odds enough against me!"

"I trust to have time to slay you before they can interfere," replied Albert, whose

sword was already crossed with that of Caillet; “and all that I wish is, that I were but sure of half an hour with you alone here in the wood. — Back, back, traitor, into the clearer light: this darkness suits your spirit better than mine.”

Thus saying, he pressed forward upon his adversary with such fierceness and activity, that Caillet was compelled to retreat towards the centre of the little opening in the wood, while the wild spectator of their combat, who had stood by for a moment, listening and leaning on his axe, now rushed forward to the fire of withered branches, and dry fern and gorse, and tossing them high in the air, made a pyramid of flame blaze up, and cast a bright glare of red light over the whole scene around.

Nor, to say the truth, was Caillet displeased to be thus enabled to see more clearly, in his strife with Albert Denyn. He was much too clear-sighted and shrewd, not to have perceived the youth's natural genius for military exercises, and marked the great progress which he had made with very little instruction; and,

indeed, though, from his greater age and experience, he had always affected a superiority over Albert, and pretended to regard him as a mere youth, yet, in reality, he had feared him, rather than despised him; had been jealous of him, rather than looked down upon him. He was thus well aware, that it was with no common antagonist he had to do; and though he vainly fancied himself as superior in skill, as he was in age and strength, he knew that a false step, or an ill-aimed blow, might well turn the chances aganst himself.

Caillet retreated then more willingly than Albert thought, watching the eager thrusts and blows of his assailant, and ready at any moment to take advantage of a mistake. The youth rushed on fiercely, and perhaps somewhat rashly, and a lunge that passed close to his breast, and wounded him slightly in the shoulder, showed him that he must be more cautious in his dealings with his adversary. In the open light, however, he took more care; and a scornful smile of satisfaction, which came upon Caillet's face, when he saw the

blood flow rapidly from his companion's arm, was the next moment changed into a scowl of malignant hatred, as an unexpected blow, from Albert's sword, covered his whole face with blood, and made him stagger as he stood. Nevertheless he parried a second blow, and only became the more wary, from the injury he had received; his first fear being, lest the flowing of the gore, which dimmed his sight, might prevent him from taking that revenge for which his soul thirsted. For a moment or two he kept entirely on the defensive, retreating slowly round the fire; and Albert became possessed with the idea, that he was endeavouring to reach his horse, which stood hard by cropping the grass, at the side of Adela's jennet.

Determined that he should not escape, the youth sprang, with one bound, into the midst of the burning branches, and then, by another, placed himself between his enemy and the horses; the intense heat, however, and the suffocating smoke of the fire, made his head giddy, and his sight dim; and Caillet, who

now attacked him with redoubled fury, might, perhaps, have ultimately gained the advantage, had not the galloping of cavalry sounded close at hand, and drawn the villein's attention to the other side. Albert took immediate advantage of the opportunity, sprang fiercely upon him, closed with him in a moment, and shortening his sword, was about to drive it into his heart, when his arm was suddenly seized, and a loud voice exclaimed, "Come, come, my young tiger! On my soul, you have well nigh killed your game; but I must stop you, however; for if I mistake not, this is the youth who gave us tidings of such a goodly booty."

"And this is he," exclaimed Caillet, now freed from Albert's grasp—"and this is he who defeated your plan, and prevented you from reaping the harvest which I had promised you. Leave him to me, leave him to me, I beseech you: I have an account as well as you to settle with him."

"By Heaven," cried the person who had before spoken, and in whom Albert instantly re-

cognised one of the band of adventurers that he had found contending with the Lord of Mauvinet and his little party—“By Heaven, if we had left him to you, my man, for another minute, he would soon have settled that account you talk of: at least so it seemed just now. But we have no time to wait for idle talk: you must both come with us; for it seems we owe you both something, and that score had better be cleared.”

Too many persons stood round at the moment, and those persons too well armed, for Albert Denyn to offer any opposition. He had about him, it is true, all the eager spirit of youth; he had in his heart that daring courage, which utter contempt of danger, inexperience, a hardy education, and a mind neither softened by luxury nor attached to the world by high fortunes and bright hopes, can alone give; he had, in short, courage approaching to rashness. But yet there are some circumstances, in which successful resistance is so evidently impossible, that even rashness itself dare not attempt it; and in the present in-

tance, Albert did not even dream of opposing the force which now surrounded him. All his thoughts were, how best to act, in the situation in which he was placed, not for his own security but for the safety of Adela. He knew, or at least he believed, that the party of the Lord of Mauvinet, and the Captal de Buch, could be at no great distance; and there was every probability of their coming to his relief, if he could delay the adventurers for a few moments; but he hesitated even to make the attempt, lest by any means the safety of Adela might be compromised, and she might likewise fall into the hands of the free companions, before those who had quitted Mauvinet to deliver her could come up.

Ere he had time to arrange any plan Caillet, as if he could have divined what was passing in his enemy's mind, and sought to frustrate his design, turned to the leader of the troop, exclaiming, "I will go with you willingly enough, noble sir; but I beseech you seek for the lady who was with me, and who must, even now, be at no great distance along that

road. You know our contract was, that she was to be my share of the day's booty."

"It was your business to keep her when you had got her, then," replied the adventurer, harshly: "we have no time to seek this errant lady now."

"You had better not dally," cried Albert Denyn, eagerly: "the count and the Captal de Buch, with all their men, must be here ere many minutes are over. Some went by the one path, and some by the other, while I cut across through the brushwood by the chapel, till I reached the road again; but I cannot have gained ten minutes upon the rest. Hark! there is a horn: those are the captal's men coming up on the right."

"By the bones of the saints, then," exclaimed the captain of the adventurers, "we have but little time to spare. Quick! to your horses! —Come, come, young man," he continued, speaking to Albert: "if you try to delay, we will drive you on with a lance! Mount your horse! quick!"

“That is not my horse,” said Albert Denyn, “that is the lady’s.”

“Here is another in the lane,” said a second man.

“Bring it, Hugo! bring it up!” cried the first; and in a moment Albert’s horse, which had followed him slowly from the spot where he had left Adela, was led forward, and he was forced to mount, in order to proceed with his captors. Placed between two of the free companions, his sword having been taken from him, and no means, either of resistance or defence, being left to him, Albert Denyn suffered himself to be hurried along at a quick pace, hearing from time to time the distant horns of the friendly troop, from which he had been separated, but with the mortification of finding that the sounds grew fainter and more faint, as he was thus borne on against his will to a distance from all those for whom he felt any attachment. He had but one consolation: that Adela, at least, had escaped; that she was delivered from the hands of Caillet, and had not fallen into those of the adventurers.

This was certainly no slight comfort ; but still, with the restless anxiety of all those who love well, imagination suggested a thousand dangers, and created a thousand fears, in regard to the safety of the fair Lady of Mauvinet. He fancied that the count and the captal might not find her ; that she might be forced to stray in terror and solitude through that dark wood during the livelong night, and perhaps perish ere the morning, with hunger, cold, and apprehension. For his own fate he cared little : he feared not that any evil would befall him, although he knew that the free companions had sometimes shown great cruelty to prisoners who could not or would not pay a large ransom ; but his was not a heart at all prone to apprehension ; and he rode on, endeavouring to solace himself with youth's bright hope, that " all will go well," which lights us still, though the clouds lour above, and the tempest beats around us.

The march of the adventurers lasted the whole night, at first proceeding very rapidly, but gradually assuming a slower pace, as they

imagined pursuit to be left far behind them. During the earlier part of the journey, Albert paid but little attention to any thing that was said or done by those around him ; and, indeed, but little conversation took place among the men themselves. As their progress became slow, however, they began to speak over the events of the day, first in broken sentences and detached words, and then in more lengthened discussions, to which Albert — somewhat recovered from the first tumultuous feelings that his captivity had occasioned — turned an attentive ear, the subject being one in which, as may be well supposed, he took some interest.

It would be tedious, both to the reader and the writer, to detail the whole conversation of the two men who guarded Albert on either side, in which those who rode immediately before and behind also joined occasionally. The youth gathered, however, that although they had been disappointed in a part of their booty, they had yet contrived to strip the good farmers of Mauvinet of a very considerable sum ; but the loss of men they had sustained also ap-

peared to have been severe; and they spoke in terms of so much anger, regarding the death of the leader who had first broken through the little band of the count and the captal, that Albert began to apprehend his own life might not be in safety if it were discovered that his was the hand which slew him.

“We shall never get his like,” exclaimed one of the men, “if we seek him far and wide.”

“I wish,” cried another, “that I could have struck only one blow at the fellow, when he hit him on the head with the axe: he should have kept him company on the road, wherever he is gone.”

“It is a bad day’s work,” rejoined the first. “To lose such a captain as that, may well make us curse the hand that did it.”

“I got hold of him by the collar, at one time,” said a third speaker, “and in another moment would have cleft his skull, but, just then, fresh people came up from the castle, and I was obliged to let go my grasp: I would have given my right hand for five minutes more; but the time may come when we shall meet

with the lad again. I wish Sir Robert would go and storm the castle some day."

"That would take more men than we have got to spare," replied the first who had spoken; "but I trust we shall lay hands upon the youth some time or another, as you say, and then woe be to him, if he come in my way."

"Or in mine," answered the other; "but see, there is the daylight coming in. We cannot have much farther to march."

What he said was true. The soft morning light was beginning to appear in the east; and the objects around became more distinctly visible, every thing looking calm, and sweet, and peaceful, and the whole scene seeming to reproach man for the folly and the wickedness of his unceasing strife and vain contentions.

The adventurers had quitted the wood for some time when the day dawned, and the landscape presented merely a quiet country scene, with fields spread out in various states of cultivation; and some scattered cottages nested in various sheltered nooks of that undulating track of country which lies upon the frontiers

of Main and Touraine. On a distant eminence, however, was seen a tall tower rising up and commanding the whole country round about, and towards it the band of free companions now took their way, passing through the midst of several of the fields, without the slightest consideration for some of the late crops, which were still upon the ground.

As the light grew brighter and brighter every moment, Albert could perceive one of the men who rode beside him turn round several times with a frowning brow, to gaze upon his countenance, and, at length, without saying any thing, but merely making a sign for those who were behind, to ride forward and fill up his place, the adventurer galloped on, towards the head of the line, and spoke for several moments with the leader. He then came back again and resumed his place, without making any comment; and a few moments after, the whole body wound slowly up a steep ascent towards the gates of the castle.

To whom it originally belonged, Albert knew not, but it was now evidently in the

hands of a large body of plunderers, of which the troop that carried him along with them formed a part. As they approached, a number of the soldiery were seen sitting round the barbican, which was beyond the moat, cleaning their arms, or playing at various games of chance; and little discipline or regularity of any kind seemed to be maintained amongst them. Even the band which had captured Albert, dispersed, without order, as they came up. Some, stopping to speak with their companions, remained behind, some dismounting, led their horses through the gates, some staid in a group to talk together over the adventures of the past night. The men who surrounded him, however, and those who accompanied Caillet in the rear, rode on into the outer court without losing sight of them for a moment; and the instant he had passed through the long dark archway, Albert heard an order given for the gates to be closed behind.

CHAP. X.

To retrace one's steps is almost always an unpleasant task. Whether the path that we have followed be one of joy or of sorrow; whether the bright beams of hope, or the dark clouds of despondency, have hung upon our way, it is still an unpleasant thing to tread back our course, and resume our advance again from a spot which we left long before. If sorrow have been our companion in the scenes which we are called upon to revisit, though there is an accidental sweetness that mingles with the bitterness of recollected woes, yet darkness must ever fill the principal part of the picture, and the light be faint and sad. Even if we have known bright joys and that glorious happiness which visits the mortal being but once or twice in life, still we find something unpleasant in retreading our steps: the scenes

are less fair than memory painted them; the light that gave them lustre is gone out, and the contrast generally renders that which might otherwise have been pleasing, sad, and very often more gloomy than if there had never been any thing glittering and joyful in the things around us.

We must, nevertheless, turn back, in the course of this history's chronology, to the moment at which we left the Count de Mauvinet, the Captal de Buch, and Albert Denyn, returning towards the château, after having dispersed the body of adventurers, and pursued them as far as was judged necessary. The count and the captal rode on, without any thing like apprehension or alarm, although both were grave; for the latter was any thing but sanguinary by nature, and loved not to see unnecessary bloodshed, and the count, on his part, had a personal interest of a painful kind in the events of the day. Many of his peasantry, upon whose superiority he prided himself, as much as upon the protection and happiness which they enjoyed upon his do-

mains, had been slaughtered or wounded before his eyes, when they came to offer an honourable tribute of gratitude for the kindness which he had ever displayed towards them. Thus neither of the two noblemen could feel gay or even cheerful; although, in the first excitement of success, they might jest at the discomfiture of the adventurers. But still, neither of them experienced the least apprehension in regard to Adela, after the explanation which Albert Denyn had given.

Albert himself was not so well satisfied; why or wherefore he knew not. There were fears in his mind, vague, indefinite, perhaps unreasonable; and he looked eagerly first towards the château and then towards the hill, though too little light remained in the sky for him to see distinctly any object at a distance. When they had reached a small mound, however, about a hundred yards from the causeway, which led across the moat, they were met by one of the peasants running at full speed, and exclaiming, "Oh, my lord, my lord! the Lady Adela!"

“What of her?” exclaimed the count, apprehensions for his daughter immediately taking possession of his bosom; “what of your lady? — Speak, man, speak!”

“He has carried her off,” cried the man, out of breath. “Instead of turning towards the castle, he has forced her away into the wood.”

“Who do you mean by he?” demanded the captal: “what can we understand by *he*?”

“I mean William Caillet,” replied the man, “I saw him do it myself, and Larchenay has followed him into the wood. Peter John has gone thither also; but I fear they will not overtake him, for they have no horses.”

“Why did you leave her, Albert?” exclaimed the Count de Mauvinet; “why did you leave her?”

“She commanded me to do so, my lord,” answered Albert: “she thought you were in danger. Caillet, too — the traitor!”

“Which way did they take?” cried the count; “which way did they take?”

The man explained as well as he could; but in the dim light he had not seen the

proceedings of Caillet distinctly, and more of the peasantry coming up only embarrassed the statements of the first. The count and his companions paused but for a moment to hear; and then exclaiming, "On into the wood! — My lord captal, I will not ask you if you will seek my child with me, I know you will," the Lord of Mauvinet spurred forward his horse towards the side of the wood, and entered by the first path he could find.

It so happened that his knowledge of the country, and a rapid calculation of the road which a person engaged in such a base enterprise was likely to take, led him at once directly upon the track of Caillet; and the count for some minutes pursued it fiercely, galloping at full speed, and without drawing a rein. The shadows of the night, however, were creeping over the scene apace; and at length the horse of the captal, which, though somewhat weary with a long day's journey, was still full of fire, shied at an object by the side of the road, and the moment after, the count himself pulled in his rein, exclaiming, "There is a dead man!"

“No, not yet dead,” cried a faint voice, “though well nigh dead, my lord; for that villain Caillet has fractured my skull, I am sure.”

“What, Larchenay!” exclaimed the count, “is that you, my poor fellow? Where is the villain? Was your lady with him?”

“Ay, that she was, my lord,” answered the farmer, in a faint voice. “He was leading the horse along by the bridle, whether she would or not; and I am sure there was magic in the thing; for though she screamed so loudly, and it was her own favourite jennet, the beast went on without heeding her cries, at the slightest touch of that traitor’s hand.

“Which way did he take?” demanded the Lord of Mauvinet.

“Oh, straight on, straight on,” replied the farmer: “he staid for no one, but dealt me that one blow on the head, and galloped forward at full speed.”

“Some one see to him,” exclaimed the count, pointing to the poor farmer: “let him be carried to the castle, and have all care and

tendance. Let us on now ourselves; we must soon come up with the villain; his horse can never match ours."

"Alas! my lord," said Larchenay, "he has dared to take out one of your own noblest chargers."

"Accursed villain," cried the count; "then we must but make the more speed. Set to your spurs, my lord captal; this is a sad day's work, indeed."

They galloped on for some way, without check or pause, no one uttering a word, but all listening eagerly, although the noise of their own horses' feet must have drowned every lighter sound. At length, however, Albert Denyn spoke.

"Hark! my lord, hark!" he said; "surely there is a horse's feet before us?"

The Lord of Mauvinet paused, exclaiming, "Halt!" and the whole line of those who were following instantly drew in their reins. At first, no other sound was heard; but the next instant the captal exclaimed, "You are right, young man, you are right; there is

some one flying along the road ;” and in a moment after, the noise of a horse’s feet, as they passed over some more stony part of the road, were distinctly heard, beating the ground with furious rapidity.

No more words were spoken; no thought animated the bosom of any one, but who should first overtake the villain that had committed so terrible an outrage. But still the sounds went on before them, and led them for some way in the pursuit; till at length, through the dim light, they suddenly caught a sight of the charger, which the moment after stood quite still; and at the same instant, the rider put his hand to his head, and fell forward upon the neck of his horse. The next minute the Count de Mauvinet was by his side; but instead of William Caillet, the figure was that of one of the heavy-armed adventurers whom they had so lately overthrown; and almost at the same time that the count laid his hand upon the bridle, so as to make the horse suddenly retreat a step, the man fell headlong to the ground, dead from the

wounds he had received in the late combat. Some of the men sprang to the ground, and opened his casque, but life was quite extinct.

“We have been mistaken,” cried the Lord of Mauvinet, “and without torches, our pursuit will be vain. Can you tell, Albert, where we can find either torches or flambeaux to guide us on our way onward?”

“There is St. Mary’s Chapel not far off,” said Albert, rapidly; “the priest there has doubtless both.”

“Thither, thither!” cried the Lord of Mauvinet, “let us go thither;” and turning his horse’s bridle, he led the way to a small chapel in the wood, by the side of which stood the house of a poor priest, who, though in truth he had nothing within his dwelling to justify him in thinking that any one would plunder his abode, would yet scarcely, on any persuasion, open the gates to the Lord of Mauvinet and his party, though the count threatened to drive in the door if he hesitated any longer. When the good man was at length convinced, that it was indeed his chief patron who was there

waiting for torches, he would have fain made a thousand excuses for the delay; and in the very attempt wasted so much time, that Albert Denyn, springing to the ground, entered without farther ceremony, and soon returned, bearing in his hand that which was wanted, much to the satisfaction of his lord.

Leaving the poor priest to close his house again at leisure, the party proceeded once more upon the search, the hearts of all sinking with apprehension at the many long delays which had intervened. To describe the feelings of Albert Denyn would be impossible; and though, if any one could have seen his countenance, those feelings would have been found plainly written there, yet as he had uttered not one word but those which we have mentioned, during the whole ride, no one present had any idea of what was going on in his breast, unless, indeed, it was the Captal de Buch, who might entertain some suspicion that the heart of his young retainer was less at ease than some of those present suspected.

At length, on reaching a spot where several

ways divided, the whole party were obliged to make a pause, to settle their farther course, lest, while they were proceeding on one path, Caillet should escape by another. All the roads, it appeared, joined again at the distance of a few miles; and while the Captal took one, the Count de Mauvinet chose another, and despatched three or four of the men by a small path which led between the two. There was still, however, an extensive track where the wood had been cut down, to afford firing for the ensuing winter; and lest the villain Caillet should evade their pursuit by crossing that, Albert besought his lord's permission to gallop forward by the only open path he knew of across the brushwood, and rejoin them somewhat farther on.

He took one of the torches with him; and as he turned to go, the Captal de Buch said, gazing on him with a peculiar sort of smile, "We will sound our horns, young man, in case you should need help, though I do not think you are one to call for it without great necessity."

“ I trust not, my lord,” replied Albert ; “ and in this case I think I could well deal with that base villain alone.”

“ And doubtless would willingly do so,” said the captal.

“ Most willingly, my lord,” replied Albert — “ pray God send me that good fortune !” — and thus saying, he rode away. His horse, which had not been out with the party in the morning, was of course fresher than any of the others ; and as we have shown — what between the shortness of the path and the pace at which he went — he gained a considerable way upon his companions. In the mean time, the count and the Captal de Buch rode on, pushing their chargers to their utmost speed, each party guided by persons who knew the way well, and each keeping nearly on a line with the other, though that of the captal was perhaps a little in advance.

The great English commander, however, had not reached the spot where the brief combat had taken place, between Albert Denyn and Caillet more than a single minute, when the

count himself galloped up, exclaiming, "What have we here? a fire!— and as I live, my poor Adela's jennet! Oh, my lord captal, this is very terrible."

The captal gazed sternly round him for a moment in silence, and then sprang to the ground, saying, "Here is something more! That good youth has overtaken him, my lord— here is the torch he carried, and the ground covered with blood. See, see— Here amongst the grass— There has been a sharp strife!— but what have we? Here are the foot-marks of many horses. A whole band has been here not long ago—some thirty or forty, it would seem. Take my word for it, my lord, this is a deeper scheme than we have fancied: this villain is in league with the men who attacked us to-night, and it is they who have got your daughter, for the sake of a ransom. Albert, poor boy, has met with them, and has fared ill, it would seem. They have not killed him, however, or we should find his body; but he must be badly wounded, if this be all his blood."

When he had done speaking, the captal

turned to the count, and standing by the side of that nobleman's horse, laid his hand upon the animal's neck, gazing up into his friend's face, which was full of the anguish that a parent alone can feel in such circumstances. The captal was moved by the depth of sorrow which he beheld. "Take comfort," he said, "my good lord, take comfort!"

"Oh, my lord captal," replied the count, "there can be no comfort for a father, while he knows not his child's fate! But you cannot feel what I feel, nor can I expect or ask you to follow out this enterprise as I must follow it! I can know no rest till I have delivered my child."

"Am I a knight, a noble, and your friend," demanded the captal, grasping his hand, "and shall I quit you in such an hour as this?—Nay, nay, my lord, hear me but one word," and unsheathing his sword, he held up the cross of the hilt before his eyes, saying, "So help me God and our Lady, in my utmost need, as I do never sheath this sword or lay my head upon a pillow, or eat aught but bread, till I

have delivered the Lady Adela, or taken vengeance of those that have done her wrong. Nor will I forget the man who has injured that poor boy, Albert. I have not been so kind to him in my thoughts, as I might have been, but I will do him justice, if God give me grace, hereafter. And now, my lord, let us on upon our way, as far as our tired horses will carry us. These men themselves cannot outrun us far, for their beasts were evidently hard pressed when last we saw them."

"We shall find a village some three miles on," said the Lord of Mauvinet, in a sad tone—"perhaps there we may obtain some intelligence."

CHAP. XI.

ALBERT DENYN gazed round the small court of the castle, when the gate was shut behind him, with feelings not a little painful. His heart was one which might find joy and satisfaction in honourable danger and noble strife, which, even had death been imminent, nay, certain, would not have hesitated for an instant to plunge into a struggle, which had any high and generous object. But the aspect of the battle field, with its eager endeavour, its inspiring emulation, with the bray of trumpets and the clang of arms, is very, very different from the silent grey walls of the prison, with the prospect of lengthened captivity, and of unrecorded death. Such were the things which Albert Denyn had now to contemplate, as he gazed around him in the castle of the adventurers; for the menacing looks which he had seen, and

the words which he had heard, were not to be mistaken.

The court was nearly empty of all human beings but those who brought him thither ; and there seemed something solemn and sad even in the sunshine, as it rested on the tall wall of the principal keep of the castle, with none but a few small irregular windows breaking the flat monotony of the surface. The large doors of the keep were half open, and from within — but seeming as if they echoed through many vacant halls — came the sounds of laughter and merriment, ringing harsh upon the ear of the young captive.

He and Caillet were now both told to dismount ; and while they stood face to face, at some little distance, with no very pleasant sensations in their hearts towards each other, five or six of the adventurers stood round watching them ; and two, who seemed to be principal personages in the band, passed through the doors into the keep, and disappeared for some time.

While they were gone, Caillet fixed his eyes

upon Albert sternly and steadfastly, but met a look not less fixed and determined than his own. Neither spoke, however ; and at length one of the adventurers who had left them re-appeared at the door of the hall, making a sign to the others, who immediately bade their two prisoners to go on, and led them forward to the keep. Albert thought that he could perceive a gleam of triumph come over Caillet's countenance as he passed, but that look left it in a moment, and his features relapsed into their usual expression of cold scorn.

Mounting the steps, they were hurried through the great hall of the keep, which was quite empty, and across another vacant room beyond, to a small dark chamber, which had once been painted with various gay devices, but which was already blackened over with the smoke of many years. In the large chimney blazed an immense fire of wood ; and the white wreaths of smoke, still escaping, curled round the rafters above, and made the eyes wink with the pungent vapour. In the midst stood a

table loaded with viands, and covered with large leathern bottles of wine, while round the upper end sat four strong middle-aged men, with harsh and weather-beaten countenances, on most of which were to be traced manifold scars. The one at the head of the board, who seemed to be superior to the rest, had a frank and somewhat gay look, with large square heavy features, and bushy overhanging eyebrows. He and the rest gazed upon Albert and Caillet for a moment without speaking, while two or three of the adventurers who had brought them thither seated themselves at the table with the others, and the rest, who appeared of an inferior grade, stood round the prisoners.

Albert, on his part — wisely resolved to keep silence as far as possible — remained standing before the adventurers with as calm an air as he could assume. Caillet, however, bent his brows — somewhat angrily it seemed — upon the personage at the head of the table, and, after pausing for a short time, as if to see whether the other would begin, he spoke

himself, saying, "This is not fair or right; I thought I was dealing with men of honour, who would keep their word with me, when I kept my word with them."

"You are saucy, my friend," said the leader of the adventurers—"take a quieter tone here. We are men of honour, and do keep our word with all those who trust us and who show good faith towards us; but it seems that there are suspicions of your not having so done, and it is but fair that we should know whether such be the case or not. I have sad news here: not half the plunder that you promised has been obtained; our people have been attacked unexpectedly, and met with severe loss. You yourself, I am told, were seen amongst those who led the rescue from the castle, and it is much doubted whether you did or did not betray us into the hands of the enemy."

"He who pretends to doubt, is a knave," replied Caillet boldly, "and he who really doubts, is a fool. Did I not stipulate for a certain prize, and was I not to take my own

means and time for obtaining it? How could I gain possession of her but by the way I took? It was the meddling boy who stands there that led the rescue from the castle; I had nothing to do with it."

"We will speak of him by and by," said the leader; "in the mean time, keep to your own affair. How was it discovered so soon from the castle that they had made the attack?"

"Because," replied Caillet, "they were half an hour later than they promised to be. If they had been to their time, nothing of the kind could have happened, but they were not; and they have no right now to lay the fault upon me of that which was their own doing."

"How is this, Harvè?" said the leader, "how came you to be so late?"

"Why, I will tell you, Griffith," answered the man; "it was Chapelle, who would stay to drink some wine, which we found at the miller's: I told him five times to come away, but he would not; and then he was so drunk, we were forced to draw him through the river

to get him sober again, as he had to command the second troop, you know."

"In short, then, it was your own fault," replied the commander, "and you have no right to blame others for that which you did yourselves. There is no proof at all that he had any thing to do with the rescue, and I see not why you interrupted him or brought him hither."

"It is not of that alone which I complain," said Caillet; "it is, that they have prevented me from punishing yon insolent boy, who was the cause of all the mischief, and, by dragging me away, have suffered the very prize for which I had risked all, to be snatched from my hands for ever."

"As to punishing him," said one of the men, laughing, "he was more in the way to punish you, good youth. When we found you, you were but in a bad taking, and in a few minutes more would certainly have measured your length upon the ground with more than one hole in your throat, if I judge right; why, he had cut you over the head, had got you by the neck,

and had very nearly settled the affair to his own satisfaction, I suppose, before we came up. — Was it not so?" he added, addressing Albert Denyn.

But Albert made no reply; and one of the leaders who were sitting at the table burst out into a laugh, exclaiming, "Better say no more on that subject, my hero; and as for the woman, give him a hundred crowns, Griffith, and send him about his business, then he will have no reason to complain. — Surely a hundred crowns is above the worth of any woman that ever yet was born. — Why he looks discontented: what would he have? Give it him, and send him off; for we must have no saucy grumblers here."

But the other, whom he had called Griffith, and who, as the reader perhaps may know, was afterwards one of the most distinguished amongst the adventurous leaders of the time, treated the claims of Caillet with somewhat more respect, saying, "I am sorry you have been disappointed, and will willingly do all I can to make up for it. What will you have? what do you wish for?"

Caillet gazed sternly down upon the ground for a moment or two, and then raising his eyes, replied with a heavy frown upon his countenance, "For the objects and purposes which, with you and through you, I have lost I sacrificed every thing on earth. I have no longer an abode, a friend, or aught else that can make existence tolerable ; and therefore it is that I demand to be received into your band, to have a new existence given me by yourselves, as through you I have lost that which I myself possessed. You will neither find me wanting in strength or skill, as I am ready to prove with any one, or upon any one here present ; and of my determination and resolution you may judge by what you know of me already. This, then, I say, is the only compensation that can be made me for that of which the silly interference of the men who brought me hither has deprived me."

The men round the table looked in each other's faces with evident surprise, but that surprise was clearly not pleasurable ; and after a moment Griffith answered, " No, no, my good

friend, you make a great mistake: it is impossible that you can be received into this band for manifold strong reasons; first, if you must needs know them, we have none amongst us but gentlemen and soldiers of tried courage and of old repute; secondly, although you seem to think that your coming here and proposing to us a little enterprise, which if fully successful might have increased our treasure in no slight degree, is a service deserving high encouragement, yet I have to tell you, that that very fact — though we may pay you with a part of the spoil, or suffer you to take the prize you coveted — far from gaining you admission into our band, would exclude you from amongst us for ever. Know that we hate and despise traitors; that we abominate and contemn those who betray the trust reposed in them; that we have no place amongst us for such people; and though we may use them, as men use dirty tools to work great ends, yet we cast them from us as soon as possible, and wash our hands when we have done. The insolence of your demand is forgiven, and we will not treat you ill, though you have for-

gotten yourself. Nay more, we will make you the compensation proposed. Take him away, Harvè, and give him a hundred crowns; restore to him his horse and his weapons, or if his horse be tired, let him have another, as good as his own, for he will have to make his escape from this part of the country. Furnish him with a safe-conduct, too, that none of our people may hurt him, and let him go in peace. This is all that can be done for you, young man, and more than most men would do; so say no more, if—as I judge by your look—what is hanging upon your lips is insolent, for the Welsh blood in my veins is not cool, and you may chance to set it on fire.”

“ You mistake,” replied Caillet; “ I am going to say nothing that can give you offence; you are the best judge whom you will admit into your band. Filled already with brave men, you need no more, but you would not have found me wanting. All I could desire further were but one short half hour with that youth whom your comrade here so foolishly fancied had done me some serious hurt.”

“No, no,” cried Griffith; “be wise, and take care of yourself! The sooner you are away from this place the better, both for you and us: we love not your presence. As to this youth, we have to deal with him ourselves, and will do so as we think fit, without your help or counsel.”

“You owe to him,” added Caillet, unwilling to leave any thing unsaid that could injure the man he hated, “you owe to him whatever evil has befallen your band; for he it was who, watching from one of the windows of the tower, first saw the attack upon the count, and then called the whole place to arms.”

“Leave him to us, leave him to us,” said Griffith impatiently; “we will act towards him as we judge right. Take him away, Harvè, take the fellow away!—We have heard too much of his babble already.”

Caillet was accordingly led out of the room; but, as he passed, he twice turned his eyes fiercely upon Albert Denyn, and ran his hand along his belt as if feeling for some weapon of offence, to smite his adversary with, at any risk. As soon as he was gone, the leader of the

adventurers turned to Albert, demanding, "Well, young man, what have you to say?"

"Nothing," replied Albert calmly.

"That is soon said," answered the other; "but we may have something more to say to you. They tell me that it was you who slew, by the blow of an axe, one of our dearest companions and best leaders."

He paused as if for a reply; and Albert answered, "It is very possible: one of them I certainly did slay, and he looked like a brave man and a valiant captain, so it is doubtless of him you speak."

"Cool enough," replied Griffith: "let me see now, young man, if you can give me as calm an answer to what I have next to ask. Can you tell me any reason why, as you slew him, we should not slay you?"

"The best of all reasons," replied Albert Denyn — "because I have done nothing for which I should be slain. I have done nothing but what any man here would have done in my place. I have served and defended my lord; I have defended his daughter. If I had died

upon the field, I should have died doing what was right; and if I am killed now, those who put me to death will neither show knightly courtesy nor the dealing of true soldiers, but will commit a murder like base assassins upon an unarmed man. If there be any man among you who would not have done as I have done, I tell him that he is a traitor and a felon, to his beard; and let him come forth and slay me, if I am to be slain, for the trade of a murderer will suit well with his character. But if there be one noble heart and good soldier amongst you, he will defend me."

"On my soul that will I!" said one of those who had been sitting at meat when the party which conducted the youth had entered. "Griffith, you see well the lad did but do his duty. Out upon it! If we are to punish a man for fighting well in his captain's behalf and fairly killing a bold adversary, I will put my head under a monk's cowl and patter *benedicites* to every one I meet; for I trust — Heaven help me! — to kill as good a man as Chappelle every year, if I keep to this trade. Set the youth

free! set him free! — Did he do any thing unfair, Maillot? — Speak!”

“No,” answered the adventurer who had ridden beside Albert, and who was one of those that had taken their places at the table; “but he killed my sworn brother Chapelle. I claim his blood, and his blood I will have.”

“Poo! nonsense!” exclaimed Griffith: “the lad did his duty bravely; no one can say more — let him go! let him go!”

“Not till I have his head,” said the man they called Maillot. “He is my prisoner: I took him, and I have a right to dispose of him as I will.”

“But you did not take him in fair fight,” said Griffith: “if I understood Harvè right you came upon him while he was fighting with the other fellow, and seized him without resistance.”

“It was Harvè seized him and not Maillot,” cried another man.

“I took him by one arm while Harvè caught him by the other,” replied the man named Maillot, “and I say he shall die.”

“I say he shall not, however,” replied Griffith — “at all events, not till Sir Robert Knowles

decides upon it. I determine *that* at once, Master Maillot! and if you dare to show your refractory spirit any more, I will cleave you down to the jaws for your pains. Hark ye, young man; I will take care that no harm shall happen to you. Sir Robert Knowles, our present leader, is a good soldier and a true knight; and he will not suffer a prisoner to be butchered in cold blood for any man's will. To-morrow some of our party will move hence and go back into Maine, where Sir Robert is. You shall go with them, and, in the mean time, you shall have free quarters in the castle here."

As he spoke, one of those who were sitting at the table with him leant across, and spoke to the leader in a low voice, nothing being heard but the words, "Maillot — find means — blood-thirsty — take care,"

"By Heaven!" exclaimed Griffith when the other had done—"by Heaven! he had better not, for he should not be alive many hours after himself. But to make all sure, give the youth back his sword, some one. He looks as if he could defend himself right well."

While the sword was handed to Albert Dényn, who gladly thrust the scabbard back into his belt again, the man named Maillot gazed upon him with fierce and angry eyes, turning from time to time towards his companion Griffith, and gnawing his lip as if he would fain have given vent to his indignation, but did not dare to do so. Griffith took no notice of him, but still was evidently irritated, and somewhat excited by the man's demeanour; and, in order to have an excuse for not remarking it, spoke in a low tone to one of those who sat at table with him. A short period of reflection, however, showed Maillot that he was placing himself in circumstances of danger, and made him determine somewhat to change his manner. It was with difficulty, however, that he could sufficiently repress his feelings to say in a sullen voice, "You will do as you like, Master Griffith, but I do think it somewhat hard that my prisoner should be thus suffered purposely to escape under the pretence of sending him to Knowles; for nothing else can be meant by the letting him go free in

this way. Why, the first time the gates of the castle are open he will pass through, of course, if he be not a fool, and then I not only lose my revenge, but any ransom, too, which I might get, if Knowles says he shall not be killed."

"Come, that is fair enough," said one of the men at the table; "we must not do injustice, Griffith, either."

"He can't escape, he wo'n't escape," said Griffith; "no fear of that. Hark ye! young man, give us your parole—your word of honour, I mean—that come what will, you will not try to escape."

"Rescue, or no rescue?" demanded Albert Denyn.

"Ay," answered Griffith, "rescue, or no rescue."

"And what if I refuse?" said Albert.

"Why," answered Griffith, laughing at the youth's boldness, "why, then, my young condition-maker, I shall take leave to thrust you into prison, instead of letting you walk about the castle."

“Do so, then,” replied Albert, “for I will have no hand in giving up my liberty voluntarily.”

“On my life,” answered Griffith, “you are a determined youth, but nevertheless I will not see wrong done you. If you value the free air so little, you must lose it; but for the rest, no man shall take your life while I can prevent it, except it be in fair and open fight. Still, as you like a prison, a prison you shall have. Let him be put into the tower on the left hand of the gate, since such is his fancy. There he will find strong doors enough, and I wish him joy of his solitude; for I think he will see nothing but a heron in the ditch, and, perhaps, not even that.”

“I should think not,” replied another, “for Pierrot with his crossbow would not let any bird rest there long. There, away with him, away with him — we have had enough of such gossip for once.”

As they spoke, one of the men laid his hands upon the collar of Albert Denyn, and pulled him somewhat rudely away, Griffith exclaiming, at the same time, “Give him food

though, give him food! It is not good to be hungry in prison, as I can tell my friends. I recollect once catching a rat that visited me in my dungeon at Evreux, and saying grace most devoutly over my supper, though I was obliged to eat him raw notwithstanding."

A loud laugh burst from the whole of the adventurers, at the idea of their companion's dainty regale, and Albert Denyn was led out of the room to be conducted to the place of his temporary abode.

CHAP. XII.

THERE is nothing so difficult to bear, there is nothing which requires so much courage of the most serviceable kind to endure, as anxiety in solitude and inactivity. The very movement of the mind when we suffer great agitation lightens its weight; but when we have to sit and count the livelong hours alone, confined to one small space, and limited to mere reflection, thought becomes a burden, and imagination a torment, and every feeling of our heart seems to war against our peace.

Thus it was with Albert Denyn. So long as he was in the presence of the adventurers he had the ideas of personal danger to occupy him. He had felt the other evils of his situation comparatively little, and had looked upon the imprisonment, to which he, in some degree, voluntarily subjected himself, as some-

thing requiring no great fortitude to bear ; but when he was actually thrust into the chamber where he was to pass an indefinite space of time, and where he might have to undergo any thing that his captors chose to inflict upon him, his heart gradually sunk, and a deep and overwhelming feeling of melancholy took possession of him.

The first half hour, indeed, was broken by two visits from one of the adventurers bringing him some food and a pitcher of good wine. The man seemed a good-natured personage, spoke to him in a kindly tone ; and, though he accused him of folly in not promising to hold himself as a prisoner, rescue or no rescue, he still assured him that he would be taken good care of, and that no harm would happen to him.

After he was gone, however, the hours wore away slowly ; and though Albert tasted the food which was set before him, and tried to occupy a part of the time in any manner, yet he felt no appetite, and was obliged to betake himself to a prisoner's wonted occupation of

pacing up and down the room. Weariness, however, at length overcame him, and lying down upon the ground, for they had not yet furnished him either with bed or stool, he placed his arm under his head for a pillow and fell into a sound sleep. It lasted some time; and loud laughter in some of the neighbouring parts of the building was the first thing that roused him. The sound of merriment, as may well be conceived, was harsh to his ear, for he had been dreaming of Adela de Mauvinet;—a vague, confused, wild vision it was of dangers and terrors, which, even when he woke, left him disturbed, and agitated. He found, however, that though his sleep had been thus restless, it must have been very deep; for somebody had visited the chamber during his slumber, and had left a settle and a table, and put down also some straw in one corner of the room.

The sight of these few articles of furniture was a much greater comfort to the poor youth than might be supposed; for before he had fallen asleep, he had remarked a window above him, which he could by no means reach, so as

to gaze from it out into the country beyond ; but the tall stool which had been brought, enabled him to see with ease, resting his arms in the deep opening of the wall.

When he first looked out, the mellow evening sun was just approaching the verge of the sky, and all the bright and beautiful colours of an autumn evening were tinging the clouds, and hanging on the woods and fields around. The country was not particularly beautiful ; but there was something in that bright evening light which gave it a loveliness that it would not otherwise have possessed. Each green slope seemed rounded with gold, and a rich misty purple rested in all the woods and dells around. The fantastic vapours that hung upon the edge of the sky changed every moment in hue and in form, as if they had been full of life, and playing with the setting sun ; and every thing on which the eye of Albert rested recalled to his memory many a happy day, when, on such an autumn-tide as that, his own fancy had seemed to take part with the light clouds, and join in their sports with the departing rays.

After any deep passion, however, has taken possession of our hearts, it seizes — like some invading tyrant in a conquered country — upon every bright thing within us, whether it be sweet memories, or warm hopes, or grand energies, appropriating all to its purposes, and marking them as its own for ever. It was thus with the heart of Albert Denyn. The sight of that fair sunset called back the memories of dear early days, but instantly, with those memories, came the image of Adela de Mauvinet, mingling the painful fears and apprehensions that the circumstances in which she was placed might naturally call forth, with every happier feeling to which the associations, connected with the sight before his eyes, would have otherwise given rise.

Where was she? he asked himself: what had become of her? Was she still wandering in the wood alone, or had her father and the captal come to her deliverance? It was all vague, and uncertain, and terrible; and however strongly hope might be inclined to raise her voice in a young bosom, fear for the time

was predominant, and sadness altogether took possession of Albert's heart.

The sun had half gone down, and half of the broad golden disk was still seen above the distant forest, when Albert perceived two or three mounted men coming over the slope of a hill half way between the castle and the woods. Immediately after the horsemen, came some persons on foot, and then others leading horses, amongst whom, the youth thought he could distinguish the flutter of a woman's garments, and his heart sunk with a sensation of dread and apprehension which language can scarcely convey.

He asked himself if it could be Adela; if she had really fallen into the hands of some brutal band of plunderers; and his heart seemed prophetically to answer "Yes!"

Ere the party came near enough for him to distinguish any thing clearly, the sun sunk altogether amongst the trees, and the group on which his eyes were fixed grew more and more dim, till at length it was lost to his sight. But still Albert remained convinced that Adela

was a captive there, and leaping down into the room, he walked backwards and forwards in a state almost approaching distraction.

It was some time before reflection came to his aid; but when he did take time to think, he remembered that the lady perhaps might be more safe in the hands of the adventurers than any woman of a lower rank. Her ransom was sure to be large, if she were treated with all honour; and the vengeance of her father and the whole of France was to be dreaded if any harm befell her; so that he could not but judge that the free companions would show her tenderness and respect as soon as they were aware of her name, which she would undoubtedly make known as soon as she fell into their power.

Albert tried to comfort himself with such thoughts; but still his heart beat with anxiety and alarm; and in a few minutes after, the sound of a trumpet, apparently coming from the court-yard, a number of voices speaking, and a loud tongue calling upon the name of several women, seemed to indicate the arrival

of the party he had seen. The place, however, soon resumed its tranquillity; and a period of about a quarter of an hour passed without any other sound, till at length there was a considerable noise; and several voices speaking in the adjoining passage were heard, with the sound of coming footsteps, and now and then a sharp oath.

The steps paused at the door of the chamber in which Albert was confined, and the door was thrown violently open, admitting the blaze of a torch. At first the light dazzled him; but the moment after, he perceived in the hands of some of the adventurers without, that strange, uncouth-looking being whom he had found contending with Caillet, in defence of Adela. Although it cannot be said that the young man felt pleasure at the sight of any human being deprived of liberty, and although the appearance of the old man but tended to confirm his apprehensions in regard to Adela's being captured, yet certainly it was a relief to behold some one who could give him a knowledge of the exact truth.

Fearful, however, that he might be deprived of even that satisfaction, if his captors perceived that there was any feeling of interest between him and the person whom they seemed to destine for his fellow-prisoner, he remained perfectly silent, and kept as far back as possible in the chamber. The old man was thrust in with unnecessary vehemence; and it is probable that those who brought him thither had already treated him somewhat roughly, for one of the leaders who came up at the moment exclaimed, —

“ Calmly, calmly ! Remember his age.”

As soon as the new captive was in the chamber, the door was shut, and the two prisoners were left in utter darkness. For some minutes neither of them spoke, though the elder was heard muttering to himself, but the words were indistinct to any other ears than his own. Albert kept silence for a moment or two, lest any one who might be near should overhear what he was about to say; and he still heard various voices speaking without, when sud-

denly, to his surprise, his strange companion burst into a loud and vehement laugh.

“ You seem to bear your imprisonment lightly,” said Albert at length : “ would that I could laugh as you do.”

“ Why do you not, then ?” demanded the old man ; “ but you need not tell me ; I know why as well as you do. It is that you have known so few and such slight sorrows, that a day’s imprisonment, even in such a chamber as this, with every comfort and aid to boot, is, to you, as heavy a grief as the loss of all that makes life valuable would be to me. Misfortune is a hard master, and requires a long apprenticeship, young man.”

“ Doubtless,” answered Albert, “ doubtless it is so ; but yet I cannot but think a long imprisonment, the uncertainty of our future fate, and a separation, perhaps for ever, from those we love best, might well make us sad, even if we had more philosophy than I pretend to.”

“ I will tell thee what, youth,” answered the old man : “ the time may come when the loss of friends, the breaking of all hopes, the dis-

appointment of every expectation, the murder of your children or your relations, the agonies, the tears, and the ruin of those you love best on earth, will so teach you to expect misfortune, that a brief imprisonment, such as you have met with now, will seem to you as a relief from worse, rather than a disappointment of your hopes. This, I tell you, may happen to you. It has happened to many of your relations before, and why not to you also?"

"How do you know," answered Albert, "that it has befallen any of my relations?"

"Because they were men," replied his strange companion; "therefore, all must have suffered, and some must have suffered thus. Thus, too, very likely you will suffer, when your appointed time is come."

"Perhaps it may be so," said the youth: "I have a good foretaste of such suffering even now."

"Call you what you now endure a foretaste of such sufferings?" cried the old man; "call you this, then, a foretaste—this which is but a mere nothing? It is mere foolishness. The

time will be when you shall look back to this period, and wish it could come over again."

"No," answered Albert firmly, "no: what I felt yesterday can hardly ever be surpassed by what I may feel hereafter.—No, it cannot be! What may be my future fate, I do not know; but of one thing I am certain, that there were moments in the course of last night which no after sorrow can ever surpass—nay, nor can it exceed that which I feel now, ignorant as I am of what has befallen the daughter of my noble and generous lord."

His fellow-prisoner remained silent for several moments, and then replied, "You wish to know what has become of her. She is here—in this very castle—but a few yards distant."

"As I thought," cried Albert, "as I thought! This is indeed terrible; but they dare not, surely they dare not, treat her ill."

"No," answered the old man; "oh no! Fear not for that; they will not treat her ill! Fools as they are, they are too wise for that."

"I trust they are," said Albert, "I trust they are; and yet what reliance can be placed

in such men? Their passions are their guides as often as their interests."

"That is true," replied his companion, "that is very true; you are wiser than I thought you, youth; and yet you have a right to be wise too. But put your mind at ease. The wife of the man named Griffith is here in the castle even now, and she is a woman of high birth herself."

"Of high birth!" exclaimed Albert, "and the wife of an adventurer like this?"

"Even so," answered the old man. "Know you not that half of those who live by plundering their fellow-creatures call themselves of high race, and that many of them have well won the only title to nobility, which this age knows, by shedding more blood than any of the other barbarous monsters of the time?—But to what I was saying—the wife of this Griffith is here. The lady has been taken to her chamber, and there she will be well. I have heard them talking about her ransom already. Set your mind at ease, set your mind at ease! When I look back upon the past," he continued,

after a momentary pause — “When I look back upon the past, I often think that the light sorrows of youth are as heavy to those that bear them as the weightier woes of age. There was an old Greek, a slave, who dealt in fabliaux — I know not whether you have ever heard of him.”

“Oh yes,” replied Albert. “His name was Esopus.”

“The same, the same,” replied the old man, whose learning did certainly surprise Albert Denyn. “That old Greek told a story of a hare running a race with a tortoise, which was intended to represent the heedless lightness of youth contending against the cautious experience of age; but while he showed that the slow perseverance of the one ultimately outdid the excessive activity of the other, he should have shown also, that the hare might have been crushed to death under a weight which the tortoise would hardly have felt. Thus it is with age and youth: the apathy of age is a hard shell, which enables it to bear cares a thousand times more heavy than those which

would crush youth at once under their burden. We have so many times in life the opportunity of practising the art of endurance, that it would be hard if we did not learn the lesson ere we have done."

"Thank God, to hear of the lady's safety, however," said Albert—"that is one great satisfaction; and with it I will comfort myself, although your picture of life is not altogether consolatory."

"It is such as life is," replied the old man, "and such as you will find it, youth. The man that sees fifty years, and yet finds any thing to enjoy in life, is either a beast or a fool; for by that time all the better parts of our nature have discovered that their home is in another place."

"And yet," said Albert Denyn, "you laughed right heartily but now."

"That did I," rejoined his companion: "I laughed—I did not smile; and laughter is only a sign of sadness or of folly, not of happiness. Happiness never does more than smile. It is that insane thing merriment, or mockery, or

scorn, or despair, that laughs. I laughed in mockery of those who shut me in here."

"And why in mockery?" demanded Albert. "Good faith, I have not the heart to mock them: they have too much power over me for me to scorn them."

"They have no power over me," replied the old man. "I will tell you hereafter why I laughed, and why I scorn them: let it be sufficient for you now to know that the lady is safe."

"That is, indeed, much," replied Albert; "and I could almost content myself with being assured that such is the case, if I had any means of informing my good lord, her father, that she runs no risk. But that is hopeless."

"Ha!" said the old man, "ha! we may find such means, nevertheless; yet why would you send him such tidings?"

"Why?" exclaimed Albert, "has he not been a friend, a father to me? And were it not so, is he not a human being, a parent, a fond, affectionate, tender parent, whose heart must be now bleeding with apprehension, and grief, and terrible anxiety?"

“ Then he really loves his daughter,” said the old man, in a cold tone.

“ Loves her ! exclaimed Albert—“ how can he help loving her ? Loves her ! better than his own life ; better than aught else on earth, except his honour !”

“ By so much the more,” replied the old man in a stern tone, “ will he condemn the presumptuous thoughts that are in your bosom, youth.”

Albert Denyn was silent for a moment — not with shame ; but he was surprised and pained to find that his feelings towards Adela showed themselves so plainly, that the scanty means of observation which the old man as yet possessed were nevertheless sufficient to discover a secret, which he had thought well concealed from all eyes but those which watched him with such keenness and suspicion as had been displayed by Caillet.

He answered quite calmly, however, when he did speak ; for although his own eyes had now been long opened to all that was passing in his heart, though he felt and knew that he loved with all the ardour, as well as the devotion, of

the deepest passion, yet his love was utterly without the presumption of a single hope. He felt so humble in his affection, that he was not moved by many of the agitating emotions which affect other men under the influence of the same passion; and although it certainly was his purpose to hide his love for his lord's daughter, out of respect and reverence, yet he was so conscious of rectitude of purpose, as well as humility of feeling, that though he did not wish, yet he did not much fear discovery.

"You are mistaken," he replied at length, in a tone so tranquil and cool as to surprise his hearer, "you are mistaken. I have no presumptuous thoughts in my bosom, old man; my thoughts are as humble as my station."

"Do you pretend to say," demanded his strange companion, "do you pretend to say that you do not love this lady?"

"God forbid!" answered Albert—"I love her with my whole heart and soul. I would willingly sacrifice my life for her, and yet, old man, all this can be without one presumptuous thought. — Can you not understand this?"

The old man paused for a moment, and then replied, "I can understand it well; but I knew not that you could either understand or feel it."

"Why what can you know," asked Albert, "either of me or of my nature, by seeing me in circumstances of excitement, for some short five minutes? I should almost think that, in this dark place, you mistook me for some one else, were it not for what you say of the Lady Adela."

"No!" replied the old man — "no — I make no mistake — your voice is enough for me. I never forget sounds that I once hear, and I should know your voice amidst the shout of an army. But you are wrong in another point — this is not the first time that I have seen, these are not the only means I have had of knowing you. From your birth till now I have been near you. — But all that matters not. — What have I to do in life, but to watch those that are around me; to mark their qualities, and to hate or love them as those qualities may require?"

"Methinks," replied Albert, "it might be as well to leave them without either hate or love."

“Not so, not so,” answered the old man: “to hate and to love is a necessity of our nature, nay more, it is an ordinance of God. Not to abhor vice, not to feel affection for virtue, is to share with the evil. Vice is, in fact, only a bolder sort of indifference to virtue. I would rather almost see a man wicked than the friend of wicked men.”

There was something strange and rambling in the old man's discourse, which certainly had so much of singularity in it as to lead Albert to imagine that his reason was somewhat unsettled. The singularity of his appearance, which has been already described, might not alone have produced such a conviction; for in that age, what we should now call eccentricity, in that particular shape, was not only common, but was absolutely sanctioned by the superstitions of the day. Many a man still thought he was doing God good service, and insuring the salvation of his own soul, by wearing garments of skins, feeding upon roots, and separating himself from his fellow-men, so that to encounter a person habited like Albert's present com-

panion, and to find him a devout, discreet, and sensible person, though somewhat tinged with fanaticism, was by no means an uncommon case. The peculiarity of the opinions, however, which the old man entertained, without any inquiry as to whether they were right or wrong, might well lead the youth to imagine that his intellect was somewhat shaken; for in those days it was rare, indeed, to find any one who went out of the beaten track.

Judging thus of his companion's state of mind, Albert cared not to enter into any abstruse discussions, but turned the conversation back to what the old man had been saying in regard to himself. "Was it from knowing that I was the companion of wicked men, then," he asked, "that you supposed me filled with presumptuous thoughts, which certainly I never entertained? I know not that I ever showed myself the friend of wicked men: when have I done so, my good friend?"

"Have you not been always the companion and the friend of this very Caillet, to whom you show so mortal a hatred, now that a ri-

valry has sprung up between you? Who was so often seen with him as you? who seemed to share his thoughts and his counsels but yourself?"

"Nay, nay, you are much mistaken," replied Albert eagerly: "circumstances cast us together, but not affection: there was a link between us, which bound us to companionship, with our hearts unbound. We were both serfs in a house where all were noble round us; except the other servants of the mansion, who were all differently treated from ourselves. They were, indeed, a separate order of beings in mind as well as in treatment; but in scarcely any respect was there a distinction made between us and those noble pages, whom, from time to time, the highest personages in the land sent to receive instruction in the house of our generous and knightly master. If there was a difference, it was only, that more knowledge was given to us than to them; that to us were opened the stores of ancient learning; that for us all the knowledge of the schools was poured forth, and that, as our lord wished to place us in the church, we

were taught many an art and many a science that the high nobles of the land did not receive. Thus were we companions from early years, though he was older than I, and thus were we cast upon each other, for society, by similarity of situation though not of tastes. He, however, was discontented with all things: I was with all things well contented. I might regret, it is true, that I was not one of the nobles that I saw from day to day. I might wish that fortune had placed me amongst them, but I hated them not, because such was not my lot. I was happy, I was grateful for the superior instruction accorded to me, and for the kindly treatment I received; but Caillet vowed, for his part, that he would rather have remained in ignorance, and in the lowest state of bondage, than acquire knowledge, which only showed him the evils of his station. He detested the nobles of the land, and avowed that detestation when conversing with those whom he believed would not report the fact; and such was I. Not that he ever loved me, for he loved me not, but that I was the only one in the same

state and situation as himself, — the only one, in short, to whom he could speak his feelings freely. He knew that I would not betray him, and therefore he dared to say to me what he thought, although his feelings and mine were always different, and he was sure to encounter opposition and dispute. Thus were we, as I have said, companions without being friends, till, by his last act, he has ended the companionship also — and if ever we spend another half hour together, it will be the last that one or the other will see in this world.”

“Did the Lord of Mauvinet teach you the use of arms?” demanded the old man, in a slow and thoughtful tone: “you seem skilful with the sword.”

“I was early taught,” replied Albert, “to wield all such weapons as peasants are permitted to employ, and the sword was placed in my hands when I was very young. Afterwards, my noble lord — though I cannot say that he caused me to be taught to bear the weapons of a man-at-arms, yet when he saw how much delight I took therein — suffered me to learn

the use of the lance, the management of the horse, and indeed all the exercises of chivalry. Caillet also had the same advantage; but I think he was not more skilful than myself. He was older, and more confident, perhaps; but yet I should not fear to meet him in a good cause, even though he had some superiority."

"And you would slay him, boy," replied his companion; "for his heart is bad, and yours is good; and the man who wants the armour of a just spirit has but a feeble defence in all external arms."

"I know not," answered Albert Denyn; "though I can well conceive, that many a man, feeling his conscience ill at ease, may become weak and timid in the hour of danger. Such, however, I am sure, is not the case with Caillet: He thinks all that he does is right — not that he does it because he thinks it right, but that he thinks it right because he does it. I have heard him defend eagerly the same feelings and conduct in himself which I have heard him blame most bitterly in men of noble blood; and I never yet, in all my life, heard him acknowledge,

or saw him feel, that he was wrong. Such a thing is not in his nature.—Call him not, in Heaven's name, call him not my friend," he continued, reverting to what had passed before: "I should hate myself if I could ever have been a friend to one so base and utterly unworthy. But now that you have probed my spirit to the bottom, let me hear that which I own is of greater moment to me than all things. Tell me more of the lady; tell me all that you know concerning her. How came they not to find her?—her father and the captal, I mean. How came she taken by these men? and what, think you, will be the result of the situation in which we all are placed?"

"Manifold questions," answered the old man, "none of which I will answer now. Wait till after midnight be passed," he continued in a lower tone, "and I will then reply to you fully. I have that to tell you which may surprise you not a little. Now lay down your head upon the table, for you have need of repose."

"I have slept already," replied Albert.

But the old man instantly rejoined, "Sleep again then, sleep again! What right has youth to think? Sleep again, I say, for not a word more shall you hear from my lips till after midnight; and it yet wants full four hours to the time when the sun turns back again to this side of the earth."

Albert Denyn saw by the faint light, which found its way into the room from the moonlight sky without, that the old man crossed his arms upon his chest, and buried the greater part of his face in the skins of which his dress was formed; and perceiving that it would be useless to seek farther conversation for the time, he, too, bent down his eyes upon his folded hands, and remained silent, though he slept not.

CHAP. XIII.

To an active mind there is something solemn, and even elevating, in the task of watching in the night. The silence, the darkness, have their effect; the sally-ports of the ear and the eye are closed. The spirit shut up within its citadel holds no intercourse with the world without. The thoughts, the feelings, the fancies, the passions, which form the turbulent garrison of the human heart, cut off from communion with all the busy things of external life, may be reviewed by reason, and brought under the rod of judgment. Well used, an hour's watching in the midst of the night is often more valuable to the mind of man than whole years of the busy life of day. The world, and all its important littlenesses seem, for the time, to be dead; the immortal being within us feels alone in the presence of its God; the heart speaks to the heart of all the higher purposes of life, and

the clay that encumbers us appears to be, in a degree, cast aside together with our intercourse with other earthly creatures. If ever spirit triumphs over matter in this world, it is in the hours of solemn and silent watching in the midst of the night.

Albert Denyn remained without speaking for a long time; and although his watch was not so still and calm, as it might have been at a later hour, still it gave opportunity for thought, which was not lost upon him. From time to time there came sounds of voices speaking, of merriment, of laughter, and of song; but gradually these bursts became shorter, and more short, the intervals longer, and the silence between more profound, till at length all became still, while the gloom was increased by the moon getting behind the hills, and leaving nothing within the sight of the watchers in the prison but a bright star shining through the high window—like some of the mysterious truths of revelation, bright and wonderful, amidst darkness, but casting no light upon any other object.

In the mean while, Albert communed with his own heart. At first, his feelings and thoughts were turbulent and wild, refusing all control, so that though he felt they wanted regularity, he almost despaired of their ever returning to order again. Gradually, however, of themselves, they became more calm; and ere long he could reason collectedly, and thought and reflection brought on high resolves. He found that a passion had grown upon his heart which should never have taken root therein; and he accused himself of folly and of weakness, even although his own heart acquitted him of presumption. To cast that passion from him, he never hoped to do: he never wished it; he felt it was impossible; but he believed that in a firm and noble spirit — and he knew his own to be so — that passion itself might be so purified and elevated, as to lead him on to great and worthy deeds, to be a new principle of action in his breast, to inspire high purposes and efforts, and give a mightier energy to the chivalrous spirit that existed within him.

He fancied that the very thought of what would be Adela's feelings, if she heard, by chance, of some great enterprise achieved by him, would carry him on to exertions that nothing could resist; and thus judgment and reason employed the power of fancy to lead and guide the passions of his heart to grand purposes, rather than in the paths of vice and wrong. So may we always do in life if our will be towards virtue rather than crime.

Thus had passed the time for many hours; silence had come completely over the world; and Albert had more than once turned his eyes impatiently towards a spot, on the other side of the chamber, at which he could faintly perceive a dim obscure mass, marking the place where the old man sat; but had seen, not the slightest movement, nor heard the lightest sound. At length, however, the clear voice of a cock, crowing at some distance, came upon the air, and his strange companion suddenly broke silence. "Now, now," he said, "I will tell you what you wish to hear, and more than you expect;

for the time is coming, when you may act as well as speak."

"Tell me first of the Lady Adela," exclaimed Albert; "it is of her I would fain have tidings, old man."

"Call me not old man," replied the other; "that is not my name, youth, though I be old, and though I be a man."

"I would willingly give you your own name, if I knew it," answered Albert Denyn.

"Call me Watheran Urgel," said his companion; "that is the name which the people give me; and as to the lady, be satisfied she is well, and safe. The object of these plunderers is to win gold. They are like children piling up heaps of dirt, for the purpose of casting it to the winds the next moment — still their object is gold; and when they have so fair a chance of gaining a great sum, by this poor girl's ransom, they will not risk the loss of it by doing her any injury. No, no! they have given her a chamber near that of their leader's wife, and there she will be tended with all courtesy. To-morrow they will bid her write to her

father, showing what gentle usage she has received, and naming the ransom they have fixed. But they will hold out the fear of less gentle deeds, if he should attempt to recover her by force of arms. So much for that : your second question was, how she was taken by these men ——”

“ And how it happened that her father and the captal found her not,” added Albert, “ for they were close behind.”

“ Of that I know nothing,” replied the old man ; “ but how they took her, I can tell right well. I left you contending with the villain Caillet, and sought the lady to give her help. She had seen me defend her with my axe, and so she trusted me ; but when the men came up, who took you prisoner, we had well nigh fallen into their hands at once, for she thought it was her father’s party, and would have darted forward to meet them, had I not shown her who they really were. I then led her to a place of security, made her a bed of leaves, sheltered her from the winds of night, and lighted her a fire, to dispel the damp air of

the forest; for she has ever been good to the poor and the lowly, and deserves the careful watching of all who love the noble and the kind. I promised to guide her safely back to her home the next day; but ere I could do so, at an early hour this morning these knavish companions, hearing that I was still in the neighbouring wood, came out to hunt me down like a wild beast."

"Why, what harm had you done them?" demanded Albert.

"None," replied the old man; "but do we need to harm others to make them harm us? No, no, not so in this world! For the last twelve years have I dwelt either in this old castle, or in that dim wood. Neither in the wood nor the castle had I any right but sufferance; but the building itself was only tenanted by some servants of a lord who spent his days in rioting afar. They charitably gave me a dwelling in the winter time, and all the bright summer I spent in the green forest. With the chambers, the passages, the towers, and even the dungeons of this place, and with

the most secret paths of the wood, no one in all the land is so well acquainted as I am, and when, some ten days ago, these filthy robbers came and took possession of the place, I fled, and sought refuge where you saw me last night. There is a tower herein, to which they could find no entrance, and it is called the Stairless Tower. They thought, it seems, that it must contain treasure; and the people they found here told them that none knew its secrets but myself, for they had seen me more than once upon the top, when they, poor fools, could not find the way up. This led to more inquiries; and as wicked men never feel safe in their wickedness, the plunderers fancied that my knowledge of the place would be dangerous to them, if, as they intend to do, they kept possession of it, as a sort of advanced post on the side of Touraine. They sent out one party to seek me many days, hoping to lure me back with promises and offers; but they found me not, and at length, this morning, they despatched another to hunt me down like a wild beast."

“ But the Lady Adela,” cried Albert Denyn — “ What became of her ? ”

“ I had watched the lady through the night,” replied the old man ; “ but she slept not, till just before the morning’s dawn, when her eyes grew heavy, and a short slumber came upon her. Not long after, I heard some sounds ; and, though the fire had now sunk low, there came a smoke and the crackling of wood, with shouts and cries from several sides ; a light redder than the morning, too, began to glare upon the trees, and I soon found that the villains had tracked me into the covert, and had then set fire to the wood to drive me out. I had still hope to baffle them, and for some time wound through paths they knew not of, leading the lady by the hand. But it proved all in vain : they had guarded the outlets well, and when we issued forth they were upon us. They shouted loud at their double prize ; and though they became more reverent when they heard the lady’s name, yet were they not the less joyful. On reaching this place, they first provided for her comfort. The leader’s wife was

called, and maids, and women; and with as much ceremony as if the desolate castle had been a court, she was ushered to her chamber. They then turned to me, mocked my contorted back, bade me stretch out my lengthy arms, and made sport of me for some ten minutes, till they bethought them of the Stairless Tower—then their greediness would know no delay. They took me to the foot of it, and told me instantly to show them the way; but I was lord now, and I laughed them to scorn, telling them they should never know from me till they asked me with lowered voices and in humbler terms; till they promised me part of the spoil, and seasoned their offers with fine words. They saw that I mocked them, and thrust me in here, threatening me with torture on the morrow, if I still remained refractory. When the morning comes, however, for me they will look in vain. Had they wished really to torture me, the time was when their hands were upon my shoulders.”

“But how will you escape?” demanded Albert: “the walls of this prison are thick, the

door by which they brought us in is strong ; and I see not how any one could free himself from this place without tools for breaking out, such as we do not possess. There are stout bars upon that window, good Walleran ; and though they have left me my sword, yet it would take many a long day, I fear, to wrench off those bars, even if it could be done at all."

The old man laughed aloud. " Listen, youth," he replied at length. " I said I would tell you something you did not expect to hear. What if I set you free this very night, this very hour ? What if I show you the means by which such a youth as thou art can be back at the castle of Mauvinet before mid-day to-morrow ?"

Albert started up. " Do you jest, or speak in earnest ?" he exclaimed : " can it be possible ?"

" In serious earnest," answered the other ; " and so possible is it, that I will do it."

" But Adela," said Albert, hesitating — " but the Lady Adela, can I leave her here ?"

" What good can you do her by remaining ?" demanded the old man.

“ But little, in truth,” answered Albert ;
“ yet still, while there is a possibility of as-
sisting her, I would fain be near. If we can
fly, why can she not fly also ? You know where
they have placed her—can we not find some
means of communicating with her, and telling
her what we intend to do ? ”

“ All this is very possible,” replied the old
man, “ and she may even fly, if she will trust
herself to you.”

“ She will,” replied Albert, “ I am sure she
will.”

“ Be not too sure, till you have heard the
whole,” replied his companion. “ There are
dangers and difficulties to be encountered,
young man, which may not be easily overcome,
and it may seem better to her to wait for the
ransom from her father.”

“ At all events, she shall have the choice,”
replied Albert, “ if I can give it her.”

“ That you shall be enabled to do, if you
will,” replied the other ; “ but there may be
perils in so doing, which even you may not
choose to risk.”

“None, none!” cried Albert Denyn, resolutely: “there is no difficulty, no danger, I would not undertake, to set her free. I would lose this right hand to be the man that gives her liberty.”

“Idle talk, idle talk!” said the old man; “boyish passion all! But hear me, and then act as you think fit. Your own liberty is easy of attainment, for there is, in fact, no obstacle in your way.”

“How no obstacle?” cried Albert Denyn, “when these barred windows, and ——”

“Oh the prompt and presumptuous heart of youth!” exclaimed his companion, “never waiting till it understands, seldom even listening till it hears! I tell thee there is, in fact, no obstacle in your way to liberty; but in order to set her free, you must enter the castle again — you must swim the moat to reach it; you must find your way in darkness and in solitude, through passages which no feet but mine have trodden for many years, and then through rooms where each instant you are likely to be seized and murdered.”

“ Never mind,” cried Albert — “ I fear not. I will set her free or die.”

“ Ay; but when you have found her,” added the old man, “ when she has agreed to fly with you — when you have led her back by those same difficult passages, remember there is still the moat to cross, and it is both broad and deep.”

“ I thought not of that,” said Albert with a sigh, “ I thought not of that.”

“ But in such enterprises we should think of all things,” answered Walleran Urgel. “ Now will you undertake it?”

“ Without a doubt,” replied Albert at once; “ without the slightest doubt or hesitation whatsoever. I have swam three times that distance, with heavier burdens than she is, and I fear not.”

“ But she may very likely fear,” replied the old man.

“ Perhaps she may,” replied Albert Denyn; “ I am afraid she will; but at all events she shall have the choice. I would risk far more, for a less object than that.”

“ Well, then,” rejoined his companion, “ if you are so resolved, you shall not want the means. Mount upon that stool, and make your way through the window.”

“ But the bars, the bars,” said Albert, “ how am I to remove the bars?”

“ Take the grating by the lower edge,” said the old man, “ and pull with all your strength.”

Albert did as Walleran bade him, but the bars remained immovable.

“ It is in vain,” he said, turning round, “ it is altogether in vain.”

“ So soon are youth’s best energies checked by disappointment,” rejoined the other. “ For a great object you must have more than courage, you must have resolution, you must have more even than resolution, you must have perseverance unto death. Now, then, put to your strength, and try again — but not as before, not as before! — Lift the bars upward. Do they move?”

“ Yes, yes,” exclaimed Albert eagerly, “ they slide up as if by magic.”

“ There is no magic like a little knowledge,”

replied the old man. "Now mark what I say, and proceed gently; for, if you do not, you will call listening ears this way, or even perchance wake those that sleep. The bars have moved upwards, now they will move outwards too, and, falling on a hinge below, will make you a ladder to descend; but you must hold them fast, and let them down gently, or the clang will rouse others, with whose presence we can well dispense."

Albert followed the directions he received exactly, and without any trouble lowered down the whole grate, which being pushed outwards when once raised, freed itself from the grooves in which the two ends moved, and turning on pivots in the lower rim, swung over and hung down against the wall. It required great strength, indeed, to hold the mass of iron work up, so that it descended without noise; but the joy with which Albert saw the task accomplished would be very, very difficult to tell.

"Now," said the old man, as soon as this was done, "make your way down to the ground beneath the wall, then, before you cross the

moat, creep round, along the narrow ridge of earth between the masonry and the water. After you have passed three round towers you will come to a square one which dips itself into the moat, there you must plunge in and swim across; and then going round to the other side of that square tower, you must enter the moat again and swim over once more. You will there find, not far from the place where you cross, a small archway, like the mouth of a conduit. Bow your head and enter it; then go on straight. It will lead you to some stairs, which when you have mounted, you will find yourself in a narrow passage, at the end of which there is a door with a latch in the inside; lift that latch, and the next step takes you into the corridor leading to the chief rooms in the building. Where they have lodged the lady I cannot exactly tell, but I heard some mention made of a small room, which you will find the third, upon the left-hand side. There you must try your fortune: I can help you no more, for I have now told you all I know."

"I give you many thanks," replied Albert,

“and will now speed away; but ere I go, let me, at least, aid you from the window: you are neither so young nor so strong as I am, and it were well that you have some one with you while you cross the moat.”

“Alas! good youth,” replied the old man, “you must leave me behind; I cannot pass the water as thou canst. My crippled frame could never learn the art which will soon bear thee to the other side.”

“But I can support you,” replied Albert: “it has ever been a sport of my youth to carry great weights across the moat at Mauvinet, which is far broader than this seems to be.”

“Nay, nay,” replied the old man—“go you upon your way. Fear not for me; I will find other means to fly. Fear not for me, I say, I shall be safe, and even if they slew me here, what matter? am I not old and crippled, poor, miserable, abandoned?”

“Yes,” replied Albert; “but I see, notwithstanding, that you are kind of heart and generous. I found you defending innocence, and contending with a villain; and now you

take an interest in me, and set me free. I would fain, therefore, aid you before I go."

"What!" exclaimed the old man, as if speaking to himself, "what! one to love and to esteem me! — But go, go, good youth; this enterprise will take you time: I will find my way forth alone. I tell you that within these walls, at least, they cannot keep me; but be careful of yourself, for your task is a harder one than mine; and remember, leave the door, which leads into the corridor, open behind you; for once closed, you will not find it again." He added some more directions which Albert stored carefully in his memory, and then, grasping the youth's hand in his large sinewy fingers, he bade God speed him, and aided him to pass through the window.

When he was gone, the old man paused for a moment, listening for any sound, and then returned to his seat, saying, "He is noble and good! he is noble and good! What will be the end of all this? what will be the end?"

In the mean while, Albert, dropping from the window, found himself on a small ridge of land

immediately under the wall of the castle, with scarcely sufficient footing between him and the moat to admit of his proceeding step by step, in the direction which he had been told to follow. Sometimes, however, the space grew wider, and enabled him to go on more rapidly; but his progress was necessarily so slow for some way, that he was tempted, more than once, to plunge into the moat, as the shortest method.

At length, however, a tall square tower presented itself, much larger than any of the others, with its foundations dipping into the moat, as the old man had described; and without further hesitation, Albert plunged in and swam round till he reached the same shelf of land which recommenced on the other side of the tower.

After some search, he found the small arch to which he had been directed, though the lower part of it was partially filled with water, and entering, in profound darkness, he found his way along, feeling with his hands against the wall, and sometimes stumbling over pieces of stone which had fallen from above; showing that no careful eye had for many years examined

the spot to take precautions against decay. The description of Walleran Urgel had been so exact, that the youth met with no great difficulty; and he soon reached the door, and found the latch which caused it to open.

Albert raised it gently, and the door moved back without noise; but the moment it did so, a bright light burst in upon him, and, instead of seeing before him a corridor, as he had expected, he found himself entering a small chamber in which a light was burning. On two sides of the room appeared the old black oak wood-work, which had originally lined the corridor, but on the other two sides the walls were composed of rough thick planking, bearing the marks of the saw fresh upon it; so that it was evident to Albert Denyn, that the adventurers had converted the corridor into separate apartments since they had taken possession of the castle.

The light which struck him as he opened the door, proceeded from a tall sconce containing three lamps, which apparently had not been

trimmed for some hours; and Albert drew back as he marked the interior of the room, not doubting, from all he saw, that he was in the chamber of one of the free leaders. A large bed, occupying at least one fourth of the small room, stood in the corner opposite, with the thick green curtains drawn closely round it. But all within was perfectly silent and still, so that it was clear the tenant of the room was either absent or asleep.

To advance offered certainly no small risk, and yet Albert could not make up his mind to return, and leave the task he had undertaken unaccomplished. He paused, then, and gazed into the room for a moment, hesitating how to act; but the next instant he drew his sword and took a few steps forward, resolved at all events to go on. There was a door on either side in the new partitions. That on the left was fastened by two large wooden bolts, and against it lay a casque, and a cuirasse, with a pair of heavy steel gloves, which it seemed scarcely possible to move without making some noise; but the other door, to which Albert next turned, was secured

in a different manner. It opened into the room, and across it had been laid one of those movable cupboards, few of which have descended to the present day, although their place has been supplied by things much less convenient than themselves. It must have cost some trouble to place it in the position which it then occupied, and while it there remained, no man, unassisted, could have forced the door open from without. Piled up upon it also, were several other articles of furniture; and when Albert perceived all this caution to prevent any one entering the chamber during the slumbers of its occupant, a hope came upon him, which made his heart beat wildly.

A moment after, his eye lighted upon some of the apparel of a lady; and instead of trying, as he had at first proposed, to make his way forth undiscovered by one of the doors, he now gently approached the bed, and drew back one of the curtains.

His hopes had not deceived him. Before his eyes, overpowered by slumber, lay Adela de Mauvinet, with one beautiful arm bent under-

neath her head, and the other resting on the cover of the bed; while the fair hand dropped gracefully over the edge. Her rich brown hair, which she had unloosed ere she cast herself down, to take the repose which she so much needed, but almost feared to indulge, fell round her face and over her shoulder in beautiful profusion; and, lovely as Albert had always thought her, she seemed fairer, brighter than ever to his eyes, as she there lay, buried in deep, calm sleep, in the midst of such perils as those that surrounded her.]

[He stood and gazed upon her for several minutes, drinking deep draughts of love, if I may so express it, till at length the resolutions, which he had that very night formed, came back to his mind, and he instantly asked himself how he might best wake her without giving her alarm. At length, sheathing his sword, he knelt down by the bedside, threw back the curtain that the light might fall full upon him, and then taking the hand that dropped over the edge, he pressed his lips tenderly but respectfully upon it.

Adela instantly woke, started, raised herself partly on her arm, and gazed wildly at the youth as he knelt beside her. As soon as she saw who it was, however, a bright smile of joy lighted up her countenance. None of the particulars of her situation seemed to have been forgotten even in sleep; for, raising her finger, she said in a low tone, "Oh, Albert, is it possible? How came you hither? It is indeed joy to see you here—but speak low, speak low, for they are in that room, and there are people all around us."

"I am here, lady, to set you free," replied Albert, in a whisper. "I have been a prisoner like you, and have found means to escape, by those means also I can set you free; but I must not conceal from you that there are dangers and difficulties in the way, though I would not quit this place without offering you the opportunity of flying also."

"But how came you here?" demanded Adela. "I have been so anxious about you ever since you left me; for you were scarcely gone, ere these men passed by; and I feared that they

would find you contending with that base man Caillet."

Albert told her that they had done so: but she would not be satisfied, until he had related all that had befallen him; and the interest and the pity that she showed as he proceeded were sweet but dangerous to his heart.

In return, while she related a part of what had occurred to her, she dwelt much and long upon the apprehensions she had entertained for him, speaking little of her own fears and sufferings; and it was a strange and somewhat agitating conversation for both that took place during the next half hour, while, with Albert kneeling by her bedside, with whispered words and eyes gazing into each other's, they poured forth every feeling and thought of their bosoms — except that one passion, which gave tone and depth to all the rest.

It may well be asked, "Was that one passion then not spoken? Was it possible at such a time, and in such circumstances, not to open the gates of the heart and set the imprisoned secret free?"

It was not spoken. Not a word did Albert

utter that he would not have uttered in the halls of Mauvinet: there was as much deep respect in manner and in gesture; but from his countenance he could not banish what he felt: it sparkled in his eyes, it was heard, too, in his tone, whenever Adela's dangers, or griefs, or sufferings were mentioned. Neither did she name the name of love — nor, indeed, did she think of it at that moment. In the agitation, the fears, the cares, the hopes of such a situation, she looked upon the youth beside her only as the companion of her infancy and her girlhood, as the person in whom she had most confidence on earth, to whom she could speak as to a brother. If her tones were those of love — if her look was that of deep affection — it was that the moment was one of those when circumstances break down the barriers which we raise in our hearts against our own feelings, and when the stream of passion flows forth without our will, mingling with the whole current of our actions.

However that may be, during that night a new consciousness came upon the heart of Al-

bert Denyn — the consciousness that he was beloved; and however he might school himself, he could not so far play the hypocrite with his own soul, as to wish that it were otherwise.

Though much was said, and many a thing was told, their conversation was but short, for their words were quick as the time required. And though Albert could have remained there in that sweet intercourse for ever, it became necessary that he should press Adela to decide whether she would attempt to fly with him or not. He informed her of all she would have to encounter; he showed her that he should be obliged to swim with her across the moat; and, after a moment's hesitation, she replied, —

“No, Albert, no — you shall not risk your life for me any more.”

“There is no danger, dear lady,” he replied, “there is no risk of that kind: I know I can do it with ease; I only fear for you who have suffered so terribly already; I dread that the cold and the night wandering might injure, nay, even kill you.”

“Perhaps it might,” she said, in a sad tone,

“ perhaps it might ; and I cling weakly to life, Albert, I know not why.”

“ Oh yes, live, live, dear lady !” replied Albert, “ live for brighter days ! live to make others happy, and to be happy also yourself !”

Adela made no reply for some moments ; but her eyes filled with tears, and a look of deep sadness came over her whole countenance. “ No,” she said at length, “ no, I will not fly at such a risk to you. Besides, I know my father will right gladly pay the ransom that they fix ; and these men have treated me with all honour and some kindness, so that I have nothing to fear. Their chief himself, to give me security in my chamber, blocked up the door as you see there ; the other door leads to the room where sleeps his child, and there are also bolts which no strength could break. He showed me these things himself, and his wife gave me all comfort, and promised me her aid and protection. Under these circumstances it were wrong to risk so much. Go, then, Albert, go, and tell my father my situation — I know I need not ask him to set me free

speedily. You will reach him probably even before the letter which they have made me write can inform him of my fate. Tell him I am well—far better, indeed, in health than I could, by any means, have expected. I must not add that I am happy,” she continued, “for that I am not—perhaps may never be so again.”

Albert gazed sadly on the ground, but made no reply; and after a moment Adela added, “Now go, Albert, now go—may Heaven send you a blessing for all that you have done for me!”

“One thing more, dear lady,” replied Albert, “one thing more before I do as you bid me—Recollect that the door by which I entered here, and which you see stand open there, is unknown to these people themselves. That passage might afford you a place of refuge, in case their conduct towards you should change at any time. On the other side there is a lock; but I must see how it can be opened from this room.”

It was not without difficulty that the method was discovered, for the wood-work fitted so close

as to afford not the slightest indication of an opening when it was shut. At length, however, having found the way of closing and unclosing it at pleasure, and explained the means to Adela, Albert again approached to bid her adieu, and once more knelt by her side to kiss her hand.

“Oh! Albert,” she said in the same low tone in which they had hitherto spoken, “it is a terrible thing to bid you go, and leave me here alone, but it must be so at length. It is very, very terrible;” and she bent down her head, till her eyes almost rested on his shoulder, while her tears fell thick and fast.

“Go, Albert,” she continued at length, “go — I will be thus selfish no longer! Go at once! Fare you well, fare you well; I shall never forget you, I shall never forget your kindness. Now leave me without another word, for I am weak, and overcome already.”

Albert felt that it would be best to depart, and only pausing to press his lips again upon her hand, he tore himself away, and left her. In a few minutes he had passed through the

long passage which conducted to the moat, and with a feeling of reckless self-abandonment, he plunged in without a moment's pause or thought.

The noise of his sudden leap into the water called the attention of some one above, and a cry of "Who goes there?" was heard, warning him to be more cautious. He made no reply, but swam gently on; and he could hear the man say to himself, "It must be a dog—I will give him a shot, at all events." The next instant, the twang of a crossbow met his ear, and a quarrel struck the water close beside him.

It was luckily too dark for any thing to be seen distinctly, and proceeding as quietly and silently as possible, Albert reached the other side of the moat, and for a moment lay still under the shadow of the bank. The heedless soldier above seemed quite satisfied with what he had done, and in a few minutes walked on, whistling a light air; while Albert, on his part, crept slowly up the bank, and was soon amongst the fields of the open country.

All was dark, however ; there were woods, and orchards, and vineyards around, and, entangled amongst them, Albert could for some time find no path, but wandered without guide, and with no knowledge whither he was directing his steps. At length he came upon a road, which, though neither very large nor very good, he judged to be much used, from the ruts and irregularities which it presented ; and following it for about half a mile, the youth came suddenly upon a rising ground, whence he could discover, somewhat to his surprise and consternation, the faint outline of the castle he had just quitted, rising at the distance of a few hundred yards. He was once more turning away to seek some other path, when he was suddenly startled by the cry of " Who goes there ? " and the next instant rough hands were laid upon his shoulders.

CHAP. XIV.

LEAVING Albert Denyn in the hands of his captors, we must turn to follow the proceedings of the Count de Mauvinet and the Captal de Buch, who were not long in hearing news of the body of adventurers which had taken possession of the castle on the hill. Every peasant that they met with when day dawned gave them some tidings of a detachment from the famous company of Sir Robert Knowles who had lately established themselves in the neighbourhood, and laid the country under contribution as far as Mans and La Fleche. None, indeed, could give any information regarding the exact fate of the Lady Adela; but some had heard a troop of horse pass their cottages during the night; and the two noblemen were so thoroughly convinced that the lady had fallen into the hands of these adventurers, that after giving their horses a few hours' rest at the first

village they could find, they marched on, guided by some of the peasantry, and only halted at length, in order to send back messengers to Mauvinet, with directions to call forth every retainer of the house, and bring them to a certain spot by daybreak on the following morning.

Some consultation was held as to whether it would be better to send a summons, requiring the marauders in the castle to give up their prisoners, or to proceed at once by force. But the captal strongly urged the necessity of giving no intimation of their purpose to the adventurers till the last moment; and the count yielded, although his deep anxiety for his child made him desirous of taking the most speedy means that could be adopted for bringing her captivity to an end. No rest nor sleep was his portion during the night, though he adopted the best measures that circumstances permitted him to use, for refreshing his men and horses against the following day.

The captal, on his part, not forgetting the vow that he had made, entered no house, but laid

himself down in the open fields, with his men around him, and his naked sword by his side. An hour before daylight the two leaders met, to consult together upon their after proceedings; and before they separated, several bands of the retainers of the house of Mauvinet came in, and reported that others were following hard behind. The whole country, they said, was rising in indignation and alarm; and several of the vassals of other noble houses in the neighbourhood were found to have joined themselves to the troops of the Lord of Mauvinet; so that an overpowering force might soon be expected, ready to act at once against the adventurers.

After a short conference, the Captal de Buch proposed to his friend to go forward with his men, and reconnoitre the enemy's position, while the count himself remained behind, to collect the various bands as they came up. The captal promised to return before day had dawned more than half an hour; and his proposal being agreed to, he set out at once, accompanied by the troop of twenty, or five and twenty men, which had followed him to Mauvinet.

It was somewhat later than the hour he had specified ere he did indeed return ; but then he came with a smiling countenance, assuring the count that the place was one of no great strength, and could not make any formidable resistance. The array which presented itself to his eyes on rejoining the count, seemed to warrant well the expectation of speedy success ; for more than four hundred men were now in the field ; volunteers were coming in every moment, and various implements for assaulting the castle had already been provided. No farther delay took place : the troops instantly were put in motion ; and the Lord of Mauvinet and his friend led the way a few hundred yards in advance, at the head of a small body of chosen men. §

The whole aspect of the scene, as they approached the castle, seemed to show, that the free companions had not the slightest idea of being attacked ; and in passing through a small hollow-way, at about a mile's distance from the fortress, the count and his companions came suddenly upon an armed man, riding on with the utmost tranquillity. The

space between him and them, when he first appeared, was not more than forty or fifty yards, and reining up his horse quickly, he seemed about to fly; but perceiving levelled lances and preparations for instant pursuit, he laid down his bridle and halted, waiting till they came up. His appearance left no doubt of his being one of the adventurers; and he was instantly surrounded by the men of Mauvinet, who, perhaps, might have treated him ill, had it not been for the interference of the captal; for the Lord of Mauvinet himself was too much enraged to respect the character of soldiers in so lawless a body of marauders.

“Nay, nay, count,” said the captal, seeing the fierce look which the father of Adela bent upon the prisoner: “remember these are all good men at arms, most of them gentlemen of birth; and the unhappy licence of the times has justified things that in other days were unjustifiable.”

“I shall ever give heed to your voice, my noble friend,” replied the Lord of Mauvinet,

“when it is raised in a righteous cause; but you will not expect me to spare men who, without the warrant of actual war, do acts that actual war itself has never sanctioned — carry off women and children from their parents, and wage dishonest hostilities in time of truce against the innocent and unoffending. The slaughter of my peasantry were enough, but the outrage offered to my child leaves no room for mercy or forbearance; and a short shrift, and a neighbouring tree, is all the lenity I can show.”

“Yet listen, my good lord,” rejoined the captal: “this man may, perhaps, if you grant him pardon, give us some good information regarding the enemy. Hark, fellow — you look wondrous pale for one who has chosen so perilous a trade — stand forward, and try, by answering truly, to save your life. You come from the castle of La Trie aux Bois — is it not so?”

“Yes, noble sir,” replied the man, who evidently did not like the aspect of death in the shape which it now assumed; “but I have only

been there three days, and have had no share in what has been done there."

"How came you to go thither at all?" demanded the captal.

"I carried letters, noble sir," answered the man, "from good Sir Robert Knowles to worthy Captain Griffith."

"Ha! my old companion Knowles!" cried the captal — "is he come so near? and Griffith too! he is a good soldier, if ever man was. Nor is he discourteous either. The Lady Adela will suffer no wrong at his hands. I shall like well to try twelve strokes of a good sword with him, and will, please Heaven, ere the world be three hours older."

"Ah, sir, you reckon ill," rejoined the adventurer: "he left the castle this morning in the grey, with a score of lances, to confer with good Sir Robert; nor will he return till to-morrow at noon. They say there is some difference between them — but I know not."

"And whither were you going now?" asked the count, "who had hitherto remained silent: you seemed in great haste."

“ I was carrying a letter, noble sir,” replied the man.

“ What, another letter ! ” exclaimed the Capital de Buch. “ By your leave, sir letter carrier, we will see this epistle.”

“ It is directed to the noble Lord of Mauvinet,” replied the adventurer, “ and is written by the lady they took yesterday.”

“ Then give it to me instantly,” exclaimed the count: “ quick, fellow ! quick ! or we will take it in a way that may be somewhat more speedy.”

The prisoner, whose senses were so far confused that he did not yet understand that one of the personages who spoke to him was the very nobleman to whom the letter was addressed, gave it up with evident reluctance; and—first kissing the handwriting of his beloved child—the count tore it open and read. The captal watched his countenance narrowly, and saw, with no small delight, that the brow of Adela's father grew brighter, and that a look of relief came over his whole face.

“ She is well, thanks be to God ! ” exclaimed

the count, turning to his friend. "She is well, and they have used her with all respect and courtesy; but tell me, my good lord captal, did ever mortal man hear such insolence as this? They come hither, into the heart of the land, carry off our children, and boldly put them to ransom, as if there were a war proclaimed against babes and ladies. They ask a thousand crowns of gold, and bid me ransom my daughter at once, as if she were a knight captured in fair fight. By St. Maurice, this is too much!"

"Do they mention the villain who carried her off?" demanded the captal: "it would seem they have taken her out of his hands."

"They neither mention him, nor my poor boy, Albert," replied the count. "Of the one I will have signal vengeance, and for the safety of the other good account. That youth is like a son to me, captal, and I will reckon with that man severely who does him wrong. But let us march on, and by the way, speak of this ransoming. What say you? — should I give it?"

“ No, my good lord, no,” replied the captal. “ I can feel that you are anxious for your daughter, but they dare not — it is impossible — they dare not injure her, I am sure. My oath is, that I will set her free, and of course that oath implies by force of arms. It I must keep; and I will answer for it that the lady shall suffer no wrong, although these men perchance may threaten it. Let us march on, my lord; and bringing this man along with us, use him for what purposes we may think fit hereafter.”

As was very natural, the Lord of Mauvinet could hardly, in his anxiety for his daughter, feel satisfied with the assurance of the captal; but still, as is often the case with all men, he would not show the weakness that he felt, and agreed to the proposal of his friend, though he would fain have yielded to the demand of ransom, however unreasonable, and secured his child's safety, before he sought vengeance for the insult that had been offered to him.

Marching on, then, they soon came within sight of the castle; but as they rode forward,

upon a rising ground, which looked down upon it, the count observed a small party of horsemen coming up at some distance, nearly on a parallel line with his own forces.

“Who are these?” he exclaimed, speaking to the captal — “who are these, my good lord? We had better send out to cut them off.”

“No, no,” replied the captal, smiling, “they are my own men. I thought it best, when I returned to you just now, to leave a party upon that road, both to bring us any intelligence, and to cut off the enemy, should they think fit to send out for aid in that direction. My people will come up against the other side of the castle, and make all sure there.”

“Well bethought, well bethought, my noble friend,” replied the count: “we will teach those hardy plunderers another tale. Bring that fellow hither from behind; and let Bertrand, with the men from the abbey, sweep round to the right, while we advance against the barbican. Now, noble captal, where will you command?”

“Upon the left, my good lord,” answered the

captal. "Methinks I will attack the wall near yon square tower: it is there, most likely, that they have lodged the lady, and I would fain have it no other hand than mine which sets her free."

"But the wall seems strong and high there," replied the Lord of Mauvinet.

"The more the honour of scaling it," said the captal, with a laugh. "We must show them what the chivalry of France and England can do when united. Let us ride on together, however; but first, send on this fellow to summon them to set the lady free, and then we will act as we may find needful."

The captal's plan was followed; the troops of Mauvinet advanced, in somewhat *irregular order*, if such an expression may be permitted; for the best arrayed feudal armies of that day seldom presented any very great appearance of discipline; and troops so hastily called together as those now before the castle could not be expected to equal a long organised force. They made a gallant show, however, as they came up with their armour shining in the sun, and

their pennons fluttering in the breeze, while the castle, which when they first approached it had appeared almost entirely deserted, with nothing but two soldiers pacing upon the walls, and a few men loitering about the gate of the barbican, suddenly displayed an aspect of far greater bustle and activity. Soldiers were seen running here and there, the drawbridge was suddenly drawn up, the portcullis let fall, the walls became strongly manned, and all the bustle and agitation of a place suddenly and unexpectedly attacked showed itself in the fortress.

At the distance of an arrow's flight from the barbican the count and the captal paused upon a little mound, and for a few moments gazed upon the active scene before them. The prisoner was then called up, and the count informed him that he spared his life upon the condition, he should go into the castle and bear the message with which he was about to charge him.

"Tell them," he said, "that I have come to punish them for their unheard-of inso-

lence, in daring to carry off my child almost from my very side, and for their discourtesy and unknighly baseness, in tearing a lady from her home, and demanding a ransom for her liberty. Bid them, if they would escape my utmost vengeance, instantly set free the Lady Adela de Mauvinet; bid them surrender to me, tied hand and foot, the villain named William Caillet, who dared to carry her off, and also bid them send back to me, or give a good account of the youth named Albert Denyn, whom I have reason to believe has fallen into their power. Go, and bring me back a speedy answer."

The man hesitated before he departed, and even when he had taken two or three steps came back and said, "I am afraid, my noble lord, they will not suffer me to return."

"Thou hadst better find means to return," said the captal sternly; "for be perfectly assured, my friend, that within one hour from this time I will speak with thee in that castle, if thou art not here before; and what I say then will not please thee.—I mean, fellow, that

thy life shall answer for thy disobedience; and that if thou art not here ere our trumpets sound to the attack, it were better for thee to seek a priest quickly, for thou wilt have short time for shrift."

The tone in which the captal spoke was as significant as his words, and the man went away somewhat pale in the face.

"The villain ought to be hanged for his cowardice," said the captal. "He is one of those who hang upon the skirts of braver rascals than himself, finding just sufficient valour in a multitude of companions to carry him through a general battle.—We will give them some ten minutes, my lord, to send their answer. I have despatched two or three of my people down to the village that we passed on the right, to seek some of their masons' ladders. We must contrive to join two together to reach that wall; and even then we shall have some difficulty."

"Better by far," said the count, "join your efforts to mine, my lord, and force our way in together at this gate: I fear you will make no impression on the wall."

“ Will you bet me a Barbary horse,” said the captal, laughingly, “ that I am not in before you, my lord?—But see, my men are already making preparations; and, as I live, here comes our messenger again—He has had a speedy answer.”

The man approached slowly and evidently with trepidation; which the looks of the captal and the count were not well calculated to remove. “ Well, fellow,” exclaimed the Lord of Mauvinet, ere he reached them, “ what is the reply?”

“ I dare not give it you, my lord,” said the man—“ I dare not give it you, unless you promise me your pardon.”

“ Well, well, you shall be pardoned,” joined in the captal; “ and if my Lord of Mauvinet follows my advice, he will shave your head, and thrust you into a monastery.”

“ Speak, man, speak!” cried the count, “ or, by Heaven, I will thrust my sword through thee.”

“ Well, then, my lord,” replied the messenger, “ though I beseech your forgiveness for

speaking it, the Captain Maillot, who now commands in the absence of the Welshman, bade me give you this answer at once — That as to William Caillet he knows nothing of him; that as for Albert Denyn, you may seek him where you will find him; and that as for the Lady Adela, she shall not have her liberty unless you pay the thousand crowns demanded.”

“Courteous, modest, and reasonable,” said the captal; “but what more, my friend, what more? I see there is something more under that white face.”

“It must be told,” said the man, with a sigh; “and it is this—He bade me say to the count, that the safety of his daughter depends upon his withdrawing his banner instantly from before those walls.—He spoke it in harder terms than I dare name, and I believe he will keep his word.”

The count gazed with a countenance of anguish and anxiety in the face of the captal, struggling between apprehension for his child and the consciousness that his honour, as a knight, was pledged to resent the insult

offered to him. The face of the captal gave him no relief, though it was certainly much calmer than he expected to see it; yet there was a heavy frown upon that leader's brow, which spoke at once the determination that the count feared they must both take.

“ My lord,” said the captal, after a moment's pause, “ your situation is painful, but yield not, I beseech you, to apprehension ! In truth, there is nothing to fear. Again I pledge myself that there shall no harm happen. However, do you as you like : my answer I will send to these men myself.— Go back to them,” he continued, turning to the messenger—“ go back to them, and say that the Captal de Buch has pledged himself to set free the Lady Adela de Mauvinet; that he will not only set her free, but punish them who keep her; and that he vows by his faith and honour, as a Christian knight, if he find that insult or injury of any kind has been offered to the lady, not contented with putting every man that he finds within the castle to the sword, he will hang Maillot and twelve of his companions

by their feet from the walls of the castle, till death deliver them, or the ravens eat them living. Go tell them that I swear this on my honour and on my faith: now let me see what they dare do.— Give me my casque.— What! you are afraid?— Well, poor fool, I will go myself.— My Lord of Mauvinet, I beseech you prepare all means for instant attack. I see they have brought up the ladders there to my men. The instant I have given my message, I will ride round and scale the walls. You, at the same moment, force your way in here, while others attack at different points. They cannot long hold out against such a force as we have here: it is a place of no strength—a mere cottage. Be of good cheer, my lord, be of good cheer— no harm shall happen.”

The count shook his head mournfully, saying, “ We must do what our honour requires, lord captal; God give us a good issue.”

“ Fear not, fear not,” exclaimed the captal, who had by this time put on his casque; and thus saying, he galloped forward with the two or three men whom he had kept with him,

approaching the barbican, the wall of which, at this moment, was covered with men-at-arms.

When the capital was about forty or fifty yards from that outwork, the count and those who stood beside him perceived the adventurers bend their bows, and in a moment several arrows fell around the capital.

The Lord of Mauvinet's indignation was roused more vehemently than ever; and, waving his hand to his followers, he exclaimed, "On, on, to the barbican! A purse of gold and knighthood for the first man who crosses the bridge!"

The retainers of Mauvinet were in movement in a moment; and, dashing on towards the gates, they arrived just as the capital was once more turning away, shaking his fist fiercely towards the men upon the walls. His visor was up, and they could see that he had been slightly wounded in the face, but his countenance was all courage, and even gaiety; and he waved his hand to the count, crying, —

"On, on, my lord!" whilst he himself gal-

loped round towards the point of attack he had chosen.

The enemy sent a flight of arrows after him, but their attention was soon called in another direction; for the men of Mauvinet rushing forward, soon reached the foot of the barbican; and so fiercely did they ply the axe and hammer, that in a few minutes, notwithstanding all the shouts and cries that echoed around, the crashing sound of large masses of wood torn off from the gate, and the giving way of the iron work within, in several places, showed the besieged that the outwork could not be maintained any longer.

As soon as they perceived that such was the case, they made signs at once, to their companions on the other side of the moat, to let down the drawbridge; and a general rush took place amongst the soldiery in the barbican to make their escape. Ere they could all pass, however, the gate which had been attacked gave way at once, with a tremendous crash, the troops of Mauvinet rushed in; and, before the bridge could be raised, several of

those upon it were thrown over into the moat ; and a number of assailants rushing across, with repeated blows of their axes cut through the wood-work where the chains were fastened, and the pont-levis, which was slowly rising, fell again with great force.

The portcullis, however, was down, the gates closed, and the walls above covered with archers : but the barbican served the Count de Mauvinet as a fort ; and while a number of his men plied the bars of the portcullis with blows of the axe, others with crossbows kept up an answering discharge against those upon the battlements.

In an instant afterwards, however, the Lord of Mauvinet suddenly cried, " Stop, stop, every man of you ! " and all eyes turning to the gallery above the gate, beheld a man-at-arms dragging forth Adela by the hand, to the very spot where all the bolts were directed.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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