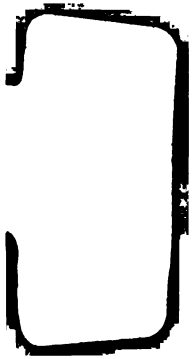

TRAITS OF TRAVEL;

OR,

TALES OF MEN AND CITIES.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "HIGH-WAYS AND BY-WAYS."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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1829.

THE VETERAN.

It was exactly ten years from the day on which I had last parted with my old acquaintance, Phil Hartigan, when I happened to arrive at the very spot where that parting interview took place. This was a fourth-rate town in one of the northern departments of France, in the very heart of the coal country close on the borders of Belgium, where Captain Hartigan had been cantoned, for some time previous to the final removal of the British army of occupation.

My acquaintance with him commenced at Valenciennes, of the garrison of which place his regiment formed a part; but after about a year's continuance there, he had been detached, with his company, to the little town in question, and to his very great discomfiture. And well he might be annoyed at the change—for never was a military man in pleasanter foreign quarters, as far as English military society in its best sense could make them pleasant, than in that garrison at the time I allude to. In this, I am sure to be borne out, by the memories of all who were there during 1815 and 1816, and who have one and all, I'll be bound, often thought of the balls, the dinners, the private plays, the gayety and good fellowship, that ran through all the seasons in succession. It was early in the summer of the last of those years that I rode over, accompanied by two others, to pass a day with their old comrade, and allay, for never so brief a space, the discontent which broke out, even in the invitation that led to our visit. I have never forgotten the last sentence of poor Phil's note—

"I'm an unfortunate devil: I seem to be stuck in this damned morass for life and death; I am sure it will kill me, so come over like honest fellows as you ought to be, and give me one pleasant day on this side of the grave."

I have called this a *sentence:* it was so, certainly, a sentence of death; but as to any thing like grammatical division, punctuation, or such like pedantries, Phil Hartigan knew nothing of, or, knowing, despised them. He was a very clever fellow for all that, and had received a fair education, (as the phrase goes,) for

the youngest son of an Irish gentleman. He was a good horseman, a steady shot, and tied his own flies. He could, even twenty years after he left shool, write legibly, and read running hand; remembered "Gallia est divisa in tres partes;" "Tityre tu patulæ," and "Arma virumque cano;" the first two problems of Euclid, and full three parts of the Greek alphabet. He was a gallant fellow, full of his profession, in its best and most brilliant parts—so full that he had no room for any of the paltry trickery which cramped and degraded it. He was an extremely handsome man; sung well, with a natural, but uncultivated taste; and although writing a common letter was a matter of infinite difficulty to him, he was the very best teller of a story that I ever listened to. Could he have written as he spoke, he would have been distinguished even in the present spring-tide of authorship, and his best stories would have run no risk of being botched by retail.

Phil Hartigan entered the army young, as young as the regulations permitted; and while yet a boy, was placed in command over men. Without any experience as to human nature, he was intrusted with a duty, for which knowledge of character is the most essential qualification. But he learned his profession, (somewhat at the expense of his soldiers to be sure,) and became in process of time a good officer.

After dodging about in home quarters for some few years, running the rounds of England, Scotland, and Ireland, in all the idleness of domestic duty, he at length entered on foreign service; was one of the expedition to South America, which ended with General Whitelock's ruinous affair; and on his return to Europe, he immediately repaired to Spain, where he remained in constant and active duty till the remnant of the French armies were driven beyond the Pyrenees. After the battle of Toulouse, he was ordered to Canada, where he saw his share of whatever was going on; and recrossed the Atlantic once more, to be in time to get the last of his half dozen wounds in the desperate field of Waterloo. While an ensign, he led a forlorn hope—what a sadly eloquent title!—and in the usual style of reward, he got his lieutenancy—*by seniority*. While a lieutenant he had the uncommon distinction of being noticed by name in the general-in-chief's despatch, and was promoted to a company—*by purchase*. As a captain, he on one occasion was lucky enough to command the battalion in the latter part of a general action, and was sure to obtain his brevet as major—when it might regularly come to *his turn*.

In fact, Phil Hartigan, like hundreds of fine fellows, had often distinguished himself, paid the last shilling of his little fortune for

the commission he bore, left his track in his own and the enemy's blood, wherever he served; but never had the good luck to obtain a prize in the lottery of military life, which (like other lotteries) makes a fine display of five, ten, and twenty thousand pounders, while ninety-nine out of every hundred of its expectant dupes, fire nothing but *blank* cartridge, from beginning to end of their career. It was thus with Phil Hartigan, who after twenty years' service, eleven campaigns, sieges, battles, and skirmishes without number; his body riddled, one arm disabled, bones and muscles shattered, and a constitution *shaken*, found himself stuck fast in his little cantonment, from which he never stirred, until he sunk in his narrow billet in its rustic burying-ground.

The day that I and my companion rode over to see him was a fine one in June, and as we walked our horses into the town, we heard a considerable clamour towards the market-place. We trotted in that direction, and the first thing that struck us was the fine figure of Phil, in a crowd of town's-people which surrounded a squad of four or five Cossacks, who had rode into the market, got drunk in a cabaret, and were quarrelling together and belabouring each other unmercifully, with the short thick whips attached to their bridles. These savages did not lay on each other more ferociously than did some cowardly scoundrels of the town lay on *them*, when two or three of them were tumbled from their ponies and lay sprawling on the ground. All the enmity of the vanquished broke out, and the Cossacks would have been roughly handled indeed, had not a gallant ally been ready, in the person of the English captain, who instantly interfered, wielding his good arm powerfully, and making most unceremonious applications with the toe of his boot to the rearward demonstrations of the flying enemy, some dozens of whom ran before him in electrical dismay.

When the captain saw us he ceased from his labours, and joined heartily in the laugh which burst from us on observing the affair. The remounted Cossacks grinned forth their alliance with our jocularity, and charged through the streets at full gallop, upsetting (but happily not hurting) man, woman, and child, vegetables, fruit, and poultry, without distinction. The crowd dispersed by sneaking units, like a cloud dissolving in single drops, and we repaired to the auberge where Phil was quartered, gave our horses in charge to his groom, and prepared with good appetites to attack the capital dinner which had been prepared for us. We passed the evening as usual on such occasions—drinking, singing, joking, picking broiled bones to revive our thirst, and swallowing fresh bumpers to excite new appetite. What a strange vision to look back upon are the scenes of early dissipation, passed

in such orgies as these! How the days, and nights, and years all seem to swim and revolve before one, as the bottles and glasses did then! How pleasant, how profitless were those times! Yet not quite profitless either, if their recollection teaches us to relish the less highly spiced enjoyments of our after life.

We quitted Phil Hartigan and his desolate cantonment the next morning. We cantered off after breakfast, on our return to Valenciennes; and as we left the town, we threw back a Parthian glance at our solitary friend, who stood (his little white terrier Snap at his heels,) looking after us, waving his cap, cheering us, and striving to cheer himself, with a view halloo, such as used to make the Kilworth mountains ring, when he followed his father's fox-hounds. We all remarked what a fine looking fellow he was at that parting moment, his black hair and whiskers curling gracefully, his cheeks flushed, and his whole appearance, such as we often see in florid-complexioned hard livers of five and thirty, or thereabouts, who have not begun to *break*. But when the break at last comes, in such good wearing constitutions, what a crash it is.

We returned Phil Hartigan's shout of salutation, entered a wood, lost sight of the town, and thus ended our visit.

It was just ten years from that day that I happened to arrive on that very spot. It was far out of the way of any reasonable purpose of mine; and I scarcely know what led me there, if it were not "a truant disposition," such as brought Horatio to Wittenburg. I had straggled over a good part of the ancient province of Artois, and made pilgrimages to one or two shrines, which turned out scarcely worth the trouble. One of these was what is called in traditional phrase, the *ruins* of Thérouanne, an unfortunate town utterly destroyed by Charles V., in the year 1553. So completely has time followed the tracks of the ruthless conqueror, that no other trace but theirs is left, instead of what was once a rich and populous garrison. Not a stone is to be found, whose juxtaposition with another could tell to what structure they formerly belonged. Not a vestige is discoverable of the habitations of men; yet the peasant cicerones of the wretched village, which now bears the name of the town that was, talk of the cathedral and the citadel, the tower and the church, of this, that, and t'other saint, but can *show* the traveller nothing but a cultivated ravine, which speaks itself to have been the ancient *fossée* that surrounded the place. Marius at Carthage, or Volney at Palmyra, had more positive, but not more convincing evidence of desolation. It is the very site for a philosopher to build on, but tells little to the antiquary, and still less to the sketcher of scenes or manners. When I walked across the

bleak and barren heights, which agriculture has not yet succeeded to redeem, a husbandman was driving his ploughshare into the ungrateful soil, and a sportsman and his dog ranging over fields, that could not produce sufficient grass to shelter a covey of birds.

I, too, had my gun in my hand, and my dog at my foot; but there was no business for either of us there. Three bipeds and a brace of setters formed a population too great for the surface which formerly sufficed for thousands.

Looking to the eastward, I was instantly struck with the notion of paying a visit to some of the not distant scenes of by-gone pleasures, or what passed current for such. I accordingly hurried off from these dreary heights, and took the road to Lille, followed close by Carlo, the son of Ranger—the reader will not require me to trace his pedigree farther.

The church clock was striking twelve (at noon) as I walked into the church of Phil Hartigan's cantonment. The sun shone strongly on the little place, and brightened up his naturally gloomy features into something like a smile. But it was a melancholy vivacity. I looked along the street, and thought of the figure of poor Hartigan, as I had last seen him, and I thought of my two other companions, who had been dead several years, the one a victim to a West India fever, the other killed in a duel. Recollection became unpleasant. I regretted having returned to the place; and was half tempted to retrace my steps, when I was arrested by two shapes, most startling and questionable. These were a man and a dog; the first presenting a broken outline of Phil Hartigan, the latter a worn down resemblance of his terrier Snap.

"How very strange!" said I, stopping suddenly. The person I gazed at, stood still also, fixing his eyes on me.

"How devilish odd!" exclaimed he.

"Can it be credible?" uttered I.

"It isn't possible!" muttered he; but odd, strange, incredible or impossible as we might have thought it, it was nevertheless true, that Phil Hartigan and myself were in an instant cordially shaking hands; while old Snap and young Carlo seemed to acknowledge each other as acquaintances, perhaps from some friendly or filial instinct, connected with the memory of poor old Ranger, who had been for some time dead and gone.

"My dear fellow! How glad I am to see you! How extraordinary! How time flies! How devilish fat you are grown!" were Phil's first exclamations.

"Do you think so?" said I, squeezing myself inwardly up, with the usual sensitiveness of corpulent men, striving to shrink into themselves. These were the only words I spoke for many

minutes, while Phil ran on with a voluble string of question and answer, salutation and exclamation.

I was not more surprised at first view of him, than I was on the closer scrutiny on which I entered. I could not convince myself for a moment or two, that I was not looking at Phil Hartigan's father, or his uncle, or an elder, a much elder brother, or I scarcely knew to whom or what—but could this be Phil Hartigan himself? Could ten years have so completely changed, so broken, so decomposed him? Where were his black curls, and his black whiskers? The first were cut away by the scythe of Time, which sorrow had sharpened; the latter were shaved off by Phil's own razors, because they had grown gray. And his florid complexion? Disease and dissipation had first faded and then dyed it a yellow ground, with purple spots; his eyes were sunk, his forehead wrinkled, his cheeks hollow; and if *I* had grown fat, how had poor Phil grown thin! He was the mere shadow of his former self. A blue frock, of military cut (plainly a turn-coat, the first that Phil ever suffered to embrace him,) was tightly buttoned up to his chin, and the reverted cape was fastened even higher, with a hook and eye. Heaven knows what was the quality or colour of his shirt; but his rusty black handkerchief was surmounted by a stiff white *collar*, flanking his countenance on either side, and silencing any battery which inquisitiveness might direct against him. A brown cloth foraging cap covered his head, without concealing the baldness of his temples; and a pair of threadbare pantaloons, gray worsted stockings, and well worn shoes, brought the picture down as far as it could go.

Such were the outworks of the once gay, handsome, dashing Phil Hartigan. His worn-down body was the covered way, his still open wounds the embrasures, his gallant spirit the rampart, and his heart the citadel, of this mortal type of some strong place, which the enemy had reduced by sap, but which had been impregnable to assault.

Having recovered from my astonishment, and suppressing it as best I could, the first burst of recognition over, we walked together towards the market-place.

"Why, my dear fellow," exclaimed Phil, "it 's a perfect age since I saw you last."

"It is indeed a long time," snswered I.

"Why, let me see—it must be six or seven years?"

"Ten, my dear Phil, *ten* this very day."

"Ten years! why, how can that be? you must be wrong—it can't be more than *eight*, at any rate?"

"I 'll easily prove it—it was in 1816, I came over from Valenciennes here to see you, with Butler and Tom Wendburne."

"By Jove, so it was!"

"And it is now 1826."

"By Jove, so it is!"

The "was" and the "is" had exactly the same emphasis, and it appeared as if the past and the present date were alike confused in my poor friend's head.

"And my old comrades, Butler and Wendburne? How do they get on?" resumed he.

"Get on! poor fellows, they are dead this many a day."

"Indeed! then the world's a pair of good fellows the less," was the careless reply, which seemed to tell that time had carried away feeling, as well as memory in its flight.

As we walked on, I was amused by the appearance of Snap, who had too evidently moved in a parallel line to that which his master had so rapidly taken down the hill—of life, I mean. Snap, who had been originally of a youthful white, was now of a dusky gray, his ears, and parts of his neck and back, showed patches of flesh-coloured baldness. He was blind of one eye; extremely deaf; and altogether a venerable specimen of half-pay terriers, on the superannuated list. His master observed me eyeing him; and he asked me if "I did not think poor Snap greatly altered?"

"And his master!" said I to *myself;* but I *answered* Phil's question, without any personal reference. He had shifted his quarters from the *Auberge* to a small apartment, consisting of two chambers, in the house of an old woman called Madame Penelope, in a narrow street near the market-place. At sight of the house, I easily divined that it was poverty which gave to the unlucky veteran the route from his former comfortable sojourn. The abode into which he now ushered me was a sad contrast to the other; quite as much so as poor Hartigan was to what he had been. Yet notwithstanding the breaking up in health, appearance, manners, and even feelings, Phil had saved something from the wreck. His natural character was unharmed, as every thing about him gave evidence. His bed room was neat, and his little *salon* adjoining it, displayed some of the nicknacks of military collection, that he was formerly so fond of. In fact the whole air of the place spoke the habits of soldier regularity, with somewhat of old bachelor precision. The articles of the veteran's scanty wardrobe were folded and laid on their shelf, snugly covered with a cloth, to keep off the dust: though had it lain thickly on most of them, it would have been but nearly the same thing as "ashes to ashes." On nails over the chimney place were arranged the old sabre, the battered breast-plate, and the gorget, which had all served so many campaigns, and given or received so many hard knocks. A pair of moccassins or Cana-

dian slippers, were hung one at each side of these; and those again flanked by a South American buffalo hunter's leathern belt, and a pair of Spanish castenets. An Indian warrior's cap surrounded the whole; and the veteran's own old sash was festooned among them. On the mantlepiece lay several relics, picked up in the various countries where he had served; and the walls were covered with bows and arrows, snow shoes, and divers articles of costume or implements of warfare; while a rusty gun and cobweb-covered fishing rod, showed plainly that their owner had for many a day "foregone all customs of exercise."

After an oft-repeated welcome, and an offer of a dram, (which on my declining, my host took for himself,) he left me for a while to discuss with his landlady (who was also his housekeeper, chamber-maid, and cook) the preparation for dinner; and then to step over and give notice of my arrival to his messmate and only companion in the place. This was Toby Underwood, a half-pay lieutenant of marines, a very old ally who had joined company with Phil, and settled in this dull place out of pure compassion, and who was, he also assured me, "as brave and as safe a fellow as ever stood before a foe, or sat down beside a friend."

When I was thus left alone, I employed myself, in the usual way of killing time in a strange room, looking at every article it contained with a listless scrutiny. Had I been disposed to indulge the moralizing mood, I should have stood ruminating before the different objects of *virtu*, which brought so many associations connected with days of yore. But I preferred thumbing over poor Phil's library, which I found (without the aid of a catalogue) to consist of a copy of "Joe Miller's Jest Book;" one of the "Rules and Regulations," much torn; one number of Mrs. Inchbald's "British Theatre," the frontispiece stained with wine; an army list for November, 1816," the red cover wanting; and a volume of "Blair's Lectures," an old edition—but quite as good as new. There was also a "Navy List," of rather a later date, a tract on the "Dry Rot," and "The Midshipman's Manual," or some such title; but these latter had the name "Tobias Underwood" written on them, too plainly to let me mistake them for Phil Hartigan's.

I chose the old army list for my reading, and I saw how closely and constantly poor Phil had made it his study. Every page bore marginal notes. They were necessarily brief, from the narrow space which so edifyingly contrasts these monthly records with other modern works, to the full as ephemeral. A little *d*, or *k*, or *p*, before many of the names, denoted "*dead*," "*killed*," "*promoted*," as was corroborated by my own knowledge of the men and their fate; and these brief annotations formed a praiseworthy pattern of what ought to be the style of

commentators in general. The *p's*, I was sorry to observe, bore a very small proportion to the *d's* and *b's*. I did not care to pursue the calculation, or to dwell on the probable chances of poor Phil himself becoming entitled to *d* and *b* (dead and buried) before his name, long ere the arrival of "the brevet," which he so reckoned on, as sure to put him among the *p's*.

He soon returned to me; and we went to stroll up and down the narrow walk lined with stunted limes, named by the amorous natives the "Allée d'Amour," but which Phil called familiarly "the Mall." He could tell the measurement of this miserable promenade to an inch, and knew every knot in each individual tree, while he had worn a way, by his regular pacing to and fro, as deep, though not so lasting, as that indented in the aisle of Canterbury Cathedral by the pilgrims to the shrine of Thomas à Becket.

During this stroll, and the "half hour" before dinner, and the additional *quarter*, allowed to the cook in all countries, I became fully informed of my companion's circumstances and sufferings since the day I had seen him last. His tale was easily told, but not his comments on it; for he bewailed the hardship of his case at great length, and with that fluent bitterness which few, but those who have themselves suffered, can sympathize with, as well as listen to. It was soon after the period of my former visit in 1816, that Captain Hartigan, coming within the reductions which took place in the army, found that he was on the point of being thrown out of his profession, and on the world, with his half-pay as his only support; for he had no capability of adding to it in any way to which a gentleman could condescend, at least, according to his notions of the thing. The nation called for retrenchment, and it fell upon those who might have been spared, by the sacrifice of a few sinecures. But the adopted species of economy (which was neither political nor politic) deprived poor Phil, with many a fellow-sufferer, of the pension to which two of his wounds had for several years entitled him, and which he had foolishly believed was granted for life. So that at the moment of his pay, his allowances, and means of living were reduced one half, he was also cut off from his pension; and thus an income, which to a bachelor soldier was really affluence, became suddenly exchanged for one which was little more than penury. But even the integrity of this pittance was not respected by the tailors, and brokers, and creditors of all kinds, who had long encouraged the unthinking debtor to go deeper and deeper into debt, and never asked for one guinea, while he could have easily paid them; but now all at once insist-

ed on receiving every shilling of their exorbitant demands, when he had not a penny too much for his bare support.

Phil entered into a short examination of his affairs, which he had not done for twenty years, that is to say, since he had had any affairs to examine. He found himself encumbered beyond all chance of extrication; he was dunned and threatened with complaints to the Horse Guards, and public exposure of all kinds, in the insolent language which low fellows delight in having an opportunity to use towards a gentleman. Phil was an honourable man; he did all he could do; he offered the best compromise in his power, and he made over the half of his half-pay to liquidate all demands. This was indeed a forlorn hope, more hopeless than the one he escaped from fifteen years before. The annual fund raised in this way was "a sinking fund," that interest, costs, postage, and commission, could never allow to rise. But Phil always looked forward to "the Brevet;" it was, to be sure, a long time before that could arrive; but looking back with wonder on the rapid flight of years gone by, he thought that those to come would pass over as quickly. He did not yet know the drawling pace of time, that is linked with suffering and followed by disappointment.

Year after year rolled on, till hope was utterly chilled and blighted. Without society or any other solace for his long career of dissipated delight, Phil Hartigan, retrograded in morals as he advanced in years. Hard drinking succeeded to good fellowship, and brought all the terrible evils that invariably follow in its train. The constitution thus assailed surrendered at discretion, or rather without any, for the prudence of a drunkard is analogous to the "*Pain à discretion*" of a Frenchman, who is *that* article possesses none whatever. But I must not lean heavily on poor Phil; I seem to tread on his grave.

The reduced veteran did not, however, all at once sink into despondency, and to the last he never despaired. He memorialed, and petitioned, "ever prayed," and always *hoped*. His applications to be put on full pay met with instant attention—a constant refusal. He had, in fact, no interest; and the royal chief at the head of the army, could not, with the very best intentions, accede to the requests of all the claimants that formed its tail. When Phil prayed for the continuance of his pension, he was politely invited to exhibit his wounds before the Medical Board; but it not being *moveable* as well as medical, that was impossible. Phil could not show himself in London: the Board was fixed there—and neither Mahomet nor the mountain stirred an inch.

Thus affairs stood at a dead halt for several years, and Phil was sinking fast, when his old acquaintance, Toby Underwood, himself on half-pay, mutilated, and with small resources, came over on a visit to his friend. Toby found the place quite as good as any other for his purposes; thought Phil Hartigan better than most men for a companion; and discovered the brandy to be far the best he had ever procured for so little money. A close compact was accordingly entered into between the invalided warriors; and an alliance offensive, and defensive, against sorrow of all sorts and devils of every colour, from the coal-black leg of a broiled turkey, to the very *blues* that ever blazed in a bowl of burnt brandy. The partnership answered extremely well; there was a perfect union of interests, no disproportion of capital, and consequently no elements of discord. The associates thought very nearly alike on all subjects of interest to them; abused the government that left them unpromoted, and mutually forgot that there are men so exclusively suited by nature for subordinate stations, that advancement to places for which they have no capacity is the greatest evil which can befall them. On two points of serious controversy among the best friends, politics and religion, neither Phil nor Toby ran risk of clashing in opinion, because on those points they had but one between them. They reciprocally thought that politics, was but another name for corruption, and religion for hypocrisy. With the townspeople, the messmates maintained a high ground, and they were much respected. This may be thought curious enough, for two men who had together only a crown a day to spend; the secret was they spent *no more* than they had. The contrary is paradoxical, and, I must acknowledge, somewhat Irish, not only in expression, but in practice.

I was formally presented to Toby by our mutual friend. I found him a blunt, good tempered North of England man, with a wooden leg, a fair knowledge of the world he had moved in, but not a person to make discoveries. A marine is naturally an amphibious animal. He can live very well on land, and if hard pressed there, he takes to the water. Such a man, if at all intelligent, ought to be a pleasant mixture of *both*; Toby was so in effect, just like a glass of his own grog, half and half. He told several good anecdotes of service at sea and on shore; and might have pass-

ed for a capital *raconteur* (in the best meaning of the term), had he not been utterly eclipsed by Phil Hartigan.

No sooner was dinner over, and Phil's heart warmed with a couple of bumpers of strong liqueur, and a bottle of Burgundy, than he began to open out, like other night flowers, in full fragrance. He by degrees unfolded the leaves of recollection (in vulgar analogy "the tablet of memory"); and by the time the wine bottles had abdicated in favour of the brandy flask, he had completely resumed possession of his old character, and burst out in as dazzling a display of story-telling as ever shone upon a night of conviviality. This was Phil Hartigan's peculiar talent. I never heard him say what is called a *good thing*. He knew nothing of repartee, or punning. But give him a story, ever so trifling, and from his unique power of description, and of mimicry, in idoms, accent, and pronunciation, he made more of it than ever may be made by another.

On the night I speak of, he told several of his stories—they were all old ones, but not a bit the worse for wear. His memory was as good as ever, and it was all the same to him whether he handled a grave or a gay subject. Toby Underwood had heard all these stories oftener even than I had. Still he laughed at some of them, as though they had been bran-new; and actually wept at others—but not till after his second bottle and sixth tumbler.

Daylight had fairly extinguished our candles before we broke up. At length Toby departed for his lodgings, and Phil retired to bed, having first seen me snugly settled on the stretcher which was prepared for me in the *salon*. I had drunk but little in proportion to my companions; and Phil made me many a reproach for having become a *flincher*.

"That's what a man is sure to come to by living in this damned country—isn't it, Toby?" said Phil, filling his glass.

"Indeed it is," answered Toby, emptying *his*.

"It will be our fate too, I suppose," added Phil, swallowing a bumper.

"Not before 'the Brevet,'" thought I.

"Ay, and mine, no doubt, *after all*," rejoined Toby, replenishing his tumbler.

"But not sooner," thought I.

In consequence of my abstinence I had three or four

hours of sound sleep, and got up quite refreshed. There was no chance of Phil's rising, for he snored audibly in the room beside me. I was at a loss what to do. The library and the museum could afford me no novelty; so I pryed about, into every hole and corner of the *salon*, in search of some unexamined object. The only thing I discovered was a little mahogany box. It being unlocked, I was induced to open it, supposing it to contain some little token of curiosity, a wild boar's tusk, or some such matter of foreign extraction. But all the earth's collections of natural philosophy or comparative anatomy combined, could not have so surprised, so interested, or so affected me, as did the contents of poor Phil Hartigan's mahogany box, and the simple inscription which labelled the papers that enfolded them. On the outer envelope was written,

"Fragments of an old soldier."

And on the separate little parcels within this cover,

"No. 1, Bones of my Leg, Monte Video."

"No. 2, Bones of my Head, Talavera."

"No. 3, Bones of my Arm, Badajos."

A heavier paper, containing a flattened bullet wrapped in cotton, was inscribed,

"No. 4, Ball cut out at Waterloo."

These relics of long service and long suffering, caused me a feeling of deep melancholy, which all the efforts of their owner and his messmate could not remove. I passed the day sadly, and the succeeding night no better. As soon as the bottle began to circulate after dinner, Phil acknowledged the inspiration, and returned to the track of his natural vivacity; but his stories seemed to have lost their pleasant flavour. Their gaiety was no longer gay, and their sadness was more sad than ever. I could not rouse myself to a free participation in the nightly enjoyments of the poor fellow whose days were so utterly comfortless; and I found that to prolong my visit would be to increase my discomfort. On the third morning, therefore, I took my leave, promising, and faithfully intending, to renew my visit ere long, with strong hopes of being able to realize a project for digging poor Phil out of his solitary station, and transplanting him to a more social soil.

Phil shook my hand cordially as we parted, entreated me to return soon to see him, assured me that he should not re-

main much longer where he was, as "the brevet" was sure to give him his promotion almost immediately.

Within a month from that day I received a letter, written on coarse paper, with a broad patch of common black sealing wax, bearing the impression of an anchor, surmounted by a firelock, like a crest over a coat of arms. It was as follows:—

"Dear Sir,

"You will regret to learn that our poor friend Phil. Hartigan was buried this morning. He died two days ago, rather suddenly, of what the doctor calls a breaking up of the system. I think it was his heart that was broken. He was as brave and pleasant a fellow as ever lived or died; but you know that as well as I can tell it. Our poor friend requested me to write to you as soon as all was over. I had him buried as respectably as I could, and I thought it but right that the little box of his splintered bones, which he had so carefully preserved, should be laid in the coffin with his other remains. "I am, Dear Sir,

"Yours truly,

"Tobias Underwood."

"P. S. Snap died about a week before his master."

I was not a little shocked on reading this letter. The suddenness of the news was aggravated by the fact that I had just completed an arrangement for poor Hartigan's change of residence to the place I had contemplated. But it was, perhaps, better that he should have died where he did, where so little existed to cause a regret for the world he quitted.

His grave is marked by a small stone with his name cut on it, followed by some half dozen lines, telling truly the good qualities he possessed. How few, if any, of his many acquaintances, companions, and friends, will ever see the spot, or read his epitaph!

I have thrown loosely on paper a few of his anecdotes, from recollection, which suffices for the outline, but cannot attempt the filling up. These will be scarcely recognized for poor Phil's spirited sketches, by those who have heard them in his original recital. They always, in fact, appeared to me as fitter to be told by the tongue than the pen. But the great majority of my readers have never heard them, as I have, and may pardon the imperfections of which they do not know the extent.

NO FIRE! NO FIRE!

I once happened to be stationed with a small detachment in a secluded village in the south of Ireland; one of those romantic and wild positions which abound in that country, fit theatres for the display of every feeling that agitates mankind in its half civilized state. The district was disturbed. Nightly outrages, by wretched marauders, whom misery made desperate, kept the scanty gentry and simple peasantry in perpetual alarm, and myself and my party in constant preparation. Sudden attacks on small military posts were frequent, and even daylight was not always a security against the daring attempts of Caravats and Shanavests—the distinctive appellations of the insurgents of those days.

The little barrack occupied by me and my detachment stood on the road side, at the entrance to the village, and was fronted by a thick wood, which stretched along the opposite hills, and came down in a mass of shadow to the very road. A narrow lane that led into its heart opened upon the road, some twenty yards from the barrack. This outlet was the chief point of suspicion for the wary eye of the sentries, who, day and night, paced before the door; and the frequent report of musket shots from the wood, made the recruits of whom my little party was chiefly formed, give many a hurried glance and take many a rapid turn, as on their hours of duty they walked close to the neighbourhood of that convenient spot for treachery and ambush.

It was one day in October, that I was on the point of sallying out, my gun in hand, and my dog at my heel, to take my usual hour or two of sport in the wood and on its skirts,

when a very sudden and heavy shower of rain forced me to pause for awhile at the door, and drove the sentry, a raw, unfledged hero of about seventeen, into his box. The three or four little messes into which my detachment was formed, were just sitting down to their early dinner, and I was rather amused by the hungry impatience with which one of the groups inquired for their mess-woman, Mrs. Merryweather, a comely hen cockney, hatched in Shoreditch, and the veteran dignity with which the corporal, her husband, repressed their voraciousness, assuring them she would be back with a table-cloth from its drying place on the hedge which skirted the lane, before the beef and potatoes could be ready,

At the very instant of this explanation, a piercing scream from the throat of this identical Mrs. Merryweather, struck upon my ear, and was followed by the terrified woman herself flying from the lane, the drenched table cloth held up before her, like a sail to the wind, and her dripping hair floating behind. Young O'Toole, the sentry, as he heard and saw her appalling voice and form, bounded electrically out of his box, and with fixed eyes and fixed bayonet stood shaking in every joint.

"What the devil is it, for the love of Jasus, Mrs. Merryweather?" cried he. "Turn out the guard, turn out the guard!"

"Yes, yes, the devil, the devil," screamed Mrs. Merryweather, "the devil or the vild, orrid, Hirish brutes coming to murder, burn, and wiolate us hall!" and as the three or four men composing the guard tumbled out, hastily seizing their arms, she flung herself into the embrace of the corporal, who had rushed into the road with the whole open-mouthed detachment, men, women, and children. Shouts now issued from the wood, and an attack seemed certain. I cocked my gun, and advanced, followed by the guard. Approaching the shaking sentinel, I sternly asked him,

"What, O'Toole, are you trembling?"

"Is it trembling, your honour?" replied he; "then if I am, it's trembling to be at them."

At this moment a figure rushed from the wood, frightful at first sight and shocking on examination. It was that of a man, tall, gaunt, and middle aged. Fever was on his lip and madness in his eye. His hollowed cheeks, bushy beard, and matted hair, spoke disease, neglect and misery; and the wild glance which rolled backwards as he tottered towards me,

gave evidence of maniac imbecility and exhaustion. His right hand grasped a staff, which was useless either for support or offence, while he feebly waved his arm above his head. His body was wrapped in a coarse blanket, girded round his middle by a rope of straw; his emaciated limbs were all bare, with the exception of his left arm, which was enveloped in the rude covering that formed his only shelter against wet and wind.

While the soldiers stood steadily prepared, not merely for the approach of this apparition, but for whatever might follow its movements, the poor wretch fearlessly, or rather unconsciously, moved forwards; and redoubled his pace as about half a dozen ragged village boys, who pursued him with loud shouts, emerged from the lane. Flying from their persecution to the shelter of the barrack, he implored protection with an air so piteously helpless, that even the fears of O'Toole and Mrs. Merryweather died away before the compassionate wonder which irresistibly seized on every bystander. Every one made way for him, and he entered the barrack: and seemingly allured by the savoury fragrance of the dinners, he advanced into one of the inner rooms; but, as it seemed to me, in momentary consciousness of his forbidding and forlorn appearance, he shrunk back from the *fire-place*, and crouched low upon a little three legged stool, in the most distant corner. He was immediately surrounded by the kind hearted soldiers and their kinder wives, who, one and all, got over their disgust and fright, and vied with each other in attending to their miserable guest. Large portions of soup, bread and meat, were placed before him, and voraciously devoured, while a murmured utterance of thanks and blessings broke from him at intervals. When his hunger was satiated, I said to him,

"Now, my poor fellow, come warm and dry yourself—get near the fire."

"Oh, no, no," groaned he, in a hollow and shuddering tone—"no fire—no fire!" and, starting up from his sitting posture, he rushed to another corner of the room, into which he huddled himself, putting his face close to the wall, and shivering in the violent impulse of some horrible recollection. This emotion excited in about equal ratios the pity of the men and the terror of the women, thus stamping its alliance with the first and finest elements of that deep tragic feeling from which it sprung. Perceiving that the coarse

sympathy of the group around him only worried the poor sufferer, I strove with a little more address to soothe his irritation. My efforts succeeded—for after a few minutes he looked gratefully up to me, and exclaimed, in a tone of deep and savage pathos,

"God bless you, and keep you and your's from fire and flame! Look here!" continued he, abruptly, "look here, where it scorched and withered me;" and with gesture and action suiting the words, he drew from beneath his blanket the shrunken and excoriated remnant of his once sinewy arm. The marks of the fierce element were fresh on it—it was scathed and scorched from the shoulder to the wrist—a blasted branch of the decaying stem it hung to.

"Good God! How did this happen, poor creature?" burst from a dozen voices.

"Whist, whist, and I'll tell you," hoarsely whispered the maniac, his finger to his lips; "but say nothing—don't waken them—Norah and the childer are sleeping still—whist! It was—let me see—how many weeks? seven—or eight—or nine—no matter, no matter—but the flax was taken out of the bog-holes, all dry and ready for scutching—the whole roof of the cabin was lined with it—it was like tinder—one spark was enough to set it blazing, and I stuck a whole rush-light against the wall! But I must tell you—that Norah had just been brought to bed—the child was at her breast—God help me! I forget how many days ould it was—but it was at her breast, in the bed wid her—in the little closet—and two more, Biddy and Patrick, were beside her—all, *all* together. I stuck the rush against the wall while I was stripping myself—the wind blew through the wisp of straw in the window—the rush blazed up—the flax caught it—the whole house was in flames—I run into the closet—Norah was crying—and the childer—they were burning—they were smothering—my body and my brain caught fire—I was all blazing—and when I came to my raison *they* were all *cinders!*—house, wife, and childer—every sowl of them—burned—burned—burned! Don't cry—don't cry, my good woman—and the men, too! God bless you all! but all the salt tears in the wide world couldn't put out the flames!———— Where did I leave off! Ay, ay—when I come to my raison—that's three days ago.—I was on the big mountains by the sea-side—and I run down then, and threw myself into the broad waves, to quench my

heart that was scorching. But somebody took me out—the fever was gone—and I got my raison !"——

A long pause followed this hurried and harrowing recital. In a few kind words I begged of him to lie down on one of the beds and rest his poor mind and body ; but he sprang up wildly, exclaiming, with a sickening emphasis on the last word,

"Rest myself ! Oh ! no, your honour—I must go *home !*"

"Home !" involuntarily echoed every voice, "home !"

"Ay, indeed, home ! and why not ? Aren't they waiting for me—poor Norah and the childer ! God bless you all—God bless you—let me go, let me go."

I saw it was in vain to oppose reasoning to a wretch who had no longer "discourse of reason." On the contrary, I encouraged him to go—and thus kept him in parley while my servant brought from my room some old and motley garments for decency and comfort sake. But I had not his outfit entirely on my hands, for there was not a man or woman in the barracks who did not offer to contribute something towards the task of clothing him. He was soon equipped—but the grotesque mixture of his half military attire did not raise one smile in the group, from male or female. Blessings and sobs were mixed together in rude eloquence as he left the door ; and just as he started, with my servant for his protector through the village, the sun burst out, a bright arch, like a bended bow, sprang across the heavens, and the maniac's cheerless day of life was gilded by one delusive gleam of hope.

HOME SERVICE;

STARVING MANUFACTURERS AND WARLIKE WEAVERS.

An explosion of manufacturing despair, which suddenly burst out in the northern counties of England, shook the garrisons of some of the remotest towns, and fairly dislodged whole regiments from their quarters. The blowing up of this political powder-mill, was, in fact, felt far and near. Our regiment got the route at an hour's notice, and was rattled away in waggons, day and night, without a single halt from Essex to Lancashire.

As we entered the scene of disturbance, the cottages for whole leagues of the high road were deserted and locked up. We could at time perceive the hungry inhabitants, on the tops of hills or the verge of plantations, looking fearfully at us, and ready to run into shelter at the near approach of "the paddies." We were the only Irish regiment ordered into the insurgent districts.

The sight of the unemployed and haggard population of the towns was most afflicting; but the fierce drollery of some of our fellows used at times to burst out, in spite of their compassion.

"For pity's sake, master," said a miserable looking man, in a town where we stopped for breakfast, to Barny Grogan, one of the company I belonged to, "don't level low when you fire at us—we are poor starving wretches."

"Indeed then I'll not, honey—not more than an inch

below the waistband," answered Barny, cutting a loaf which he had just purchased.

"God help us!" sobbed the weaver, shedding tears of actual despair.

"Arrah, come here, my poor crathur; is it crying you are? Here, take this loaf of bread. But luck to me if I meant a word of what I said, sorrows the word, and may heaven resave me if I don't miss fire or burn priming, every time I let fly at yiz, right or wrong."

The weaver ran off with the loaf to his famishing children; and Barny was, to my knowledge, *as good* as his word; for he was soon after flogged for persisting in firing over the heads of the assailants, in a desperate attack on a cotton mill.

We were soon encamped in the heart of the insurrection, if the desultory risings around us deserved the title. Small parties were stationed in all the petty towns and villages in the neighbourhood; and I was soon ordered with a detachment, to relieve another of ours, twelve miles off, which had had rather a serious affray, in which the little lieutenant who commanded, was all but thrown over the battlements of the bridge.

It was a fine summer morning when we started at daybreak, and in about five hours we were close to the town to which we were bound. As we approached, I heard the shrieking crash of an ill-trained military band; and presently a regiment of local militia, about twelve hundred strong, came straggling out, in full marching *dis*order, on their way to the exercise-ground, about half a mile from the town. It was the time of annual training, and a season, as may be supposed, of prodigious importance to these shuttle-throwing veterans, from the colonel to the corporal, "pioneers and all."

Being resolved to gratify their pride of military consequence, I formed my little party in line by the road side, drew my sword, ordered "fixed bayonets;" and stood, with "shouldered arms," ready to salute the regiment as it passed. But I little anticipated the embarrassment I was about to cause to the worthy warriors. No sooner were my ambiguous motions observed by the colonel at the head of the column, than he consulted with the lieutenant-colonel beside him, and called up the major and adjutant, who rode in the rear. A halt was commanded; and I saw that a

road-side council of war was holden, as to the measures of etiquette to be pursued in this most difficult predicament.

They seemed at length to decide that I was not drawn up in actual order of battle, and that they were to repay my salute with a return of all possible honours. The word "march," was accordingly given again, and the whole column advanced in slow time, the band crashing forth a grand symphonia, with triangle, cymbals, and great drum, each and all *obligato*. The four mounted officers rode abreast, at the head of the regiment; and on my presenting arms (as in duty bound) on the music passing me, the colonel thought he could not do less; and consequently, at his command, the whole of the marching battalion came to the "*present;*" the officers leading companies, and their subalterns, saluted; and the colours were swept down to the very dust, in honour of myself and my twenty men. Any Johnny Raw, who ever attended half a dozen drills, can tell what a ludicrous display all this must have been. My own men had, I must confess, a very disorganized appearance, for almost every one of them was forced to staff a glove, a handkerchief, or a *hand* into his mouth to avoid laughing outright—but the whole pageant passed off very well.

As soon as I got my men into their billets, I dressed, roused up my old friend Toby Underwood, who was recruiting in the place; and being resolved on getting a dinner at the local militia mess, I waited on the colonel on his return from the exercise ground, and presented him a report of the strength of my detachment, the meaning of which document puzzled him amazingly. As I expected, he asked me to dinner, and I consented, with rather a patronizing air, on condition that my friend Toby was invited, together with a cornet of heavy dragoons, who was stationed in the place, like myself, with a small detachment. The dinner hour was *noon*, the usual time with all the weavers, warehousemen, and cotton spinners of the country. I had scarcely a moment to see Toby and the cornet, convey the colonel's invitation, and concert a plan of operations for mystifying the *localities*, when the dinner bugles sounded, and we repaired to the inn.

Two rooms had been knocked into one, that is to say, the partition between them was removed, to make accommodation for so large a party. There were upwards of fifty officers of the regiment present, not one being missing, except a couple who were too seriously indisposed to be able, like

their brethren, to strut their this year's fortnight per annum on the stage of military caricature.

The arrangement of the almost interminable table was not a little amusing to us who went to criticize. At the head where we, the strangers, were posted, with the field officers, several bottles of wine, red and white, were placed. "Midway down," like the samphire gatherer, on Dover Cliff, and below the captains who came next to us, decanters of rum and brandy punch marked the station for the subalterns of senior rank; and the lowest compartment of the festive board was garnished with bottles of beer and ale, fit beverage for the ensigns, the quarter-master, and adjutant, who occupied the foot of the table. The colonel sat at the head; Toby Underwood next to him at one side, the dragoon cornet at the other; the lieutenant-colonel was between Toby and me; and on my left was the captain of grenadiers, a gaunt, raw-boned attorney from one of the neighbouring towns. Opposite to me, and next to the cornet, sat the major, a complete specimen of the species "Sturgeon," a corpulent and red-faced old fellow, in a brown bob wig—a wealthy publican of the place, who seemed, like Boniface, to have lived on his own ale. The rest of the captains were shop-keepers or master manufacturers. The colonel was himself a landowner, who, from having originally swept a warehouse, became immensely rich; and gradually advanced from porter to cotton spinner, from cotton spinner to proprietor, and was then on the very point of purchasing a rotten borough, and going into parliament. The lieutenant-colonel was a man of pretty nearly the same original stamp, though he had not the talent to wear it out, in the progress of advancement in the world, like his superior officer. In fact, the latter was, though ignorant, a cleverish fellow in his way—the other, my next neighbour, a mere vulgarian, and one of that decided kind that feels, or affects a pride in his vulgarity. During the dinner he gave me several sketches of the persons at table, of himself among the rest; and vaunting his own and others' wealth, he finished, by telling me,

"Yes, Lieutenant Hardygun—that's your name, isn't it, eh?—Yes, lieutenant, we are all sprung from the dunghill, every one of us; but dammee, d'ye hear, we ha' been wiser than the cock in the old story, for when we found the jewel we knew its value."

The importance attached to the titles of even the lowest grades of these heroes, was droll enough. In military society all officers below the rank of captain are indiscriminately called *mister*. But on this occasion no man's rank was slurred over. It was lieutenant this, ensign that, adjutant such a one, quartermaster so and so, all through the day.

"Pass the punch, Lieutenant Twist," said one; "Clear off your heel taps, Adjutant Wheeler," cried another. "The pleasure of a glass of hale with you, Ensign Spinaway?" asked the quartermaster.

"Two, if you please, Quartermaster Windwell," answered the ensign.

There was tremendous execution done among the dishes; some of the feasters seemed put to a nonplus, certainly, in the usages of a table handsomely served, and displaying a profusion of plate; the silver forks came very unhandy to sundry of the hard-fisted subalterns, and various mouths ran imminent risk of being enlarged, by the edges of the knife blades which were thrust into them. These, are, however, but invidious observations—let them pass.

There was a profusion of wine, punch, and ale, consumed during dinner, and many of our entertainers were nearly drunk before the cloth was removed. The clamorous conversation, the joking and jibing of the uncultivated youths in the region of malt liquor, was mixed with the more spirited sallies of the punch drinkers; and such a Babel-like confusion arose, that the colonel felt it necessary to put it down by the mere force of lungs. The toasts acccordingly began, and any man who has ever been in the north can well imagine the speechifying which followed.

The King, the Duke of York and the Army, the Duke of Clarence and the Navy, the Church, the State, the Ministers—religious and political, and many other toasts of a general nature were given, with suitable exordiums by "Mister the Colonel-President," the title by which every one at table scrupulously addressed him. But "a health," of a nature more immediate to the company, was now about to be proposed.

"Clear off, gentlemen!" cried the colonel, in a tone of command, "fill a bumper! I give you the health, happiness, and prosperity, gentlemen, of our gallant and distinguished guests, the regular officers of the army and marines, now present; the representatives of three branches of the tree

of our national glory, the warp, the woof, and the weft, of the land service; the horse, foot, and dragoons of the British army." Toby had told the major, that he belonged to the "Horse Marines;" the major passed it to the colonel, and so the thing stood.

It became necessary to make a reply, in acknowledgment of the honour just done us. My neighbour, the grenadier captain, told me, it was expected we should each make a speech, but Toby declined plump, while the cornet merely stood up, and briefly said, "Gentlemen, all your healths!" Seeing the disappointment of our entertainers, who received that short sentence with loudly expectant cries of "Hear! hear!" I stood up, and after a few sentences of thanks, I burst into a warm eulogium of the institution of the local militia; talked of serving one's country, fighting for one's firesides, covering one's self with glory—of patriotism, heroism, laurels, liberty, cannons, musketry, broad-swords, and battering rams, in a most edifying mixture of splendid incomprehensibility. The room echoed with cheers, the table groaned with thumps; glasses were upset, bottles broken, and most honourable testimonies to my eloquence overflowed the table, in rivers of port, sherry, brandy, and strong ale. I proposed the colonel's health. He made an oration, and gave the lieutenant-colonel's. From him the toasts and the speeches went gradually down one side of the table and up at the other. Some vowed that "It was the happiest day of their lives;" others declared, "They wanted words;" others again, that "They were overpowered by the unexpected honour;" one fellow said "His heart was as full as his rummer of punch;" and another still *more original*, began, "Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking—"

But when it came to the major's turn to make his speech, and put an end to the oratorical display, my friend, the grenadier attorney, gave me a nudge with his bony elbow in the ribs, and said—

"Listen now, lieutenant, listen, I say; now you'll hear something good, depend on't, the major's a pithy oul' fellow, and when he speaks 'tis to th' purpose—listen!"

The old major rose from his chair with due solemnity; broad blotches covered his face in variegated shades of purple and crimson. He looked all of a blaze, he took a quid

of tobacco out of his mouth, placed it in his waistcoat pocket, wiped his brow with the table cloth and began—

"Gemmen! I am no great dabster of a speech, d'ye see—I thank ye all for drinking my health—I drink yours—and I'll give you a toast or a sentiment—May no gemmen officer of the Hoxton and Hustleberry united regiment of local militia, ever want a clean shirt or a guinea. Three times three, gemmen!—here's your healths all round the table!"

"I told you, didn't I?" asked the grenadier captain, with another punch of his elbow in my side; and it would be quite impossible to describe the effect of the major's oratory. It had literally come home to "the business and *bosoms* of men;" and that's the secret—the truest touchstone of eloquence, whenever, and wherever it may be.

The bugles now sounded for evening parade. The colonel left the room, followed by his next in command, the adjutant, and the assistant surgeon. But the major swore that "may he be tapped if he'd stir without another bottle"—the captains all with one voice, chorussed this resolution; and he was lifted by acclamation into the vacant chair. The lieutenants insisted on having more punch; the ensigns called for malt liquor in all its possible varieties—pipes and tobacco were introduced—and I and my delighted companions saw that the full tide of mutiny had reached high water mark. We stirred the cauldron of inflammable matter, swore we never heard of such despotism, as breaking up a dinner party for an evening parade; and Toby Underwood declared it to be contrary to the articles of war. In vain the bugle blew its blasts through the streets: the adjutant was knocked on the head with an empty bread basket, as he came for the tenth time to summon the officers away; and in fact the whole business ended by our remaining at table, drinking, singing, and speechifying, twelve mortal hours, till the clock pealed midnight into the ears of Toby, the cornet, and myself; every other man being either carried off to bed by the waiters, or lying scattered in utter drunkenness in various parts of the mess room.

The next morning a message from the colonel requested our attendance at a little council of war, held between himself, the lieutenant-colonel, and the adjutant. The recent violation of all the rules and regulations of military discipline was the subject in discussion; and strange as it may seem, we were summoned to give our advice as to the most

proper means of punishment for the very offence of which we had been the instigators and abettors.

"What ought I to do with these officers of mine?" asked the colonel.

"Put them under arrest," said the cornet.

"Bring them to a court-martial," cried Toby.

"Smash them all," exclaimed I.

"I'll be d—d if I don't," replied the colonel, slapping his hand on the table; and the adjutant was ordered forthwith to take a wheelbarrow and a pioneer, to go to the respective quarters of the mutineers, gather their swords, and place the disgraced owners in close arrest.

My companions and myself immediately took our departure, to go the rounds of the unsuspecting offenders, and spirit them up to a still more refractory misconduct. As we passed out from the inn door, we saw the barber, who was in the habit of operating upon Toby, coming from the room which was occupied by Major Bungbutt. (I do not really know if this was a true cognomen or a sobriquet.) Toby knew the barber for a wag, and asked him what he had been about?

"Ecod, Master Underwood," replied he, "I ha' been jist a shaving o' th' oul' major—he's all afire—he'd fizz like a hot iron if he was thrown into the river."

"How do you know that?" asked Toby.

"Why, when I took un by th' nose, awhile agone, by gom, I felt my fingers and thumb aw scorching, so I nat'rally popped 'em into th' ott water in jug on th' table; an' ecod, I got both burnt an' sca'ded!"

I scarcely remember what measures were taken, what resignations sent in, what punishments inflicted; but I am sure the united regiment of Hoxton and Hastlebury was as thoroughly demoralized and decomposed in one day of home service, as they could have been by the hardest fought campaig n abroad.

CAPTAIN X——.

During my career of service I have met with numbers of brave men, and a few cowards. I have seen courage and fear display themselves in various ways, and many modifications; but I never met with but one instance of a thorough mixture of audacity with poltroonry, of the basest faint-heartedness with presence of mind.

On joining the regiment to which I exchanged, for the sake of serving in Spain, the very first of my brother officers to whom I was presented by the major commanding, was the captain of the company to which I was attached. I never was so prepossessed in favour of any one at first sight. He was a fine handsome young man, of most elegant address, full of ready wit, and apparently burning with military ardour. He was a prodigious favourite in the regiment. Nothing could exceed his attentions to me, except the pains which he took to instil a portion of his own gallant spirit into mine.

The first time I went into action with this new regiment, Captain X—— was unfortunately taken ill, just before our brigade was ordered to advance. He was obliged to let me lead on his company, and his regret made a deep impression on me. It appeared to me that he suffered more mental anguish than bodily, even though, I think, he specified his being desperately ill in three places.

After we had succeeded in driving the enemy from a strong redoubt, the captain joined us, in great spirits and good health, all his spasms having given way to some violent habitual remedy, which he told me was either "kill or cure" with him. He almost wept at finding that the fighting was all over.

We had several smart skirmishes soon after this affair. Captain X—— was often in the field, but I never happen-

ed to see him through the smoke, except on one occasion, when he shewed great tact in the use of a pocket-glass, with which he constantly looked out from behind a tree or a mound of earth, and gave orders with great coolness to me and the other subalterns, to advance and retreat, as occasion required.

In a storming business, when I was detached with a few men,* a serious accident was *near* happening to Captain X——. As soon as the place was taken, and I returned to the regiment, I received a pressing request to repair immediately to him, as he feared he was at his last gasp—dreadfully wounded. I ran to his quarters, in a house just under the rampart, to which he had crawled; and I picked up the surgeon of the regiment on my way, forcing him to abandon some other patients to give his whole attention to my friend. We found him lying on a mattrass, almost insensible.

"Good God!" said I, "what has happened? where are you hit, my dear X——?"

He could not speak, but placed his hand on his side.

"Let me examine you, Captain X——," said the surgeon. "I have not a minute to lose—we have many others wounded, officers and men."

"Ah, my dear doctor, are you there?" said the sufferer, opening his eyes for the first time. "How kind this is—but never mind me—hurry off to my poor fellow-soldiers—it is of little matter what becomes of me—I am too far gone for help—I am a dying man—yet you need not exactly say "*killed*" in your report; I don't wish to shock my friends *too* suddenly. Merely put me down "dangerously *wounded.*"

"I can put down nothing, Captain X——, till I see your wound," said the surgeon, drily. "Where are you hit, Sir?"

"Why, as to that, my dear doctor, I really can't exactly specify—that is to say, I cannot say directly, that I am absolutely *hit*—but—but—"

"But what, Sir? I am in a hurry—the life of many a *brave* man is risked by this delay—I cannot be trifled with," exclaimed the surgeon, with most unfeeling emphasis.

* Phil Hartigan here modestly alluded to the occasion of his leading the forlorn hope.

"My dear fellow," resumed X——, "I am the last man in the world—the very last ——"

"What is your wound, Captain X——, if you are wounded at all?" peremptorily asked the surgeon.

"Ah, never mind me, never mind me," replied the captain; "leave me to my fate—but spare my friends—break it gently to them—only say "*severely* wounded," and let me die!"

"What *is* your wound, Sir? Of what nature, I ask you again?"

"It must, I think, have been a cannon shot—I feel my side almost battered in—that is to say, a *spent* shot."

"Is there any mark?"

"Why, no—no—not decidedly a *mark*—I cannot say there is a direct contusion: it might have been, in fact, *the wind* of a twelve pound shot, or something of that kind—you may, in short, put me down (to save the feelings of others, very dear to me) you may put me down "*slightly* wounded."

"Why really, Captain X——"

"Not a word, not a word, my worthy friend—off to your duty—go, go along—you *must* put me down "slightly"—whatever you like, in short—something—anything—only pray let my name be in the list of the wounded! Not another word—good by, good by, my dear, my very dear doctor!"

The doctor smiled, as bitterly as though he had just swallowed a dose of rhubarb. He left the place; and to my infinite surprise, and that of the whole army, I may say, the London Gazette, which some weeks after brought us the official account of the storming, shewed us the unprecedented notification, in the list of casualties, of Captain X—— being "*very* slightly" wounded. He was the only individual of the regiment who was not thoroughly ashamed of this, and who did not feel the actual cautery of the surgeon's printed sarcasm.

I now began to know my man; and was not much surprised, at the night attack on a fortress soon after, to hear myself called loudly from the head of the company, (I occupying my post in the rear, as we advanced in subdivisions to the breach), by Ned Flanagan, of Galway town, Captain X——'s covering serjeant.

"Mr. Hartigan, Mr. Hartigan! For God's sake, your

honour, come up, come up quick, and lade the company,—the captain's run away *already*."

Every one knows what a hot affair Fuente d'Onore was—but no one took it so *coolly* as Captain X——. The village had been taken and retaken several times, till a final charge in which our regiment bore a part, drove the enemy out, and left us in possession of the place. As we forded the river, in close column of companies, Captain X—— quietly slipped behind, and took up a position among the rubbish of an old house, which afforded him a fine view of the business. The colonel by whom we were that day led on, a Scotchman, who was by hereditary right as brave as a lion, turned round suddenly to the adjutant, and asked him,

"Where is Captain X——?"

"Hiding under that wall, Sir," answered the adjutant, pointing to the *reconnoiterer*.

"By G—, that's too bad!" exclaimed the indignant colonel. "Gallop up to him—*at* him—*over* him—and if he does not rejoin the regiment instantly, cut him down on the spot! Now, my brave lads, on them, steadily and coolly—give them the steel, the steel, my boys, and plenty of it!" added the colonel, turning to the regiment, and quite forgetting Captain X——. But the adjutant rode fiercely up to him, and hurriedly repeated the orders he had received.

"Nay, nay, my good friend," said X——, "what's the use of being so confoundedly hasty? Just let me say a few words in explanation. May I die, my dear friend, if—"

"Die and be d—d!" abruptly uttered the adjutant, putting spurs to his horse, and dashing back to his post, where he had scarcely arrived, when a musket shot through both his cheeks tumbled him to the ground, and put an end to his gallant conduct for that day.

As soon as we were thoroughly in for it at Salamanca, when the grape shot began to pepper the head of the column, and the men dropped right and left, an officer of ours was seen to throw himself bodily into a dry ditch; and those who could not distinguish who it was, thought we had another brave fellow knocked over. But those who identified Captain X——, were quite satisfied that *he* was in safe quarters. As soon as the business of that hard fought day was well and thoroughly done, we had ceased firing, and were charging after the broken enemy, when an officer was dimly observed through the smoke that was clearing off,

about fifty yards in front of our line, waving his hat with its long streaming feather, in one hand, and flourishing his sword in the other, cheering on the regiment, with shouts of most vociferous valour, the Arapiles echoing to his cry. A roar of laughter burst along the line, and became particularly loud when our company joined in it, for we soon recognized our resuscitated captain, and knew better than any others how to appreciate his prowess.

But his best, and, poor fellow, it was his *last* exploit, occurred not long after this, at the siege of a place memorable for the determination of its defence, as well as the vigour with which it was attacked and carried.

The approaches of the English army were pushed on with a frightful proximity to the place; so much so, that the guns from the bastions, were fired point blank at individual officers and men, who had the temerity to raise their heads above the trenches; and they were often hit from cannon of large calibre, with as dead a certainty, as though the most unerring sharpshooters had levelled at them with rifles.

Our entire company was ordered down from the camp, on a working party, one fine morning, out of our turn of duty, and not a little to our surprise, to replace another which had taken its place in the trenches during the night, but was almost annihilated soon after day-break, by the terrible cannonade from the enemy's works. One of our subs was killed the day before, so that Captain X—— had but myself and the ensign, a gigantic Kerryman of about twenty years old, and six feet five inches high, under his command. We were under cover, as soon as we came within range of the enemy's guns; and so hot was the fire, that not one of us felt disposed to despise the captain's example of keeping as close as possible.

There were several small redoubts thrown up along the trenches, from which elevations, the officers on duty could keep a sharp eye on the men at work. I stept or rather crept into one of these, to relieve the last surviving officer of the company we replaced. He was in the act of eating a crust of bread, which his servant had procured him for breakfast; and as he was leaving his post to my occupation, he incautiously raised his head, to look at the hostile ramparts, when it was carried clean away by a twenty-four pound shot, and the body knocked several yards out of the redoubt.

These were not pleasant occurrences for any man's com-

fort, but least of all so to one of Captain X——'s temperament. I was scarcely settled in the redoubt, when I saw him moving towards me along the trench, stooping much lower than the utmost prudence required; and he soon came crawling into the redoubt, requesting me to change places with him, and take the command of the whole party, as he wished much to sketch the bastions of the fortress: and he took out his sketch-book and pencil for the purpose. I could not refuse his request, a most unlucky one for him, for had he stayed where his duty required, he had most probably escaped the catastrophe which ensued.

I had not changed places with my captain five minutes, and had just stepped up on the ridge of the trench where the soldiers worked, to look about, as it was my duty from time to time to do, when the general of the day galloped up, attended by two aids-de-camp, and a couple of orderly dragoons. He was one of the bravest of the brave; too brave, indeed, as was proved by his death not long after, on a distant service unworthy of his fine talents. He, too, was an Irishman, and knew our regiment well.

"Who commands this party, Mr. Hartigan?" asked he.

"I do, Sir," answered I.

"There is a whole company here, isn't there? Who is the captain? Where is he?" were the rapid questions next put.

"There is an entire company—Captain X—— is the captain—he is sitting in that redoubt, Sir," were my immediate answers.

"Sitting in that redoubt! May he be doubly d——d! What is he doing there? Hark ye, Sir," added he, addressing our finger-post of an ensign, "you have long legs; step out then quickly—go to that redoubt, and bring back Captain X—— here instantly. Stoop, Sir—stoop low—lower, I tell you, or you'll not have a head left on your shoulders."

The intrepid Kerryman strode along, but cared nothing for the general's caution, and scorned the shelter of gabions or fascines. When he came to the redoubt, he summoned out the captain, repeating *verbatim* the general's speech.

"What a cursed hot-headed fellow!" exclaimed X——. "Go back to him, my trusty ensign, and tell him I am taking a sketch of the first importance; I am proving the engineers to have been all wrong. Tell him the service will absolutely suffer if he disturbs me."

The ensign strode back again, and delivered this message

to the general, who was moving about busily, giving various orders around him.

"Taking a sketch! The engineers all wrong! What an impudent scamp! D'ye hear me, Sir—go back—tell your captain, once again, that I order him to come here; and if he refuses, drag him neck and heels out of the redoubt, and up to this spot."

"I'll tell you what, my friend," said X——, in reply to this second summons, and hoping that while he temporized, the general would take himself off—or, possibly, that he might be *taken* off—"I'll tell you what—"

"Don't give yourself the trouble to tell me any thing, Captain X——, but come out of this immediately, I tell *you* again," said the ensign. At this instant his cap, which was visible above the wall, was knocked off his head, perforated by a cannon ball.

"God bless me, what a narrow escape! how very lucky that you were not three inches *taller!*" exclaimed the captain.

"Never mind whether I'm tall or little, Captain X——," said the Kerryman, coolly clapping the shattered cap on his head again. "I'll tell you what, the short and the long of it is—by Jasus, if you don't come with me, quietly and by fair manes, I'll drag you out of it, dead or alive—so come along, I advise you."

X—— finding all resistance or subterfuge to be vain, stood slowly up and followed the Kerryman along the trench; muttering that "a man's life was not safe a minute on service with these infernal mad-brained Irishmen; but that with persons of common discretion, one might go through a dozen campaigns, as securely as though one had never smelt powder."

The enemy seeing a general officer so close, sent their missiles towards us in double quantities. One of the orderlies was literally cut across with a shot, and an aid-de-camp's horse severely struck with the splinter of a shell. Captain X—— saw all this as he came forward; and by way of ending the business, and stopping the general's mouth, he held forth the little sketch book, and began some stammering sentence.

"Not a word, not a word, but listen to me, Sir!" said the general. "Resume your place here—do your duty—or, by Heavens, I'll make you such an example as never—"

Here the general was himself stopped short, by the explosion of another shell, directly over the heads of the group —and the report was instantly followed by a terrified mixture of groan and shriek from poor X——, who clasped both his hands across his breast, and with a dreadful expression of agony in his face, fell flat on his back, almost under the feet of the general's horse.

"Good God, is it possible!" cried the kind-hearted general, his wrath at once appeased. "Who could have thought of his ever dying so fine a death! Well, he's gone, poor devil! He was at any rate a clever, a pleasant fellow, and a gentleman—ay, every inch, but his *heart*—but, damn him, he could not help that! Here, soldiers, throw one of those great coats over the body of your captain, and bear him to the camp. We could, after all, 'have better spared a better man.'"

With this quotation, the general coolly trotted off with his aid-de-camp and orderly, in the midst of a shower of shot and shell. The ensign and myself were too much shocked by what had passed, to think of any thing for a minute or two, but the fate of our captain, and we stood gazing after the body, as it was borne away, the limbs already stiffening before it was out of sight.

What was the astonishment of the general, who thus pronounced Captain X——'s funeral oration, on riding back to the camp about an hour afterwards, to see the identical Captain X—— unharmed, unblushing, and unabashed, dressed, as was his wont, better than any man in the army; and cantering his little Arabian pony along the lines with a feather streaming from his hat nearly as long as the pony's tail? And what was my surprise when I met him the next morning!

But this could not last. A significant hint was that day conveyed to him from the highest authority. The following morning brought him (he said) letters, requiring his instant return to England. He set out at once. The next Gazette announced his resignation; and as Captain X—— has been ever since an ex-captain, I have nothing more to say of him.

THE

MONKS OF RONCESVALLES.

THE battle of Vittoria was a glorious affair. We had been nevertheless roughly handled, and a week's repose would have been worth half the riches of the east. But that could not be. We trod in the footsteps of a flying enemy, and we had but three days halt in six weeks. We broke up from Placentia on the 16th of May, and marched into Roncesvalles the 1st of July.

The Spanish scenery of the Pyrenean range turned us all into lovers of the picturesque; and we looked at the mountains with feelings that we could lie down at their feet, and sleep there for ever. Harassed and jaded, men and cattle alike, we entered the old town in that state of good spirits and good temper which anticipated comfort is sure to produce.

On the following day we learned with great joy that we were to remain in the place taking our turn of duty on the summits of the hills which surrounded us. The French army had stopped to take breath on the mountains farther on; and the advanced post of their position was visible on an overhanging rock of prodigious size, called Château Pignon.

Soldiers know better than any other class of men how to make themselves comfortable. In a couple of days the whole division felt quite at home. It was my good luck to be quartered in the monastery, the brotherhood of which treated us very well. The whole place belonged to these monks, who were considered a most pious and exemplary set of men. The shrine of our Dame of Roncesvalles is

in great vogue for many a league round, and pilgrims flock from all parts to offer up their prayers and watch for miracles. Some of our lads who were deep in literature, used to amuse themselves quoting Ariosto and Bishop Turpin, and we all began to get familiar with the names of Charlemagne and his Paladins. We used to gaze at the Brêche de Roland, which gaped widely on the summit of the distant mountains, seeming to offer a passage into heaven that shone through it.

The monks shewed us, in the sacristy, Bishop Turpin's slipper, and Roland's mace, and many other curiosities, quite as authentic. That was all very well for the antiquaries; but some of us, I among the rest, found shooting the wild goats, and frightening the eagles, the most romantic pursuits of the place. On the 4th we received ten days pay. We had a capital dinner—the first really good one since Placentia. We enjoyed it amply, and got to our beds as straight as we could.

Being completely rested by the end of a week, we found the place beginning to grow devilish dull. A change was loudly called for, no matter of what kind. Some of the lads wished for more fighting, others for more money; all for some fun. We found it hard to amuse ourselves. Some read, some puffed on the flute or scraped the fiddle, others sketched views of the glorious scenery. I took great delight in climbing the mountains, by the rudest and most unfrequented ways, and rolling down from the summits huge stones, which broke into a thousand fragments on their descent, and dispersed in a shower of dust, before they reached the bottom of the ravines. Thus we contrived to kill time.

Nothing could be more singular than the aspect of the country seen from those high stations, in all the animation of military possession. The valleys shewed all the bustle of bivouacs, and irregular encampment. The mountains were studded with tents, wherever a tent could be pitched for small parties of out-posts and piquets. Above these again, and more advanced from the lines of the respective armies, videttes were to be seen pacing the rocky solitudes, and keeping a sharp look-out. Trumpets and bugles were constantly echoing around, and at times an occasional discharge of musquetry or field-pieces varied the desultory

sounds. But it was all the while dead peace; and, odd as it may seem, we all began to long for war again.

Not being able to fight the enemy, nothing was left but to quarrel among ourselves. This was not frequent with brother officers, certainly, but we had several affairs with our Spanish allies. The little commissary of the brigade I belonged to, was insulted by a Don Lorenzo, or Francisco, or Diabolo, something or other. The commissary was irate to the last degree, and looked as big as one of his bullocks; but he could not get any one to be his second on the spot. Few of us liked to be identified so closely with these purveyors. As I, however, saw that the little fellow was in earnest, I thought it hard that he should be forced to submit to an affront, for want of some one to load his pistols; so I stepped forward, and offered to carry his message. I had not far to carry it, for the Spaniard was standing close by, as proud as a don could be, in the notion that he had bullied an Englishman. But when I talked of an immediate meeting, and pistols, I saw that he was a true bobadil. He swore "by the life of his saint," (and in fear for his own) that he would fight in no other way, than with a sword in one hand and a dagger in the other—the only manner worthy a descendant of "*los antiguos cavalieros.*" Seeing that my hidalgo was not a fellow of real Castilian kidney, I took the liberty of giving him an unceremonious kick—the readers of Hudibras may imagine where; and with a "*Va usted con Dios!*" I turned on my heel, and never heard more of the don. Not so of the commissary. That very day he sent me a kid, two bottles of real cogniac, and a skin of excellent wine—a delicious windfall to our little mess.

A day or two afterwards, some suspicious circumstances induced me to turn my more particular attention to the *padres;* and I took it into my head that their sanctity was not so unquestionable as it was thought to be. My room was in a recess, formed by a wing branching off from the main body of the building, and a wide corridor separated it from the dormitory of the monks, and this again was partitioned and subdivided into several little pigeon-hole rooms, where a great deal of billing-and-cooing might be quietly carried on. I had observed, on more than one occasion, a nice little girl, called Maraquitta, the reputed niece of the *secretario,* coming from her uncle's room, but with a pace so steal-

thy, and a look so confused, as no innocent visit need have caused.

This was evidence enough for an idle or prejudiced judge, and I was both. I immediately passed a sentence of condemnation on the *secretario*, resolved to lie on the watch to entrap his reverence, and forthwith gave secret instructions to my Portuguese lad, Antonio, to keep a careful eye on what was going on in the *secretario's* quarters, and more particularly on what might go *in*.

Antonio was an apt scholar. I had educated him myself. He used to tend my goats in the Peninsula; but having bravely borne a few beatings, in the execution of some secret services, I promoted him to the attendance on my person. His mattrass was placed near my room, in the corridor before mentioned, in a most favourable position for the purposes I intended; and every thing promised a discovery, if there were any thing to be discovered. But the wary *secretario* had nearly frustrated all our projects, by complaining to the quarter-master-general, that my servant, sleeping in the corridor, disturbed the devotion of the holy fraternity. Antonio was, in consequence, sent to the right about, but his acuteness was put doubly on the alert.

On the very next night I had a jovial party, of five or six, in my own room. The last of the commissary's last bottle of brandy was disappearing fast. We were all ready for a frolic, and full of mischief. Most *apropos* to a state of such excitement, the door slowly opened, about midnight, and Antonio came stealing in on tiptoe; and with a radiant glow on his countenance, he whispered me that he had just seen Maraquitta slipping into the *secretario's* cell, and heard the door bolted on the inside.

"Soho!" cried I, raising my hand; and Antonio, like a staunch and well-trained pointer, made a full stop. "Now for it, lads," continued I, "all's safe and right—we've got the old fox into cover—and now, here goes to make him break in prime style!"

Without another word of preparation, I rose from the old-fashioned, damask-covered, hair-stuffed arm-chair, which I occupied as president for the night. I immediately ripped it open, back, bottom, and sides; while Antonio, with infinite alertness, almost anticipating my orders, emptied the contents of my large powder-flask into a basin, with the remains of the brandy. I tore the horse-hair into shreds, and

mixed it well with the damp powder; while one of the party (a violin player) added a lump of rosin, and another brought from his room, next door to mine, a piece of stone sulphur. In a few minutes all the materials were pulverized, melted, and amalgamated, and we had manufactured a dozen of fire-balls, sufficient to destroy a fleet.

All being ready, I slipped off my shoes, stole across the corridor, and heaped the balls against the door of the *secretario's* cell. I then returned for a moment to my room, when a bumper being quaffed to the success of the burning, we all moved gently out, and I thrust a lighted candle right into the combustible mass.

In a moment the whole corridor was in flames. The gunpowder fizzed, the horse-hair crackled, the brimstone rosin blazed; and the conflagration was so sudden and so serious as to surprise and alarm us all. We had no notion of our own cleverness at such diabolical combinations.

Antonio instantly roared out lustily in Spanish, "Fire, fire, in the priory!" We all chorused his cry; and the first result was the instant opening of the *secretario's* door, from which Maraquitta rapidly emerged, in that sole and simple garment, called on Tam O'Shanter's Nannie, a "cutty sark." The red-headed *secretario* followed, in a corresponding costume, and burst with a lurid plunge through the flame and smoke before him. While I seized the terrified fair one in my arms, one of my trusty accomplices gave an ear-splitting view halloo to the flying *secretario;* and sung out in the words (well known to most Irishmen) of the celebrated blind piper, Kerns Fitzpatrick,

"Hoicks! Wind him, and find him, and drive him! Push the red rascal through the blackberries! Hoicks! on him, on him! tear him and eat him!"

The hunted, belaboured, and bewildered *secretario* ran forward and backward, doubled and redoubled, through smoke and flame; and at last attempting to seize the screaming Maraquitta, he received a *facer* from an experienced fist, which laid him sprawling. Lamps, candles, torches, lights of all kinds, now added to the illumination. The *padres* came running and waddling, in every direction, rubbing their eyes, calling out "Fire, Fire!" and bellowing lustily for the patron saint of the convent—but he never came. The monks were hustled, tripped up, and rolled over and over, without mercy or ceremony; and a Babel-like mixture of

French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Basque, screams, groans, prayers, curses, and confusion, completed the scene. All the pumps, pipes, and reservoirs, were put in requisition, and the whole population of the place plied their resources so well, that the danger of being hurt was succeeded by the chance of being drowned. Thinking the joke had gone quite far enough, I released Maraquitta from my grasp, and, with my fellow incendiaries, took advantage of the confusion to steal unobserved to my room.

The next morning the monastic horizon looked gloomy enough. Maraquitta was sent off at day-break to Tudela, her native town. The monks drew up a formal complaint against me, and the prior declared he would forward it to the duke. I lost no time in running to a Spanish regimental chaplain, an honest and liberal divine, and I implored his advice. He immediately prepared a counter statement, detailing such of the events of the previous night, as told for me and against the monks; the truth, a good deal of the truth, and even a little more than the truth. I addressed this remonstrance to the Bishop of Pampeluna, got it signed by all my brother delinquents, and with it in my hand boldly entered the prior's apartments. On reading it the alarmed superior turned as many colours as a dying dolphin; entreated me to drop the affair, as he did—on finding it too hot to hold; abused the *secretario*, and vowed he would send him to the Indies, that asylum for all the scum of Spanish monkery. To set the seal on our compact, he invited me to dinner; and before I had quitted him ten minutes, he sent me a twenty bottle case of prime old Malaga.

The next news I heard was that the *secretario* was banished from the monastery; and Antonio (who watched him to the last), reported that he had seen him stealing out of the direct road to his retreat, and slily taking to that which led to *Tudela*.

I had a capital repast with the prior; but left him rather early to rejoin my messmates, who were celebrating our treaty of peace in my chamber. As I crossed the corridor, I encountered the *secretario's* most close ally, the *baxonisto*, or bassoon and serpent-playing brother of the monkish band. He gave me a gloomy scowl, shook his iron fist at me, and murmured hollowly that I had not long to live. I told him of my reconciliation with the prior. This intelligence, with a cordial invitation to make one of our party, produced a

powerful revolution in his sentiments. He accompanied me to my room, got as drunk as a piper, and, sending Antonio for his bassoon, he played to our dancing, till the matin bell called him to his post in the choir.

AN AFFAIR OF OUTPOSTS.

BEING a good Frenchman, the general selected me a few mornings after the row with the *Secretario*, to proceed with a flag of truce to the enemy's lines, on a mission of rather an interesting nature.

During the retreat from Vittoria, the French army had lost not only the whole of their artillery, but almost all their baggage. Every extraneous article was abandoned; and the hot pursuit of our advanced guard forced several fair fugitives to quit their carriages, and escape on foot. One lady, the wife of an officer of rank, was so terrified at the sight of our hussars, who came suddenly close upon her and her escort in a narrow defile, that she sprang from her caleche, and with her *femme de chambre* and postilion, plunged into a cork wood that lined the pass, while the half dozen dragoons made the best of their way *en avant*. Every possible entreaty was shouted after the lady and her attendants, in English, Spanish, and French, by the officers of the party, to resume their places and continue their route unmolested. But no answer was returned from the terrified fugitives; and there being no spare time for ceremony or delay, the carriage was instantly rifled; and among the booty was discovered a child, a beautiful little girl, of four or five years old.

This was a very puzzling sort of prize to the captors. The dragoon who first laid hands on little Zoé, which was the child's name, carried her, with as much tenderness as rough arms and a rough nature allowed, and gave her up to the serjeant, who passed her on to the cornet, by whom she was handed to the lieutenant, who made her over to the captain, who delivered her to the major, who presented her to the

colonel, who felt it his duty to lay her before the general, with a regular report of the transaction from beginning to end. Thus did little Zoé run rapidly up, from the lowest to the highest rank to which her promotion could reach; for the brigade being detached from the division it belonged to, the responsibility finally lay at the brigadier's door, and he was not long in taking it across the threshold. He willingly took charge of the little prisoner; and placed her under the especial care of his servant's wife, an excellent woman, and old campaigner, who knew well how to secure whatever comforts could be had for the child, on the small scale proportioned to her infant wants, in the rapidly succeeding movements of the brigade.

During the few weeks which elapsed between the route of the enemy, and our arrival at Roncesvalles, little Zoé had become immoderately attached to her protectress, and picking up many phrases of English, she grew extremely amusing, and was a constant fund of entertainment to the general, his staff, and all the officers who could condescend to be interested in the vivacious prattle of childhood. I confess myself to have been one of those, and that was perhaps a chief reason for my being subsequently selected as a flag of truce, in the service of little Zoé.

As soon as some repose was allowed to the general, he began to make every inquiry that could lead to the discovery of the child's parents. An immediate and animated correspondence took place between him and the French commander in closest contact with our position; and a few days sufficed to ascertain that the child's mother had by good luck succeeded in rejoining her husband's division, and that she was at the moment safely with him at St. Jean-Pied-de-port, where he had a command. They had, on their part, suffered the cruelest anxiety for the uncertain fate of little Zoé. The mother reproached herself incessantly with her abandonment of her infant, and the husband did not spare himself, for the imprudence which induced him to risk the safety of both wife and child in the dangers and horrors of war. Inquiries of all kinds had been set on foot. Letters had been interchanged between the opposing generals, rewards offered, descriptions distributed, and all parties who had been informed of the event at the British headquarters, vied in exertions for recovering the lost treasure. But we, who had it in possession, were all this time the

most remote from the scene of these exertions, unacquainted with the general interest excited by the affair, and as it happened, the nearest to the parties most interested in it. When the delighted mother knew that our little heroine was actually at Roncesvalles, she repaired with all speed to the advanced quarters of the French army; and as soon as our general heard she was expected, I was dispatched to the outpost of Château Pignon, to see if the lady had actually arrived, or to ascertain if the child was to be sent in immediately to the care of the French commander.

I accordingly mounted my pony and set out, accompanied by a trumpeter and a dragoon bearing a white flag; but all this melodious and pacific display did not secure me from a danger which might have cut short my mission, my adventure, and my life. I had not gone five hundred yards beyond our outmost piquet, when a band of most picturesque marauders, armed Basque peasants, started up from among the rocks, and began popping down at me and my men from their well directed rifles. We shook our flag of truce and flourished our trumpet most peaceably, but they gave us no respite. till we gallopped clear out of the range of their fire; and two or three bullets came whizzing after us, even close to the side of the advanced vidette of the French army.

I was received at the first post by a corporal and his guard, who apologized for the uncivilized salutation of the peasants, with amazing politeness, but not enough to have extracted a bullet from me or my trumpeter, had we happened to have *caught* one, as the French say. My eyes were immediately bandaged, and I was led cautiously up a rocky and difficult path, leaving strict directions to my mouth-piece, the trumpeter, not to get garrulous or groggy —in short, to neither speak or drink.

When my eyes were uncovered, I found myself in a large, wainscotted, ill-furnished room in the old château, surrounded by French officers, with a fashionably dressed lady, and her *femme de chambre*, sitting at the table beside which I stood. A few words sufficed to explain the purport of my appearance; and about as many minutes proved enough to obtain me the gratitude and confidence of the enthusiastic Frenchwomen. When, to her rapid inquiries, I answered that her child was safe and well, and ready to be conveyed to her, her delight seemed to have no bounds; and

certainly she set none to its expression. She rose from her chair, clasped my hand in both of hers, and did all but fling her arms round my neck. The witnesses of the scene, all of them soldiers of several campaigns, felt the contagion of the mother's tenderness; and shewed all the good feeling that is sure to appear in Frenchmen whenever a child is the subject of interest.

The mother, in her anxiety to learn every particular of the capture and subsequent treatment of little Zoé, overstepped, in a measure, the bounds of strict propriety, by inviting me to accompany her instantly to the shepherd's hut, where she was lodged, and where we might converse amply and uninterruptedly. I, of course, gladly accepted the proposal, offered my arm in return, made my bow to the officers, and walked off with my new friend, followed at some paces distance by her maid Graciosa, who, by-the-by, was rather too much of a coquette for a Basque peasant girl.

My companion was a handsome brunette, not exactly of *la première jeunesse*, but of that degree of *embonpoint*, which wears gracefully in a woman of thirty, or thereabouts. It may be supposed that I viewed her with an eye of enterprise. The freedom of her manners, the warmth of her disposition, the peculiarity of her situation, seemed to mark her as a fair object for conquest.

Our conversation at first ran on Vittoria, the battle, and the retreat; next upon Zoé, in talking of whom she never tired; and with her phrases of maternal endearment, were mingled the deepest self-reproaches, against the unnatural cowardice which had suffered her to abandon an object so beloved. While she declaimed and I listened, the maid had disappeared, the hut was solitary, and I was just endeavouring to bring about a more personal turn to her discourse, when Graciosa entered, more apropos to my appetite than my intentions. She bore an overflowing supply of cold meat, poultry, cakes, fruit, and wine; and to every article of this sumptuous collation (which had travelled so far for my indulgence) I did ample though summary justice.

The lady talked as fluently as I eat fast; and warming into confidence, she almost made me the depository of a secret. Her husband, she said was, "an excellent creature, a good soldier, *une bonne pâte d'homme, d'un certain âge; brave comme son épée; mais bête! mais bête, à manger du foin.*"

A little further advance in our intimacy opened her heart still wider, but not *entirely*.

"*Ah, mon Dieu! est-il donc possible que j'aurais jamais pour ami un Anglais! un ennemi juré de ma patrie! Mais non, c'est impossible! Vous êtes Français—avouez-le—oui, vous êtes Français—mon cœur m'en fait l'assurance.*"

Being prodigiously cosmopolitan on the occasion, I swore that I was of any country she pleased; and her next communication was very nearly *a confession*.

Méchants que vous êtes, vous autres Anglais! You killed me *un bien tendre ami* at Albuera, my husband's aid-de-camp, *mon cher Adolphe!* When a woman is not quite happy in marriage, not perfectly matched, she requires a friend in whose bosom she may *épancher ses peines*. My sweet Zoé is his very portrait—*jugez donc s'il était beau!*"

All this made me the more assiduous and condoling. I offered to wipe off her tears, which flowed freely, and I told her I should be delighted if she would *épancher* her *peines* with me. She became somewhat tranquillized; again changed the subject to little Zoé; and suddenly putting on her huge black bonnet, which was half smothered in white plumes, she took my arm. and we quitted the cottage for my return to the outpost, followed by Gracioса, and escorted by a corporal and a file of men. On our arrival at the piquet, I found my trumpeter dead drunk; and while the French soldiers strove to rouse him and fasten him on his horse, Coralie (for such was her name,) walked forwards with me, close to our outlying post, where we parted, and I pursued my way to Roncesvalles, lighted by a brilliant moon.

The next morning early I mounted my pony again; and, attended by a serjeant of dragoons, I proceeded to restore little Zoé to her mother. The woman who for so many weeks had had charge of the child, was almost inconsolable at thus losing her. She had quite endeared herself to this kind-hearted woman; and when the latter lifted her up on the saddle before me, she wept and sobbed aloud. Zoé seeing her to be unhappy, cried bitterly, and the parting was really affecting. But the meeting between mother and child was still more so. I cantered rapidly on from our own outpost to that of the enemy; but I could scarcely make use of that word on the present occasion, and I was met at the most extreme point of the French lines by Coralie and her maid. She had been watching there since day-break; and

when she saw me approach, she flew towards me, and I had scarcely time to alight from my horse, when she was by my side, and embracing the child with impassioned rapture.

The mutual recognition was a spectacle worth looking on. The unbounded delight of the mother and the infantine joy of Zoé, are not to be described. They seemed to forget every thing but each other; while I, and the serjeant, and the French vidette stood, all alike, gazing on and enjoying the scene. But Coralie, Graciosa, and myself, soon repaired to the cottage, where a capital Pyrenean breakfast was spread out. I ate heartily; while Coralie feasted on the growing beauty of her daughter, and seemed disposed to devour her with caresses.

I confess that, in my observation of this maternal enjoyment, which so raised the mother in my esteem, I felt some annoyance at the check which it gave to my own individual views. But I let nothing of this escape me, and strove to enter into the scene with feelings as little adulterated as possible. I abstained from uttering a word or venturing a look that might clash with Coralie's actual sentiments; and hour after hour passed innocently away. At length I began to abandon all hope of making a further progress in the affair; and was thinking of at once making my bow, and taking final leave, with a good grace, of this now truly interesting woman, when, to my infinite surprise and pleasure, she said to me, in a whisper, that Graciosa could not overhear,

"I am all this while forgetting—no, not forgetting, but neglecting you; and I feel my ingratitude in doing so, even for a moment. I am wild with joy, in having my dear child once more with me; but my heart is not dead to other feelings. I may confess that you have inspired me with great interest, with warm regard. I can say no more at present; but if you will meet me here to-night, after my maid and the peasant family have retired to bed, I shall hope to prove my gratitude—my friendship—I can say no more!"

Seeing that I was about to reply, in a strain of great animation, she added,

"Not a word, not a word! I must not be suspected of more than a common gratitude towards you, even by my maid. Let us now part; take your leave in as careless and common-place a way as you can."

I obeyed her instructions, bade her adieu, embraced the child, wished all happiness to both, and saluted the three or

four officers who had come down from the château, with as much *nonchalance* as if I had not a thought of seeing any of the party again.

During my way back to Roncesvalles, and for the remainder of the day, I thought of nothing but my adventure, which promised so happy a termination. I was in that pleasant state of satisfaction with myself and all around me, so natural to a man after such success. My vanity was gratified by the facility of the conquest, and my love of adventure excited by its novelty. The danger to be encountered did not enter into my thoughts; they all turned on Coralie: so handsome, so interesting, so enthusiastic, and so fond of me.

I ate but little dinner, drank but little wine, and refused two or three invitations to spend the evening. As soon as day closed in I retired to my quarters, and putting on a dark grey frock, and broad leafed Spanish hat, which had served me before on some masquerading frolics, I put my loaded pistols in my pockets, took a stout stick in my hand, and set off on my adventure.

My ready boy, Antonio, contrived to unlock, unperceived, a small door in the monastery garden, by which I went out into the open fields; and making a circuit round the town, I succeeded in gaining the mountain immediately above. The moon was high and bright in the heavens, but the night was cloudy, and I thus had the alternate advantage of light and shade, lying close when the moon was uncovered, and making great way while she was overcast. By these means, and knowing all the passes, from my rambling excursions in the hills, I contrived to pass unperceived by either our own or the French piquets, and arrived without hindrance at the door of Coralie's little dwelling.

I walked cautiously and closely round and round to be convinced that all was quiet; I then peeped in at the window of Coralie's little room, which was, I knew, separated by a slight partition from the closet occupied by Graciosa. I saw Coralie sitting by the bed-side, looking tenderly on Zoé, who slept in her mother's bed. I thought the child more beautiful than ever, but also that she was not in her proper place. The mother appeared in my eyes still more lovely. I grew impatient and tapped gently at the casement. I expected that it would have been instantly opened; but instead of that I perceived Coralie put on her bon-

net and large shawl, and in a moment she came out by the door, instead of letting me in at the window. I flew towards her, and attempted to embrace her, for I was amazingly loving on the occasion.

"Hush!" whispered she, "follow me."

I did so in a pleasant kind of tremor, that arose from any thing but fear. She entered a copse of young cork trees close to the hut; and as soon as she was out of hearing of those within, she spoke to me pretty nearly as follows, gently but firmly repressing the advances which I made towards a closer alliance.

"I see you mistake me and my motives—but I am neither surprised nor angry. How otherwise could you think of me and them, than as you do? I am not, however, so light, so profligate, I may say. I esteem and regard you as the restorer of my child, the object most dear to me on earth; but that is all, my friend, for I wish to feel towards you as such. I confess myself to be a mere woman, not an angel, as you, deceivers as you are, would persuade us; but I am not to be just asked for and won. Love is the growth of *impulse*, or of *time*. If it does not spring up in a day, a month is not enough to produce it. Now I did not fall in love with you yesterday; therefore there is no chance of it, as to-night we part, in all likelihood, for ever. I set off at day-break for St. Jean Pied de Port. We may never see each other again. But to lessen the chances against what I should deeply regret—for I shall be happy, most happy to meet you again, and know you intimately and long—I have begged you to meet me here. Could you believe that for any thing less than some very solemn reason, I would have made you run the risk of passing the lines of two armies, and of being caught as a spy in ours? Hear what I have to say, and know me better than you do now.

"When I saw you this morning I was but partially informed of what I am now sure of. God knows if I am not a traitor to my country in telling you what I know; but the law of nature is stronger than that of nations. The protectors of my child shall not perish if I can save them!

"Clausel's artillery has arrived at the army; reinforcement on reinforcement is pouring in; all is preparing for a decisive, a terrible blow. Soult has sworn to exterminate you all; and in five days *vous serez écrasés!* To-day is the 20th of July; the 25th will be St. James's day, the day of

doom to the English army! I have thus fulfilled my duty—*one* at least; and in performing that, I have perhaps sacrificed another. But it is not my fault; gratitude has been stronger than patriotism—*vous m'avez dénationalisée.*"

A few words of farewell, warm, cordial, and not to be mistaken *for more*, closed our interview. What I said is unimportant. In fact, I could not utter much, for I was lost in astonishment at the new aspect in which this versatile woman appeared. Her tone and conduct during our first interview had led me to form that false estimate of her character, which too often results from the levity of manners that distinguishes her countrywomen. Her look and bearing on the present occasion, corresponded with the importance and solemnity of her warning. She seemed raised above all frivolous or merely personal feelings. I never had a more exalted sense of the capability of the female mind—of the depth of the female heart.

I retraced my way towards Roncesvalles; and trod with a much less lively step than that with which I had come over the same ground an hour before. The heavy sense of danger seemed to weigh on me. Had it been for myself alone I might not have felt it so much; but when I thought that a whole army might be compromised, that thousands of my fellow soldiers were in peril, and that their safety might depend on me, my sensations were in the highest degree awful.

I forgot for a while my own actual situation, until I was aroused from my reverie, by the report of a musquet, *followed* by a rather tardy *Qui vive?* and the well known sound of a bullet whistling, as it went past me, "for want of thought."

I turned round, and saw the French vidette reloading his piece. But I was resolved not to be his target a second time, so I took to my heels, with cautious speed, and regained the monastery unharmed and undiscovered.

SHARP FIGHTING—SPOILED FEASTING—BLUNDERING AND BURYING—PRIESTS AND PILGRIMS.

The information gained during my "affair of outposts," was too serious to be kept to myself a moment beyond that in which I could communicate it to the highest authority in the place. Next morning I accordingly reported my having obtained such information, without betraying the source from which it came. Both I and my intelligence were made light of. I was not exactly called an ass, but I am not quite sure that I was not thought so. I nevertheless remained deeply impressed with the conviction that the English army would be attacked on St. James's day.

The very morning after I had made my report, a singular coincidence of information occurred. General Murillo, who commanded a brigade of Spaniards, received a warning, perhaps not quite so direct as mine, but strongly corroborative of it. His soldiers, having no regular commissariat, were in the habit of marauding, even into the French side of the mountains, and sweeping the valleys beyond for a supply of corn and cattle. A party of these foragers had, a short time previous, seized and driven to their own cantonments, a considerable flock of sheep. The owner, a French Basque, came in and addressed a petition to the Spanish general, promising that if his sheep were restored to him, he would send regular information of every movement of the enemy. He obtained his flock undiminished, and he was faithful to his engagement. On the 22d of July, two days after my adventure, he sent in one of his shepherds, with a significant recommendation to the general, to beware of St. James's day. This notice was communicated at head quarters, and, like my own, disregarded.

In the mean time, grand preparations were made by the

Spanish brigade for the celebration of this important holiday in the Catholic kalendar. A dinner for fifty officers was ordered at the inn. I, among many other British, was invited; and I was appointed to act as one of the stewards on the occasion by General Murillo, although he, as well as myself, had a strong presentiment that the feast would terminate in a fight. On the 24th, I made another effort, through my commanding officer, to recommend a more than ordinary precaution—but in vain. At least the only results were an order to our brigade to take its position at the chapel above the town, and to fire three alarm guns, if any movement was observed along the enemy's lines. Murillo requested permission to advance into the pass between the town and the French army, and he was sent forward accordingly.

The next day, the 25th, St. James's day, Coralie's prophecy and the warning of the shepherd were terribly fulfilled. A fierce and irresistible attack was made upon Murillo and his insufficient force. He would have been annihilated in the pass had not our brigade rushed forward to his aid. A scene of desperate but unequal conflict took place. We were, after some hard fighting, turned right and left, and forced to retreat. We were only saved from being surrounded and utterly destroyed, by a heavy fog setting in; but the battle was still at intervals maintained, through all the vagueness and solemnity of the mist. We left behind us on the field half a regiment and six guns.

I was sent forward, (or *backward*, if you like better), to Roncesvalles, with a verbal despatch. As I gallopped up towards a part of the —th regiment, which was reluctantly retrograding, but in fine order, poor O'B—— had his thigh carried away by a cannon shot. I stopped, dismounted, and put him across my horse; sprang up again behind him, and moved on towards the town.

O'B—— was a thorough, rough-spun Irishman, whose blunders were notorious to the whole army. The last and greatest he ever made was while he lay bleeding to death across my horse.

"Cheer up, my boy," said I, "your life may be saved yet."

"Oh, the devil a fear of that," replied he; "the leg may go, but the life is safe; for I insured it, sure enough, the

last time I was in England, and paid doubly dangerous for it, my boy."

I had known poor O'B—— several years. I once went out shooting with him in Essex, when we were quartered together in Colchester barracks. He had just arrived from Ireland, where farming was then carried on, on a narrow scale. Even a large field of turnips was a rare sight in the arable district where he came from; but an extensive crop of red cabbage had never met his eye until the day in question, and he could not associate such a vegetable with any thing but a pickle jar. He was crossing from a grass field into one the produce of which I could not exactly discover, when he stopped suddenly, and with a leg on either side the stile, and turning to me, with the greatest wonderment depicted on his visage, he called out,

"Oh, blood and turf, Phil, did you ever see such a field of pickled cabbage!"

One day, defiling near Braganza, we passed an old and extensive mansion. "Aha!" said O'B——, "I suppose that's the house of Braganza the Portuguese make so much bother about."

On crossing the Tormes, he rode a tall horse, and put his baggage upon a pony. The consequence was, he got over dry but his kit was dripping wet. Recollecting this when we were talking of crossing the Pyrenees, he exclaimed, (thinking we meant another river),

"Then, by the powers, I'll put my baggage on the big horse this time, and ride the pony myself!"

Poor O'B—— had breathed his last before I reached Roncesvalles. The roar of cannon, the rattling of musketry, the enemy's trumpets sounding the advance, and our own bugles sounding the retreat, made altogether a din, through which I could barely hear his dying request that I would bury him in consecrated ground, as he was a Catholic. I fulfilled this injunction faithfully but hurriedly. I applied to my friend the prior, to have a grave dug in all haste in the cemetery. Two of the brethren completed a hole deep enough for my purpose, in a few hurried minutes; and the body was committed to the earth, dressed as it was, no time being allowed even to take off the gold watch and chain, and the other trinkets which the poor fellow had on his person.

This sad business over, I bade a hearty good-by to the prior,

and went out into the street. The troops were in full retreat through the town, and the approaching cannonade told me I had no time to lose. I stepped for an instant into the inn, to fill my flask with brandy, and I saw, with an envious eye, the whole display of roast and boiled, and stewed and baked provisions, almost ready for the feast.

"My worthy hostess," said I, to the landlady, "I am really sorry for your loss—not a morsel of all these good things will be eaten—we are retreating as fast as possible—'tis a race for life or death."

"It's all one to me, Señor," answered she; "Frenchmen have as good appetites as English—they will eat it, never fear—roast beef and all."

"Damn me if they do, you cold-blooded, ungrateful old fagot!" exclaimed I, in a passion; and beckoning to my little friend the commissary, who was over head and ears employed with horses, baggage-waggons, and bullocks, I obtained of him one of the carts, with full permission to use it as I pleased. I accordingly fell to work, assisted by some straggling soldiers, and maugre the lamentations, reproaches, and imprecations of the landlady, I heaved into the cart, ready roasted ribs of beef, legs of mutton, and turkeys, with fowls, hams, pasties—every thing solid, in short, leaving the soups, the fricasees, whipped cream, and *vol-au-vent*, for the hungry *Gavachos*.*

We retreated, fighting step by step. The 26th we were hard pushed at Zubiri; the 27th attacked at Urgate; the 28th at Villa-Alba; in all which affairs the French were repulsed on all points, in the latter with heavy loss. The 29th was a day of truce, to collect the wounded and bury the dead. In the intervals of this dreary duty, our people and the French regaled themselves together, with a repast of raw beans, gathered with great cordiality in the same field. Every thing being prepared, several brigades of guns mounted on the most difficult heights, and a noble attitude assumed, the morning of the 30th was ushered in by a general attack on the enemy's position. They were routed in every direction, and driven, in broken bodies, over the same ground across which we had retreated a few days before. We pressed them hard on the 31st through the beautiful

* Nick name for the French in Spain.

vale of Bastan,* and took a large convoy of brandy at Elizonde. The 1st of August we halted at Maya; *bivouacked* on the 5th at Los Aldoides, amidst torrents of rain, with no tents, but plenty of melted snow; and on the 6th we re-entered Roncesvalles once more, where I was re-instated in my old quarters in the monastery, which a wounded French chef d'escadron had occupied *ad interim*.

Almost the very first face I recognized was that of the re-instated *secretario*, and the next was that of the *baxonisto*. I learned from the latter that few of the monks had quitted the place in consequence of the French possession; and moreover that the enemy had conducted themselves remarkably well.

Being anxious to afford to the remains of my poor friend O'B—— a burial of more solemnity than the last, and also recollecting that his friends might be glad of the trinkets he had on him, as memorials of the wearer, I applied to the prior to have the body exhumed. The prior crossed himself, and answered by a plump refusal, it being, he said, contrary to the ordinances of the church to violate consecrated ground by such a proceeding. I however found a brother monk or two less scrupulous, and I had the grave opened, when I was somewhat shocked to find the mutilated remains of poor O'B—— *stark naked*.

Boiling with indignation, I hastily repaired to the prior, and detailed the fact. He shrugged up his shoulders, and exclaimed, "*Los Franceses, los Franceses!*" laying the blame on the backs of the French, they being conveniently turned. But a neighbouring carpenter assured my boy Antonio, that he had seen the *secretario* and two or three of the brotherhood, rifling the grave and stripping the corpse, the very day I had laid it there. I felt the impossibility of obtaining redress, so I determined to watch an opportunity for revenge.

The next day I was on duty with my company on the hill. While I lounged about, musing on past events and present probabilities, I heard a sudden burst of psalm-singing of most rough discordance. Looking from a pointed rock, under which I had been walking, I perceived a posse of pilgrims of both sexes, trooping across the hills from the French side, a most vagabond collection as ever prostrated

* This valley is a perfect contrast to the desolate one of the same name on the French side of the mountains.

themselves before a shrine. The field officer on duty came up to me, and ordered me to drive back these fellows without the least ceremony. I accordingly approached them, and addressed myself to their leader, an able-bodied ruffian, with a long beard, broad leafed hat, and coarse cloak, almost covered with cockle shells.

"Where are you going?" asked I.

"To Roncesvalles' shrine," replied he.

"What for?" said I.

"To pray our souls out of purgatory," answered he.

"You may go farther and fare worse," retorted I, "but not this way. You shall not pass here depend on it; so to the right about face—quick march!" and back they went, crossing themselves, (and cursing me, no doubt,) and howling most piteously, in full chorus. I never had a more thorough contempt for the humbug and hypocrisy of mock devotion.

Three mornings after this I was awoke about day-break, by a confused murmur of psalm-singing in the court-yard of the monastery. I jumped out of bed, ran to the window, and to my great surprise, saw the whole division of pilgrims, filing in through the porch, and marching towards the chapel. I learned from Antonio that, after the repulse they met with from me, they had made a wide circuit through the mountains, and entered Spain again by the pass of Orbaicety, where the guard of Spaniards allowed them free ingress, on a principle of religious toleration I suppose.

I perceived that, after about an hour of praying and singing in the chapel, the whole body were stowed away in a large room near the organ-loft; and there it was that I was resolved to play them a trick—I had not quite decided of what kind.

By the time they had, after their day's devotion, supped, and settled themselves (as they thought) to their night's repose, I approached their position, and carefully reconnoitered it. I found the door of their apartment to be old and ruinous, hanging loosely on its hinges, the pannels broken, and presenting a couple of wide and most convenient chinks, through which I intended to carry on my offensive operations. I had fixed my eye, during the day, on two handpumps, used by the monks for watering their peach trees, which abounded in the monastery garden. These were soon procured, and brought to me by my trusty Antonio;

and I as quickly placed them each in a bucket of putrid water, which he carefully selected from the greenest of the two stagnant ponds that adorned the garden.

I then collected about half a dozen of my companions (a couple of whom had been of the merry-making which we gave to the *secretario*) ; and all being ready for the assault, the pumps were placed at the breaches. I peeped in, and saw the pilgrims lying higgledy-piggledy together, old and young, men and women, lighted by a single lamp, which burned dimly before an image of the virgin, in a niche not far from the door.

I saw my worthy acquaintance, the leader with the bushy beard, stretched full length, and I thought that the sound of his particular snore was not like the mellow utterance of natural sleep. In a minute or two this suspicion was fully borne out, for the fellow, feeling assured that he was unobserved, rose gently up, and stole across several prostrate carcasses, which separated him from a young pilgrim, not of the doubtful gender, who lay in an expectant attitude, in the very niche where the statue stood and the lamp burned. The leader sat himself down beside her—but my ardour for action would not brook further delay. So I took steady aim, and let fly a pumpful from one of my buckets, directly in the fellow's beard. Antonio immediately re-loaded ; and I, without an instant's pause, sent another discharge smack against the lamp, which sputtered and expired—in any odour but that of sanctity.

" The rain is coming in !"

" Shut the windows !"

" Re-light the lamp !"

" Rouse up the brethren !" cried some.

" The rain !" roared another ; " St. Jago protect me, my eye is nearly knocked out."

Two more well-sent discharges completed the general confusion, and soaked the victims through and through. The whole body rose *en masse*, and with loud vociferations they rushed towards the door, pushing against each other, and tumbling about in every direction.

We now heard the whole fraternity of the monastery rushing up stairs in loud alarm. We therefore decamped, Antonio leading the way, with the empty buckets and one of the pumps : I covering the retreat, with the other, ready loaded, in both hands. Just as we gained the private door,

at the head of a flight of little steps which led down to my room, I saw the red head of the odious *secretario*, blazing obnoxiously in the glare of a torch which he carried above it, as he mounted the grand staircase, cheering on his brethren to the rescue.

Never did I feel my resolution more determined, or my hand steadier. Every nerve was wound up for justice. What chance, then, had my victim of mercy or escape? I planted one end of my pump on the floor, pointed the other where I wished its contents to go—and in an instant the *secretario* was struck, almost dumb and blind, with a volley of water, mud, and duck's-meat; and the very memory of his former scorching quenched in the dirty deluge.

THE CARNIVAL.

We have been told from high authority that there is a step between the sublime and the ridiculous. It is, however, a mistake—there is no such thing. Sublime and ridiculous are one and the same—co-existent qualities, of different complexions, perhaps, as looked at in different lights, but blending and blooming together, like the green and pink shades in a shot poplin. I was quite convinced of this, a day or two ago, by witnessing the carnival, to see which I came on purpose to Paris. My long wanderings in the provinces had left my wardrobe not quite suited to the display I expected to witness on this occasion; so my first business, after I had shaken off the dust of the Diligence, was to look out for a tailor, knowing the importance of appearances, as well as old Quarles himself, who tells us in his "Enchiridion," that "the body is the shell of the soul; apparell is the huske of that shell; the huske often tells you what the kernel is." Acting on this principle I was resolved to decorate myself in French costume. Decked out, then, at a day's notice, in a Polish frock, black velvet vest, with a white, a pink, and a blue one, respectively of silk, inside, Hussar pantaloons, boots *à la Vellington*, and brazen

spurs—French every bit of me, brass from head to foot, as a body might say—I sallied forth to present my recommendatory credentials to the friend of a friend of mine, M. Le Vicomte de Vaurien, who had been represented to me as one of a family wonderfully well known in France, a man of fashion, literature, science, taste, and talent; a sort of second Crichton, in short, who had spent many years in England during the emigration, and was attached *à la folie* to all that was British, and to the ancient *régime* at home.

"A pleasant sort of person this," thought I, as I approached his residence, "to lead a young fellow like me through the labyrinth of learning and pleasure; for I intended to be at all in the ring, as we say familiarly at the club. Arrived at the street to which my friend the proprietor's hand-writing on the back of the letter pointed like a finger-post, I was not very favourably struck by its appearance. It was in the heart of the town, narrow, dark and dirty; but, knowing the ways of Paris, I did not much mind all that. "No. 18, *le voilà !*" said I, entering the *port-cochère*, of a gloomy but good-looking house. Then pulling up my shirt-collar and adjusting my hair, I marched up to the landing-place of the *premier étage*, cast an inquisitive glance at the coat of arms on the pannels of a huge old family coach standing in the *remise*, and was in the act of seizing the bell-cord, when a withered old hag shot forth her visage from a dismal little den in the *entresol* below, screaming—

"*Diable donc! où allez-vous?*"

"*Qui, moi?*" I replied, rather indignantly; "*Je vais chez M. le Vicomte, Madame!*"

"*Monsieur le Vicomte! Qui est cela?*"

An odd question that, thought I. I cannot surely be wrong. "*Le Vicomte de Vaurien, Madame!*"

"*Vicomte! Bah! et c'est là que vous le cherchez! montez au sixième.*"

"*Au sixième!*" sighed I, looking up the dismal staircase, so high, that it seemed, like Jacob's ladder, to lead to a glimpse of Heaven, which twinkled through a sky-light at top. I drew a long breath of preparation for the ascent, and heard the old wench mutter below:

"*Diable l'emporte! c'est toujours comme cela vous passez partout à gauche et à droite, sans rien demanderà la portière, vous autres Anglais.*"

"*Vous autres Anglais!*" echoed I. "Rat it, that's too bad, though—she has found me out, in spite of my frock, waistcoats and pantaloons. But never mind! *Au sixième! Courage!*"

Landed at length at the summit, breathless and panting, my head dizzied by a glance over the banisters into the interminable chasm below me, I leaned for a moment against the wall, and pulled a greasy bit of faded pink ribbon that hung dangling beside a filthy little door.

"*Qui est là!*" demanded a feeble voice.

"*Moi*," replied I.

"Aha! an Englishman; wait, wait for one leeteel bit, Saer," answered the voice, in a tone of gaiety.

I waited as desired, confounded beyond measure to find that the very pronunciation of one syllable had betrayed me a second time. While I pondered on this the door opened, and a black silk night-cap popped itself out. A sallow wizened face was under it, and the head it covered was borne upon a narrow pair of shoulders, clothed in a short brown woollen jacket, appended to pantaloons of the same, forming stockings as well, and ending at the feet in a shabby pair of morocco leather slippers.

"Walk in, Saer; walk in, Saer," said the wearer of this strange costume, and still stranger phiz.

He would have measured about five feet and an inch or so, and looked a good half-century old. His upper lip was horribly embrowned with snuff, and he seemed to have but two or three straggling teeth in his head.

"Is your master at home?" asked I.

"My Got, Saer! vat you take me for? I am my master."

"I beg your pardon, Sir," cried I; "I wish to see the Vicomte de Vaurien."

"Why dat is me, my dear Saer. Walk in, Saer."

As he did not seem to wince at my mistake, my "withers were unwrung;" but any one may imagine my mortification while I contemplated the figure and abode of my anticipated Cicerone. I shall not touch my readers' sensibility on my account, by detailing the appearance of Vaurien's garret. A truckle-bed, two tottering chairs, a broken deal-table, a tarnished mahogany basin-stand, with gilded porcelain basin and water-jug cracked and chipped, and standing for show, like Goldsmith's celebrated row of broken tea-cups. These and such like commodities, are not matters to enter into a

description meant for the brightest eyes of England. I therefore draw the blanket (there being neither veil nor curtain at hand) over the mysteries of the Vicomte's abode.

A few minutes made us quite known to each other. He read my letter with attention, shook my hand with warmth, professed himself my most faithful friend and devoted servant, and finished many pleasant sayings by begging me, with an air of great *nonchalance*, to sit down while he took his breakfast. That was soon despatched, for it consisted only of a little cup of coffee without cream, which had stood simmering in a pipkin by the fire, and a small roll, of about the length and consistency of a dried herring, which lay on a shelf with the viscount's dressing-apparatus. His repast required none of the usual appurtenances of a breakfast-table, and being quietly finished, he begged me to excuse his then making his toilette. Delighted at an opportunity of being initiated into the manœuvres of a *petit maître de Paris*, I willingly accorded his pardon. He began by throwing off his black cap, and displayed a head completely covered with *papillotes*, which he, without shame or ceremony, pulled coolly from their respective curls, and folded up in readiness for the service of the night. At first sight of him I thought he had been bald, for not a straggling hair wandered on his temples Now he had a profusion of dark brown ringlets; and had I not seen the progress of de-*cap*-itation I would have sworn he had put on a wig, so that he was just as far from natural appearance one way as the other.

"Pardon, for two little moments," cried he, squeezing my hand in both of his, as he popped into a closet close by the head of his bed.

In two minutes he was back, but no more like what he was before he entered, than I like Hercules. His transformation was magical—it was "Hyperion to a satyr." A rosy flush spread over his face, and seemed faintly fading on the tips of his nose and chin, like setting sunbeams on the peaks of a mountain. A pair of false whiskers of the same pattern as his side-locks, curled upon his cheeks; and his mouth displayed a regular row of well-set teeth; while his head, in its whole *ensemble*, might be really supposed to have just glided gently off the shoulders of a goodlooking fellow of thirty or thereabouts.

I started back. He laughed. "Ha, ha! *vous ne me connaissez pas*," said he, slapping me on the shoulder;

" my dear Saer, you must not vonder at all dis. Ve Frenchmen are enough philosophers to care ver little for appearances in de house, and to know dat 'tis ever ting in de street."

I was so amazed at the metamorphosis, and so pleased with the aphorism, which put me so much in mind of myself and old Quarles, that I did not closely observe the process of his dressing, which I should otherwise have faithfully reported. I followed him with my eyes as he went on, but saw him indistinctly, and heard him chatter without minding what he said. When I recovered from my reverie, I observed him full-dressed all but his coat, wiping the cracked gilt basin with a towel, and placing it carefully in its proper stand.

" *Allons !*" cried he, as he finally settled his collar before the looking-glass, and stood revealed in all the perfumed bloom of a dashing dandy. " Now, Saer, shall we go out see de masks on de Boulevards ?"

" Masks !" exclaimed I ; " why, it isn't carnival time, is it ?"

" To be sure 'tis," replied he ; " dis is *Mardi gras*, de gayest of de gay days. Nothing but pleasure, and fun, and hosh-posh."

I may be allowed to mention here, that the vicomte is very proud of his English, and loses no occasion for displaying his familiarity with the niceties of the language, among which " hosh-posh" is a particular favourite.

I was electrified at hearing that the carnival was really going on, for the whole appearance of Paris was really going on, for the whole appearance of Paris was so *sombre*, so muddy, and misty, that I could not imagine any approximation to gaiety in the place or the people.

" *Ah, vous verrez, vous verrez bientôt,*" said the vicomte, as we descended the stone staircase, picking our steps in its perpetual twilight, and directing our course by the iron banisters.

Once fairly on the Boulevard, my friend seemed quite in his element ; and though I looked down on him from an elevation of half a dozen inches, and thought my dress exhibited a tolerable specimen of style, I confess there was something in his swaggering air, fine complexion, floating curls, and the red ribbon at his button-hole, that seemed to throw me into the shade. He talked English loudly all the time,

proud of displaying his accomplishment to the ears of his countrymen; and his observations were amusing enough. The day was gloomy, cold, and comfortless—yet the world was out. During the hour and half which I had spent in the vicomte's garret, all Paris seemed to have been suddenly infected with the wish for a walk, ride, or drive. The pathway was thronged with pedestrians; many a mounted exquisite was cantering on the centre of the pavement, between the rows of carriages going in opposite directions, in horizontal analogy to the movements of two buckets in a well. These carriages, of all sorts and descriptions, open and close, cut a poor figure to a man accustomed to the equipages of *the Park*. There was scarcely one from Long Acre to be seen. They were almost all French, gaudy, shabby, and flimsy. It appeared that though all Paris was there, yet the confounded weather kept all the decent horses at home, for such a sorry collection of jaded hacks was never before exhibited in a christian country. The masks were few and vile. Now and then a barouche hove in sight, crammed with clumsy harlequins, miserable mountebanks without a joke, or two or three stupid caricatures of old women, in "feathery furs and studded stomachers, tippets, cardinals, hoods, and ruffles." A pretended peasant, here and there, rode silently along; but there was nothing like frolic, or humour, or happiness. The vicomte pointed out to me some well-known characters in the carriages which passed; among others, in his sky-blue chariot, his brother vicomte, the romance writer, who has described in the heroine of his last work, a better masquerade figure than the whole carnival could produce. "Chargée de plumes, de fourrures, de fleurs, de pierreries, et de gaze, enveloppée d'un mantel à triple collet, et sa robe bordée d'images." I, in my turn, told my companion the names of a few of my countrymen; but I saw none who combined notoriety with the ludicrous, except the celebrated Squire Hold'em-tight, who, mounted on the dicky of a calèche, covered with a huge box-coat, whipped along a pair of pitiful hacks, and (puffing his red and bloated cheeks against the wind) gave occasion to a group near me to halloo out, "*Voilà! Voilà le bœuf gras!*"—and I certainly never saw a finer specimen of John Bullism.

While the file of carriages was thus dragging, like a wounded snake, or an alexandrine, "its slow length along,"

and every face seemed the index of a melancholy or a dissatisfied mind, the sound of martial music struck upon my ear, and presently several regiments of infantry in full order of march, moved along the Boulevards from the direction of the Tuileries, where they had been just passed in review, preparatory to their departure for the invasion of Spain. A train of artillery followed—the heavy rolling of the guns over the pavement mixing with the clash of the military bands, bringing to the mind a rush of awful combinations touching the tremendous probabilities in which these troops were going to be actors. There they were, mingled with the fantastic fooleries of the crowd—the motley crew of masks and mockeries, heavy hearts and dreary apprehensions. I gazed at the scene with a sarcastic smile and an involuntary shudder; and exclaimed, as we turned down the Rue de la Paix (Napoleon's triumphal pillar staring me in the face), "No, no, there is no step between the sublime and the ridiculous!"

LONGCHAMPS.

Pleasure is certainly the polar star of a Frenchman. He is the needle which points to it most faithfully—but one that has no variations. North, south, east or west, (for though his magnet shifts, it always preserves its attraction,) is quite the same to him. Other men make pleasure a recreation or an enjoyment. It is a Frenchman's business and happiness. His national exaggeration cannot, in this instance, go too far, nor far enough. Words have no power to express the sensation excited in the breast of a Parisian, by the announcement of a fête, a procession, the spectacle, the Carnival, or *Longchamps*. He looks at the almanack, watches the weather, counts the days, and pants through the moments in indescribable agonies of enjoyment. It is astonishing with what acuteness he catches up every flying report, and ascertains every fact, connected with the *summum bonum* of the month or the minute, as the case may be. Ex-

hibitions, which take many weeks and amazing wisdom for their arrangement, are often suspended or stopped by a sudden caprice, of which the public gets a few hour's notice. English travellers, or even those who may be residents in Paris, often cut a foolish figure, hoaxed and mystified by the undesigning frivolity of ministers, mistresses, managers, or censors. An announced airing of the king, or the playing of the water-works at Versailles or St. Cloud, or the representation of a tragedy at the Français, or a ballet at the Opera, is frequently put off at the very time that the English part of the population are swallowing their early dinner, in danger of choking from fear of being late, stepping into their carriages, or half way gone to the place of exhibition. I have known several of my haughty countrymen, who would not confess to being hoaxed even by the whole cabinet council, assert that they saw the king driving out, and comment upon his looks, on a day that I knew him to be suffering in his bed from an indigestion; and a particularly sensitive baronet once gave me a detailed critique on a tragedy, for which I had seen him take places for himself and family, but which was changed for one of Molière's comedies, by a sudden freak of the censorship, an hour before the rising of the curtain. In this case my friend might, to be sure, have been honestly deceived; for I sat in the pit, and saw him sound asleep, from the first music to the end of the fifth act.

The weather, also, frequently takes in the English. I have seen them of an evening a little misty or threatening, but a fine Vauxhall atmosphere, crowding up to Tivoli or Beaujon, though the *fête extraordinaire*, fire-works, rope-dancing, balloon, elephant, etc. had been all decidedly adjourned, and placarded all over Paris a full hour before. The fact is, as I said before, or meant to say, we do not make so much of these things. We hear of an intended entertainment, and we resolve to go to it. We think no more of it till the time comes. We employ the interval in other rational ways—reading, writing, drinking, or what not. Not so the Frenchman. He has his mind's eye always on the one object. He is abstracted from every thing else, but all alive to that. He keeps on the fidget eternally; and looks for every shifting of the minister's will as closely as he watches every change of the wind—for in proportion to a Frenchman's delight at a show is his dread of a shower. Punch

and Judy are not more necessary to his happiness, than an umbrella to his security. Amusement rules supreme as "the god of his idolatry;" but rain divides with ridicule the empire over his apprehensions—I ask a thousand pardons, his *sensibilité*. All this being matter-of-fact, it was quite a matter-of-course that my friend Monsieur le Vicomte Vaurien should present himself, according to appointment, at my lodgings the morning of Longchamps; and, the morning being threatening, it was just as natural that he should appear with a brown silk parapluie under his arm.

"My Got, how unfortunate!" exclaimed he as he came in, "de vind is veering vesterly."

"Yes, a little unlucky, no doubt," said I; "but not enough to be vexed at, Monsieur le Vicomte—it may clear up yet." He shook his head despondingly. "I am quite ready," continued I: "is your carriage at the door?"

"Vat door? Got bless my soul, 'tis at de *Magasin de Voitures à louer*."

"And how the deuce are we to get to it this raw morning?"

"*Diable!* ve must valk"—and we did walk accordingly. I may here mention, that this appeared as odd as it was uncomfortable. The spirit of our contract was, that I should go with the vicomte in his carriage: and I therefore (being at the time a downright invalid) thought it a curious circumstance that, instead of driving up to my door, he told me coolly I should walk to the carriage, instead of the carriage rolling towards me. But I thought of Mahomet and the mountain, and we set out.

A dreadful half-hour's promenade through the wretchedest part of Paris, brought us at length to a sort of bazaar for carriages; and such a collection as presented itself—

> "Barouche and buggy, tandem, random,
> Jarvey, gig and whiskey"—

would have made the fortune of a showman in England. We entered the yard, the vicomte first, in due order of precedence and propriety. I recollected the good old family-coach that first caught my attention at Vaurien's lodgings, and I pleased myself into the notion of my approaching drive in that rumbling representation of worn-out nobility, heraldic distinctions, and privileges gone by. No abso-

lute suzerain of the good old times, demanding *le droit de cuissage*, could have stepped out more boldly to put his spurred and booted leg into the bed of his new-married vassal, than did I prepare the strut which was to lead to my entrance into the family-coach of the Vauriens; but I looked round in vain for this anticipated depository of my pride. I observed, indeed, ready for immediate use, a miserable calèche, fastened with the degenerate remains of a truly aristocratical set of harness to a pair of animals that seemed modelled from the Rosinante of Don Quixote; while a scowling and surly-looking driver, miserably dressed, stood beside, and threw a look at us as if he did not like his company. All this was rather strange; nor did the aspect of things look much brighter from my observing my friend the vicomte in ardent conversation with a broad-set boisterous woman, who was evidently mistress of the place. He seemed eloquent, and she decided; and in fact, to let my readers into the secret at once, she was insisting on the vicomte's offering some security for the hire of the calèche, which was to serve as our conveyance to the delights of Longchamps. A word or two explained this to me clearly; and with the vivacity which men sometimes muster up, when they start from a fit of castle (or carriage) building, I jumped into the vehicle, calling out lustily,

"*Allons, Monsieur le Viconte! Allons, cocher! Partons, partons!*"

"*C'est assez,*" cried the woman; "*si Monsieur l' Anglais l'a choisi, c'est bien lui qui est responsable. Montez, François; montez, M. Vaurien! C'est une affaire finie.*"

The coachman and the vicomte got up at the word, and away we drove; my friend endeavouring to smother his mortification, and I doing my best to conceal my observation of his embarrassment. He went muttering on, however, every jolt over the pavement giving energetic vibration to such expressions as "Dam beast? Canaille! Hoshposh! Affront a nobleman!" I let him go on uninterrupted, and listened patiently to his cooler confession, that the carriage I had set my heart on not being his, he was obliged to hire one for the day; and having forgotten the little formality of entering into a written engagement, the wretched woman had refused to suffer him to get into the calèche, on his remonstrance at her exorbitant demand; but that my being an Englishman was security, she being protected

without papers in her transactions with a foreigner. This seemed all so plausible that I swallowed it most credulously, and we drove on; but after circumstances made me rather anxious to hear the point mooted by some legitimate propounder of international law.

The rain did not fall, luckily for the vicomte, but most unfortunately for me, for the dust rose in whirlwinds, by which I was nearly blinded, but to which he seemed quite insensible—as if "*jeter la poudre aux yeux*" was an operation as natural for him to suffer under as to perform. While driven along towards the Bois de Boulogne he gradually recovered his composure. The world began to be on the move. A few early equipages came straggling forward; and the sun darted down his glaring rays upon us, enough to raise a smile under any French mustachio, maugre the piercing north-east wind, on which the edge of every sunbeam seemed sharpened, they cut so keenly. We had nearly reached the term of our first *course* (the site of the ancient abbey, from which, and the pious processions of its tenants, the degenerate pilgrimage of our day derives its name), when I was struck by a change of countenance in the vicomte beside me, and by some convulsive twitches and contortions in his limbs, that seemed to announce a severe nervous attack.

"My dear friend, you are unwell, I fear," cried I.

"Oh, no, no—'tis nothing, nothing at all," replied he, with a dignified complacency;—but he kept fumbling at his watch-pocket, as if its neighbourhood was the seat of his malady.

"What is the matter, my dear vicomte?" asked I, impatiently. "Have you lost any thing?"

"Oh, noting, noting at all," returned he gaily; "a mere bagatelle—only my vatch; but 'tis no matter."

"Shall we return and look for it?" said I.

"Got bless my soul, no," replied he, with emphasis, "'tis not vorth the vhile. If 'tis lost, 'tis lost—dere's end of it, you know; and a Frenchman is toomosh philosopher to care for sosh hosh-posh trifle like dat" A laugh closed the sentence, and I pondered silently upon it.

The sharp wind, and the jolting of our "infernal machine," now began to produce their natural effects—for a considerable inclination to eat is the legitimate consequence of air and exercise. The vicomte, too, was in want of some-

thing consolatory, and readily agreed to my proposal that we should stop at one of the tent-like constructions scattered by the road-side, and refresh ourselves with some of the *à la fourchette* temptations of its larder. We were quickly seated, and as quickly served. A capital fricandeau, an unimpeachable omelette, a plate of cold *haricots blancs*, with oil and vinegar, for the vicomte, and a portion of *épinards au naturel* for myself, were the chief ingredients of our repast. For our sour and surly *cocher*, I ordered a bottle of vin de Surenne, celebrated for its acidity, hoping that it would bring him to good humour, on the principle that two negatives make an affirmative. He sipped it growlingly, like a cur picking a bare bone (if I may be allowed the Irishism), and I should have moralized deeply, no doubt, on his invincible savageness, had not my attention been excited by the waiter flinging our bill (for which I had called) upon the table, and by the exhibition of some symptoms in my friend and boon companion, precisely similar to those which had betrayed his anxiety in the carriage.

"What now, vicomte?" asked I, less anxiously than before, "what has got possession of you?"

"By Got, 'tis de very deevil!" was the reply, accompanied by a most abstracted air and rapid gesticulation.

"Indeed!" said I, "we must drive him out then. Fill a bumper, vicomte." As he took no notice of my summons, I did the service for him, and his left hand,

> —— "Raised
> By quick instinctive motion,"

poured the contents of the glass into their proper recipient but his right kept unceasingly rubbing about the lower extremities of his waistcoat, and had such friction only followed the swallowing of the wine it would have been natural enough, for the *boisson* was most execrable, though announced to us as "*Beaune première qualité.*"

"Speak out, my dear vicomte," said I, once more; "unburthen yourself."

"By Got, I am unburdened already," replied he: "I have lost my purse—my money—*vingt deux Napoléons—trois pièces de cent sous—sept ou huit francs—et quelques petites pièces!*"

The appalling solemnity of this enumeration, and the prodigiousness of the sum, in comparison with the circum-

stances of the loser, filled me with sympathetic alarm. I started up, and swore that I suspected the ill-looking *cocher* of having picked his pocket as he stepped in and out of the carriage. He scouted this idea as impossible I then turned the battery of my accusations upon a couple of "scurvy mechanics," who were regaling themselves at a table beside us, and proposed calling in the police for a general search. This the vicomte would not listen to for a moment, saying aloud, with great feeling, and his hand placed on his breast,

"*Je connais trop l'honneur Francais; je n'accuse personne; si le sort m'a fait perdre cette somme inconsidérable, c'est perdu : voilà tout!* But, my dear Saer," added he in English, and in a subdued tone, "have de goodness to pay de bill, if you please."

On these words he stalked towards the calèche with a very imposing and rather awful demeanour, leaving me to explain to the waiter and the other listeners the cause of his magnanimous expressions. I paid the bill, and rejoined the representative of the noble race of the Vauriens, with very elevated notions of his philosophy, and profound respect for himself and his whole family to the remotest generation.

We soon re-entered the line of carriages, and proceeded at the regulation snail's-pace adopted on these occasions. My contemplation of the vicomte, who was in a moment as lively, as chatty, and as much at his ease, as if he had found, instead of losing, twenty guineas and a gold watch, prevented me from paying much attention to the unmeaning and uninteresting procession in which I made one, and which annually sets all Paris in a flutter, and may be called *la fête par excellence* of milliners, mantua-makers, and hackney-coachmen. This spectacle of Longchamps is, of all others, the most stupid and the most devoutly worshipped of the periodical frivolities of Paris. No one of any fashion could presume to hold up his or her head for the rest of the year, if they did not, on this all-fool's day, occupy a seat in some kind of vehicle, and sit up for hours to be stared at in the open air, by the walking population of the capital. On the particular occasion which I describe, the crowd of carriages was inconceivable. But the day was not kindly. The sun was hot and the air raw. The year and the season did not pull together. The first was advanced, but the other backward—just like the ludicrous imitation of an English equi-

page which figured before me—a monstrous blue and gilded caricature of the Lord Mayor's coach, dragged by four old white horses, the leaders and wheelers pulling most obstinately in different directions, to the great amusement of the crowd, and the horrible discomfiture of the old aristocratical couple within, their clumsy postillions, with cocked hats and huge jack-boots, and the two footmen, in their scarlet cloaks and yellow plush breeches of the true cut and pattern of the *siècle de Louis XV.* This was the most barefaced revival of the *ancien régime;* but there were many minor attempts, and much laughable absurdity of our own day;—the train of king's pages, for instance, on their piebald horses, and in a most quizzical costume, with various laughter-moving efforts to look English on the part of the other equestrians, both masters and grooms.

The whole thing had the air of a forced production. The white dresses of the ladies were out of all keeping with the coldness of the weather; and a profusion of artificial flowers in their bonnets looked quite preposterous, when compared with the leafless branches of the trees that stretched their skeleton arms across the Boulevards. I was out of patience at the whole display; yet not so much annoyed by the folly of the multitude, as indignant at the meanness with which they submitted to be swore at, and rode over, and shoved, and jostled, and commanded, and abused, by some dozens of mounted gens d'armes—those military masters of the ceremonies, whose wand of office is the bare blade of a sabre, who give curses instead of courtesy, and put fears of despotism and tyranny into the hearts that should be filled with associations of joy. What hope can there be for such a people? thought I. But hold! I am afraid I have got to the length of my tether: and if I give myself more rope I may get hanged, or guillotined, or something of that sort, one fine morning.

I sat it out till six o'clock. Less would not satisfy the vicomte, and the coachman repelled my effort to quit the calèche. He insisted on my remaining until it was delivered safe and sound into "the place from whence it came." I was, therefore, obliged to suffer half a day's martydom, which may partly account for my disapproval of the show; and having paid the woman forty francs, (being double the common price, on account of the fête), I parted with the vicomte—for ever, I do believe. He gave me a squeeze of

the hand, which was forebodingly forcible, and an assurance that he would come the next morning to settle his share of our day's expenses, a promise which he most faithfully remembered to forget. And it may be well to add, that when I called on him two days afterwards, the old portress told me he had gone into the country for some weeks; and to my inquiry if he had recovered his watch and money, she replied by a turn on her heel, slamming the door in my face, and the emphatical utterance of the interjection "Bah!"

HORSE RACES—FETE OF ROSIERE—SAINT LOUIS'S DAY.

It is in vain to attempt a separate notice of all the Paris sights. They come like blushing honours, "thick upon me;" and drive me out of my pitiful retail business into a line of wholesale combinations. Horse-racing, ballooning, drunkenness, La Rosière, and La St. Louis, make but an odd jumble, I must confess. It is, like that of a modern work, "rank confusion in the orders of precedence"—but no matter; symmetrical arrangement must not be expected from a head which the last month's varieties have set spinning like a merry-go-round. The sun, that so long refused to shine, has at length burst out, and warmed into life all the ephemeral enjoyments of France. Before their flutterings subside into the winter's inanity, I must endeavour to pluck a few of those innumerable feathers which compose their butterfly wings. I have been at about twenty fêtes and fairs within a month; and being completely disburthened of the friendship, and even presence, of my quondam associate De Vaurien, I was driven out upon the stormy solitudes of public places and suburban pleasures. I was for many days tossed about on "the multitudinous sea;" borne along the moving waves of the crowd; carried forward by the gale of the popular breath (not over "spicy," to be sure) like any other privateer or pleasure-barge running ready-rigged before the wind. Continuing this maritime al-

lusion to my pursuits, I must confess in this capacity my manifold offences in my cruise after curiosities. Many a thousand have I crushed of those

"Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flowers,"

as Burns has it—or

——"These floures white and rede,
Such that men callen daisies,"

according to Chaucer—when bringing myself to an anchor, on beds

"Of daisies pied, and violets blue,
And ladysmocks all over white,
And cuckoo buds of yellow hue,"

as Shakspeare says—I have, upon getting under sail again, had the variegated reproaches of many a murdered flower, staring in the face—any one who happened to follow me. It really grieved me to the heart, to witness and partake in these floral depredations; and it is positively one of the chief evils of that propensity for everlasting dance, which entitles this nation to have St. Vitus for its patron, that there is not a spot of meadow or pasture-ground round the capital sacred from the trespasses of "*Le Cavalier Seul*," "*Chassez deux*," "*La chaine Anglaise*," and such like boisterous intruders. The fact is, that no man likes a fête better than I do. Once and away, a rural party of joyous peasants, or a group of gay *grisettes*, tripping it—not on the *green*, alas! but on "the russet lawn or fallow grey," if you will—is as pleasant a sight as one could wish.

I delight in dancing, but then I love moderation, and I hate excess, coupled with which, pleasure is (like the punishment of What's-his-name, the tyrant of old) a living body joined to a dead carcass. Now the French, at this season, at least, think of *nothing* but fêtes, and *do* nothing but dance. All the world goes capering, and there is no fear of treason certainly, for every one seems to have "music in his *sole*." A working-day must be a delightful holiday, I am sure, when they can, without being singular, put their feet at full length upon the ground, for at present, all, young, old, well or ail-

ing, are from Sunday morning to Saturday night "on the light fantastic toe"—except one hideous fat old woman, who nearly crushed the corn of my left foot with the tread-mill pressure of her heavy heel the other day, at the horse-races in the Champ de Mars. And this reminiscence brings me round quite naturally to my subject.

Horse-racing, then, in France, is precisely what opera-dancing is in England, or opera-singing in America. None of them are indigenous to the soil; the natives are not cut out for such exercises of the arm, the leg, or the voice. The performers must all be imported; for the home-breed, in their various ways, are too much or too little refined for the several accomplishments. It ever will be thus in countries so remote in manners and institutions. The social soil can never be ploughed, nor the national feelings harrowed up, so as to bring forth the fruits, which are looked on as the productions of a barbarous or a degenerate clime. Would John Bull give his Newmarket for L'Académie Royale de Musique—for which last word read *danse?* Not he! any more than an independent Yankee would barter his hard-earned liberty, for the emasculated refinement that

"Squeaks and gibbers in the Roman streets."

For my part, I am always happy to see a people gazing with pleasure, in the heart of their capital, on an exhibition of foreign skill, which they, nevertheless, most heartily despise. It is a proof of independence of feeling; of a notion of self-superiority in matters of importance, without which no people can be great: and, above all things, it satisfies me that, in my time at least, there is no danger of those distinctive features being rubbed off, which keep all countries from becoming (the most abhorrent of improvements to my mind) one great, undistinguishable, monstrous family. I love to hear an Englishman allow the French to be the best dancers, and a Frenchman acknowledge us to be the best boxers in the world. There is something so *naïve* in the fist, and so unso*fis*ticated in the latter; and the admission is always made with with so truly national a toss of the head, or shrug of the shoulders, as the case may be! Vestris and Paul, kicking their heels against the fly-scenes of the Opera-house, are objects of high delight and deep contempt to the applauding English audience—while Tom Cribb or

Rendall, making their best display in the Champs Elysées, would amuse the Parisians, while they pronounced the pugilists to be barbarians. These national incongruities are all as they should be. What we are proud of, the French despise, and *vice versâ*. We are, like our roast beef, too underdone and too plain for their palates; and they, like their fricassees, too unsubstantial and too *saucy* for ours. It is just as *morally* impossible for John Bull and Monsieur de Grenouilles to have the same notions of politics and pleasures, as it is *phizically* impossible that they could resemble each other in features or complexion. As to horse-racing, in which we excel, it is a matter of course that the French should botch it. To succeed in such a pursuit, men must, of all things, love the country, and have a relish for rural pleasures. Of them the French gentry know little or nothing, beyond transplanting their natural productions to the towns; and probably the greatest burlesque existing is the annual exhibition of horse-racing in the capital of France—from the simple reason, that the actors and the spectators have no sympathy in common. The place, too, appropriated, but not adapted, for the race, is enough to destroy all enjoyment of it; and has been chosen only from a stupid revolutionary imitation of the ancient Romans, who held their Fasta Equiriæ in the Campus Martius. Instead of a smooth and level turf, against which, with us, the noble animals strike their elastic limbs, and bound along in grace and beauty to the goal, here they plough through an immense bed of sand, labouring and panting, and covered with a coat of dust and sweat, jaded and disheartened, and looking any thing, in short, but what one expects in a "high-mettled racer." Such as the thing is, it is almost wholly in the hands of Englishmen. A French jockey rarely appears; and the only gratifying object, to my eyes, in the display, was the knowing air with which the riders mounted their steeds, and gave them their preparatory canter through the ranks of gaping *spooneys* about them. It was amusing, too, (though somewhat humiliating from its anti-English look) to see the winners of the prizes, two thorough-bred horsedealers, with all the blunt and rather slangish air of their profession, lead their respective horses up to the foot of the balcony (from which the Duchess of Berry superintended the scene), preceded by a band of music, and escorted by a troop of horse-grenadiers. I did not much like to see my

two countrymen twirling their hats in one hand, stuffing the other into their breeches-pockets, and looking altogether so confoundedly *gauche* in the presence of "les augustes personnages." I could not help smiling, however, when they took their silver coffee-pot and ewer away in triumph under their arms; and as they gave their several scrapes of the foot, and bobbed their bows up to the balcony, and turned off upon their heels, I thought I distinguished on each of their countenances an expression that seemed to say, "All my eye, Betty Martin!"

Next came Mademoiselle Garnerin and her balloon; and they were much more to the taste of the spectators—she gracefully bowing and looking gaily; it moving along, gaudy, inflated, and "full of emptiness." Up she sailed upon her aerial voyage, not to go round the world, but merely (a hard task, alas!) to get above it; and if a man may judge of his fellows by his own feelings or their faces (most uncertain tests, I allow), there was scarce a looker-on who did not, in the enthusiasm of the moment, wish to be yoked in the car with the adventurous nymph, "fat, fair, and forty," as she looked to be.

I had long had a desire to *assist* (as we say in France) at *la fête de la Rosière*. Early associations, boyish imaginings, Madame de Genlis, and other delusions, had fixed this inclination deep in my mind. Pastorality and purity, innocence and ingenuousness, and such animating alliterations, floated before me, and, as might be expected, prepared me for—an utter disappointment. I had gone to the *Champ de Mars*, my brain crammed, like a Yorkshire newspaper, with the anticipated joys of horse-racing, and I came away knocked up like a sorry hack—there are various kinds, reader, as the booksellers could tell you. I went to the fête of the Rosière, my head as full as a flower-pot of bloom and fragrance, and I returned with every expectation as withered as the faded wreath that adorns the image of the Virgin over the porch of Suresne church. There never were such cruel pains taken by a Curé with or without the commands of his superiors, to render common-place and unpopular an institution full of sense and sentiment, as have been taken in the present instance by the Curé of Suresne. The fête of la Rosière, established on the basis of national feeling and true morality, was in its origin meant to reward with a garland (full as honourable *per se* as a blue ribbon) the girl of

the village, who combined the best life with the most graceful demeanour. To-day the whole matter, if I am rightly informed (and I beg that this clause may be a *saving* one), has become an affair of paltry intrigue and party prejudice. The fortunate maiden last year was the daughter of the maire! Now, though I would no more exclude the progeny of a *maire* from the right to the Rosière, any more than the prize of the horse-race, I think the public functionary ought not to have let his daughter enter the lists, lest the people might suppose *his* situation to have some influence in *her* success. They think so at Suresne, I can assure him; but the discontent is at its height this summer, from the Curé having refused the claims of all the girls of the village who could be convicted of having gone to a fête or a dance during the year! Imagine this in France—on the banks of the Seine—within sight of Paris! It is the most preposterous innovation of modern *épurations*, for it strikes at the very root of national manners and character. A French girl entitled to be crowned Rosière in proportion as she is ignorant of "Balancer and Rigadoon!"—why it is worthy of John Knox, who did not deal harder with Mary, his gay-mannered and French-hearted queen, than this Curé with his virgin parishioners. There were, as may be supposed, scarcely any candidates; for the favoured maiden, instead of being "one in a hundred," was, of course, only one out of four or five; and these no doubt the pious *wall-flowers* of former ball-rooms, who, unable to get a flesh and blood partner in a mortal quadrille, have been forced to waltz through the year with the memory of some dead-and-gone saint of the second century. Mademoiselle Julienne, something or other, may, therefore, arrange her garland before the looking-glass, without exciting the least envy in the majority of her fellow-villagers.

As for me, I turned from the contemplation of these puny contentions to the overwhelming enjoyments of "*La Saint-Louis.*" Here, thought I, I shall see something worthy of the genuine fête of religion and royalty combined. Saint Louis and King Louis are to be celebrated together to-day—the throne and the altar—regal splendour with christian piety—all the national virtues consecrating a few of the national vanities—civility and sobriety walking hand-in-hand with gracefulness and gaiety! That was something like a combination for an amateur of fêtes;—so away I trudged in

king could be honoured, or a saint be glorified, or a man be bettered, or Heaven be pleased, by such a scene!

I pondered all this so deeply, walked so fast, and used such energetic action as I inwardly debated, that I saw I had attracted the remarks of some of the agents of that multocular monster—the Police; and fearing to be taken up for a malcontent, I wheeled away through the trees, and took French leave of the place.

BELGIAN SKETCHES.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following papers are no more than they profess to be, *sketches* of a country which I have not known long enough to know it well. I have, however, seen sufficient of the world to know the fallacy of first impressions; and I am, therefore, cautious in forming opinions of nations, except on points of mere external physiognomy. In individuals, even *these* may be made subservient to their designs on the observer; but a whole population cannot change its face for the purpose of deception. There are certain striking features peculiar to a people. When *they* appear what they are not, the deception is engendered in the brain of the observer. He sees things under influences purely personal; he is affected by pre-conceived opinions; and measures the objects he looks at, by the scale of his own qualifications, not by their qualities. No wonder, then, that many learned and estimable authors are mistaken on self-evident points, and thousands of travellers after them, who love to take things for granted, and look at them with other eyes than their own. The generality of writers of "visits" and "tours," following in single file, like Indian warriors on a hostile expedition, know nothing to the right or left of the path, each being only mindful to tread in his predecessor's track. They thus form their notions of character from sources where it does not in reality exist; they mistake decomposed materials for masses of solid combination; and believe that they depict a nation when they describe its metropolis.

Another mistake of most authors appears to me their readiness to notice faults of character, in preference to merits. They slide over the smooth sward of national virtues, without remark; but cannot see a pebble on their path without making it a stumbling block. They prefer what is singular and striking to that which is general and passive. They find the former in national *defects*, for these, like individual failings, stand out in full relief. They are the "beaked promontories," against which most voyagers are afraid of striking, which they describe with a sudder, and fly from without examining. But each jutting rock is furnished with its beacon, not only to warn the stranger of peril, but to light him to safety in many a verdant recess. In the French revolution, for instance, the most marked objects, view it from what point we will, are its crimes. But if we boldly enter on the scenes of their commission, how much redeeming softness, what a fund of downy virtues may the mind repose on, to save us from misanthropy, and teach us to be men.

But just allowance is rarely made for the faults of nations. We forget that they often spring from the elements of purity — that a primitive virtue may run into excess— that a spark of brightness may be blown into a conflagration. Alarmed and offended at the glare, we would extinguish it entirely, and leave ourselves in the dark. It is not better to soften the light, than smother it? — to shade our eyes, than completely close them? — to leave ourselves at least the means of seeing our way through the labyrinth in which we are self-involved?

To come at the real, distinctive character of a nation is a matter of great difficulty: it is formed of such varying shades—such infinite blendings — so cameleon like in the shifting accidents of its moral atmosphere! It is easy to talk of fixed principles, and unbending distinctions. Where are they to be found? In individuals? Shew me the mind that *may* not be warped by circumstances—the nation that *must* not be changed by events. Are the English people what they were before the reformation—the French the same as before the revolution? And what may not Greece become again in the splendid renovation that awaits her? or Ireland, in the gradual removal of that mass of misrule, which still covers her prostrate energies?

But this, perhaps, is "wandering from the record." I

have now to deal with Belgium; and to no country in Europe do most of the foregoing observations apply more strongly. It is, I think, every way undervalued by travellers. An inconceivable ignorance as to its capabilities, even to its very boundaries,* is observable in many works upon it. Writers of *romance* can find no matter for their pens, and seem, with one truly brilliant exception,† to abandon it in despair. I nevertheless conceive it to be rich in subjects of great variety; and see in its many incongruous peculiarities abundant materials for illustration. I by no means attempt to say that I have been able to avail myself of them. They are objects that catch the eye of the traveller, but which the hand of the sojourner alone can reach.

I admit that there is much that is repulsive at first sight: many faults that shew nothing evidently redeeming. A Spaniard throws an air of chivalry into his fanaticism—the bigotry of a Belgian is as dull as it is gross. An Irishman "disguised" amuses by his humour; the bright spirit of his whisky evaporates in fun or fighting. The drunken Belgian is besotted as well as brutified—he is but a fermented beer barrel. The avarice of a Dutchman is based on calculation—that of a Belgian on cunning. The petty cheateries on the road, the impositions of the swarm of blood-suckers that fastens on the traveller, are the plodding realities of roguery. A picturesque highwayman, or sentimental pickpocket, never appears. Elsewhere one is cheated sometimes; but *here* one never escapes. I met with more exactions, I lost more articles of dress, in a few months rambling through Belgium, than in twice as many years of travelling and residence in France. Yet, after all, I maintain that there is much of individual and natural good to be found, by those who will take the pains to seek it—and I (like my countryman) think "the trouble a pleasure."

The Belgians are reproached by strangers with having *no* national character. Their native writers labour hard to prove that they have two or three I acknowledge myself to believe that they neither have, nor can yet have, any so marked and settled, as to be considered peculiarly their own. Centuries of subjection to various European powers, all

* *Les Fastes Universels* state the geographical divisions of Belgium to be precisely what they were under the Austrian dominion.

† Quentin Durward.

widely opposite to each other in manners and customs, have left among the Belgians evident traces of inconsistency, modified by time, and by one brief and brilliant era of liberty. The taint of each separate tyranny blends with the bright colouring of freedom; and their faults combine with courage, humanity, industry, and pride.

The Netherlands form at this moment a new country; and their various provinces are, for the first time, an acknowledged, independent, *uncontested* state. In this aspect they become a subject of peculiar interest. They possess moral varieties proportioned to their chequered scenery. They know their own limits, their masters, and their laws. Under the inspiring influences of a constitutional government, a liberal king, and a gallant heir-apparent, they take a present stand, and promise a continued place among "the nations;" and they inspire me at once with interest and inclination to sketch the outlines of a portrait which some abler hand will, in time, fill up and finish.

THE FRONTIER.

THE view from Mount Cassel, on the northern frontier of France, is, I believe, unequalled in its kind. Prospects of infinitely greater variety, and consequently of superior beauty, abound even in France. England possesses landscapes, seen from many an eminence, of more isolated richness. Mountain scenery, in all countries, leave it no chance of comparison in point of actual extent—but it is nevertheless unrivalled.

The eye, taking in a circuit of about twenty miles depth from the point of observation, but particularly directed towards Belgium, reposes on a mass of vegetable wealth, a profusion of deep green, which might rival the savannahs on "Susquehanna's Side." This luxury of foliage marks the scene as one of nature's most fertile districts; and man has not been less prodigal in proofs of his preference. Upwards of thirty towns, and thrice as many villages, distinguishable from the eminence, shew that civilization has long been established in these verdant plains; and we may fancy the immense population that swarms over the teeming soil.

It is this combination which forms the extraordinary charm of the prospect. It is the vastness and the wealth united—the evidences of fertility and industry—the alliance between nature and art. But almost all that constitutes *beauty* in a landscape is wanting. There are trees and spires—that is all; and these in such monotonous profusion that they soon fatigue the sight. There are no rivers; not a hill except the one we stand on; no visible ruins; no contrast, in short, no *variety*—and, without *that*, what view is beautiful?

No sooner is the first burst of astonishment gone by—and such is certainly excited—than we begin to find fault with the scene; and what caused such wholesale surprise we instantly depreciate in detail. In the broad plain of verdure we see only what is "flat and stale," though we cannot in conscience add "unprofitable." The thin veil of vapour, which seemed a fine spun tissue, covering the fertile soil, now takes the aspect of an unwholesome mist, engendering disease, and shrouding death. The spires which rise up around seem emblems of an insolent religion, lording it over the land. Nothing strikes us as romantic, wild, or picturesque; and we prepare to plunge into this low region already tired of its monotony, and half suffocated by anticipation in its marshy atmosphere.

It matters little to the reader *when* it was that I stood on Mount Cassel, or whether it was on my first visit or my last that the sensations arose, which I, with the license of authorship, have supposed common to all; or whether my feelings received their colouring *from*, or imparted it *to* the scene. But however different persons might be variously affected by its individual peculiarities, there is one feeling which I am sure is general, not confined to the immediate spot which I describe, but arising on every view taken of a rich and pastoral landscape in solitude—and more strongly, in proportion as the weather is mild and the atmosphere serene. I mean the deep melancholy which steals upon the mind while contemplating a prospect unanimated by human beings, and unassociated with feelings of local attachment. All its beauties seem steeped in pensiveness, and an undefinable heaviness weighs the spirit down. Yet we do not the less enjoy the scene. Its charms are felt, perhaps the deeper, from the accompanying sadness in which they seem involved. The brighter the sun, the more powerful these sensations. If the distant hum of villages, or the chiming of church bells, come swelling on the air, they but add to the depression; and it is then the mind is most prone to long for those distant objects of affection, far beyond its covetous grasp, and who alone are wanting to turn the oppressive scene into a paradise of joy.

It was a glorious morning in midsummer, when I descended the paved causeway that winds round the hill; and, soon losing sight of the suburbs of Cassel, I was entering one of the passes of the vast and populous plain, which did not contain a thing to excite my interest, nor a being whom

I knew. As I had no particular object but *to break new ground*, I cared not whether I turned to the right or the left; and unfurnished with itinerary, map, or guide, it was totally by chance that I took the road to Poperingues, the nearest town within the Belgic frontier.

Approaching the confines of a new country, one naturally becomes watchful and anxious for the distinctive marks which are to tell you that you have quitted the old. We expect, at least, to find in the natives the proud consciousness of a line of demarcation, on one side of which they may stamp the impriat of their home-born attachment, and on the other, if needs be, fix their foot in prompt invasion of the *foreigner*. Sound policy in governments would surely encourage a separate *feeling*, although the differeuce were as unreal as the imaginary line that divides the globe. For national *prejudices* are not more odious than national *distinctions* are wise. People divided from each other, by a sea, a river, a chain of mountains, or even a *rivulet*, as the Spanish and Portuguese, are totally distinct in character and habits, because they can point out their boundary; and, fancying some magic in the visible limit, attribute to the soil or the climate (which are the very same) results that arise from opposing institutions, founded on the feeling of a separate independence. Their pride is thus blended with the love of country; while hatred and contempt of the neighbour that *is* the rival, and *may* become the foe, seem the natural consequence—the dross in which the ore is enveloped. To shake off the one and preserve the other, to foster a generous rivalry and discourage a brute enmity, should be the true aim of civilization, and the great object of good government. But to give a people these feelings, in relation to their neighbours and themselves, a marked and evident boundary between them seems essential. Napoleon maintained that the Rhine was the natural limit of France. It, or some other as decided, most certainly is, in the point of view in which I consider the question. But the mockery of a separation, which exists between the Netherlands and France, is wholly destructive of the feelings I advocate, and actually blends the natives so completely together, that the very notion of a *frontier* seems absurd.

Trudging along the sandy defile which leads from Cassel to Poperingues, I vainly inquired for the frontier line. The former town having been, until the last division of this part

of Europe, included in Flanders, although it is now in France, Flemish is spoken there exclusively, except for the accommodation of strangers. As I advanced into the country, the peasants understood no other language, and I was hard set to work my way, with the scanty knowledge I possessed. Not one of those I questioned was able to ascertain or describe the object I asked after. Some gave me to understand that *they* did not understand *me*. Others told me I was still in France—*but* that, if I continued my journey, I should infallibly reach Belgium. One man explained the frontier to be a narrow drain, cut in the soil *somewhere thereabouts;* but as to the exact spot, *that* I could not divine.

I at length gave up the point, and went forwards, through fertile tracks of what looked, notwithstanding its high state of cultivation, like reclaimed swamp, which sent up teeming crops of corn, flax, and tobacco, while hop plantations were thickly scattered around. The whole scene was rich, to exuberance. It was utterly cloying. It was "a land of honey," in which one's feet seemed to stick. The air was damp and clammy. The heavy smell of the flax, as it lay soaking in the stagnant pools, brought with it the worst associations of ill health. Ague and fever seemed abroad —and I hurried on, as if escaping from a lazar-house.

NATIONAL TRAITS.

WHILE I thus trudged on, oppressed with heat and that suffocation of feelings which I attempted to describe in my last sketch, I found a very important, though rather common-place, sensation stealing on me, in the guise of a downright fit of hunger. A house opportunely presented itself at the road side, with a broad announcement that there was no sacredness in it; but that all comers might, at all times, violate its sanctuary. A smartly painted board, fixed over the door, spoke thus plainly—

"HIER VERKOOPT MEN DRANKEN
"EN LOGIERT MEN TE VOET ENTE PEERD."*

"If," thought I, "the *lodging* be as neat as the *board*, a weary traveller may be well off in this hut: but who would be, of all callings on earth, a publican!—himself the slave of every passer by, while the very *penetralia* of his home is common to the commonest fellow who shakes the dust off his shoes over the threshold?"

"Give me a glass of beer!" said I, in lordly illustration of my moralizing, and in very good Flemish, although it was but plain English.

"Ya, Mynheer," said a clumsy wench, giving me the liquor.

"Brooed!" said I.

"Ya, Mynheer."

"Booter!"

"Ya, Mynheer;"—and she accordingly placed before me a lump of salt butter, and a *hoop* of coarse bread, which might have been used as a Brobdignagian wedding-ring, and served for separate maintenance afterwards. I got through my repast, which was eked out by a piece of abominable Dutch cheese, as quickly as possible, for I was thoroughly tired of my company—four or five boorish fellows, every

* Liquor sold here,
And lodging for man and beast.

bows which give to our coachmen such a peculia individuality. Your Belgium driver, snugly seated in the corner of his cabriolet, does not fatigue his neck, nerves, or muscles by exertions like these. An open look of recognition, or guttural grunt or two, is all that he deigns to bestow on his friends as he *goes;* but on his *return* he is sure to smoke a pipe, and drink a draught of beer, at every house that will afford fire for the first, and hospitality enough for the second. But in general, there is a matter-of-fact, road-book kind of accuracy about these fellows. They give you information as the pump gives water: you must eternally ply the handle; and they go at a jog-trot that would tire the patience of any one but their horses. Three miles an hour, in a by-road, is their regular pace. They are phlegmatic to the last degree. Nothing can upset them, any more than their vehicle; and both one and the other are so used to the rough work of life, that the easy indifference with which they jog along is quite a nuisance to a man who cannot so patiently endure it.

During the time that I observed the very different kind of animal from those which I have been describing, and wondering how he could belong to such a *genus*, he, of course, took his mental measure of me. He eyed me sharply for a minute or two, jogging on beside me as I walked along, and humming his *refrain* all the while; at length, pulling up, and coming to a full stop, he said, touching the tassel of his cap by way of salutation—

"Well, Sir, I can only say that if you were driving this return cabriolet, and I walking up to my ankles in this confounded road, I should not, most assuredly, let you pass me without asking for a place."

Following his example, I called a halt, and replied, that I preferred walking to going at a snail's pace in such a vehicle.

"Why, to be sure," said he, "we do not go at full gallop, and I cannot say much for the carriage; but it is not *that* I mean. A baggage-waggon would suit me as well as the king's coach, provided I had *company*. That's what I want. I hate being alone. I am obliged to sing myself hoarse, to keep up my spirits. In short, we are going the same road, it seems; I pass through Poperingue, and stop at Ypres, and if you are so disposed, Sir, I offer you this vacant seat, and shall be proud of your company."

So fair an offer and so original a companion were not to be resisted. I had no road to choose; so I stepped into the cabriolet, and away we went.

"Well, nothing surprises me more," continued my companion—for any little pause or interruption did not in the least seem to break the thread of his discourse, it only put a knot on it—"nothing surprises me more than to see any man on foot who is able to pay for a carriage or hire a horse. As for myself, the whole length of my walking is from the stable into the court-yard, and then, pop! I spring into my cabriolet, and feel as if the seat was part of me! But never mind that—there is no accounting for fancies. Well, Sir, and what do you think of this country? for I see you are a stranger. So am I, I might say; for though I was born here, and christened with beer and tobacco, like my countrymen, and had a good education thrown away upon me, I passed all the best part of my life in the Lancers of the Guard, and made my first bow to *Messieurs les Anglais* on the field of Waterloo. Nothing could tempt me to pass my whole life in such a country as this. The women, with an exception or two, are mere lumps of mortality, and the men have not one idea to knock against another!"

This harangue was not delivered as consecutively as it is written: it was spoken in fragments, interspersed with snatches of his song; and I have forgotten a good deal. My occasional replies and observations are not worth noting; but this ran on the voluble tongue of my comrade, as we entered a little, close, asthmatic-looking village, smothered between high hedges and trees, and seeming impenetrable to a breath of air:

"But what signifies, after all, whether a man be Belgian or Frenchman? Yet the miserable beings of this place presume to quarrel about it. This is the frontier village, ridiculously enough arranged. The road, running in the middle, is the line of separation. The right hand cottages are in Belgium, the left in France. The widow Vanderbroeckellen, there, on one side, sells you tobacco at ten sous a pound; while her opposite neighbour, François Delaporte, must charge you ten francs; and at that house, on the French side, you may drink a bottle of wine for a franc, that is prohibited to the envious and thirsty dog who lives *en face*. Such are our custom-house laws, and a nice nest of smugglers they hatch here! And look at those two fellows, searchers of honest people—one French, the other Belgian—how they eye us from each side of the road! This village of La Belle, as it is called, I consider to be a stone-

and-mortar reproach against two governments that think themselves, no doubt, very wise; and as for the stupid dolts that people it, imagine their coming each half way into their common street to fight for the honour of their *different* countries!"

"I am heartily glad to hear *that*," thought I; "it *does* look like national feeling:" but I did not care to interrupt my companion, and we left La Belle behind us.

"There they go!" exclaimed he, as we were about a mile out of the village—"there they go, the real boys of the by-ways! Look at those light-footed fellows!" and I remarked, emerging from a little lane, five or six uncommonly active young men, but reckless and vagabond-looking, each with a stick in his hand, and four, five, or more bladders slung over his shoulder, and dangling against him.

"And who are they?" asked I.

"All smugglers," answered he; "brave, open, day-light fellows, who care no more for a gens-d'arme or custom-house officer, than for you or I. They have just come back from selling their tobacco in France, and are well laden with brandy in return. They have made a round to avoid the village, and are now on their road, fearing neither man nor devil."

As he spoke, two mounted gens-d'armes appeared—a loud shout from the smugglers gave the salutation—and, in an instant, the whole gang were across the hedges, and away into the thick-planted fields beyond. The gens-d'armes put spurs to their horses, drew their swords, looked in a terrible passion, and kicked up quantities of dust, galloped about, up some lanes, down others, swore, quite like troopers, and at last rode off in a quiet pace, side by side, having, no doubt, done their duty most faithfully.

We had not gone far when another official *satellite* of government, one of those infesters of the Belgic highways, a custom-house searcher, peremptorily stopped us, and, in no very civil mood, ordered us to descend. Then commenced a search of the carriage, of the most rigid nature. Every hole and corner was looked through and into, my small package rummaged, as though it contained a hogshead of brandy — and we were at last dismissed on our way.

While this examination went on, I said to the sworded and belted inspector—

"Do you know, my friend, that while you are wasting

your time here with this empty cabriolet, you are letting real game escape you in the woods yonder ?"

"Never mind that, Sir—I know my duty," was his reply.

"And take care of your *interest*," was my retort—for I was vexed with the fellow, and had no doubt of his being bribed by the smugglers.

But the most offensive *fixtures* of the roads, were the numerous huge wooden representations of the crucifixion, which always appear to me like blasphemous caricatures. They, nevertheless, excite different sensations in the country people, for at the foot of each of them, one is sure to see one or more persons at prayer. As we passed one of these, the driver observed, looking at the image—

"That is religion, as they call it. Very well! were I king, I would encourage it; for as long as a bungling carpenter and a little paint are in the country, I'll engage to rule it by the aid of these—the *true* magistrates of Belgium. Here is Poperingue—now do you think the burgomaster and eschetins have half the authority of that image? Not they, I promise you—and to tell the truth, little worthy of authority they are! Look at this nice little town, capable of thriving, if the rich inhabitants had common spirit. But there are full a dozen of them with an income of forty or fifty thousand francs a-year each—and how do they apply it? Put it up in a strong box, and live like poor burghers on little or nothing, smoking their pipe and drinking their beer in the pot-house, talking of hops, and playing their game of ninepins! Such is a fair specimen of the small towns of this country; and you may see how far civilization has crept in, when these louts wear bob-wigs, short breeches, striped stockings, and brass buckles in their shoes. No, the reformation of loose pantaloons has not even fallen on them—and how can such a country thrive?"

After we had baited the old horse, who ate well, and seemed as if he could go on at his own pace for ever, we took again to the road, for I had no inducement to stay in Poperingue, and we were soon on the well-paved causeway that leads to Ypres. During the two hours, consumed in covering the two leagues that separate these towns, my companion was not idle; and the following was the material part of his most fluent communications. I thought it worth noting down, for I own it really astonished me, coming from the source it did. His observations, at the time, appeared

excellent, and I was afterwards confirmed in my opinion that they were so, for a reason which the reader shall hear in good time.

"Why, Sir, the fact is, that Belgium is so little known to strangers, that one might call it sequestered from the rest of Europe. Its history, its geography, the national character, are all misunderstood, and that because the books of our days are composed from those of former times—because writers prefer seeing with the eyes of others to the trouble of using their own. When an author has proclaimed that superstition and fanaticism are the foundations of the Belgic character, he thinks he has done every thing. But let us examine the fact, and look back a little. After the fall of the Roman empire this country shared the common fate. Devastated and torn to atoms by its own people, Belgium gave birth to that spirit of restlessness, and we may say mutiny, which has been perpetuated even to our days. By and by came the Spanish domination, and that lasted too long not to have influenced our character, and we must confess that after three hundred years that taint is not effectually washed away. In the heroic struggle against the tyranny of Spain, Belgium, in making common cause with the Dutch, could not help coming into close contact with them. Religious differences separated them again, and there remained nothing to us from the association but a strong dose of avarice. The dominion of the House of Austria, our struggles for short-lived independence, the French Revolution, and the final settlement of our country into an acknowledged independent kingdom, must necessarily have all more or less influenced the manners and the character of the people. It is thus that, formed from so many various elements, they bear a portion of the features which distinguish each of those nations; and it is the indecision of character consequent on this, that gives them a physiognomy so difficult to be seized by the pencil of the writer. We are neither Germans, Spaniards, nor French. We have picked up from each a little of what is good, and rejected a great deal that is bad. We have remained Belgians, neither more nor less, with all that contrariety of character so puzzling to strangers who have not studied it. If a Belgian appears indifferent and cold, it is less from reality than for convenience sake; he is economical without being actually avaricious; studious and fond of ease; unimpassioned; averse to novelties; at

once sober and glattonous; modest, yet presumptuous; cold in his amours; and terrible in his enmities—he seems, I must allow, an eternal problem of indecision, and displays a plurality of character that exists but in him."

This was, I think, the last sentence I heard from my lecturer, for an accident happened to me which I trust may not occur to my readers—I fell fast asleep; and we were at the gates of Ypres when I awoke. My companion was carelessly humming a tune, and when I opened my eyes, he "hoped I had had pleasant dreams." I assured him I was much edified by the information he had given me, and ventured to express my surprise at all he had uttered.

"Why, Sir," said he, with a most consequential and imposing air, "the fact is, I observe a little, think a good deal, and sometimes read; and I am happy to give any information in my power to a stranger whenever I happen to fall in with one. This is the *Bras d'Or*, the best inn in Ypres. Let me set you down here, and bid you farewell; only recommending you not to stay more than a day or two in this place, the unhealthiness of which is proverbial, as a sickly-looking person, all over Flanders, is called 'a death's-head from Ypres.' Adieu, Sir."

I returned his civilities in the way most congenial to his expectations, and we parted excellent friends. I had a capital dinner, most comfortable lodging, and civil attendance; and I strolled out, to pass away the evening, rather than from any particular curiosity about the place. I walked round the ramparts, out at one of the gates, and in at another, and paid my homage to the royal arms, sculptured over it, and was duly appalled by the open-mouthed lions, each with a blunderbuss under his arm, meant, no doubt, to inspire a wholesome dread of kingly authority in the mynheers and vrowes of the neighbourhood, as they came to market.

When I re-entered the town, I stared about, like any other stranger, and at last discovered a bookseller's shop. I went in, and took up a smart little work called 'Tablettes Belges.' The very first sentence of the introduction struck me as not quite new. I read on, and, to my infinite surprise, and no small amusement, I found there every word of the cabriolet-driver's essay on the national character, and a great deal more than he delivered, which the rogue had got by heart, and passed for his own! I could not be angry with

him: it was an innocent plagiarism; and I sincerely hope that if ever the author discovers it, he will imitate my indulgence, in consideration of the very original specimen of national character offered by the culprit.

TOWNS AND CHURCHES.

"God made the country, and man made the town."
COWPER.

THE exterior aspect of cities, or their examination *merely* as works of art, has never had the slightest charm for me. The cold admiration which we give to domes, or spires, or columns, oppresses rather than exhilarates us, if some associating link of feeling does not excite an interest for the object. I can wander for weeks across a foreign district of *country*, without seeking acquaintances or wanting society. The ever springing varieties of nature give ample occupation to the mind; but one day spent alone in a town, is intolerable. It is the very worst species of solitude, for it generates discontent with one's own desolateness, and envy for the social intercourse which seems shared by every one else. We do not consider, and console ourselves with the fact, that other strangers are labouring under the very same feelings that oppress us. Even if they are, we cannot sympathise with those we do not know; and in our solitary selfishness we only dwell on our own discomfort.

What is to be done to obtain relief? To eat one's breakfast, dinner, and supper? Then to sleep away the night? But the intervals between? "There is the rub." How to kill time—the common enemy—and to give him an easy and quiet death, the infliction of which will lie light on one's conscience. For my own part, I have a regular routine of methods, which I follow with systematic constancy, whenever I happen to find myself in the dreary situation I allude to. I first examine carefully all the engravings, bad or indifferent, that decorate the walls of "mine inn;" and then thumb over scrupulously the torn old almanacks, or com-

non-place pamphlets, which may (by particular good luck) be on a dusty shelf, or in a corner cupboard. I then saunter out into the streets, discarding all the officiousness of the grinning and ragged ciceroni that offer their aid, and also the swaggering assistance of the saucy varlet, yclept on the continent *commissionaire*, who, with a smattering of bad English, forces his services upon each new comer.

Fairly launched into the unexplored intricacies of the place, my first object is, if possible *to lose myself*, because a quarter of an hour may be laudably consumed in recovering my way. I sometimes clamber up the hundred, and heaven knows how many steps, of some tower or steeple, and gaze over the parapet on the tiles and slates below me, in great wonderment that the tops of all the houses, and the houses of all the towns should be so marvellously alike. The contracted streets and the pigmy passengers only make me moralize on the narrowness and littleness of mankind and their ways, but I wanted no such factitious elevation above my fellows to impress the lesson upon me. So down I go again, not much the better, and certainly not a bit the wiser for my ascent, and I look up at the buildings I had just been looking down upon, a gazing illustration of the ups and downs of life.

But straggling about in that kind of way, I often chance to stumble upon some half-buried association of history or romance, or knock my head against some legend or superstition, projecting beyond the crumbling walls of an old mansion or decaying monument. These I generally treasure up for after manufacture; and if I consider them worth any thing, I am, at any rate, not churlish about their value. I certainly have not reaped a fertile harvest in the towns of Belgium. There is, generally speaking, a stagnant air of insipidity hanging over them like a cloud. Every attempt at gaiety seems abortive; the discordant vivacity of their *Carillons*—their miserable attempts at illuminations and fireworks. Then the ungraceful sameness of female costume, and still more unpleasant sameness of female occupation—every window in every house garnished with a languidly industrious fair one, knitting her stocking, and prying into the very secrets of the streets by means of her pair of lateral mirrors.

Churches, those favourite lounging places of my countrymen, afford me but unfrequent sanctuary, in my capacity

of time-killer. I am not over fond of expiating that crime at the moment of its commission, in the aisles of a cathedral. There is too much sameness in the decorations, the pillars, pictures, altars, and pulpits, to excite me; and I have another reason for not caring much to frequent the continental Catholic churches, which has less of propriety than *amour propre* in it. I make it a rule never to look into guide-books beforehand, for information as to what I *ought* to look at, and what I *should* admire. A sort of perverseness immediately opposes itself to the dictations of *soi-disant* taste, wherever and whenever it assails me. But I have sometimes examined such oracles *afterwards*, to find if my untaught notions of beauty or proportion tallied with the received *dicta* of the learned; and it has more than once happened to me to find that I had wasted much of my admiration, and thrown away my delighted scrutiny on objects perfectly worthless; while I passed by with indifference or disapproval *chef-d'œuvres* that I ought to have almost idolized. Now on these occasions I invariably stuck fast to my own predilection, and laughed the dictators to scorn; and I got into several scrapes, and arguments, and disputes in consequence. But as I have no pride in the affectation, or the fact of *singularity*, I think it better to keep out of the way of such mishaps. This, after all, is a puerile reason for not being a church-gazer; and if I had no better, I should not have recorded it; but I *have* a better, at least I think so. In any catholic country, but particularly in one so pre eminently devout as Belgium, I feel a considerable objection against straggling through the sacred edifices, at all times occupied by many pious individuals, to whom the intrusion of heretical curiosity must appear very indelicate and indecorous. These places of worship are, it is true, *open houses*, but not of *entertainment*. Their pictures and statues are placed in them not as mere objects of art, but as incitements to devotion; and those (and I avow myself one) in whom they produce but feelings of a very contrary description, had better leave them unexamined, than force their way through the prejudices and piety of a whole people, or, as it may happen, the very worthiest portion of it. Neither do I like the gorgeousness of their temples; their "*graven images*" cause me a painful sensation; and I revolt from the mental and bodily prostration of intelligent christians, in a way that I believe to be foreign to the true spirit of their religion and its

founder. Still I venerate religion even in what I think its degeneracy, and I would not wilfully insult or give pain to the lowliest fanatic who thinks he glorifies his Maker by debasing himself: and therefore, it not being my duty to teach the difference between debasement and humility, I seldom do more than listen under the porch, to the solemn pealings of the organ, or take a stolen stroll into the body of the building, at a very early or late hour, when the shades of twilight shroud the sacred pile, and a mystical obscurity seems to envelop at once the building, its occupants, and its purposes. For it is not alone to objects of religion that religious edifices are devoted. Many a worldly or worthless motive brings the mock christian there; and such scenes have ever been considered legitimate situations for subjects of romance. Veiled nuns and hooded monks are the very staple of romantic fiction; and I believe that, even at this day, occurrences take place under the agency of such actors, equalling in mystery and horror those which the most intrepid novelist has heretofore detailed or invented. Human nature is, in fact, ever the same; and if crime does not decrease under the operation of civilization and knowledge, there is no reason that it should do so, within a convent's walls, from which both are excluded. One circumstance came to my hearing (I will not exactly say to my knowledge) of recent occurrence, and I believe of no doubtful authenticity. I will venture to relate, without exactly vouching for it; but it was told to me as fact, and was publicly believed to be such.

the determined scrutiny of her gaze, that made him almost shudder. She was handsome certainly. Her features were regular and marked; but she was pale to sallowness, and her dark eyes had a restlessness of motion, that seemed caused by an unquiet mind.

The young American gradually recovered from his embarrassment, but he scarcely regained his self-possession, for the feelings which succeeded were somewhat bewildering. Vanity, the natural weakness of a youthful mind, conscious that it was allied to a handsome person, began to work strongly on the feelings of the stranger; and his heart bounded, and his head seemed to swim round, at the thought that his appearance had excited some irresistible tenderness in the breast of the nun. The notion that she had fixed her thoughts on him, in preference to his friend who sat beside him, gratified him in a double sense; and his bosom being thus softened by the inward workings of self-love, became more susceptible to the impressions stamped on it by another. The consequence was, that he began to fancy an interest stronger and deeper than he really felt; and giving himself up to the delusion, he had no doubt of the existence of a secret and unaccountable sympathy between himself and the *religieuse*.

He felt his cheeks glow, and he gave to his looks the tenderest expression of which they were capable. He saw an answering flush rise on the pallid brow of the nun, and a smile, that thrilled through him—but not with unmixed delight—played for an instant on her colourless lips. Her eyes then sank down, and her face resumed its calm and sculptured look.

He still fixed on her his fascinated gaze; yet while he did so, a strange mixture of sensations crowded upon him. Did she already love him? Could *that* be possible? and was her present downcast air, the effect of the struggle which modesty had sustained against passion? Then she might be unhappy—ill treated—tyrannized over; and she might have fixed her suppliant hopes on him for protection and redress. But again, some dark and treacherous design might have prompted her magnetic gaze! The last misgiving he instantly abandoned, as unmanly and unjust. But one point was certain—she had fixed upon him in a marked and singular way; she had acknowledged his looks and replied to them; he was so far committed, and she com-

promised. There might be risk in following up the adventure—but it might lead to happiness—or what is considered so by the unbridled ardour of warm and youthful hearts; and come what might, he resolved not to shrink from the result.

Absorbed in these agitating reflections, he did not remark the priest quitting the altar and entering the vestry, nor the congregation one by one departing from the church. He only saw the one object of his deep attention, and he did not even observe that her companions had left their places, and that she alone occupied the gallery.

His friend, who had for some minutes closely watched him, at length recalled him to recollection; and in a suppressed tone rallied him on his reverie, and on the intense manner in which he gazed on the remaining nun, who seemed buried in the depth of devotion. Thus roused, and brought to himself, the young man prepared to accompany his friend, ashamed of the seriousness which he had betrayed, and which he felt that he could not shake off.

They were on the point of quitting their places and retiring from the almost deserted church; the friend of the young lover, for so we must call him, had turned round and made a few steps in the direction of the door, and the lover himself was about to follow, when his parting look at the nun was answered by an imploring glance from her quick raised eyes, and a momentary, but intelligible motion with her finger that he should remain.

These ambiguous communications made him start, and almost tremble. He could not comprehend, nor had he time to question the motives of the nun. He had promptly to form his decision—and he at once resolved to stay; he therefore stepped quickly after his friend—avowed his intention to linger a little longer in the church—received with a smile the bantering caution which told him to beware—and then, as his friend went out, he sauntered awhile up and down the aisles, in apparent examination of the pictures and statues; and in a little while he was satisfied that the church was wholly deserted, except by himself and the object of his growing solicitude.

He felt an awkward anxiety to address her; but there was an awfulness in her bearing that irresistibly repelled him, and he felt himself completely the creature of her will. She threw an occasional look, in reply to his impatient

glances, which told him he must suppress his impetuosity and wait her pleasure. He resigned himself willingly to the course of the adventure, every moment adding to his excitement, and a tumult of wild sensations revelling in his breast.

After some time his fascinator rose slowly from the place where she had so long knelt; and descending by a back stair from the private gallery, she passed by the rear of the grand altar; and once more took a kneeling posture in a narrow recess opposite a little shrine, where burned a single lamp. He followed her movements, encouraged, painfully, by her doubtful smile, and the suppressed gesture, which pointed out to him the position near her which she wished him to take.

He at length leaned against a pillar, his hands folded across, and as if in close observation of a fine statue of the Virgin, and within a few yards of the real object of his almost breathless attention.

With her head low bent, and inclined towards him, while she turned over her beads with much apparent devotion, she asked him, in a deep whisper,

"Do you understand French?"

"Yes," murmured he.

"Do you speak it?"

"Not sufficiently to express your influence on me."

This was answered by her wonted smile—"Good God, is it *satisfaction* or *triumph*!" thought the American.

"If you can see any thing in me to interest you," continued she, "are you inclined to do me a service?"

"*Am* I!" replied he, with energy—"try me—put me to the proof!"

"It is no trifle," said she, solemnly.

"Any thing is trifling that can enable me to serve you; for any thing short of death command me!"

"And if death *did* cross your path in this adventure?" exclaimed she, with a full expression of voice, and a piercing solemnity of look.

"By Heavens I'd spurn even it," cried he; "you have exalted me to a pitch of excitement, I know not how or wherefore."

"You are an enthusiast!" said she, a somewhat more softened expression blending in her smile.

"I know not what I am; but it is you who have made me so, be it what it may. I am new in this country—I seem to walk in enchantment—I swear myself yours!"

Here irresistibly followed the impulse which bade him to kneel down, and he directed looks as fond and thoughts as fervent at his neighbour nun as ever devotee could have meant for the pretended object of her present worship. The nun smiled one final smile of ghastly solemnity. The American could less than ever read its meaning. She had evidently a great purpose in view. She had selected him for her agent—he was bound to her he knew not how.

"I am satisfied with you," resumed she. "I believe you to be a man of honour; and that fine person and striking face cannot be allied to an ignoble soul: I feel myself safe in your hands. You perceive that the rules of my order are not the strictest; but their discovered infringement is ruin; and I am now infringing them. I can speak to you no more at present—I have run a fearful risk. But meet me outside that little portal to-night at nine. I will admit you punctually as the clock strikes. Vespers will be over, and the church in solitude. You must not speak; but trust to me: follow me, and count on my gratitude."

"May I, then, hope?"

"You may hope every thing from a grateful woman, who admires you, and *must* love you, if you serve her as she expects."

"Enough—you must run no further risk—at nine I will be at the little portal."

"Adieu!" murmured she, in a soft tone; and in a minute the American had left the church.

As he passed away in high exultation, and just as he turned one of the massive buttresses which supported the venerable pile, a man, in a sort of half-official uniform, armed with a sword, turned his eyes from an advertisement pasted against the wall, and fixed them on the American.

"A word with you, Sir, if you please," said he, in tolerable French, taking off his three-cornered and orange-cockaded hat.

"What can you have to say to me, my friend?" asked the American, in a haughty and somewhat abstracted air.

"Why, just this much, Sir; that, as a stranger, you ought to be cautious of your conduct. Your indecorous and flippant manner during the celebration of mass has made you a

marked man; and the friendship of an agent of the police, willing to protect you, is not perhaps to be spurned."

"Oh, I am quite equal to my own protection in all cases!" proudly replied the stranger. He was in that state of mind that makes a sanguine man think every thing *must* go well with him, and that it would be a disgrace, even in difficulty, to look for the help of others. Besides, he thought this man might, perhaps, be some impostor, lying in wait for foreigners, to extort money from them under false threats of danger and vain promises of support. "You may pass on," said the American.

"You may repent this!" replied the other.

CHAPTER II.

The American found his countryman awaiting him at the hotel; and, after a few preliminary arrangements of thought, suited to the important occasion, he told him every thing that had passed, from the time he had quitted him in the church, until he had himself left it in the sole tenantry of the mysterious nun.

The friend, on hearing this confession, felt perhaps, at first, a slight sensation of jealousy and envy, at the better fortune of his companion. But as they were sincerely attached to each other, and had started under a fair agreement of non-interference in their mutual adventures, *that* feeling passed lightly over, and only left an anxiety for the perfect safety of his fellow traveller.

He did not exactly like the aspect of the affair. There was too much romance in it, if *real*, too much trickery, if *pretence*, to suit his steady temperament and well regulated habits. He thought it strange in any way; although he could not help admitting that his friend was a striking sort of fellow, one likely to inspire a feeling more than ordinary, in a woman accustomed to adventure, and having an object in view. It was then again possible that all this parade about doing her some secret service might be merely meant to heat his imagination and inflame his feelings, But what if

she really had some quarrel to avenge, and that she had artfully worked on him, and meant further to do so, to involve him in some matter of serious danger? The *friend* turned all things studiously in his mind; while the *principal* carelessly paced the room with buoyant heart, and thinking (if he thought at all) that nothing could thwart his success, or mar his coming happiness.

Never did day pass heavier or seem longer than did this to the lover. Hours and half hours, as they sounded their monotonous chimes from the various belfries, sending out the same tones of tedium and delay, worked him up to a fit of nervous fermentation. His friend did all he could to allay it, but he participated himself in the anxiety, which spurred them on, while it seemed to retard them from the end of the adventure.

Every plank of the boarded and sanded salon which they occupied, was paced in unreckonable repetitions. Every possible method to hasten the wings of time vainly employed. At length all in-door efforts being exhausted, a walk without was proposed, accepted, and undertaken. But scarcely had the friends sallied forth, when they were assailed by various insulting symptoms, from a group of boys, among whom some men were intermingled, who seemed to have lain in wait for, and were now resolved to annoy them. The lover walked on for some time, unconscious of what passed around him, for he was of that fearless spirit that does not anticipate danger, and he never thought of the warnings of the police agent. Besides which, he was at the moment borne far away, on the wings of the abstraction to which he had delivered up his mind.

His friend was more observing and sensible of peril, though a firm and decided man at the time of its approach. He therefore spoke to his absorbed companion, and asked him if he could account for the evident marks of hostile feeling in the conduct of the persons near them.

"Not I," replied he. "I neither observed them, nor think them worth observation. I suppose they are only venting their curiosity, for we can have excited no other feeling."

"I differ with you, my friend. The expression of those faces means more than that, and some of those fellows are muttering some insolent jargon. Yonder, however, is a man in an official dress, one of the police, perhaps; it

would be well to put ourselves under his protection, I think, for no glory is to be gained in a contest here."

"Yes, that is the very fellow who told me I was a marked man, and offered to take care of me. I now remember him."

"A marked man? For what?"

"For not having been devout enough at mass, I believe."

"Indeed! then we must be cautious. We stand on perilous ground; for if notice has been taken by this bigotted people of any indecorum in our bearing, it might go hard with us. I will speak to that man, whom you seem to slight so much."

So saying, the cautious traveller at once approached the police officer, and addressed him; but he received nearly the same sort of reception which his friend had lately given to the municipal object of his application. The fellow put on a fierce air, and replied to the request that he would not suffer two foreigners to be insulted by a parcel of ragamuffins,

"Ay, now that my assistance *is* required, you are both civil enough; but you may *now* take care of yourselves, and let your friend suffer for his haughty rejection of my offers."

"My good fellow," replied the American, "you must attribute any thing in the manners of that gentleman to his imperfect knowledge of the habits of this country, and of the language perhaps. I apologize for him, and request that you will now, without hesitation, just walk with us to our hotel."

With these words he stamped an impression on the policeman's hand, which left its tangible mark there as he closed his fingers upon it; that impression, which, following such a discourse to such a person, is like the seal upon a letter, giving authenticity and consequence to all that has gone before.

"Well, I'll tell you so far," said the police-man, *feeling* the amount of the piece of money, which he did not deign to look at, "you are a civil and fair-spoken gentleman, and I'll not refuse your request. I'll walk with you, and nothing shall happen to *you*, I promise you. Let your proud companion take care of himself, as I said before; I told him he might repent his incivility, and he *may* yet."

"Well, then," said the American, "I'll just take him

under the arm, for I must not desert him, you know, and you will keep close to *me*."

He accordingly took his friend's arm in his, and extricated him from the gathering crowd, in reply to whose insults he threw looks of most aristocratical, republican contempt; and, escorted as agreed upon, they soon regained their hotel. Arrived there, these late occurrences were soon forgotten by the most prominent actor in the events I am recording. His mind reverted to the one object of its anxieties, and fixed itself upon it. His friend, who saw what had just passed in a more serious view, resolved that the result of his companion's adventure once over, they should immediately quit the place; and he accordingly desired post-horses to be in readiness for their carriage at a very early hour the next morning.

This point arranged, dinner was ordered unusually early, to break the tediousness of the unemployed day; and no sooner was it dispatched than the friends regretted it was not to come over again, as the vacant hours of evening seemed to gape before them like the mouth of some drear and unexplored cavern. To add to the discomfort of the situation, the decline of day was accompanied by most dismal weather. Rain and hail rattled against the windows, and gusts of wind swept mournfully through the streets.

One resource alone was left to the friends—wine! and to that genial comforter and care-killer they betook themselves. They drank freely and fairly by their coal fire; and in the warmth of conversation they soon became inattentive to, and undisturbed by, the intrusive pattering against the closed shutters, and the boisterous swell of the increasing storm. Their conversation, following the capricious course which imagination suddenly turned into, reverted to home, to old friends, dear connexions, and early days, when, happily, innocent of the fierce joys of manhood, the unreckoned years flew by. In these far and bygone recollections the matter of the moment was for a while forgotten; and hour after hour chimed out, astonishing the friends at their quick succession. At length the earliest clock struck nine. The lover, whose temporary abstraction to other days and distant scenes had not left him unwatchful of the actual march of time, knew that although nine o'clock was *sounded*, half past eight was *meant*—half an hour being thus, according to the habit of the Belgian belfries, announced in advance, for

some better reason, no doubt, than the most obvious one—to puzzle the heedless, and tantalize the watchful citizen.

The lover sprang from his chair, startling his friend from a reverie of home and happiness. But he quickly understood the cause of the abrupt movement, and he prepared to accompany the adventurer as far as he might, consistent with *propriety* (if I may apply the term in such a case) and with *prudence*, as regarded the safety of his friend. There was a full half hour to spare before the time of rendezvous, and the friend pressed strongly, but unsuccessfully, the uselessness of quitting the hotel, and braving the storm, which raged more violently than ever, before the few minutes required to reach the church. But, warmed anew with wine, and all the ardent feelings of his nature in action, he cared alike for weather or advice, and in spite of both he put on his hat, and threw his cloak around him, declaring that further delay was intolerable, and that he *must* be gone.

His friend, finding him determined, also equipped himself for going out, and a sharp contest immediately took place on the question, which answered admirably the friend's object, to gain time. The lover insisted on his friend's remaining at home, smiling at the notion of danger, and protesting strongly against another partaking the unpleasantness of an adventure the happiness of which he could not share. The friend, however, was obstinate, in his turn; and the contest ended in both leaving the house together, and making their way, through all the obstructions of wind, rain, and darkness, to the gloomy mass of building which the lover recognized as the church of St. ———; and they took their station in one of the most covered recesses, formed by the projection of the grotesque and ancient architecture.

In this imperfect shelter, shivering in cold and wet, they felt the heavy minutes brush past them with their leaden wings. No object was abroad, save the figure of a man who twice crossed the nook they were concealed in, but of whom they could distinguish nothing more.

At length the first stroke of the *ninth* hour came hollowly borne towards them, by a descending gust of wind. The lover seized his friend's hand, pressed it in nervous, yet triumphant agitation, whispered farewell! as faintly as if the divine walls might divine his secret in the word, and rapidly stepped in the direction of the little portal, at some paces distant, round an angular projection. For a moment his

friend remained motionless, but recovering himself, he followed, with long and cautious strides, the flying footsteps that guided him on. He was in an instant close to the lover, and giving his strained observation to the portal, which he could barely distinguish, he saw it darkly open, just wide enough to admit the anxious expectant, who rapidly glided in. It was instantly closed again; and the friend, with a feeling of heaviness and oppression, he could neither successfully combat nor account for, turned from the church as the ninth stroke was hurriedly borne away into the clouds by the rude blast that rioted through the towers and turrets. The same figure that had crossed them before now passed still closer to him; and exclaiming, loud enough to silence the roaring wind, "Take care of yourself—you had been better at your hotel!"—it disappeared in the gloom.

"This does look like danger of some secret kind," thought the American, as he vainly attempted to pierce the darkness in the direction which the figure took. "I must if possible know more;" and he instantly followed with the intention of stopping and questioning it. But his attempt was vain. Favoured by the deep gloom, the figure had turned into some of the narrow lanes close to the church, and was no where to be seen.

"Take care of myself!" exclaimed the American. "If I have need of care, how much more has my brave and reckless friend! No, I must not see my hotel again until he is free from this affair. Here will I watch for his return. I am not worse off than the sentries who pace the unsheltered ramparts—this is my post."

He regained the little portal, and buttoning his large travelling coat tightly about him, he stood close under the porch, which protected him from the straight falling rain, but by no means against the sudden and violent squalls which at times gathered the rain like a shroud, as they swept along, and dashed it in a liquid sheet full against the voluntary sufferer. In a short time he was thoroughly drenched, and so benumbed with cold, that he was fain to quit his station, and move about in open exposure to the storm, to force his blood to circulate, and give action to his cramped limbs.

In this comfortless state of body, which was however unheeded in the increasing agitation of his mind, the staunch and anxious friend continued to pace close before the portal,

while the chimes told three times over their half hour's monotonous attempt at melody. The quarter of the town where stood the church, was inhabited almost entirely by the poorer orders of the people, and one by one the lights had disappeared from their wretched dwellings. It was near eleven o'clock, and all was desolate: the rain had ceased, the wind had died away, and the American almost wished for the fierce fellowship of the storm once more, in preference to the dismal calm, which, spite of his natural intrepidity, made him shudder.

Almost exhausted by mental and bodily agitations he had actually resolved to strike for admittance at the portal; and in case of failure in that attempt to acquire intelligence of his friend, he determined to demand the assistance of the military guard, which he had observed to be stationed in the chief square of the town.

For the purpose of putting the first of these resolutions into effect, he approached the portal, and raised the little knocker, but his hand refused to strike. A feeling crossed his mind of the objection to so direct and personal an interference. He thought that it might give offence to his friend, who was perhaps after all in perfect safety, and only detained by the happy consequences of his adventure. It might compromise the safety—the life even—of the female concerned. It was perhaps indecorous, premature, unnecessary. He paused, and resolved at length to wait still half an hour, before he took any more decided step than to continue his watching.

He accordingly recommenced his steady pace, and had scarcely made three or four turns, when he heard the hinges of the portal slowly sound. He instantly placed himself close, but concealed from view. The portal was opened and shut, with the greatest speed and the least possible noise. The figure of his friend was visible to the anxious American, and he rejoiced at his return from that place of peril, and was only restrained by a sense of delicacy from abruptly accosting, and congratulating him. He was quite close behind him, and he observed him to move forward hurriedly, but not with that light and easy movement which marked his usual carriage. The friend stepped on, and was astonished and grieved to distinguish, almost beyond a doubt, that the lover bore beneath his cloak, and supported on his shoulder, a burthen, which from its length and gene-

ral shape was, as well as he could form a judgment, a human form.

This discovery, or almost certain conjecture, perplexed and distressed him greatly. The imprudence, the risk, in carrying off this nun, and intruding such an embarrassment on their travelling arrangements, appeared unwise, ill-considered, and unpardonable in the highest degree. But his first impulses of angry regret were suppressed by the forgiving friend, and he determined to follow closely the movements of the offender to be able to judge what were his plans and intentions. He accordingly kept on his track, just near enough to run no risk of losing him, nor of being in his turn counter-watched, either by the lover or the prize he carried. He easily perceived there was little danger of the latter observing him, for the cloak was kept carefully covering the head, which reclined loosely on the bearer's shoulder. He heard not even a whisper, as they went along, and he felt something solemn, and even unholy, in the silence, unbroken but by the heavy tramp of his friend's footsteps under his sacrilegious burthen.

After a little time, in which they traversed several by-streets, through which the lover passed, as though he had been directed well, they reached one of those canals with which the town abounded, and the lover unhesitatingly descended one of the flights of steps, which facilitate the landing of goods from the barges, and the embarkation of persons employed.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the watchful friend to himself, "can he be wild enough to bear her off at night, in some open boat—God knows where! Where or how will this adventure end?"

He placed himself close to the quay wall, and looked over the parapet. He saw his friend on the steps; there was no boat of any kind stationed near or in sight—yet the lover continued to descend!

"What can this mean? what frantic feat can be destined to conclude this affair?" muttered the careful guardian, as he watched with intense interest; and *as* he watched, he observed the object of his care to disencumber himself of his burthen; a figure in black emerged from beneath the cloak, and a heavy plunge in the stagnant water was the signal of its disappearance.

The perpetrator of this appalling deed immediately as-

ceaded the steps. The shocked witness felt his blood run curdling through his veins. His eye seemed doubly fixed on his retreating friend, and on the rippled surface of the water where the body sank. The American could not swim, or he would have suffered no hesitation in the course to be pursued. He was therefore obliged to gaze in motionless horror, and the safety of his friend kept him mute, for to call for assistance was to reveal the murderer! He felt himself, therefore, as it were, an involuntary accomplice in the deed; but it was no time for acute reflection. The figure of his friend was rapidly passing away; and as he turned from the fatal spot to follow him, he saw the water softly and silently closing over its hidden prey.

He quickly gained upon his friend, who, to his astonishment, took the direct road to the hotel. They arrived there at the same moment; and they recognised each other without exchanging a word. A simultaneous pressure of the hand was their only salutation; and the friend shuddered to feel, that the one he clasped was cold and clammy. The door opened to their summons, and they mounted together to their chamber.

CHAPTER III.

The mutual agitation of the young men kept them for some minutes silent. The desperate appearance of the unfortunate *lover*, if we still must so distinguish him, was quite dreadful to his friend: he looked like a man half drunk, half dead; the upper part of his face, his brow, and cheeks, were flushed; a flood of perspiration was on his forehead; and his eyes stared wildly, as if bodily pain was joined with mental agony. His lips were livid and contracted, and all around them, above and below, with his chin and jaws, were pallid, while in two or three places, broad marks of blood lay on, and changed the expression of his countenance.

Seeing that his friend gazed at him with such an expression of terror, he started from his seat, rushed towards the looking-glass that hung above the mantle-piece, and con-

vulsively springing back, uttered in a voice that thrilled through his friend—

"Oh, God! his blood is on my face, but not on my *hands*. Look—look—they are unstained! Oh let me wipe out these frightful marks!" and, with frantic anxiety, he deluged his face with water, until he had successfully cleared the blood away.

"My friend, my friend! what does all this mean?" cried his agitated companion; "for Heaven's sake, relieve my anguish—what has happened to you—what fatal result?"

"Hush, hush!" replied the other; "give me a moment's time—you shall know all—every thing that I *may* tell. Sit down—I must begin regularly and as collectedly as I can."

He placed himself beside his friend, close to the fire, the blaze from which threw its lurid flash to mix with the wild and varied colouring of his face; and it gave to him altogether a look of more than human awfulness and horror.

"I left you, my friend, as the clock struck *nine*—that fatal and accursed hour, which sounded the knell of my happiness, and began the misery of my life!" It was in these words the unfortunate young man commenced his recital. He trembled as he spoke, and looked fearfully round the room; his friend caught the contagion, and listened with terrified attention as he continued.

"My blood was on fire; the wine I had drunk worked fiercely in my brain; and the novelty, the wildness, and the peril of the adventure, wound me up to a pitch of frenzied enthusiasm. I was fit for any thing—I only wanted a tempter—and there was one at hand!—I followed her, holding her robe in trembling agitation—she spoke not, nor did I. We walked through the cloisters of the church, cautiously, and on tip-toe; yet the echoes of our steps sounded through the vast building. It was utterly dark. I could scarce restrain myself from seizing my conductress in my arms—but the sacred place was soon violated! By winding stairs and narrow passages we passed through the precincts of the church, and reached the secret way to the convent cells. We entered *hers*—Oh, God! how that little space has become my world of recollection, of remorse, of horror!—We entered her cell. All was silent as death—the sisterhood slept, or perhaps performed *their* guilty orgies in secrecy like *us*.

"A little lamp glimmered before a crucifix and skull that

stood upon a table. Two coarse chairs completed the furniture—a bed stood in a recess, concealed by a dark curtain —God of Heaven, why was that curtain ever drawn!

"She instantly lighted two tapers and illuminated her deeply expressive countenance. Her eyes glowed like brilliants—that awful smile curled her lip—in short, she looked to me divine, more than woman!"

"My dearest friend," interrupted his companion, "you are unwell; restrain yourself for the present; you require repose—you speak with difficulty."

"No, no, 'tis nothing—let me go on—I am agitated, but no more—I will finish my detail. I cannot, if I would, repeat all that I spoke or she replied. The foolish ravings of a man half mad, or the confiding converse of a woman—of any woman—are not to be told! But should I keep faith with her?—What has she driven me to? The time flew past—she was divine—I, excited beyond manly endurance, pressed her to seal my happiness—she reminded me of my vow. I swore—how deeply, how blasphemously I swore!—that I was ready to do her bidding.

"'You are!' cried she: 'then drink to the safe end of your enterprise! The cell of a nun is not unfurnished for a lover's indulgence!' With these words she produced wine—I gulped down bumper after bumper, and I felt my head swim in a fiercer round than ever, and I clasped the nun in my arms. 'Hold!' cried she, 'not yet—you must first perform your task.'

"I am ready," replied I, "for aught you can require, or man accomplish—speak." Her looks here took a new expression—awful, and dark, and desperate!—'You will not fail?' she asked, and her words seemed to rattle in her throat —the look and the tone were in terrific unison. 'Put me to the test,' exclaimed I, in furious and impassioned agitation. 'Strain your nerves then to their boldest stretch—you have a dark and dismal task to do—nothing to excite your manly spirit—nought to stir up your young blood. *My* wrongs are already *avenged*—you have but to hide the victim and the deed in equal oblivion. Look here—firmly and boldly!' with these words she drew back the dark, coarse curtain of her bed.—Oh! what a thrill of agony shot through me as I gazed. The dead body of a priest, in his professional costume, lay stretched on the bed. His face pronounced him to be young.—Two or three wounds were gaping in his

breast and side—his features were distorted—his eyes wide staring—his mouth unclosed. I could not, for some moments, turn my looks away. I felt frozen to the spot. At length I looked at *her*. Her face was almost black with strained emotion. All the dark passions of the soul seemed struggling to give it the gloomiest and most hideous expression. I felt at the moment nothing but disgust and dread; for I confess it, I thought at the instant I stood by some fiend in human form.

"'Well,' said she, with demoniac imperiousness; 'now to fulfil your vow. Take that base body in your arms, bear it hence, and fling it into the first canal.'

"I thought I should have sunk on the floor; nothing could have been so hateful and revolting to me. Five minutes before I could have performed any thing. Murder itself would not have arrested my frantic passion. But now, all was changed, and chilled, and paralyzed; and this cold-blooded participation in the dreadful deed was beyond my power. I told her I *could* not do it. Why, oh, why must I remember what followed! I cannot repeat it—my oath, my honour are pledged—but, stronger still, her safety is at stake. Even *she* must not be endangered. Nothing that wears the female form but is sacred against man's betrayal! —Imagine all the rest, my friend—her overpowering blandishments—my maddening, infuriated delight! Oh, Heavens! close upon the scene—odious to myself, for ever let me hide myself.—The fiend, the fiend! what refinement in horrible guilt—that deeply, doubly polluted bed!—that damned cell! The dead man by our side!"

Exhausted and worn out, the young man sunk down, muttering impassioned and incoherent ravings like these. His friend by assiduous care, brought him to himself; and his reviving expressions were of deep anxiety lest he should have betrayed the secret of the nun. His friend assured him he had not, and he became tranquil, and began to continue his recital.

"I took the stiff and bloody body in my arms, and with a demon's strength, I flung it on my shoulders. She wrapped my cloak around *us*, and she led the way, and *we* descended —the lifeless head lay by my face, cheek to cheek, and the hands flapped against me as I walked. How had I power to bear it on?"

Just as he finished these words, he was seized with a sud-

den and violent fit of vomiting; his face became convulsed and blackened; and cold showers of sweat poured from his forehead. His eyes rolled, his lips quivered, and every sign of mortal agony was displayed in his whole form. He pressed his friend's hand, but could not speak a word. The latter, at once shocked and affrighted, called loudly for help; and at his summons, as it would appear, the room was in a moment filled with police officers, headed by two magistrates, with their satellite attendants—a long official train.

With true municipal indifference they began to examine and accuse the suffering object of their search and vengeance. Their authority for the intrusion was proudly demanded by the afflicted American, who laboured to assuage the agony of his friend. They replied, by producing a writing *in a female hand*, stating that "a murder had that morning been committed on the person of a young Dominican Father—the confessor of the convent, that the body was concealed, but would be that night between nine o'clock and twelve, flung into a canal, specifying its name, by the perpetrator of the crime." This paper was said to have been secretly conveyed to a police agent that evening, and that man was appointed to watch at the place and time mentioned—and he witnessed the truth of the denunciation, and tracked the *convicted* murderer. So spoke the legal authority! This man was instantly recognised by the American, as he who had figured in the day's proceedings. He remembered his pique against his hapless friend, and his smothered expressions of enmity. Could he be at the bottom of this affair, and leagued with the female fiend, that found an instrument to hide her guilt in his ardent and unsuspecting friend, and then laid a sure train, to let her secret and her new victim perish together!

But while this thought passed in his anxious mind, a deadlier and surer means of safety and secrecy on her part was fatally developed. The suffering culprit, as he now was deemed, every moment gave symptoms of increasing agony. He writhed in torture, and minute by minute lost every chance of life. His eyes closed, his hands dropped motionless, the coming signs of death pressed on him. The last words he uttered were, "The wine!—the wine!—poisoned!"—when a desperate spasm freed him from suffering and life.

The friend, stunned as if by some heavy blow, stood sta-

tue-like beside the corpse, holding one clammy hand, and gazing on the discoloured and distorted face. The municipal observers were shocked at the unlooked-for catastrophe, that snatched a victim from the laws. They soon, however, commenced to arrange their official reports of the strange transactions of that eventful day: and they gave little time to the surviving traveller, before they began their interrogatories, plainly warning him that he was implicated as being an accomplice in the murder, being distinguished on the spot where the body was plunged into the water, and seen to return to the hotel, with the unfortunate perpetrator of the deed.

This sounded really serious, and the American amidst his anguish had strength and clearness of mind sufficient to look upon his perilous position, and to see it in all its bearings. It was plain to him that matter enough existed (if the vengeful spirit of religion was aroused) to lead to his sacrifice; and, in all the difficulty of the trying scene, he summoned resolution and firmness sufficient to follow the best straightforward course on every occasion of life—to speak the truth wholly, and without reserve; and he detailed with great precision almost word for word as heretofore stated, the transactions of the day.

The singular relation startled and puzzled the hearers. They could not doubt the truth of the statement, for it bore in every word and every look of the American the stamp of implicit veracity. But though they privately and individually believed the shocking facts, it was decided that, publicly and collectively, they must not be even *tolerated*. So heavy a stroke at the sanctity of the town—the virtue of the pious sisterhood—the inviolability of the faith—the sacredness, and holiness, and infallibility of the Mother Church! Was such to be sounded abroad into the wide ears of the vulgar world? No, no! The dead priest was to be fished up from his watery grave, and quietly placed within an earthly tomb. His disappearance was to be wondered at; his murder hushed up; the nun, her actions, and her agents left in congenial gloom and doubt; and truth, poor truth, for a million of million of times, mercilessly doomed to be *smothered*, without remorse, and against all chances of resuscitation!

But to all this suppression of facts there was one objection. The deposition of the American was a sturdy docu-

ment; and he himself seemed a man who would speak out, in defence of the reputation of his murdered friend; and he might cry for revenge against the supposed perpetrator of the deed? But the junta of authority thought, and rightly, that they could overcome this difficulty.

They accordingly, in the first place, represented to the young man his own personal danger, were he prosecuted on the evidence within their reach; next, they showed him the impossibility of his establishing the pretended facts of his recital, their only witness being no more; again, they assured him that his deceased friend's good name should suffer no attaint, as the whole of the circumstances being suppressed, all mention of him was at an end. They therefore proposed to him to quit the place at once—at the moment; leaving to them the care of the last Christian rites to the body, which could not rise up in reproaches against him for a forced abandonment.

The American, at first, revolted against the idea of leaving the last duties to be performed by strangers' hands. But he was strong-minded as well as good-hearted. He examined the case in every aspect, and he accepted the compromise thus offered. He left the town *alone*, in the dark, deep night, in desolate bewilderment of mind, and with a sad and sinking heart, but thereby securing the safety of his own life, and avoiding the scandal to his unfortunate companion's fame. Whither he turned his course I know not—nor could I trace the name of either.

Every one in the knowledge of these transactions was sworn to secrecy; and an inducement almost as strong held out in the threat of instant *destitution* to him who should violate the pledge. But (and how it happened must be decided by those who know,) the facts transpired—the recital became public—and, from one of the many mouths that were soon filled with it, it found its way to *my pen*; which, knowing no vow of secrecy, and having no place to lose, may stand acquitted of either impiety or imprudence in sending the story farther.

THE LIVING ALCHYMIST.

Will you believe antiquity?—records?
I'll show you a book where Moses, and his sister,
And Solomon, have written of the art;
Aye, and a treatise penned by Adam,
O' the philosopher's stone, and in High Dutch.
BEN JONSON.

IT will scarcely be credited that there still exists a man who believes in the wild visions of Alchymy—devotes his life to its pursuits, and conceives himself within the reach of the deepest of its long sought and long laughed-at mysteries. Yet such a mortal does exist—and it has been my good luck to see, converse with, and *appropriate* him. For he is mine, in fee—positive freehold, without quit-rent or crown-rent, tithe or tax; and I, like a generous proprietor, am about to show him to the world, as, perhaps, the very last specimen of a genus supposed to have been totally extinct.

Nothing could exceed my incredulity when I was informed of the existence of this man. I little thought that, in this age of knowledge and sunlight, a human moth could be found, singeing his wings in the taper of *such* a superstition. But my skepticism soon yielded to conviction; and that was accompanied by the pleasure I always feel from each new proof of those lingering illusions, the poetry of life, so fast dissolving before philosophy and *fact*.

The singular being in question is an inhabitant and a native of one of the cities of Belgium, where many scattered remnants are to be met with of those coarse webs, in which the speculative ardour of times past enveloped the purity of art and science. His existence came to my knowledge by mere accident. A circumstance of a strange and somewhat doubtful nature had caused a great deal of conversation and conjecture, just at the time that I happened to be sojourning in the town. A poor fellow had picked up, from a heap of

rubbish in one of the narrowest and most unfrequented streets, a piece of metal, weighing several pounds. He at first supposed it to be iron, as it was covered with a thick coat of rust. But even a piece of iron of that weight was no small prize; so he took it home, and began to scrape and scour it very industriously. After some labour he succeeded in getting off the thick crust; and after a little polishing, he began to perceive a yellowish tinge gleaming through the dark brown coat. The brazen serpent of the Hebrews was not probably gazed at with more devotion than this poor fellow gave to what he believed to be the solid lump of brass which his good fortune had thrown before him. He never imagined the possibility of its being *gold*—yet *gold* it was—and, after various consultations, and many an assaye, *gold* it was universally admitted to be.

The lucky possessor of this treasure having got over his astonishment and his joy, without running wild from their effects; and becoming extremely scrupulous, either through integrity or fear—their operations are very similar—resisted all the overtures of the jewellers and other Jews, and refused to sell his ingot at any price. He resolved on depositing it with the authorities of the town; and accordingly handed it over to the safe keeping of the chief magistrate, who immediately made an official report of the transaction to the Secretary of State for the Home Department. A very considerable deal of useless trouble was taken, in consequence of the minister's orders to find out the real owner of the mysterious ingot, or to trace the true history of its appearance in the public streets. Every effort was ineffectual—no claimant came forward—no evidence appeared—and after some delay, and the strictest investigation, the minister finally ordered the ingot to be returned to the finder, who, with much praise for his honesty, was pronounced to be the lawful proprietor; and this lucky, but no longer *poor* fellow, was dismissed to the enjoyment of his most unhoped for wealth.

For many weeks after this event the heads of the townspeople were almost turned, one way or another. Some looked upwards, some downwards, very many sideways—but few straightforward to their own business, the sure way, notwithstanding, of becoming as rich or richer than their fortunate fellow-citizen. Great numbers indulged in the belief that the golden age was fairly returned in solid evidence

upon earth. The most vapoury looked to the clouds in hopes of a Danaëan shower; and the least speculative part of the population (that is to say the poorest part of it, for covetousness always goes in a direct ratio with wealth) sifted and searched the most wretched heaps of rags and rubbish, on the chance of turning up "another, and another, and another."

At length, the most rational of the citizens came to the conclusion that this solitary ingot must have lain, time out of mind, concealed in some old house, and upon the demolition of the walls, or the clearing out of the cellars, have been carelessly flung into the street, to become a source of wealth to one man, and of words to thousands. But there were some, and not a few, who indulged another theory on the subject. These good folk—the credulous and marvel-loving—the romantic and rigmarole portion of the community, settled in their own minds, or *imaginations*—we must not confound terms—that "the living alchymist" was the author of all that had happened, that he had at length discovered—

> "The divine secret that doth fly in clouds
> From east to west, and whose tradition
> Is not from men, but spirits;"

and that the first fruits of his success was this identical ingot, thrown thus upon the wide world, like an apple of discord, or bone of contention, to set the population by the ears, and thus revenge himself for the contumely with which he and his studies had been heretofore treated. By this conflict of opinion, and the chance mentioned of the last cited, I, as any other stranger might, became acquainted with the name and residence of "the cunning man," who, I was assured,—

> "Could extract
> The souls of all things by his art; call all
> The virtues and the miracles of the sun
> Into a temp'rate furnace; and teach dull Nature
> What her own forces are!"

Fancy could not fail to be busy on the subject fresh started for its pursuit, in the very mention of a "living alchymist." No sooner did I bring myself to believe in the fact of the existence of one of these "smoky persecutors of Nature," and had ascertained that he was not an inmate of, or a sub-

ject for, a madhouse, than I began to picture him, in all the varieties of moral and physical construction—his enthusiasm, his abstraction, his ardent looks, his worn-out frame, pale cheeks and sunken eye, his picturesque costume, with all the auxiliaries of crucible, furnace, and alembic, and the chaos of elementary confusion associated with his wild pursuit. My mind seemed to fly back for centuries. It appeared to suffer a kind of retrograde transmigration, and to occupy the body of some contemporary of St. Leon; while the splendid combinations of Godwin peopled the actual scene with the very characters and customs, his breathing pictures of which had been the charm and the magic of my boyhood.

In breathless impatience I approached the alchymist's residence. I was truly and most unaffectedly excited to a state of high *romance*. I was well introduced, and sure of admittance, and a good reception. But the look of the house displeased and disappointed me. I had framed it to myself as Gothic, dark, and desolate. It was a square, modern mansion, plastered and white-washed, with a green door and brass knocker, in a well-built street, and provokingly clean. I hoped I had made a make a mistake; but the chubby-cheeked lass, who appeared at my knock, dissipated my doubts, and replied to my inquiry, in unquestionable Flemish, that her master was within—and just returned from market.

I gulped down this carnal and undignified intimation; and as I followed the *juffrow* along the narrow and white-washed corridor, I strove to keep awake my rather somnulent sensations of whilom excitement. But I had no time for preparation; for my conductor abruptly threw open the door of a back parlour—and the alchymist stood before me! I literally started back, and my heart sunk—with *what* species of emotion I shall leave to my readers' fancy, after I sketch the object thus suddenly revealed to my astonished observation.

He was a little, pot-bellied, smooth-faced, rosy-gilled, old fellow, with gray hair, tied behind in "a round unvarnished" pig-tail. He was dressed in a brown frock-coat, buttoned half-way up, and displaying a chintz waistcoat, a broad-frilled shirt, and a white muslin cravat, tied tight, and terminating under his chin in two large bows and flowing ends. I could not see his breeches, but his stockings were of white cotton

with blue stripes, and a huge pair of plated buckles fastened his broad-toed shoes. His face was a dumpling illustration of dulness, to which a simper and a chuckle of ineffable content added their mortifying evidence. I was utterly astounded. The whole fabric of my fancy was blown into the air. Antiquity, chivalry, and magic vanished from around me. Never were the wings of expectancy so closely clipped. The wide ocean of romance, on which I had been afloat, seemed shrunk into the dimensions of a dry dock; and I stood, as it were, with sails tight furled, in the steam-engine reality of boiler and black smoke.

I stared at my alchymist, with a gaze which nothing could have transmuted into politenesss. He returned it by a bow or two; and his little gray eyes twinkled stupidly; and he muttered some civilities in clumsy French. I made a bad return for these attentions, and gave but a sorry specimen of national good breeding. Quite satisfied, though by no means contented, I was about to make a rapid retreat; but my host (without whom, if I may be allowed the *équivoque*, I had so sadly reckoned) was not inclined that I should escape thus easily. His vanity was up in bottle—it had been many a long year fermenting; and was, as I soon found out, hereditary.

"Well, Sir," said he, "you were anxious to see a man whom every one considers a fool?"

"Why, Sir," stammered I, "I confess I was desirous to make the acquaintance of a gentleman whose pursuits are so uncommon—but—"

"Come, come, don't mince matters—you came here to laugh at me."

"Not with that *intention*, I assure you."

"Well, well, never mind—you need not deny it, if you did; you may laugh as much as you like. Every one laughs at me—but I shall have the cream of the jest by and by—ha! ha! ha!"

"Why, do you really believe that you will ever discover the philosopher's stone?" asked I, my disappointment *fusing* down into amusement, at this vulgar caricature of alchymy and its sublime absurdities.

"That I shall *ever* discover it!" exclaimed he, with a contemptuous vibration of the upper lip, and a chuckle of self-consequence; and wheeling quickly round, and instantly walking out into a little trim-set flower-garden,

"Follow me!—look there!" added he, as soon as we reached the farther end of the *parterre*, and he pointed to half a dozen phials hanging against the wall in a corner, and covered by a glass case. "Look there; do you see that phial? *that* contains the philosopher's stone. The philosopher's stone indeed! *Ever* discover it! Why, it is nothing—nothing at all—the very first step."

"Indeed!" uttered I. "I confess my ignorance, but I thought the philosopher's stone was the grand secret. But where is it, pray? I see no stone."

"Heaven forbid that you should! No *stone!* why the *lapis philosophorum*, or philosopher's stone, is not a *stone*."

"What is it then, may I ask?"

"Why, it's a powder—that red powder that you see there, formed at the bottom of that liquid—that's the philosopher's stone—ha, ha, ha!"

"Then you expect next to be able to make gold?"

"Make gold! why I *can* make gold, and silver too; look at *that* phial—and *that*. What is in the first? Isn't it gold?—and in the other? Isn't it silver? Is there a goldsmith or chemist in the Netherlands that can deny it? But could they *make* it, ha, ha, ha!—not they, not they, not they!" and with these words he turned abruptly round—a favourite movement of his.

"My good Sir," cried I, catching him at his rebound, as I may say, "you quite astonish me."

"I dare say I do, ha, ha, ha!"

"You do indeed. What! you possess the philosopher's stone—you can make silver and gold—you have the proofs there in those phials?" and I looked at the dirty white, and the green and yellowish compounds.

"Well, and what of that? I tell you the philosopher's stone is *nothing*—and my gold and silver is not worth a brass farthing."

"How—what—why? I don't understand you."

"Why, because my gold is not solid—it wouldn't stand *fusion*—it would evaporate and fly up the chimney; and that red powder, the *lapis philosophorum* can't make better. It is the *transmuting* powder I want. Do you understand that? Not the powder that can only make such pitiful gold as this—although it is the *purest* that can be made of its kind, and many a man would think half a century of toil well repaid by being able to make it; but I want the powder that can

change base metals *into* gold—that's what I want; and what, with the blessing of Heaven, I am in a fair way of having."

"And that grand result may happen at any moment?"

"Ay, at the very moment we are talking of it, the purchase of the globe and eternal life may be mine—ha, ha, ha!"

"You must work hard for all this, Sir," said I; "I should like to see your laboratory."

"See my laboratory! you do see it. There it is—this is it," said he, pointing to the corner where hung the phials; and opening out his hands, to express, as I thought, that he worked in the open air, but he undeceived me immediately, continuing—

"Work hard! I don't work *at all*—ha, ha, ha!" and once more he wheeled briskly round on his own pivot.

"Who works *for* you, then?" asked I.

"Nature—the climate—the Heaven—the sun and moon—the seven planets—*they* are my workmen."

"And do you really think they understand their trade?" said I, smiling.

"Understand their trade! *Pardi!* to be sure they do. What makes these flowers to grow in the earth? these trees to put forth their shoots and blossoms? cannot the power and the agents that do that make gold and silver generate in these phials?"

To this unanswerable argument I felt no inclination to reply.

"Does it take a long time," asked I, "to form this powder into gold?"

"Seven months—a month for each planet."

"But although you have not arrived at the grand secret, you know how to go about it? you know the matters requisite?"

"Yes, I think I do, ha, ha, ha! The four elements—any fool may know that. But how to put them together! there's the point, ha, ha, ha!" and round he spun once more.

"You must have burned a good deal of charcoal in this pursuit," said I, laughing outright.

"Not a single bit," replied he, with his usual chuckle; "but my father burned about four thousand bushels of it."

"Did your father follow the same trade?"

"Ay, for sixty years. He beggared himself by it, and was at last blown up by the explosion of a retort. But he

knew nothing—he was a mere child—he went on the wrong tract—he worked with *fire*, and left behind him a heap of ashes, that could as soon make mutton as gold. My ancestors have spent centuries in the science."

"Your family is an ancient one?"

"I believe it is indeed, ha, ha, ha! Follow me," and round he whisked, and walked straight into the house. I followed as desired, and stopped when he stopped, before a huge genealogical *ocean*, hung up against the wall of the corridor. It was bedaubed in all the corners with coats of arms, heraldic bearings, and hieroglyphical devices, and looked dirty enough to have been drawn in the dark ages.

"Stand upon that table," said he, "and just look at the *first*, the topmost name, close to the ceiling. Stay, stop a minute—put this chair upon the table—now up with you—look sharp, and tell me if mine is an ancient family. I should like to know your opinion, ha, ha, ha!" and he thus ran on, murmuring rather to himself than to me, while I mounted the very ricketty pedestal, and was somewhat repaid for the trouble and risk, by a new proof of human littleness, in reading, in old misshapen characters, the name "Augustus Cæsar." I descended, and saw the twinkle of pedigree-pride in the old man's eye, and the nervous curl that shook his lip. I made him the very low bow which he seemed to expect, and I heartily wished at the moment that he possessed the essence of philosophy rather than the *stone*.

"Your favourite study must have cost you years of reading," said I, looking at the dusty shelves, which were bent down with heaps of old books, in most unsightly bindings, and many of them in "High Dutch," which the readers of my motto already know to have been Adam's language.

"Yes, yes, it has required some application," replied the Alchymist, "but I might have read for ever, in the way my ancestors did, and, like them, not have been a bit the wiser. All these volumes, and thousands more, have been written on the hermetic science; but the whole secret might be traced on a paper, the size of your thumb nail—what do you think of that?"

"In fact, it lies in a nut-shell?" said I.

"Yes, but who can *crack* the shell, ha, ha, ha?" chuckled he; "ay, you might read to eternity, and not understand one single sentence without you possessed the key."

"And pray how is that to be procured?"

"The way I procured it—the way the whole race of philosophers who have known the secret procured it—the way any man *may* procure it, but in which no other perhaps ever will procure it—the way by which religion enters the heart—the way the prophets procured their power—the way in which God speaks to his creatures, and in which man may know his Creator—by *inspiration!*"

"Enough, enough, Sir!" exclaimed I, "spare yourself and me any further explanation: I now understand the nature and value of your science completely. I thank you cordially for your frankness—I wish you all happiness and superhuman success; for you have taught me a new lesson in the wide book of nature, and I will do my best to profit by it. Good morning to you, Sir.—Farewell!"

With these words, and a reciprocal profusion of bowings and scrapings, we made our way, he forwards, and I backwards, to the street door, which he insisted on opening, and I made a point of closing; glad to shut, within the atmosphere of his own absurdity, a visionary unfit for the rational intercourse of life.

But the reader will, perhaps, be surprised to hear that this visit made a strong impression upon me. I cannot reasonably account for such an effect, produced by so contemptible a cause, for nothing could have been more effectually destructive of every imaginative illusion, connected with the wild secrets of Alchymy, and all their exciting associations. Yet I could no more restrain, than reason with the feeling that made me dwell on the insipid enthusiast—if I *must* profane the appellation by giving it to him—and on the pursuit over which *his* devotion threw so degraded a stain. So it was, however, and I am almost ashamed to confess that I followed an idle impulse, which led me for several days, to look out in the old libraries of Belgium, for works that treat of the Hermetic Philosophy.

I lost some precious time in wading through a mass of authorship, that gave me but little entertainment, and still less instruction, but which, nevertheless, *led me on*. I worked like a machine to which the impetus was given, no matter how or by whom. But I shall not repine if, by my testimony to the utter worthlessness of the study, even as an amusement, I may prevent others from a like infatuation. The *most* inquisitive may be satisfied to remain in ignorance of the divine art or *science*—for its profoundest professors

do not know which to designate it—and may leave in the dusty repose of some mouldering collection, the whole of the writers, from Hermes Trismegistus, the Egyptian, down to the Abbé Lenglet du Fresnoy.

It would be of little comfort to the curious to know (as I do) whether the double mercury of Trevisan, or the mixture of mercury with gold of Basil Valentine, was the material most approved of, to waste the time and wear out the wits of the phantom followers. I am sure no one would thank me for communicating the knowledge, so dearly earned, and so soon to be forgotten, as to the relative merits of essences, bodies, metals, alkalis, and vegetables, for the chances of forming the real projecting powder or *lapis philosophorum*, or for detailing the disputes of Father Kircher with about a dozen of the "philosophers," in which the renowned Jesuit proved himself a perfect ass, by thinking it necessary to *prove* that his adversaries were the same.

Who, either, would desire a detail of the experiments of Arnoldus de Villanova at Rome, in the thirteenth century; of Raymond Lully in England, in the fourteenth; of Gustenhover of Strasbourg, and Dubois in France, somewhat later?—or be interested in the facts of Louis XIII., Gustavus Adolphus, and John, Prince of Mirandola, having countenanced this humbug, or, as some say, believed in it; or of its being sadly goaded by, and tossed upon, the horns of Pope John the XXIId's most violent Bull?

All the stores of information I have procured on these heads may be very quietly bonded and warehoused, as food too nauseous and unpalatable for even the craving appetite of the present generation. But I cannot resist giving one extract (as a fair specimen of all that has been written on the subject) from a work, that, in the estimation of the initiated, hangs on the very topmost branch of the tree of knowledge. It bears the modest title of "The Sum of perfection," and owns for its author a most renowned Arabian philosopher and alchymist called Geber, who, some centuries back, received the *inspiration*, and discovered the grand secret. The passage which I am about to transcribe, may have lost some of its spirit in a double translation, but I dare say *the sense* is pretty well preserved. It is the last chapter of "The Sum of Perfection," and I only regret that I did not begin to read the book Chinese-ways—for if I had, my readers may believe, I would not have gone *further*.

"CHAPTER THE LAST.

"Of the manner in which the author has taught the art.

"To remove all sort of pretext on which my calumniators could accuse me of duplicity, or of not having spoken with full frankness in this treatise, I do declare, in the first place, that I have not attempted to teach the *science* consecutively or with studied form, but have dispersed my instructions here and there, in divers chapters of the work. And I did this *on purpose*, because had I put them in a regular way, and one after another, the wicked (who would have made a bad use of their knowledge) would have learned quite as easily as the well disposed; *easier*, perhaps, as the devil would have no doubt prompted his children.*

"I declare, in the second place, that in every part of this treatise where it appears that I have spoken the plainest and the most openly of the science, it is just there that I have spoken the most obscurely. I have not, notwithstanding, spoken any where by allegories or enigmas; but I have treated my subject in plain and intelligible language, having written with sincerity, and in the way I was taught by inspiration of God, the most mighty, most glorious, and above all praise, who deigned to reveal it to me; it being he alone that can give it, and take it back, to whom and when he pleases.

"Hold up, then, Children of Science! Do not despair of obtaining the power to learn this marvellous secret! For I promise you faithfully that you will infallibly discover it, if you seek it, not by the aid of reason, or of any other science, but by ardour and impetuosity of mind!

"Whoever will seek it by the natural intelligence and enlightenment of his understanding, he shall find it. But he who would expect to learn it in books need not hope to acquire it without long study. For I protest that neither the philosophers who have preceded me, nor I myself, have written one sentence but for our own information, and that of the philosophers and adepts who shall succeed us, and not *in the least* for others.

"As for myself, although I have written in the self same way, I can nevertheless say that I have not said what I have

* *Si plura dicerem etiam pueri intelligerent*—if more were said, even children might understand it—was a favourite phrase of the "Philosophers."

said merely to excite the shrewd and sensible to study this sublime science, but that I have said quite enough to give them the means of seeking the secret by the only true method. Moreover, I can pledge myself that whoever will apply diligently, and with good heart, to understand what I have said in this book, will assuredly have the pleasure of discovering a very great gift at the hands of the Most High.

"And that is all I have to say, touching the study of an *art*, or a *science*, so renowned and very excellent."

The reader will no doubt be struck with some passages in this mass of jargon, resembling a higher order of jugglery; but *this* is enough to deal with at present.

Like the Indian sage, who reduced the library of the king his master, from a hundred camel loads of books into *four sentences*; or a cook, who boils down a basket of spinage into a saucerful; I have stewed all my Alchymical information into this—that "the sublime science," was, at its best, but a study fitting a mere bubble, to burst at the first prick of common sense, whose worthiest motto, *intellige si potes*, best designates its meaning—a game of "catch me who can!"

Yet, reader, recollect that there lives one man, who firmly believes in *all*, and he is within the reach of any one who will take the trouble to *find* him.

THE

TRAPPISTS OF CATSBERG.

On the very borders of France and Belgium, and so completely "debateable," that the inhabitants scarcely know to which nation they belong, there is a cluster of hills, which, in that flat country, are considered as mountains of no ordinary importance. There are six or seven of them, each a few hundred feet high, and differing so little in that particular, and in their general features, that it is evident that Mother Earth threw them from her at one birth.

After crossing the western division of Belgium, from north to south, without seeing any spot of land higher than a mole hill; travelling over a portion of Nature's face, so smooth that one longs for a wart or two, as beauty-spots rather than disfigurements—it is delightful to catch the swelling aspect of these frontier hills, and to mark something rising between you and the heretofore unbroken circle of the horizon.

I never saw a *mountain*, or indeed a hill of almost any height, that I did not feel an inclination to climb it. The group of elevations now before me could not fail strongly to excite this propensity, if it were merely from their contrast with the monotonous insipidity I had left behind me. But they are in themselves extremely picturesque, well wooded, and broken into abrupt varieties of landscape. They appeared most tempting; but I never was less able to gratify my own wish, or explore their beauties. From circumstances of no importance to the reader, but of infinite moment to the writer—so passing is the intercourse between *intimates* of three volumes' standing—I was at the time little master of my limbs. They took advantage of a long illness to shake

off my authority, and refused to obey *me*, although quite unable to shift for themselves. The consequence was, that I was, for exercise' sake, obliged to have recourse to those machines formerly described, the village cabriolets; and at the time I speak of, I was seated in the right-hand corner of one of the very worst of them, the driver occupying, according to custom, the left. But this was a very different sort of personage from those of the same profession, of whom I have previously given a sketch. It was no other in fact than the old woman, the proprietor of the vehicle, who, while her regular charioteer was shivering in a fit of the low country fever, took this office upon herself; and after first driving a hard bargain with me for the price, (to get her hand in practice,) she scrambled up by the wheel, and settled herself beside me, and off we jolted for a couple of leagues, I did not care in what direction; but chance led us towards the *mountains*.

There never was a more unsociable couple than we were for the first league. No communication of any kind intruded on the vacancy which separated us, for I kept myself so remote as to give full elbow room to her whip hand. But, notwithstanding the space, not a word, even, passed between us; exchange, in that particular, was much below par. She was, in fact, repulsive to the last degree—an evident skinflint, without one element of good fellowship, with that nutcracker countenance which bespeaks asperity, and a look so sour that it would have been worth a wagon load of vinegar to Hannibal, when he cut his way through the Alps. She was so taciturn as not even to mutter a sound to her old gray mare, that shook its scanty tail at her sometimes—reproachfully, I thought.

We had thus silently and unsociably proceeded, until we came to the very base of the hills, which gradually displayed their secret recesses as we approached. A little village was visible, about a quarter of a league before us, close to the foot of one of them; and, as the road began to slope gently upwards, the paces of the old gray mare were successively changed, from a trot to an amble, and from an amble to a walk. The old gray woman, consequently, first loosened her loose hold, then placed her whip in the corner beside her, next threw the reins on the animal's neck, and finally flung herself back in the carriage, took a pinch of snuff, offered me another, and began to talk.

"Aha!—good—so far, so well! now we may take it easily. Go along, my lass, at your own pace; your legs and my arms may rest themselves; and well they require it, after near two leagues driving at such a rate."

So much of her conversation was addressed to herself and her mare. She paused for a while, then pulled from her pocket a long clasp knife, and took up from the straw at the bottom of the vehicle an old pocket-handkerchief, which contained a feed of oats and beans ready mixed. Safely shrined within the corn, and wrapped in a fold of dirty paper, were some thick slices of brown bread and butter, and several layers of cold fat pork; forming altogether a display of sandwiches most solidly disgusting. As my companion offered me one of these, her rigid features relaxed into a smile, which was a mixture of sweet and acid, as nauseous as a cough emulsion. I declined the proffered dainties, and saw her, without the least degree of envy, mumble through the greater part of the repast, and wash it down with a dose of beer, from a broad-bottomed bottle which lay in the cabriolet pocket. These stimulants of solid and fluid produced a powerful effect on my companion, for she became all at once as loquacious as she had been taciturn; and her conversation turned, luckily for my wishes, on the objects which began so much to excite my attention.

"Well, Sir, here we are among the mountains, and a hard pull my poor beast will have of it, to get as far as the village yonder. I don't know what demon made me take this road, instead of going straight along the level causeway. But here we are—there 's no use in repining; and we shall have down-hill work going back. So cheer up, Sir; I promise you a draught of new milk, some fresh bread and butter at the village, a repast which some folks may prefer to cold pork and bottled beer. To your better health, Mynheer!" and she quaffed the dregs of her bottle of froth.

"Do you know the names of these hills?" asked I.

"To be sure I do. It would be odd if I didn't know the hills, where I lived so long, and where my poor husband immortalized himself."

"A hero, by Jupiter!" thought I, and I listened in fixed attention.

"Yes, I do indeed know them, continued the dame, "and so shall you if you wish it. There, right before us, is Rosenberg, so called from the bloody murders that stained its

soil deep red, after the battle of Cassel, a thousand years ago, between the men of Bruges and Julius Cæsar, or the Duke of Alva, I don't know which, but my poor man could have told you all about it, as it's often he told me, lone woman that I am. There 's Scarpenberg, high, and stiff, and rocky, like its name; and Zwartenberg, as black as the devil himself, that used to sit on the top of it in former times, and watch the hermits rooting their caves in the earth, long before the Benedictine monastery was pulled down, and the villain monks massacred by the people, with my own good man, Peter Zannekills, for their leader—for which good deed, Heaven rest his soul—Amen! Then here, close to us, is Catsberg—"

"By your leave, dame," said I, "before you go any farther, pray tell me the particular causes that led to the deed you mention."

"You must not have much knowledge, if you are yet to learn one of the most gallant acts of history," replied she, with a vivacity that set every muscle of her face in action, and a curl of contempt on lip and nostril, which gave a most unsightly twist to her gray mustachios. "Yes," continued she, "I believe every one knows that the Benedictines who last roosted in the old convent on Swartzenberg, were killed to a man, and their sinful nest pulled about their ears, every stone of it; as you may see, from the foundation ruins lying bare there before you, down to the very cellar floors, where their miserable victims were entrapped.",

Confessing my ignorance of all this, with a most appeasing humility, and showing no disposition to doubt her statements of geology or chronology, the old woman proceeded to a somewhat lengthy detail of the atrocities vulgarly attributed to the Benedictine confraternity. Among others, the popular belief has stamped their memory with that of inveigling all the pretty females of the neighbourhood to a certain part of the monastery, where a trap-door immediately opened under their feet, and they were safely precipitated, I forget how many fathoms deep, into caverns where every luxury but fresh air and daylight was provided by the lascivious monks. There the hapless victims were doomed to linger, till premature decay withered their youthful bloom, when they were successively put to death by the impious priests, to whose brutal embraces they had been doomed. The fruits of their intercourse were instantly destroyed; for no sooner had each

miserable mother given birth to a child, than it was torn from her arms, and she was thus robbed of all that lighted the cavern solitude with a ray of hope. The whole country was thus kept for some years in a state of ferment, and to use the words of my informant, "a pretty woman became as scarce an animal on the skirts of Swartzenberg, as a wild cat in the woods of Catsberg, ever since Paul Scoonen, the hunter, was employed to destroy them at five guilders a score."

At length a most tragical catastrophe put an end to the career of monkish villainy. One of the victims (a married woman) escaped by some miracle which I could scarcely comprehend. She fled at night to her own cottage door, and almost frightened her husband to death by her unexpected appearance, her ghastly looks, and altered form. She briefly recounted the story of her captivity and sufferings; told how she was led along by a prowling priest, at the close of the evening, when she had wandered rather far from home in search of a goat that straggled from its pasture; how the reverend father coaxed her on into the convent bounds, and finally to the room from which she was suddenly plunged down into the abyss; how her two babes, born in these dungeons, never saw the light, being unmercifully strangled by their *very* reverend fathers; and how, after a captivity of nearly three years, she eluded their vigilance and escaped.

"How happy the man must have been in recovering his wife!" exclaimed I, in my innocence.

"That he might well be!" replied she, with a self-sufficient toss of her old head.

"And what did the husband do?" asked I.

"Why, he kissed his pretty wife, God bless him! gave thanks to Heaven, stuck a knife in his leathern belt, took his bill-hook in one hand, and a blazing fagot in the other; then roused the neighbourhood, and was the first to set the monastery in flames, and commenced the butchery by cutting the prior's throat!"

"But you forget, my good dame, having told me that your own husband took the lead in this pious business."

"And who dares deny it? Was not Peter Zannekills my husband?—and didn't I go with him hand in hand, and stand by him to the last till the whole pile fell in, and buried the very memory of the villain that ruined me?"

"What, then, were *you* the pretty woman in question?—*you* the wife that the man thanked heaven for sending back to him?"

"Yes, Mynheer, I was; and for thirty years afterward he had the blessing of a faithful helpmate to repay him for his three years of divorce; and he only parted from me, on his death-bed, in the hope that I might—"

"Live many a long day after him?"

"Exactly so, Mynheer."

"What a shocking sight the burning ruins and the murdered priests must have presented!" exclaimed I.

"Yes, they did; but a sight that did one good! It was fine to see lust and cruelty weltering in blood and flame! But it was a sad spectacle, indeed, to watch the ghastly women as they fled from the caverns half wild with fright and joy, and fainting from the fresh air rushing upon them too suddenly! But never mind looking back to these dead monks, while you have plenty of living Trappists to stare at here on Catsberg. Heaven preserve me! if there isn't one of them close by!—*two*, as I am a sinner! Let us get on from this lonely place—I would not trust myself within reach of them for the world!"

While she whipped the old mare into something approaching an amble once more, I could not resist a smile at her anxiety, which might have suited with the circumstances of forty years before; and taking for granted her reports of her former charms, I gave a passing thought to the fragile nature of personal beauty, and wondered if any youthful fair one could see the anticipated reflection of her loveliness in the face of this old crone, or value her own bloom the less, from the prospect of what it might become.

In the mean time, I kept a strict eye on the two trappists; and curiosity absorbed reflection, speculation, and philosophy. The faces of these men were turned from the road, as they were employed watching three or four cows that grazed in a pasture on the hill side. The figures were enveloped in brown cassocks, with cowls pulled over each head; and nothing more was visible but two sturdy and naked pair of legs, as they strode through the furze and heath. I perceived that they wore shoes, but no other object of dress was visible. I could not ascertain whether or not they had discovered our approach; but they seemed to turn their backs most scornfully either on us or the world.

We soon reached the little village, which was one of those neatly built, sequestered spots, that seem made for the enjoyment of what is most amiable as well as most humble in life. There were but two or three houses that exceeded one story in height, and these had no pretensions over the others but in a few feet elevation. A pretty girl received us at the inn, more blooming than the large tulip (a favourite sign in the Netherlands) which was painted over the door. A limping hostler hobbled out to assist my old woman in *unroping* the mare; while the girl, (whose name might have been Hebe) handed me a glass of delicious new milk, which her smiles seemed to convert into that of "human kindness" itself. Seated on the stone bench, in front of the house, I finished my draught, and eat with it a roll of the very best bread I ever tasted, in Belgium or out of it, and butter that merited as pretty an imprint as the pretty face of her who had made it. While I was thus employed, the old mare munched her mixture in the portable manger which stood at the door; and the old woman despatched the remnant of her sandwiches with a rapidity that proved her teeth to have bid defiance to time.

I looked upon the hill which rose high above the village, and distinguished its barren sides, through the veil of smoke wreathing upwards in the light breeze that had scarcely power enough to stir a leaf or a blade of grass. On the brow of the hill some straggling cottages appeared, and beyond them, on the very summit, stood (as I was told) the monastery of the Trappists.

Rousing all my strength of resolution and *muscle*, and grasping firmly my trusty stick, which had ere then aided me up acclivities somewhat higher than that I now comtemplated, I proposed to a gaping youth, who seemed to have nothing better to do, to guide me by the easiest path to the high point of my ambition, and the very highest, I believe, of his knowledge. A piece of ten cents sealed our bargain; and I set out, vigorously leaning on the lad, and followed by many cautions from my old woman, "to take care of myself, and look out sharply for trap-doors."

I never felt more thoroughly the inspiring influence of air and exercise. At every upward step, I seemed to throw a load of fatigue and languor down the hill. My limbs became elastic, my spirits light, and I felt stronger and younger than I had been for months before. I now and

then paused for repose; but by the time I reached the top, I only halted for the purpose of enjoying the view: and it was really worth enjoying. A wide extent of landscape spread around, but it seemed secluded and *domestic*. The two or three towns in sight did not look as if they were gone a visiting, like those seen in the mist from loftier eminences; but gave a notion of home and quietness, calm enjoyments, and social circles. The prospect was bounded, at a reasonable extent, by rising grounds and woods; and the highest object was Mount Cassel, standing in single pride, and looking far over the heads of all the other elevations in my view. I could not help giving this hill somewhat more than its due share of veneration, as I marked its pre-eminence; and I thought that men might take example from mountains, and understand the value of standing *alone*. The group around me are lost in a common confusion to the gazer from Mount Cassel, merely because they *are* a group. Had each stood singly out from its fellows, in originality and independence, each might have gained its separate share of admiration, and have attracted in its turn the very same degree of respect that I now gave to another, no higher nor better than they.

"There, Sir, is the monastery," said my guide, as soon as he caught my eye turned in the proper direction.

"The monastery!" exclaimed I, in surprise, at seeing, instead of the gloomy building one associates with the name, a modern house, white-washed and cheerful-looking, stretching along the extent of a handsome garden, smiling in sunshine, and the absolute contrast to aught morose, or dull. Looking over a hedge, which was the only enclosure to an extensive yard in the rear of the house, I observed close to it two of the trappists, industriously working with carpenter's tools. A little farther off, two or three more were busily employed in spreading out some newly washed linen; others moved about, variously occupied, and all wore the same coarse and characteristic costume as those I had first encountered. Some of the fellows I now gazed at were of most ferocious aspect, with bushy beards and scowling brows; and I thought I was coming into contact with felony's picked men.

I moved round the garden hedge, and reached a small door at the other side, which my guide informed me was the entrance to the place. I accordingly rang the bell. The

door was immediately opened; and a figure stood before me, of an aspect totally different from those I had previously seen. It was that of a young man, beardless almost, of fair and mild complexion and demeanour, dressed in a robe of white drugget, his cowl thrown back, and discovering a head with hair so closely cut as to appear as if recently shaved, all but a circular rim of about half an inch broad just above the ears, which struck me as an impious imitation of the halo usually represented in painting close above the heads of saints.

The young man made me a low obeisance, with arms crossed on his breast, and he demanded, in Flemish, what was the object of my visit? I replied, in French, that I wished to see an establishment so interesting, and hoped I might be permitted to indulge my curiosity. He bowed assent, and led the way to the house. I followed, the guide at my heels, cap in hand, and looking awfully respectful to every thing we approached.

We first entered a small square parlour on the ground floor, of which a few common articles composed the furniture; but all were extremely neat, and I found one of the rush-bottomed, cherry-backed chairs as luxurious a resting-place as a couch of velvet, had I been visiting a palace: such is the advantage of *things* being in keeping with *places*.

The chamberlain left me for a few minutes, most probably to "report progress" to his superior, for the prior himself soon made his appearance. He was an extremely good-looking man of about forty, dressed like those I had first observed, with the exception of his head being covered by a close leather cap, and the brown cloth of his robe being of a texture not so coarse. After a short conversation, I proceeded, under the direction of the reverend ciceroné, who waited outside, to examine the remainder of the house, beginning with the little chapel, which was very plain, having none of the disagreeable pomp of Catholic churches in general. We next walked through the narrow corridors, on each side of which were ranged the little cellular divisions, where the monks went through the mockery of repose; for there can be little of its comfortable reality in the four hours' rest snatched between eight o'clock and midnight, when they rise again to pray and chant, without changing an article of their clothing from morning till night, or night till

morning. Their very shirts of coarse horse-hair, are worn for a fortnight together. The beds on which they lie down are most ingeniously uncomfortable, being too short for even a common-sized man, and I have no doubt but their possessors often wish for a couch of the Procrustes fashion, with *one-half* the capabilities of his celebrated machine. A scanty rug covers the straw on which these self-tormentors stretch themselves; and no other furniture of any kind adorns their cells, the dimensions of which do not exceed six feet square. A small aperture is cut in each door, to admit a literal *mouthful* of air, and on each is inscribed the name of its occupant, "Brother Francis," "Brother Ambrose," "Brother Symphorien," "Brother Placidus," and so on.

We next visited the refectory, where a table was laid for about forty. Beside each plate, of the coarsest earthen ware, was a mug of the same material, about the size of a small drinking-glass. These were filled with beer; a scanty bit of brown bread was beside each plate; and a still smaller portion of cheese; and I found that these, with an undressed salad and a soup made of water, onions, potatoes, and parsley, composed the entire repast. But it must be observed, that at the period of my visit the Trappists were living *well*. They had bread and milk for breakfast, besides the dinner luxuries which I have enumerated; but they never eat meat, poultry, or even fish. On the first of October their Lent of *nine months* was to commence; and during the whole of that time they allow themselves but one meal a day, excluding totally the indulgences of milk and beer, and wholly living (if it can be called so) on vegetables, bread, and water. In every room the word "SILENCE" was painted on the wall, and I figured to myself these unsocial Cenobites, placed at their lonely board, and, in the coarse, though scanty indulgence of appetite, discarding these convivial accessories which raise eating men above grazing brutes. But the whole system of Trappism goes to degrade mankind to its lowest possible level. Beggary, needless filth of person, perpetual silence, (except to the few who must use their tongues to keep their commerce open with the world) seem the fundamental principles of the order. They herd together for no conceivable purpose that might not be effected by each man singly, and by thus congregating they

give a scope to imagination, or malignity, for odious imputations, which after all may have no reality in them.

Yet I could not help viewing these monks with a species of compassion that approached to what might be called interest. Whatever may have been the excesses of bigotry or crime that have forced these men into such an asylum, the life they lead is indisputably one of wretchedness. Whatever their sins, the penance is equivalent. For what misery can exceed that of the closest intercourse, without the least *society*, with one's fellow-men; the mind condemned to wallow in the mire of its own dark thoughts, with constant yearnings to unburthen itself; a companion, perhaps for years, at the very elbow of each wretch, only wanting the interchange of *one word* to become intimate, confiding, and compassionate—and that word forbidden; to move about, each man a breathing automaton, heart, feelings, and faculties, all under interdict? I say nothing of their personal austerities—but let me be of any order save that of La Trappe—fasting and praying, as long as nature and the brain can be kept on the stretch, flagellated daily, hourly, if the vows demand it, so as thought is free to vent itself in speech, so as the healing intercourse of friendship be allowed, even at the risk of confidence leading to disappointment! The best fate that awaits the Trappist is, that he cannot live long, and that the intellect is worn out, ere the body sinks under the wasting sufferings to which it is doomed.

Wishing to examine the details of the place more closely than this hasty morning visit allowed, I readily accepted the invitation of the prior to spend a day or two in the monastery, a custom prescribed towards all strangers, a law of hospitality that is sure to meet its recompense. I accordingly sent back my garçon guide, with a message to my old woman, that she might return alone, sending me, the following morning, a change of those articles of dress, which even the example of my hosts could not induce me to dispense with.

I was soon served, in the little square parlour, with a very good dinner of flesh and fowls, cheese, eggs, beer, wine, and all that was calculatad at once to satisfy and astonish the traveller. I only wondered what became of the *remains*, or how the supply of the larder was disposed of, when no claimant like myself consumed its resources. I, however, asked no such questions. I slept in a neat bed, with tolera-

bly fine linen, and in a chamber altogether such as might content any reasonable visiter.

During the day, I walked about the garden and on the hill, conversing with the prior, and also with the almoner, who indulged most freely in his privilege of speech. He was a young fellow under five-and-twenty, good-looking, loquacious, jovial; and he seemed well qualified for his office of managing the household affairs, and seeking abroad for resources which he aided to consume at home. The offices of almoner and begging brother are united, and are by no means sinecures, as I was afterward convinced.

I attended the afternoon service in the chapel, and saw a remarkable display of close-cropped heads, apparent humility, and the externals of devotion. There were many commonplace, and *some* marked countenances among the monks who chanted the service; and these were uniformly habited in a white robe, with a black stripe down the back; the heads close trimmed, with the exception of the circle I before described. They were almost all young men, and evidently of an order superior to the coarse and brown-clad brethren who worked at the menial offices. In what form of gregarious intercourse can perfect equality exist, since there is, even among Trappists, a privileged class? But it is, after all, questionable which is the aristocracy here—whether the psalmodist, who performs no manual labour, has not a still harder task, in a seven hours' daily attendance in the chapel, aiding the hoarse discords of his brother chorists. Among the latter I was particularly struck with the positive air of consumptive delicacy in their faces and hands, and the remarkable developement, in many of the heads, of that elevation which phrenologists pronounce to be the organ of *veneration*. There was not a prominent forehead among them. There were a very old man and a young one, who were fit figures for sculptor or painter—the young man, particularly, was one of the finest expressions of resigned and pious beauty that I ever contemplated; and I have him before me as I write, in his fixed posture, with folded arms, and eyes neither cast upwards nor downwards, in assumed devotion or false piety, and the hectic flushings that passed at times across his pale and sunken cheek.

During my visit, I acquired a good deal of information as to the habits and rules of this remarkable order, and I was disabused of some errors which I had formerly entertained;

among others were the vulgar notion, that the Trappists never change any article of dress till it literally rots on the back; and that a part of their daily duty is, to go through the ceremony of digging their own graves. Cause enough exists, without having recourse to such exaggerations, to make the system of La Trappe eminently objectionable to those whose principles are opposed to monachism in all its branches. A few of the peculiar rules of this order have been mentioned. The most obviously repulsive to good sense, which it possesses in common with others, is that of being wholly subsisted by beggary; for any little appearance of industry among its votaries is confined to offices of household necessity, which they certainly would not perform could they find any others fools enough to save them the trouble. A few words on the subject of monkish mendicity may not be amiss here.

Of nearly one hundred monastic orders in the church of Rome, upwards of thirty live by charity; "without any obligation," as they say, "to work, either corporeally or spiritually, for their own support. For participating the sovereignty of God in the empire of the universe, they have the right to live at the public cost, without doing any thing but what they please."*

It is, however, clear that St. Francis, the author of the begging system, had no intention that it should reach the state of corruption it soon acquired. His principle is thus laid down: "Those brothers to whom God has given the ability to do it, will labour faithfully, so as to avoid idleness, without injuring the spirit of prayer; and as a recompense, their bodily wants will be relieved; they and their brethren joining humility to poverty; but *they must not take money.* The brethren must have nothing of their own, neither house, land, nor other possessions; but considering themselves as strangers in this world, they will go on with confidence, asking charity."

But these rigid principles of their founder did not suit even the earliest Franciscans; for four years after his death, in 1230, they obtained from Pope Gregory IX. a bull which freed them from the obligation of strictly observing his testament. And thus, "manual labour, so well practised by the

* This exposition of monkish insolence is to be found in a curious book called, "*Les heureux succès de la Piété.*"

original monks, became odious; and mendicity, formerly odious, became honourable."*

In about half a century after the death of St. Francis, his followers grew intolerably presumptuous, importunate, and idle. So much so, that several of the bishops loudly declaimed against them. Under pretext of asking charity, these begging brothers mixed themselves up in all sorts of affairs, private and public; entering into the most secret concerns of a family, or obtaining deputations to negotiate treaties between states and sovereigns;† and finally, it was to them that was owing the establishment of the Inquisition.

The society on Catsberg is a branch of a great Trappist establishment in France. It was founded a few years back, by a painter of some celebrity, called Ruyssen, whose generosity took this singular channel for indulgence. He made a free grant to these monks of the house they inhabit, and a considerable portion of the land which surrounds it. The latter is not at present of much value, the soil being poor, and requiring more industry to make it productive than belongs to its present possessors. But the gift was generous, however its object might have been ill-chosen; and the monks have not only granted, as is supposed, an equivalent in heaven for this earthly donation, but the suspicion is abroad that they hastened the journey of their patron from this world to the next, to give him more speedy possession. Soon after the painter made his will, securing the bequest, he died suddenly; and the general inference is, that the Trappists were resolved to secure their succession against any possible caprice on the part of their benefactor. One would hope that this is a calumny. The will was, I understand, contested by some of his relatives; and the monks were deprived of a considerable share of the bequest, but confirmed in possession of the part they now enjoy.

* The following passage from St. Bonaventure is cited by Voltaire, in his Philosophical Dictionary:—

"These begging brothers, by their vagabond life, scandalize in place of edifying. Their importunity in demanding makes people afraid to encounter them, as if they were but robbers. Indeed, this importunity is a species of violence, which few can resist, and particularly when it comes from those whose very dress demands respect. But it is, in fact, the natural consequences of mendicity; for the beggar must live. Hunger and other pressing wants conquer the natural modesty of even the well educated; and once that this barrier is passed over, each considers it a merit and an honour to have more success than another in collecting alms."

† Abbé Hussey, a Trappist, was a celebrated diplomatic intriguer between several European courts, about the latter end of the last century.

Catsberg has, from the earliest times, been the favourite resort of Anchorites, who, before the French revolution, covered the hill. Soon after the establishment of the new order of things, (which means, I fear, a return to *the old*,) a few of the *Frères Barbettes*, or, as they are commonly called, the *Ignorantins*, took possession of the hill, and commenced their course of religious *enlightenment* and political *endarkenment*, neither of which received any encouragement from the neighbouring inhabitants, whose eyes had been opened too widely during a quarter of a century, to endure the *glare*, or be satisfied with the *gloom*. The ignorant instructers were consequently induced to abandon their position; and they were succeeded by the Trappists, who, in no way interfering with those around them, are tolerated, but by no means popular; and from being at first objects of curiosity, are now only subjects for contempt.

My guide up the hill appeared at my bedside soon after daybreak the following morning, bringing me the refreshments I had requested from my old hostess. I rose early; eat a hearty breakfast of excellent materials; gave what I thought a fair return for my entertainment; made my adieus to the prior, and accepted the almoner's offer to accompany me down the hill, to meet the cabriolet which waited for me at the village below.

My animated and talkative companion entered into most fluent explanations on every point of my inquiries; and with as much freedom as on any other, into the particulars of his own situation.

"What a happy life must yours be, in contrast with that of your secluded brethren," said I.

"Why, yes, Sir, it is: thanks to Heaven it is so, for *me*—but I have not enjoyed it long. I am the successor of another, even in the short time that our community has been formed here; and perhaps if you knew *his* story, you would acknowledge that the situation of begging brother is not one so desirable, or so free from worldly dangers as you now suppose."

"Perhaps not. But to enable me to form a just opinion on the point, you will probably tell me your predecessor's story?"

The hint was sufficient. It was no sooner thrown out, than my companion acted upon it. He not only walked down to the village, but he joined in my drive; and did not

quit me until he had partaken of my dinner in the old woman's *auberge*, at the cross roads leading to Bailleul and Roussebrugge. When we separated in the evening, as he returned to his monastery, I put something into his leathern purse, slightly adding to the funds of his society, and still more insufficiently recompensing his loss of time, and paying for the information he had given me. *That* I now proceed to communicate to my readers, with some probable variation of words, but none whatever of *circumstances*, as I learned them.

STORY OF

THE BEGGING BROTHER.

CHAPTER I.

It is full seven years since a lad, of about eighteen years of age, of delicate appearance, mild manners, and gentle, though not polished address, presented himself to the superior of the Trappist monastery, near Amiens, in Picardy, and demanded admission into the order. There was something altogether about this claimant for living burial that particularly struck the prior. He was dressed in the style of the better kind of farmers, and his air and conversation bespoke him of that class; but a tone of natural refinement gave a delicacy to all he said or did. He spoke French well, but with a Belgic accent; and to the prior's inquiries as to the motives which led him, so young, to desire the seclusion, and brave the hardships of the most rigid of the religious orders, he answered, with a modest fervour, that "he felt a call from Heaven."

According to the system of the society, no questions were asked of the youthful aspirant after solitude, silence, and self-denial, as to his name or profession, who he was, or whence he came. He was regularly accepted, the ceremonies performed, his duties pointed out, his dress presented to him, his cell assigned him, and he installed in it, under the appel- of Brother Placidus. The calm facility with which the new brother entered into the functions of his station was quite remarkable. The closing of the gate that shut him from the world was echoed by no sigh of his; nor did any smile of satisfaction attend his entry into his newly-chosen state.

Nothing seemed unfitting or strange. The drapery of his costume hung easily on him; his shaven head appeared to cause him no inconvenience; the unbroken silence, the frugal fare, the midnight risings, nothing came amiss. It appeared as if he had at once dropped into the situation destined by Nature as his own peculiar place.

His attention to his duties was exemplary. He performed with untiring alacrity, for some months, services to which he was evidently unaccustomed; and he did works of manual hardship to which the appearance of his hands proved him a stranger. After the usual time of severe noviciate, his vows were completed; and he was then released from his brown dress, distinctive of the labouring brothers. It was replaced by the white cassock—and Placidus was accordingly appointed one of the singers of the mass.

In this new station, to which he succeeded with a tranquil resignation, that spoke neither pride nor pleasure, he continued to display the same contented perseverance that had from the first distinguished him. His regularity in attendance to the seven hours' daily service in the chapel, which his duty claimed, was never once interrupted. He was almost always the first to enter; and the earliest sound of the bell was generally struck by his hand. During all this while his health was unimpared. He retained his delicate appearance, but was never actually unwell. In strict pursuance of his vow, and of the rule of the order, no word escaped his lips; nor could the observing looks of the many who were seriously interested for him, obtain even one communicative glance from his unspeaking eye. His only converse was with his own thoughts—be they what they might.

For upwards of four years nothing occurred to break the monotonous course of the young Trappist's existence. No inquirers sought him; no wish or thought escaped him; and he was totally dead to the world. But at the expiration of the period mentioned, a new destiny awaited him; and, like a man risen from the grave, he was doomed to enter again upon the stage of life, and to explore scenes, and mix with society, in a way unknown to him, even before he immured himself within the monastery walls.

The establishment of the new branch of the Trappist order on Catsberg, required the appointment of a prior and almoner, with other offices. The prior, chosen from among the brothers, a man of good manners and education, as well

as strict and exemplary conduct, had no hesitation in approving the choice of Brother Placidus for his almoner, and "begging brother" to the institution.

It was not merely the quiet virtues and religious resignation of the young brother that made him the object of election to the elder ones. In abandoning the world the Trappists had not forgotten its ways; and they judged that the handsome features and interesting manners, the air of truth, and the mild enthusiasm of Placidus, was the most likely to soften the hearts of the benevolent public, and particularly that most sensitive sex, of whom donations were to be demanded, for an order of monks, unpopular from their overdone austerity, and from the vulgar notions which aggravate all that is repulsive in their practices. Besides, Brother Placidus was beyond doubt a Belgian; and as his eleemosynary efforts would take a round in the direction of his own country, not to interfere with those of the main establishment, his native language would be, in fact, a necessary qualification for his office.

When the arrangements were finally settled between the principals of the establishment, the newly appointed almoner was silently summoned to hear the official announcement of his nomination. He calmly rose from his seat, and shaking off the train of secret meditation in which he was absorbed, he followed the mute messenger by whom he had been beckoned, ignorant and indifferent as to the object for which he was required. Arrived at the door of the parlour, where the prior was used to receive visiters, or transact business, the heart of Brother Placidus beat with a palpitation unknown to him since he entered the same room, a suppliant for admission into the order, above four years before. The thought glanced across his mind, that perhaps some intrusive inquirer had come to break the stillness of his seclusion. He struggled to keep down his latent emotion; and, prepared to meet whoever might accost him, he entered the room.

He made a respectful obeisance as he entered; and raising his eyes, he observed no stranger face, nor yet one of those, of early association and endearment, on which the keen glance of affection can trace an expression ineffaceable by absence or age. The objects which presented themselves to his view were the prior, the brother named to the superintendance of the new branch society, and one other.

the almoner and begging brother of the present main establishment. These faces were not strange to Placidus; and although he had never exchanged a word with two of the persons, and not with the other for near five years, still the familiarity of daily intercourse, eating at the same table, and being mutually naturalized to the same locality, created a sort of visual intimacy, which removed all restraint from the young Trappist, and left him quite at his ease to hear whatever communication was about to be made.

The prior rose, and advancing with a cordial and benevolent smile, he gave his hand to Placidus, and said,

"Brother, the restriction of years is removed. The time is come when you may indulge in the privilege which is permitted to all of us present. Taciturnity, so salutary to the well being of the brotherhood in general, must be dispensed with in the acting members of the order; and I have to announce to you that you are chosen as one.'

The prior paused, and he and his associates awaited the evidences of grateful satisfaction, which they expected to witness in the looks and words of the young man. But no sound escaped him, and he only bowed obediently and respectfully, without the slightest change of countenance. The prior, pointing to a seat, which was taken by Placidus, and resuming his own, continued,

"A benevolent and pious individual has granted an endowment, of a house, land, and money, which enables us to extend our institution, by a new branch, to the very confines of Belgium; and it is on one of a little range of mountains called Catsberg, that our new society is to be placed."

At these words Brother Placidus seemed to shrink involuntarily, and a deep glow suffused his cheeks. But it passed quickly over. He drew his hand across his brow, and let it descend, as if mechanically, on his heart; while a sigh, half suppressed, heaved his bosom.

"The worthy brother here beside me," continued the prior, "has been chosen chief of this new formed station; and there, on the verge of Belgium, if not actually in it, a native brother of exemplary character and conduct, will be required to act as an almoner, and to make the usual rounds, demanding aid to our scanty funds from those charitable Christians in whom the love of religion is superior to the vanities of the world. Such a brother, so qualified, we have found in *you*, for you are, I believe, a Belgian, and the rest I answer for."

When the prior concluded, a pause of some minutes ensued. The young Trappist evidently laboured under some strong hidden emotion, which he strove to overcome, and which the observers respected too much to allow of their interrupting him. The very use of speech, so long prohibited to him, was difficult to recover. He made more than one effort for utterance before he succeeded; and when he really spoke, it was in so confused and incoherent a way that he was startled and abashed. He, however, expressed, in sufficient phrase, his gratitude to his superiors for their confidence and marked approbation; he declared his readiness to obey any call made on his services for the good of the brotherhood; but concluded by saying, that "taken by surprise as he was, having hoped and believed that he should have lingered out life and sunk to death in the quiet oblivion of his retreat, he must beg a few days to prepare himself for his new avocation, and demanded the favour of some instructions for his guidance in a calling for which he was sensible of his incompetence."

"Beloved brother," exclaimed the prior, "every indulgence, every consideration shall be given to your feelings and your wishes; and our good brother, Petrus Maria here, who has so long served in the capacity of almoner to our establishment, will give you such suggestions as may render light to you, and advantageous to the brotherhood, a task for which I am convinced you are pre-eminently suited."

After salutations and congratulations from the new superior with whom he was to serve, and a blessing from the prior, Placidus followed his brother almoner to the little room assigned to the latter, for the regulation of the receipts, disbursements, and general accounts of the establishment, all which were under his care and control.

Nothing could be more striking than the difference in all ways between the two almoners. The calm, pale, handsome countenance, and tall spare form of Placidus, were strongly contrasted with the coarse and swarthy visage, and short round figure of his Brother Petrus Maria. The latter had not been almoner and begging brother for seven or eight years for nothing. If he scrupulously performed his duties, he also conscientiously availed himself of the privileges allowed him by his station. Wearing, as permitted, in his begging excursions, the ordinary habiliments of common life, (with the exception of the horse-hair shirt,) and his own

black shock of hair growing out of all mode of La Trappeism, he also indulged freely in those points which hungry travellers consider necessaries of life. He ate heartily, and drank freely; and bore the natural marks of good living, in a speaking rotundity of person, and rubicundity of face.

Brother Petrus Maria had been chosen to his office from reasons the very opposite to those which led to the appointment of Placidus. It was his fluency of speech, his persevering address, (which might perhaps be translated *impudence*,) added to his knowledge of accounts, discovered by an accident, which formed the ostensible reason for his promotion. But he himself was frequently heard to declare that the real cause was his uncontrollable passion for talking, which made it almost impossible for him to observe the rule of taciturnity; that he was repeatedly near choking from being forced to swallow his half uttered words; and that if by chance he succeeded, in keeping silent for a day, he was sure to rouse the whole brotherhood of the domitory by talking in his sleep at night. This was *his* version of the motives for his appointment; and as he was a Gascon, the chances were equal as to its being false or true. But the reasons which first induced him to enter such an unsocial order, never transpired. It was indeed whispered that he chose that sanctuary, in preference to a chance of the galleys; and that his present integrity as a monk, was quite necessary to balance the account against his former roguery as a man. As it was, he was considered by the brotherhood invulnerably honest in his actual calling; and no mendicant was ever hailed on his rounds with greater pleasure than was Brother Petrus Maria, or, as he was familiarly called, Brother Pierre, particularly when he put on the ludricrous grimace which he called his *begging face*, and discharged some of his most celebrated gasconades.

"Welcome, Brother Placidus, to my little cabinet," said he, as they entered the room; "it is pleasant to be able to say, how do you do? to a friend for the first time after five years' acquaintance. Sit down, and let us see in what way I can be of any use to you."

"The favour I would require from you, Brother," said Placidus, with as much composure as the agitation of his mind and the extreme difficulty of articulation allowed, "is that of your advice and information, as to the means of fulfilling the arduous labours of the office I am appointed to,

so as best to acquit myself of so difficult and responsible a duty. But I do not at present wish to press this on you. I will allow you a day or two of undisturbed leisure, to form a little code of instructions for my guidance; and during the interval I hope to bring my mind to a state fitting to receive your kind and brotherly suggestions."

"A day or two, to form a code of instructions!" exclaimed the almoner, in surprise; the "arduous labours of your office! St. Peter preserve you, child, if these are the notions with which you enter upon it. Sit down, I tell you, and in ten minutes I 'll give you as much really useful knowledge on our mutual calling, as if I wearied myself and worried you with a volume of amplified trash—sit down—sit down."

Placidus obeyed the repeated invitations, took a chair, and prepared himself in equal astonishment and satisfaction, to hear the simple secrets of a duty which to him had appeared so complicated.

"Now, my dear Placidus," said the almoner, "to set your mind at ease all at once, what, let me ask you, is the nature of your duty and mine? In one word, to go a-begging—to go a-begging, my boy, neither more nor less! What so easy, so pleasant, so natural to a man? It 's an absolute instinct. Every one is born a beggar, and lives and dies the same. Many, to be sure, disguise their calling under the name of *borrowing*; but the only difference is, that your beggar *makes* no promise of payment, and your borrower *keeps* none. Others steal, rob, cheat—for there are nice distinctions—but all are only begging in masquerade: off-shoots from the native original root. I am a beggar by inclination as well as profession; and so are you, my brother, as you will find out on your very first essay. Well then, what so easy as to obey a natural impulse? The principal once felt, the practice will soon follow. But I will give you a rule or two, and a reason for each.

"First, never go a-begging, or a-borrowing, with a sad face or a shabby coat. Your poor devil, in evident distress of mind or circumstances, has no chance of relief. It is your joyous, bold-faced, well-fed, solvent fellow, that has only to ask and have; and why, Brother Placidus? because the charity of half the world is *selfishness*, that does a service, small or great, only in the hope of getting a greater in return.

"Second, always half fill your leather sack, as I do mine,

before you commence your collection. But take your purse out empty, and you will bring it back empty. And whenever you ask alms, be sure to rattle your money and open the mouth of your sack. There is a powerful magnet in gold that has been given to the poor; and the elements of the attraction are vanity and envy mixed; for the charity of the other half of the world, Brother Placidus, is *ostentation*, that prompts a man to do as much or more than his neighbour, although he would let that neighbour starve if he chanced to fall into want."

Placidus, whose look of attention had gradually changed into a stare of horror, took advantage of the pause in the almoner's discourse, to express his feelings.

"Brother, brother," exclaimed he, "can this picture be real? You shock and terrify me! Is this indeed the world I am about to enter?"

"Ay, that it is," replied Petrus Maria, "a very true picture of worldly benevolence in general; but there are, no doubt, some exceptions. For instance, in a town of twenty thousand souls, you may receive aid from fifty who give money from mere recklessness, from a love of squandering, they care not how; a couple of hundred cowardly rogues may hope to buy off their ill-doings by a false benevolence; and perhaps half a dozen individuals may drop their mite into your sack, in the pure spirit of charity."

"And such are the exceptions?" murmured Placidus, covering his face with his hands.

"Excuse me, brother," said his companion, "for causing an ungratified longing to your palate, while I satisfy mine—a man who talks must drink. Liquor is the food of speech:" and thus I avail myself of my dispensation:" and he filled from a corpulent flagon, a glass of some rosy-coloured liquid, which he quaffed instantly.

Placidus scarcely observed him, and his palate was quite unconscious of his brother's indulgence. The latter, after repeated smackings of lips, and accompanying evolutions of tongue, that nothing might be lost to the unimbibed liquor, resumed his lecture.

"Of such materials, my dear brother, is composed the mass of beings among whom you are to recruit the funds of your young establishment. I know them well, in all their varieties; and I will give you a hint or two as to the way of managing them."

"Managing them!" echoed Placidus, with a strong emphasis.

"Ay, manœuvring them—working on their feelings, if they have any; on their *failings*, if not. There is nothing, Brother Placidus, that we must not do, for the good of our order and the love of God. Remember, then, whenever you ask alms of a rich man, to appeal to his charity; if you beg from a man of moderate means, talk of his wealth; if women are the objects of your solicitations, you must praise the liberality of the old, the freshness of the middle-aged and fading, the piety of the young and vain. Thus you give credit to all classes, of both sexes, for what they have not, the reputation of which is just what they are best pleased to pay for; and, as one grand rule, *flatter all.* Be a perfect Turk in that respect—spare neither sex nor age; and you 'll see, Brother Placidus, how fast the strong box of Catsberg will fill."

The harangue finished, Petrus Maria paused for breath, and poor Placidus sat gasping from agitation. He waited a while, in expectation of more of this revolting advice; but finding, by a significant nod from his companion, that there was no more to be said, he rose to depart. Oppressed with a thousand conflicting sensations, and unused to the forms of the world, he quitted the room in silence; and he heard his late counsellor murmur as he retired,

"St. Peter preserve the boy! If he does not mend his manners before he goes his rounds, my poor brothers on Catsberg will have their beer-barrel filled with water, and be cut short of their inch of cheese for a whole month."

Placidus passed with hurried steps along the corridor, and had just reached a landing-place, from which a flight of narrow stairs led to his cell, when he encountered the prior, who had been paying a patro-fraternal visit to a sick brother above. This chance meeting seemed to Placidus a dispensation of Providence, to save him from the fate which appeared gaping to ingulph him. Following the hurried impulse of the moment, he flung himself at the prior's feet, and seizing him by the flowing folds of his dress, he sobbed forth, in scarce articulate utterance, his incoherent appeal. The first words distinctly understood by the prior were these:—

"For mercy sake, do not insist on this. It is too much for me—the frightful picture drawn by our brother yonder,

of the hideous world, half drives me mad. I could not serve the brotherhood in such a station—I should sink under duties I was unable to perform—and all would end in injury to our order, and my own disgrace! Spare me, spare me from this dreadful result—relieve me from this misery—appoint some more fitting brother. I implore you—and let me but retire into the silence and solitude of my former state. Oh! take pity on me, and grant my humble and heart-inspired prayer!"

"Beloved brother," said the prior, in his kindest tone, feeling sincerely for the agitation of the youth, and at the same time remembering the weighty reasons for keeping him firm in his situation, "this emotion is but natural in a youthful and innocent mind. It gives the best surety of your fitness for the duties you will have to fulfil. Your appointment was the result of mature deliberation—the best interests of the new establishment are involved in it—it is, in short, irrevocable. But I am fully sensible of what you suffer, which, trust me, is only temporary. You will not find the world so bad as you expect. An upright man may safely hold with it such intercourse as yours, and walk unharmed through all its maze of vice. Brother Petrus Maria has perhaps coloured his picture too highly. He is rather satirical by nature, a little cynical by habit, and *provincially* inclined to exaggeration withal. But I, too, have known the world—its bad and its good parts. I have known the meanness, the treachery, the selfishness of men, but I also have known their integrity and truth; and I have *felt*, dear Placidus, the healing breath of woman's virtue and ever-verdant faith, giving balm to the lacerated heart, and filling it anew with health and hope! Hasten to your silent cell—to your humble couch—commune with your innocent soul—all will be well. You have agitated me somewhat, and revived long-buried thoughts. This must not be!"

With these words the prior moved away, leaving Placidus struck with his evident emotion; but how much more a victim to his own! A new train of feeling was revived in his mind by the unpremeditated expression of that which had escaped his superior. The newly pictured world had faded from his view, and imagination hurried him back to days and scenes, that even the effacing wing of Time had failed to blot from his mind.

In this mood he reached his cell. He lay down on his

lowly couch. The night he passed was pitiable, compared even to Trappist's usual sad and scant repose. Unceasing sobs were heard by his solitary neighbours till the chapel bell and daybreak summoned them away; and for the first time since his admission to the order, Brother Placidus failed to aid at the celebration of the midnight mass.

CHAPTER II.

In a few weeks afterward the new branch of the brotherhood was firmly established on Catsberg. The portion of the building assigned to their use was fitted up in the manner suited to such tenants; and never were furnished lodgings less encumbered with furniture. The garden-ground was soon laid out, and the hungry earth fed with the seeds and plants which it was to reproduce in fruits and flowers. The working space was enclosed, and the sterile soil beyond it dug up and prepared, as much as its savage nature would allow, for the refinements of culture.

The ten or a dozen brothers who, with the prior and Placidus, had thus colonized the hill, were all soon named to their respective occupations; and the younger almoner would gladly have exchanged his place for any of theirs, even at the risk of the healthy, but ungodly, glow that was forced into their cheeks by the labours which nature pointed out for man. While all these various works went on, Placidus was more tranquilly, but not less usefully employed. He had not repeated his visit to brother Petrus Maria. He preferred rather the conferences and counsel of the venerable prior and his own immediate superior; and by force of piety and resignation, he gradually saw in a less fearful aspect the monstrous expanse of difficulty and danger into which he was about to be launched.

But habit, still more powerful than advice, did wonders for him. The very day he quitted the monastery walls, and saw the champagne country opening out before him, he could not suppress the spring of delight that gushed spontaneous from his heart. He was evidently, for a moment, transported with a feeling of happiness. It seemed as if nature had really

him for the white-robed Trappist, to whose occasional visits of purchase she was accustomed; and when, on examination, she recalled his features, she could scarcely believe his cheerful countenance and affable demeanour to belong to her former melancholy and unsocial customer. She naturally imagined that the young man had emancipated himself from his vows, and renounced the fellowship of his austere and ill-fed companions, and, stretching out her hand, she wished him joy of the change, in terms of much warmth.

"I always suspected it would end this way," said she, giving him no time for a reply to her first mistaken congratulation. "Extremes touch, they say, and I thought such excessive piety would have a wild fling at last—the barrel was too full to escape bursting! Come in, come into the house, Mr. Placidus, if that is the name we are still to give you—but happy I am, for your sake, not to call you *brother* any longer. A good breakfast is a stranger to your stomach. You shall have the best that the house affords; a slice of bacon, with the thigh of a potted goose, a bottle of beer, such as they never taste on the mountain, believe me, and the best of *caffé au-lait*, bread and fresh butter. What do you think of that? It does my heart good to see your comely countenance brightened with a smile. Come in, come in."

The constitutional serenity of Placidus was not ruffled by this abrupt and ill-timed volley of felicitations. "My good dame," said he, without obeying her invitation, "your kind wishes gratify me, but their expression is founded in mistake. I am still a Trappist, still *Brother* Placidus, still the almoner, and still what I have been all along, the caterer for the trifling wants of my brethren!"

"Indeed! you do astonish me," exclaimed the hostess, "but you are not the less welcome, good Brother Placidus;" and this might have been true, for having a fair portion of the natural taste for gain, it was probably equal to her whether she made her profit on potted goose or barreled beer. Supposing, therefore, that her visiter came on his usual purpose of purchasing the latter commodity, she still pressed him to come in, assuring him that the last brewing surpassed in excellence all that he had before bought of, and proposing to send up a small cask to the monastery before the great demand of the neighbouring farmers had consumed all. "And pray," continued she, "excuse my error, in supposing you had parted company from the worthy gentlemen

of the monastery; it arose from seeing you in this christian suit of clothes, instead of the outlandish dress in which you and the other good brothers usually roam about the hill, like so many Turks without their turbans."

"Where no offence is meant, no apology is required, my good dame," said Placidus. "But you see me now in a character which you never knew me to assume before—the begging brother for our establishment!" And with these words he drew forth his leathern purse. The lank appearance of this recipient, which had hitherto opened before the landlady in much better plight, did not escape the quickness of her eye; and a sudden revulsion of feeling was excited within her. She seemed seized with a shrinking antipathy to every thing that appertained to Trappism and beggary. The strings of her heart seemed instinctively tightening, as though her money had been deposited in its core.

"Yes, Madam," continued Placidus, glowing with the animation inspired by this first effort in the service of his brethren, "I am now but the humble mendicant, no longer the liberal purchaser for my brother Trappists. You know, without doubt, that our order subsists on the alms of the charitable; and our little funds being now nearly expended, I this day commence a collection, to which I trust you will be the first to contribute."

"Me indeed! then you are much mistaken, Mister Mendicant. Me subscribe to the support of a parcel of lazy, good-for-nothing fellows, who do nothing but frighten the poor peasants with their grim looks, and haven't as much as a civil word to give to a body. No, no, not I indeed—not an *ortje**—so good morning, Sir, and a pleasant walk to you."

"Well, well," said Placidus, as he turned away, unruffled by her rude refusal, "this is a bad beginning: but, after all, the poorer we are the less beer we shall drink, and a trifle bestowed in charity might have been returned a hundred fold in honest profit."

He fairly struck the chord: all the national and personal feelings of the hostess answered in unison to his insuendo. She quickly returned towards him, and with a hard-wrought smile, she exclaimed, "Well, there is no resisting the workings of one's heart. I gave a hasty denial, my good Brother

* Half a farthing.

Placidus, and I am afraid not an over civil one. But I don't know what came over me—I don't, indeed. I am sure I never would have refused to contribute to the comforts of the good brotherhood of the hill, had I considered a moment. Open your little sack, and let this drop to the bottom of it. I heartily hope it may bring you luck. Would you like to take any thing?—just one glass of the new tap?"

Placidus excused himself, thanked the *re*-considerate landlady for her bounty, and walked away, not less satisfied at the donation than at his own address in exciting the ruling passion to which it was due.

Encouraged by this success, his next attempt was undertaken with still more confidence and self-command. He approached the house of one of the wealthiest farmers of the district, who had fixed his residence in the village, which was nearly surrounded by his various tenants. The large and well-built house, and its corresponding appurtenances, excited high hopes of a handsome donation, and Placidus entered at the half open door with a feeling of gratitude for the anticipated gift.

Farmer Cloots happened to be at the moment in the common room, which, as usual in the country, served for kitchen and parlour to the family. A large table was spread for the breakfast of the whole establishment, consisting of master and mistress, their sons and daughters, and all the servants, in-door and out. Substantial loaves, butter, eggs, and cheese, gave evidence of liberal housekeeping; while the large coffee-pot, simmering by the fireside, and the proportionate saucepan of milk upon the fire, told that good and generous living was common to all. Placidus augured still more favourably from these symptoms, and he readily advanced, on the invitation of the farmer, whose portly frame presented itself with a full front, his back to the fire, and his hands in his breeches pockets, in each of which he rattled sundry pieces of money. At either side of him sat a female, one the partner of all his good fortune for life, who was occupied in preparations for making the *café au lait*; the other was a wo-begone figure in widow's weeds, who silently gazed on the flaming fagots, and seemed to read in them the history of her own misfortunes.

"Welcome, Sir, to house and table!" said the farmer, with ostentatious hospitality, as Placidus took off his hat and

bowed to the trio: "to what, and to whom, may I ask, am I indebted for this visit?"

"I am, Sir, the alms-asking brother of the monks of La Trappe, established hard by, on Catsberg; and my object in this intrusion is to solicit your bounty towards the funds of an order whose sole means of subsistence are the donations of the pious and charitable."

"Ha!" interjected the farmer, screwing up his mouth, and buttoning his breeches pockets, "I have been expecting the honour of a visit like this: I wondered why you gentry forbore so long from levying a tax on your industrious neighbours; but I suppose you were too busy in digging your graves. You say, Sir, that you live on donations from the pious and charitable. Well, I am, I hope and trust, both one and the other"—(here his hands resumed their employment of rattling among his money)—"but neither piety nor charity tell me to pay a premium upon sloth; therefore, you get no donation from me!" again buttoning up his pockets. "Yes, Master Mendicant, I trust I am *pious*: I hear mass every morning, and I confess once a month. I believe I am *charitable*, as this poor woman can attest, who lives on my bounty, and has this very moment shared it!"—and once more the chink of gold and silver sounded on either thigh; "but I have nothing for the idle—nothing!"

"Nothing, or less than that, if possible," chimed in the for-better-for-worse companion of the last speaker; while a rather nice-looking girl, the eldest daughter of the well-matched couple, pulled her mother's apron, and elbowed her reproachfully, at the same time casting a look or two at the handsome almoner.

"I must receive your refusal with as much resignation," said Placidus, "as your bounty would have excited gratitude. I cannot force your purse to open, nor do I judge your actions, though you are so unsparing of ours: but I little expected" (and here he addressed the wife) "that Madame Vermoot, at the Tulip, yonder, would have given while you refused; and I hope, Sir," turning to the farmer, "that a blessing will not be withheld from the doings of him who scorns and insults the poor."

Placidus bowed low, and was quitting the house, when he perceived the widow glide out of the door; and at the same moment the mistress of the mansion briskly demanded, "if, indeed, Madame Vermoot had given any thing?"

Placidus replied by producing the small piece of gold he had received from the hostess.

"No," said the *charitable* dame, "it shall never be said in the village that Vrowe Vermoot, the brewer, was before me in any thing. Here, take this piece, double the value of hers, and put it in your sack, and let them jingle together, to tell which sounds the loudest."

"I have been thinking, Mister Trappist," exclaimed the farmer, even before his mate had finished her amiable harangue, "that one might as well not be so severe as I was just now. I am sure if any man merits a blessing, I do. I pray enough, and give enough to ensure it, at any rate; and I must not risk its loss, after all, by any want of moderate assistance to the deserving, as no doubt you and your brethren may be, in your own way. Pray accept this—do you think that enough to secure me from ill luck? You shall have more, if you really believe, in honesty and conscience, that that is not sufficient—but I hope it is—what do you say, Sir?" and a silver coin, of no great value, was held forth by this compound of ostentation and superstition. Placidus allowed the money to drop into his sack, answering only by a bow of thanks, and quitted the house, giving a grateful smile to the daughter, whose considerate interference to spare his feelings from hurt, had not been lost on him. As he paused for a moment in the village street, to consider where he should next apply, a "Hem!" two or three times repeated, attracted his attention, and looking towards the sound, he saw the farmer's widowed pensioner standing half concealed in a recess, formed by the separation of two of the houses near him. She beckoned him to approach, and when he joined her, she said in a timid tone,

"My good Sir, excuse the humble offering of a forlorn woman; and let this mite prove her wish to share her pittance with those scarcely poorer than she is. It is part of the weekly allowance which conscience wrings from that hard-hearted man—a feeble recompense for all the ill his avarice brought on me and mine. Take this, Sir, and my blessing with it, and excuse my boldness."

She then, with downcast eyes, offered a piece of money. Placidus was deeply affected by the humility of genuine charity, coming in such soothing contrast with the spurious examples he had just witnessed. He closed the widow's hand upon her money, and pressed it between his.

"Excellent woman," said he, and his voice faltered as he spoke, "I *will* accept your blessing, but dare not take from your scanty store. In rejecting this sacred offering, I violate no duty to those whose wants have sent me forth. The poor must not prey upon the poor! Your gift has sanctified the little I possess, by the very intention of their mixing together, and Heaven's treasury will largely repay the proffered loan. Farewell, and may your blessing be returned a thousand fold! Farewell!"

It was thus, in such scenes as those, (sketched from his own brief recital of them to the prior) that Placidus continued his rounds of alms asking. In a short time he had seen human nature in many of its capricious forms, and he did not neglect to profit by his experience. He had, as has been seen, on his earliest attempt, availed himself of his intuitive knowledge of the heart, and of his acquaintance with the two leading faults of his nation—avarice and superstition. Resolved to extract what was good from every thing that tended towards the well being of those for whom he was the agent, he was not unmindful of Petrus Maria's advice, "to work on the failings of mankind." This he thought all fair, for a just and pious object; but he never degraded himself or his calling by any unworthy tampering with the feelings or passions of those he begged from; and he scorned to blend servility with the natural humbleness of his spirit.

He mixed a good deal with rich and poor, as he took the circuit of the neighbouring towns, and he came unharmed and unsullied through the ordeal he had dreaded so much. He had considerable success in his collections, and brought handsome returns to the monastery's store. He throve in his vocation; he looked, in a few months, healthy and strong, in comparison to his former delicate appearance; and he felt an elasticity, a vigour, and an expansion of mind, which he at once enjoyed and was amazed at. But the wonder is easily solved. It was *employment* that performed this magical change—that simple cure for all the indolent and dissipated portion of mankind, who waste in sloth the precious goods of time, and let them slip away like the sands that trickle in his glass.

Bailleul, Poperingue, Cassel, and all their surrounding neighbourhood, were in their turns visited by the begging brother; but it was remarked, that he studiously avoided the glen which divided Catsberg from Scarpenberg.

CHAPTER III.

The summer months were passing rapidly away. The last Sunday in July had arrived, and the begging brother, after his most distant and most successful expedition in search of alms, was returning to Gatsberg, on his route from Ostend, when he entered the town of Furnes, between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. He had quitted the barge that carried him to the end of the open suburb called the Nieuport-*gate;* and, as he walked forwards, that appellation gave rise to many a reflection on the mutability of human creations. Not a fragment was discoverable of what was formerly the strong built bulwark of this ancient place. The name of *rampart*, still attached to the green hedged walk and bordering gardens which wind round three parts of the town, is another instance of the courtesy of recollection speaking to the pride of ruined grandeur.

As Placidus walked on, the loud and rapid tolling of a church bell gave notice of some evening ceremony, more than the mere chanting of vespers. His pious feelings were gratified at the opportunity so promised him of joining in some holy rite; and a sentiment of religion blended with the historic and philosophical reflections that filled his mind. He moved quickly towards the centre of the town. The street he walked through, which seemed quite destitute of inhabitants, was strewed with herbs and flowers; and the mean and diminutive houses at each side were hung with every rag of drapery that their poverty could supply. Groups of peasants were entering the town, and all wending towards the church, a deep expression of superstitious curiosity stamped on the majority of the faces, from which the atmosphere of their native marshes had forced every wholesome tint.

The cheerless and poverty-stricken aspect of all he saw, gave the contemplative Trappist ample occasion to moralize on the existing contrast with the state of this very town, some centuries back, when it had eight seigneuries and nearly fifty villages in its jurisdiction, when the counts of Flanders made it their occasional residence, and the central point of their splendour, braving, for its attractions and advantages

(hard at this day to trace or imagine), the danger of its climate, at all times proverbial.

Placidus reached the principal square. The crowd which filled it, as well as his own curiosity to examine it, made him pause at the opening from the street which he was quitting. Before his mind wholly gave up its reverie on times past, it lingered a moment on the associations connected with the objects around. His eye rested on the large brick mansion on his right hand. In its crumbling edges and the curious masonry of its angular roofs, he read age and respectability, while the iron-grated windows spoke its modern purpose, of coercion and misery. The florid architecture of the mansion occupying the opposite corner of the square, its elevation over the neighbouring dwellings, and the national and civic arms ornamenting its porches and windows, revealed its quality, as the ancient residence of sovereigns and governors, and its present use, as the seat of judicial and corporate importance. But his attention was soon drawn from these dull memorials of past or present scenes to a display of human weakness, in the guise of a religious ceremony, almost unparalleled for absurdity, and which, had impiety, instead of superstition, been its motive, would rank among the most flagrant outrages upon that which it is meant to honour.

The whole of the large square, which serves for market-place, was filled with a throng of inhabitants and country people, mingled together in a common mass of gaping and awe-struck anxiety. On Placidus inquiring as to the cause of the assemblage, he was told by a man beside him, in a whisper of deep reverence, that the procession of "The Passion" was just on the point of departure from the church, the approach to which he pointed out in the opposite corner of the square, beside the Hotel de Ville. Placidus having ascertained from his informant the route in which the procession was to move, contrived, in the activity of his zeal, to witness it closely, to work his way through the crowd, and finally to fix himself in a niche of one of the old houses, from which he could command an uninterrupted view.

The sudden silence of the bell which had so long pealed its notice of the approaching ceremony, was now the announcement that it had commenced. An immediate and perfect stillness pervaded the multitude that had hitherto mingled its murmurings with the tolling sound. Every head

was instantly uncovered: every knee was on the earth: not a voice was to be heard; and as Placidus overlooked the silent mass, and marked the thousands close jammed together, their bended bodies moving involuntarily to and fro, in wave-like agitation, he was impressed by the solemn spectacle of human power bowed down by what fanaticism elevates into religious awe, but what philosophy pronounces servile fear.

The softened harmonies of a band of music, the chanting of the priests, the voices of the choristers, broke faintly on the ear; and, as the procession advanced, increased into a full swell of harmony. The banners, common to this and a hundred other mummeries, were now seen moving along; and the whole display of priestly fraud and popular folly was evident in minute detail, sanctioned by the presence of all the judicial and executive authorities of the town, whose cloak of political hypocrisy was impervious to the gaze of their rustic dupes.

I shall not attempt a minute description of the procession of the Passion* annually exhibited in the town of *Furnes*. It is enough to state that all the circumstances of that deeply affecting event are parodied, with a revolting defiance to the solemnity of its record. The character of Christ and his apostles, and the other personages connected with the subject, are represented in this spectacle, by simple villagers, from motives of true piety, and sometimes by less innocent actors, in a spirit not so pure. On all, however, the masquerade sits ludicrously ill. The mountebank costume and mock demeanour being alike disgusting and absurd.

To the observing group of town's-people whom the spirit of enlightenment has awakened from the dark trance which still enshrouds the majority of their countrymen, the view of this exhibition, taken in connexion with their knowledge of the mummers that enact it, must be infinitely amusing or intensely painful, in proportion to the feebleness or force of their religious feelings. But Placidus saw no subject for either levity or regret in the paltry pageant which passed by him. His enthusiasm, his long and deep-formed habits, the absorption which his mental faculties had undergone, on matters of religious *feeling* in concert with sectarian *form*, all conspired to blind him to the reality of what he witnessed;

* For an account of the origin of this ceremony, see note at the end.

and not one of the ignorant fanatics that figured in the scene was more darkly unconscious of the degradation thus inflicted upon man, and the insult it implied to his Maker.

The only part of this procession that has the least claim to the sympathy of common sense is that which closes it, and which is formed by *real* sentiment and suffering combined. It consists of the wives, sisters, children, or attached friends of the victims to disease, who at all times abound at Furnes, but more particularly in the fever-breeding weeks that close the summer season. Although the most certain epoch for this local plague had not, at the time I describe, actually arrived, there was still enough of illness in the town and neighbourhood to secure a long train of suppliant females, many of whose pale and sunken features gave evidence that neither health nor hope were strong within them. But there was one observable among the train, the beauty of whose countenance marked her for admiration, while an expression of animated piety distinguished her whole air from the sombre superstition of those that preceded and followed her. Her plain and modest dress showed her to own no higher rank than that of the agricultural class of small landholders, who, with their tenant peasantry, chiefly composed the procession. A white veil hung loosely from her head, which was covered with a close cambric cap, bordered with deep lace. An unembroidered muslin robe formed the remainder of her costume, as she walked on, a long wax taper in her hand, ready, when the procession should be over, to burn before the shrine of her peculiar saint.

As this interesting figure approached the spot where Placidus stood, his eye was fixed upon her with an ardent and searching expression, that lasted but one moment. In the next, he exclaimed aloud, "Gracious Heaven! It is she—Melanie!"

At the sound of this voice, and the call upon her by name, the young female stopped suddenly, looked incredulously towards the place where Placidus had stood, and interrupted for an instant the regular march of the procession. But her eyes found not what they sought... Placidus had left his station, and was seen, to the utter amaze of the persons round him, rushing into the very centre of the crowd, whose undulating movement marked where he had forced his way. The young woman, baffled in her apparent hope of seeing the person she sought, attempted for a while to recover her

self, and then strove to continue her forward movement. But she was soon forced, by her emotion, to pause once more. Her face became pale, tears started to her eyes, and she was nearly letting fall her consecrated taper to the earth, where it was evident she would soon herself have sunk, had not a fine-looking young man stepped quickly into the line of the procession, caught her in his arms, and led her into one of the houses.

The intrusive and fugitive Trappist was soon obliged to stop, finding it impossible to penetrate far into the resistance opposed by the passive density of the crowd. He could not, if he would, retrace his passage; and he was consequently forced to remain in this imprisonment, during the entire continuance of the solemn mockery which paraded the square and streets.

At length the crowd began by degrees to dissolve. The loosened mass of human beings separated little by little, and Placidus had free room for egress. But when the opportunity was afforded he seemed unconscious of it, and he stood in a state of stupified abstraction, until the square was almost totally abandoned by the assemblage; and when at length he started from this unconsciousness, he found himself quite alone, close by the fountain in the middle of the square. He cast his looks around, and soon perceived that he had attracted the observation of a few stragglers, who eyed him curiously from a distance.

Recovering at once enough of self-possession to know the awkwardness of his situation, and regain power to fly from it, he hurried away. He hastened towards the nearest outlet from the town; and on inquiring of a lounging inhabitant of the suburb, he found that he had taken, by chance, the very road he sought—that leading to Ypres and Poperingues. In this direction he walked for full two hours, mechanically proceeding towards Catsberg, but every mental movement retrograding far from all the actual circumstances of his present home and state. Still he fled towards that cheerless home, as if it were a sanctuary from pursuing thought, like some hunted animal, vainly seeking shelter in its solitary lair.

He had reached the opening of the by-road, which branches from the main *chaussée*, leading direct to Ypres, and he turned into that secluded and rather gloomy track, which the finger-post pointed out as the readiest way to

Steinwert, a bourg in the close neighbourhood of the monastery. Nothing could be more oppressive to a mind, harassed by painful excitement, than the effect of the surrounding scenery, with the loaded and almost suffocating state of the atmosphere. The country was thickly wooded. The outstretching branches of the trees were unmoved by any breath of air: their heavy shadows lay upon the road, without any of those fantastic shiftings by which they often trace a moral on the path of a lonely wanderer, and like the caprices of fortune on "the broad highway of the world," leave him for a moment in sunshine only to replunge him into shade. Distant thunder had, during the whole afternoon, been faintly echoing in the sky, and its vague murmurings seemed in unison with the oppressive combination through which the Trappist slowly plodded along.

An interruption consistent with the scene at length aroused him, and caused him to look up. It was a thick cloud of dust that suddenly and silently enveloped him, the state of the road having prevented his hearing the trot of the huge chesnut Flanders' mare, whose heavy hoofs ploughed up the sand beside him. Through the dimness of the dust Placidus observed the figure which bestrode the animal. It was that of a man, of a size proportionate to his beast, a complete model of a wealthy Belgian farmer. His head was covered with a fox-skin cap, the long leather shade in front of which stood out far before the outline of his face, and more than half concealed it from view. A blue cotton smock-frock, thickly worked with red worsted round the neck and on the breast, preserved his holyday clothing from damage. The bottom edge of this garment, which the trot of his mare had worked up above his knees, was met by the tops of an unwieldy pair of boots, such as are worn by the heaviest of our heavy dragoons. Attached to this important portion of the habiliments of a Belgian cavalier, were a pair of silver spurs, of great thickness and length; a whip, the handle heavily mounted with the same metal, in the form of a hammer, hung by a leather thong on the horseman's right arm; the reins of a cumbrous bridle lay loosely on his left wrist, and he sat entrenched in the unshapely depth of a saddle, which rose high before and behind him, and nearly covered with its broad square flaps the whole carcass of the animal that was doomed to bear its weight; it, as well as the bridle and crupper, was thickly studded with brass buckles and

plates in various devices. Underneath was a crimson cloth, bound with yellow worsted tape; the undermost of all the housings being a green net, which did not leave a bit of the overloaded mare, from head to tail, free from encumbrance of one kind or another. Even the poor tail itself, which would have delighted in switching off the flies that left in many places bleeding traces of their assaults, was clubbed up, and tied in an ungainly lump with a wisp of straw, quite out of keeping with the caparison I have described. The horseman sat, body and limbs alike, in a dangling sort of lounge, a rather costly pipe in his mouth, from which he puffed a cloud of smoke nearly as thick as that of dust ascending all around him.

A half-muttered salutation escaped with one of these exhalations, as the rider came close upon Placidus. The latter, taken quite by surprise, did not make any acknowledgment. The other repeated his words of vapoury courtesy, in a tone not very loud, but sufficiently astounding to the Trappist to make him start with astonishment.

"Good God!" said he, almost to the hearing of the horseman "what am I to think of this? Am I indeed discovered and beset?"

But the horseman did not actually hear the exclamation, and in a fit of furious irritation at receiving no reply to his twice-uttered civilities, he pulled up his reins, with a quickness and force acting so suddenly on the severe and heavy bit, as to make the mare rear up erect, while she threw her fore legs forward, so close to Placidus, that he suddenly sprang across the ditch. A fierce application of the rider's spurs brought the mare again to her proper equilibrium; but she plunged violently, and while an angry contest took place between her and her master, he exclaimed, in a voice of thunder, to the alarmed Trappist,

"Good evening, Sir! Good evening to you, I say! That is the third or fourth time I have said it, and I don't know what you mean by your insulting silence, nor will I bear it—so good evening, I say, once more!"

His passionate emotion barely allowed him to hear the trappist's timid reply.

"I am glad you have found your tongue, Sir," cried he, in a somewhat softened tone, "for I hate quarrelling—but I can't stand an insult. But why do you quit the road? Perhaps you are more afraid of me than of my mare? But you

need not be so, for I am not a robber, young man. You may safely come through the hedge again. Joos Cooperslaugen, of Scarpenberg, is not a name to be scared at; it is pretty well known in these parts. Come, come, take to the road again, you will have bad walking in that copse: I have told you who I am."

"I know it but too well!" said the Trappist mournfully to himself; and a deep sigh was the only audible answer to the choleric horseman's speech. The instant Placidus had heard the sound of his voice, he recognised him for an old acquaintance of his earliest years: one connected with all that had attached him to the world, and driven him from it in his boyish days, the father of that lovely female, whose sudden apparition in the procession had forced the astonished Trappist to fly, unconscious of all but her presence and his own danger.

In much less time than is required for the telling, he resolved in his mind a hundred recollections connected with the man now so close to him, whose very mention had, from childhood to puberty, been a formidable bane to every pleasurable sensation. Scarcely had he quitted his cradle, and began to walk alone, when the name of Joos Cooperslaugen, "the mountain giant," was the by-word of terror that was rung in his infant ears. This appeal to his fears was never made in vain. The whispered syllables, with a finger held up to caution or threaten the child, were sure to silence his complaining, whether of ill temper or ill health, and he hid his face in the readiest refuge. Joos Cooperslaugen was his father's friend; and though the distance between their residences scarcely allowed them to be neighbours, he often called and sometimes dined at his house, when bursts of his violent temper were not unusual. The voice of this unwelcome visiter, was sure to cause a shudder in the boy; and his appearance across the threshold was invariably followed by the retreat of the latter to some dark shelter, or by his rapid exit from the house. By degrees he became more accustomed to, and less scared at, the "big man of Scarpenberg," another of Joos's familiar appellations; but, even when shame at his own timidity, or a stronger motive still—the strongest of all motives—acted freely and forcibly on his mind, he could never conquer the early dread which the folly of his mother or his nurse, or both, had planted in his infant heart. Many an instance of the effects of this, and some of them

bitterly painful, now rose reflected to the Trappist in memory's officious glass; and his gentle nature was almost agitated into a mental execration of the object which, after a lapse of several years, he once more gazed at and shrunk from. Instead of complying with the rather uncourteous invitation to abandon the shelter of the copse, the Trappist pursued its obstructed path, and after a silence of some time, he replied, in a low voice, that he preferred it to the dust-covered road.

"Very well, Sir, as you like, every man to his fancy, as the burgomaister of Rousbrugge said, when he married his meysthen*—any thing for me but incivility; work your way through the brambles, I will stick to the dust; and we may have some social chat across the hedge, to shorten the road."

The Trappist had many a contending emotion to struggle with. Question upon question pressed towards his lips, but he dared not venture to utter them. He would have asked after his parents, his brother—for the natural feelings of the man were, at the moment, more powerful than those of the recluse, the devotee, the fanatic. He would have mentioned another name, more near to his companion's heart than the name of his old friend; but the risk of betraying himself closed his lips against the utterance of a word, beyond a few common-place remarks on the weather, and these in a tone so timid and obscure, as to create a strong suspicion in the mind of the hasty horseman, that the traveller who so cautiously avoided his observation, must be of a very questionable character. This impression put all his notions of courtesy to a rapid flight, for he was an honest man, who officially hated a rogue; and his plain, rough disposition scorned any appearance of what it was not.

"Hark ye, Sir," said he, in a determined tone, after giving himself a moment's pause, for preparation rather than reflection, and rising high in his stirrups, perhaps to let his huge size be more apparent—"Hark ye, Sir, I thought you suspected me just now of being no better than I should be, so I told you frankly who I was. I now suspect *you* to be worse than you ought to be, and I tell you so without ceremony. No honest traveller skulks in the shade of the evening behind hedges and ditches. The open track is his, as it was yours, a while ago, when you had it all to yourself. It

* A servant girl.

is only for guilt to shrink out of the public way. That is my rule of the road; and the judgment of Joos Cooperslaugen on such a point has never been doubted, I believe. I am overseer and supervisor of this district, and it is my duty to see it kept clear of all suspicious persons. You will therefore tell me, without hesitation, who and what you are."

The Trappist knew the determined character he had to deal with, and was aware of his authority as a public functionary. He was also certain that nothing was more like to send him off than the knowledge of the profession of him whom he questioned, for he had a deep and most irreverent antipathy to monks and mendicants; and as he could not punish them for walking in the public roads, his next resource was to abuse them first, and then fly from them. The answer to his abrupt inquiries was, therefore, as follows.

"Without questioning your official right to ask me who I am—a right which it is my duty to accord to the lowliest peasant—I tell you, Sir, that I am a brother of the order of La Trappe, returning from a mission of alms-seeking for the benefit of our monastery on Catsberg."

"The devil you are! then you are the very man I want." A painful misgiving seemed to sink the Trappist's heart—"the very man, though any other of your tribe would have done as well. I wonder you never paid me a visit at Scarpenberg; but that is nothing to the purpose now. Hard by us here, at Huysenclau's farm, in a house which I have just now left, lies a sick man, who calls out for the aid of a priest, as the doctor has failed him. A friend has tried the procession of the Passion-to-day at Furnes, but the fever is too strong for that—and now, poor fellow, finding himself at the last, and without a chance of life, he wishes to prepare for death. My heart was heavy as I rode along, and sorrow never mends a man's temper: so don't you follow a bad example, and be angry with me, because I was somewhat rude to you; but step across yonder ploughed field to that open gate; you will see a house close by—a hut, rather—go into it fearlessly, if you are not afraid of the fever—but your sanctity protects you from infection, no doubt—tell what you are, and who sent you—you will be well received—and it will be well for him who wants you, if your prayers meet as warm a welcome in Heaven. God grant they may!"

These concluding words were uttered to himself, as if in his own despite. The Trappist gazed at him, as he put spurs

to his mare and galloped off; and could not help being struck, and somewhat affected, by the softened manner of the rough and boisterous man. He heard the involuntary prayer which had escaped him, and it subdued any risng resentment at the sneers which had interlarded his speech. Every personal consideration was in a moment buried deep in his heart. It was filled with fervid anxiety for the object he was so summoned to attend; and he proceeded, at a quick pace, towards the spot indicated by Joos Cooperslaugen.

CHAPTER IV.

From the gate, which he soon reached, the Trappist immediately discerned the dwelling, the only one to be seen in the circuit of dreary landscape visible through the mist. The loaded clouds obscured the rays which the sun still threw above the horizon, beneath which he was sinking, and vapours floated on all sides over the pools and marshes. The cottage, or, as Joos Cooperslaugen had rather disparagingly corrected the appellation, the hut, was situated in a large pasture-ground of many acres extent. The little eminence on which it stood was planted thick with poplars, and a few aquatic trees of the willow tribe drooped down unhealthily into the stagnant ditch that surrounded the whole. A shroud of vapour rose steaming up, as if ready to enfold the hapless tenant of the place; the herds of cattle scattered in the pasture were lowing mournfully, and discordant croakings resounded from every sedge. The Trappist paused for an instant on the weed-covered path that led to the cottage, which appeared, wretched as it was, and sad as was his mission to it, a refuge from the dreariness and melancholy without.

He crossed the narrow plank thrown over the ditch, and approached the half-closed door. He stepped cautiously, but he was heard by those within; and just as he prepared to tap gently for entrance, the white dress of a female appeared at the door, which slowly opened, and displayed to the Trappist the face and form of her whom he least thought

of meeting—it was Melanie that stood before him. She was pale and agitated; and evidently did not recognise the visiter, on whom she cast a look at once inquiring and fearful.

A pang of surprise seemed to transfix the Trappist to the spot. He could not fly, as he had done a few hours before. He was now stunned by the recurrence of the vision which had then affected him so acutely. He was incapable of motion or speech, and for a moment or two, sensation itself seemed paralyzed. He gazed at her with an expression which was rendered more intense by the terrifying doubt that the scene before him was the creation of his over excited brain. The faint twilight, and the shade of the cottage, which fell upon and almost concealed him, secured his emotion from self-betrayal; and the brief space of this inaction sufficed to rally his thoughts, to convince him that what he saw was no mockery, and to give birth to many an abortive surmise, as to the events which brought him so close to the being whom, of all others, he was most desirous to shun. She, the agitated Melanie, fatigued, and trembling from mixed emotions, little knew at the time the person whose embarrassed silence so added to her other alarms. She at length falteringly addressed him, and inquired his business.

It were difficult to describe the effect produced on the Trappist by the sound of the voice which syllabled the words of that inquiry. Who has not felt the thrill caused by the faintest tone of a being once, and for ever, dear to the heart? And who needs be told of the throbbings it sends through that heart, like the vibrations of a lake on which the lightest leaf has fallen? The Trappist trembled as he listened to Melanie's twice-uttered question. Her voice seemed to speak the thoughts of years gone by; and it called up the instantaneous and confused remembrance of sensations that could never again exist. But he was still alive to the propriety, the necessity of resisting the influence of the past. He only wished for strength to escape the fascination which threatened to enthral him. With this hope he conceived the instant project of breaking away from the spot, feeling, through his agitation, that even the abandonment of a fellow Christian to an unshrined death was venial, in comparison with risking the breach of his sworn renouncement of all that might lead to enjoyment or temptation.

He therefore prepared to withdraw, and had he done so,

abruptly and silently, he had escaped discovery and all its consequences. Safely screened by the shadows of the cottage, he ventured in his abstraction to address to Melanie a sentence of apology for his intrusion, not supposing that she would have recognised his voice, though he felt that *her* very whisper would have been to him a piercing sound through all the united discords of the world. But his want of self-confidence, and freedom from self-opinion, had in this instance deceived him. No sooner did he speak his first confused words of courtesy, than Melanie, with simultaneous movement and utterance, sprang forward, clasped him in her arms, and exclaimed, through a half-suppressed scream of joy,

"It is, it is you, Ernest! It *was* then your voice that struck my ear and pierced my heart this evening, like a sound from the grave—and you are now with me once again! And you are indeed alive and well, and returned to us all—to those who have so long mourned you as lost to them for ever! Come in, come in—but oh, God, where do I ask you to come! No, no, Ernest, you must not enter here. Can it, can it be you that I hold in my arms? Oh, speak to me again, dear Ernest, and tell me that all this is not a dream!"

Ernest Vandersteen, for so we must now call our young Trappist, listened to this burst of Melanie's tenderness—saw the tears that bedewed her cheek—felt the gentle pressure of her arms—and trembled like a child in the grasp of a giant. He scarcely knew what he said, or would have said, but he spoke.

"And is this *you*, Melanie, again—a second time raised up before me? By what magic are you here, in this wretched place? Why did your father send me here to find *you?* He spoke of a dying man, who—"

"Oh, do not say dying, Ernest—his life is still in the hands of Heaven."

"Who is the sick man, Melanie? Is it Nicholas? It must be he. Is Nicholas dying?"

"No, Heaven be praised, he is well; but, Ernest, what ails you and agitates you in this frightful way? Why do you smile so wildly, and tremble so fearfully? This is *not* Ernest—you are not he—leave me—let me enter the house." But she could not escape the convulsive embrace that strained her to his breast. Her reply to his inquiries—her doubts of his identity—her anxious questioning, were all unheard,

and he incoherently spoke again, still holding her firmly clasped.

"Is he *dying*—your father said he was? *Is* Nicholas dying?"

"He is well, he is well. In mercy loose this desperate hold. If indeed you *are* Ernest, take pity on me—you terrify me—Nicholas is not ill—your brother, my husband, is not ill."

"Brother—husband—true, true! What am I about? What madness is this? And you! Melanie! Gracious Heavens, what fiendish notion flashed across me? Not Nicholas? Thank Heaven, thank Heaven! Now then to the death-bed duty—I am quite ready."

With the rapid enunciation of these broken sentences, he had released Melanie from his wild embrace; and he abruptly pushed open the door of the cottage, which she had cautiously closed, unheeding the faint effort which she made to prevent his entrance. Alarmed at his whole air and conduct, which she attributed to insanity, she followed him in.

He passed rapidly through the empty room which first received him, and thence into an inside closet which contained a bed. In this he perceived the sick man lying; while a woman sat beside, and appeared in an attitude of deep watchfulness. The solemn sadness of the scene acted promptly and powerfully on the half-distracted Trappist, and he advanced with gentle steps to the bedside. The woman rose at his approach—the sick man raised his head—Ernest threw his looks from one to the other alternately; and leaning for support upon a table beside him, he groaned deeply, and exclaimed in a hollow murmur,

"God of heaven, can this be? My father, my mother, what can this mean? Can it, can it be so?"

The altered voice and dimly revealed features were in a moment acknowledged by the mother as those of her long mourned and favourite child. She rose from her chair, and in an excess of parental joy, loudly pronounced his name, and covered him with caresses, forgetful of the danger which the shock of his abrupt appearance might bring to his suffering and nearly exhausted father. But the latter felt no sudden emotion. The nerves were too much shattered, and nature too nearly worn out, to be capable of receiving a shock. The announcement of his son's return and presence was plainly understood by the once sturdy farmer, who, in

former days, would have bounded with boisterous joy at the happy news; but who now calmly looked his consciousness of it with listless indifference. Indeed, all worldly feelings seemed extinct in him. He threw his eyes upwards, and looked as if towards heaven; and he murmured, in anxious and even fretful fervour,

"Oh, send me a priest! must I perish in want of holy consolation?"

These words, uttered in a tone of such despondency, made Ernest shudder. He could no longer doubt the evidence of his senses, bewildering as was the conviction which they brought to him. It was indeed his mother, whose wo-stricken countenance was before him—his father, who was the occupant of the bed that seemed too wretched for even death to make his own. Those parents, so dear to him, whom he had abandoned with such anguish, in the full possession of wealth and health, now reduced to the depths of poverty, and one of them to the verge of the grave! Yet he saw it was so—and the time did not serve for inquiry as to the cause. His father's call for a priest was the most stirring excitement to his feelings; and gently disengaging himself from his mother's embrace, he sunk on his knees by the bedside, and in a voice, at first half choked with emotion, but gradually recovering its wonted fulness and power, he cried—"My dear father, your call is not in vain—Heaven has hearkened to your prayers—and I, your child, justly punished and agonized by witnessing your sufferings, am mercifully allowed to be your solace in this awful hour. I, dearest father, am a priest, the lowliest servant of Heaven, the least worthy member of our holy church; and I invite you, in the name of that church, by the sanction of that Heaven, to repose your weary spirit, and pour forth the fulness of your heart in confession and prayer."

Astonishment was depicted on the faces of the listeners to these words, but a feeling of deep respect, excited by the sanctity of the speaker's tone and manner, kept down the expression of surprise, which struggled for utterance with both his mother and Melanie. The first threw up her wondering eyes towards heaven, while Melanie stood, with clasped hands, and looks that seemed to speak a still more heartfelt joy than could be excited by the mere accomplishment of the old man's wish. He, the object most interested in Ernest's avowal of his holy calling, wore a mingled look of eagerness

and doubt upon his haggard features. Ernest observed this expression, and to remove at once the skepticism which gave it birth, he bowed down his head, so as to expose the shaven mark upon his crown, though to avoid a too evident singularity he had suffered his hair to grow again, on the other parts of his head.

"See, father, see here the humble mark of my profession—place your hand on the tonsure which denotes my sacred office"—and the sick man's shrunken arm was extended, and his fingers felt on the Trappist's low-bowed head, as Isaac sought for evidence of his son's identity—but the modern parent was not, like the Hebrew sire, deceived.

"May Heaven bless my child!" feebly, but with an air of pious conviction, uttered the old man. And Ernest, catching the words, and feeling the weak, yet thrilling pressure of the hand that still rested on his head, could not resist the unpriestly thought, that he never was truly consecrated until then. Both the female witnesses were deeply awed and affected at the scene. Melanie sobbed audibly; while the prayers and thanksgivings of the mother spoke at once her gratitude to Heaven, and her mingled pride and reverence for her son. An expressive look from the old man, and a mild suggestion from Ernest, caused the weeping women to retire; and the door was closed upon this solemn, and, perhaps, unparalleled instance, of a repentant father laying bare the deepest secrets of his heart, before the absolving authority of his son.

The sanctity of faith, in both communicant and clergyman, covers such scenes with a veil, which even those who condemn the rite would hesitate to raise. The confession of Martin Vandersteen was, therefore, inviolate in the bosom of his child; but the character of the penitent was too commonplace and unmarked to have engendered any but such every day failings, as the priest might conscientiously have pardoned.

CHAPTER V.

MELANIE and her mother-in-law had scarcely retired into the outer room, their reverential feelings towards the scene that passed within keeping them silent, when Nicholas Vandersteen, the son and husband, Ernest's elder and only brother, hurriedly entered the cottage. He was flushed and fatigued, and had evidently put forth his utmost speed; but he entered on tiptoe, and his whispered inquiries for his father were answered as cautiously by his wife. She acknowledged, in his solicitude for his parent, and in the hoarse muttering of the approaching thunder, sufficient reasons for the haste which had urged him toward home, and without questioning him as to the cause, she quickly recounted the extraordinary appearance of Ernest, and explained his sacred occupation at the time.

At any other moment Nicholas would have shown more surprise and more pleasure at this unlooked-for intelligence; but an absorbing anxiety pressed on him, and left him little power for the susceptibility of these feelings, and less for their utterance. He displayed, however, just enough to prevent the betrayal of what he strove to conceal, though fearful that a very short time must make his painful secret known. He looked anxiously from the window of the room, having carefully fastened the doors of the dwelling; and while he was thus occupied, the Trappist slowly came forward from his father's little chamber. The spirit of piety seemed to beam from his face, which Melanie could now fearlessly look into, and acknowledge as that which in years of young endearment she had so often and so innocently gazed on. All the tumult of its late expression had died away in the performance of his sacred functions; and he wore, for the moment, his own wonted look of pure and undisturbed devotion. But his eye fell upon the form of Nicholas, who still anxiously watched at the window, and he involuntarily started, and shrunk back—and when his brother turned round and stepped forward to embrace him, his face and forehead glowed deeply, as though his heart had sent up a rush of evidence to pro-

claim his self-accusal. But Nicholas had no suspicion that his brother's embrace was less cordial than his own, and Ernest himself was scarcely sensible of the check which an over-sensitive conscience gave to the impulse of natural affection.

The looks of all were now directed toward the bed within; and the invalid was seen placidly lying, his hands clasped on his breast, his eyes closed, an expression of profound contentment overspreading his face, and the motion of his lips alone giving proof that he still lived and prayed fervently. The anxious watchers, taking advantage of this tranquil and comparatively happy state, entered into a hurried interchange of inquiry and explanation as to the events of the five years which had elapsed since they had last been together, in the midst of festivity, and feasting, and enjoyment to which there was but small exception on the wedding-day of Nicholas and Melanie.

A brief recital told Ernest of all the accumulated ills that had fallen on his family since that day, the auspicious opening of which was blasted by his immediate disappearance from his home and friends. The total ignorance of his fate had been ever since accompanied by successive misfortune; and ruin and disease had finally brought death within arms' length of the chief victim. Failure of crops, mortality among cattle, and a desolating flood, that swept the country for leagues around, were the main evils against which Martin Vandersteen was fated to contend. His superior knowledge of farming, his activity, and fortitude, made a long stand, but ill health bore him down; then it was that grief for the loss of his beloved child threw itself, unresisted, on his prostrate spirit, which gradually sunk with the worn-out frame it dwelt in; until that hour when, by almost miraculous coincidence, the child returned, as if on Heaven's own mission, to smooth the track that led to his parent's grave.

But all this wretchedness was not without its consolations. A faithful and untiring wife watched by the sick bed, and ever threw herself to meet the assaults of ill luck, and soften their asperity ere they reached the mark. Melanie and her husband, who had, ever since their marriage, lived with her father, quitted the comforts of his residence in the valley at the foot of Scarpenberg, and following the fate of poor Vandersten and his wife, accompanied them from refuge to refuge, when they were driven abroad by merciless creditors;

and had for some weeks been with them in this lonely and wretched dwelling, situated on a farm of Joos Cooperslaugen, which, many leagues distant from their once happy home, and from his neighbourhood, promised a safe retreat against immediate pursuit.

And Joos Cooperslaugen himself, coarse, harsh, and violent as he was, proved, on this occasion, what redeeming virtues Nature can bestow on the sternest men. Of the many others of Vandersteen's *friends* (to use the parlance of the world), some stood aloof, feigned to have never received his application for relief, or found for refusal ample excuses to satisfy themselves. Others, slightly contributing to his wants, or coldly interfering with some claimant, rose on the poor advantage of having conferred a favour, and presumed, under cover of affected kindness, to censure, to sneer at, and insult, when they were only called on to do a service or be silent. The burthen of *such* obligations was too great for the sufferer's gratitude, and he at once cursed the ill-luck, and loathed the meanness which combined together against him. But Joos Cooperslaugen formed a fine contrast to this mass of every-day littleness. He came forward unsolicited; put his hand in his purse as far as it could in prudence go; met the creditors of his friend; soothed when he could not satisfy them; upheld the honour of the absent man against the insolent impeachment of his persecutors; defended his interests, sympathized with his feelings, and relieved his wants; and when he could fairly do no more—when justice closed the hand that generosity would still have held open, he did not abandon the friend he could no longer serve, but continued to pour forth a fund of feeling more precious than all the minted riches of the realm.

Ernest, for his part, had but a short tale to tell, and he curtailed it still, by suppressing all allusion to the motives of his flight from home. He only stated his entrance into a monastery; the long day of monotonous seclusion, of which months and years formed the divisions; his office of almoner; his last tour of collection; his presence at the procession at Furnes; and his chance meeting with Melanie's father. When he spoke of his employment as a begging brother of his order, his mother showed an attention more acute than during any other part of his short recital. She inquired if he carried the produce of his last collection on his person, and when he unhesitatingly answered that he did, and

mentioned its amount, frankly but not boastingly, she repeated his words, with an emphasis which he did not rightly comprehend.

In a few minutes more the old woman went carefully into the sick room. Shutting herself in with her sorrowful employment, she resumed her place at the bedside, watching the countenance of the patient, who now calmly slept. Nicholas, on some pretext, left the hut, the door of which he closed after him, and Ernest was left alone with Melanie, both retaining the seats they had occupied during the explanatory recital before alluded to.

Placed thus alone, their sensations were widely different. Ernest, in the worldly and personal explanations that had just taken place, felt as if abandoned by the spirit of religion that had so lately rested upon him. He no longer knew the excitement which seemed to lift him above earth, when he knelt by his father's side, and spoke the words of what he felt to be inspiration, and which consequently was so *to him*. He was now, as it were, replunged into mere mortality; and the sensation excited by the presence of the innocent being beside him, was, fear *of* her, and *for* himself. A man even practised in the ways of the world might have been embarrassed in such a situation; but to one like Ernest it was utterly overwhelming, and he was at once the sport of every conflicting feeling. Melanie, on the contrary, experienced a total relief from the apprehensions caused by Ernest's manner on their meeting at the door of the cottage. His avowal of his calling, the visible evidences of it, his whole bearing while in the actual discharge of its duties, threw a sacredness around him, which raised him, in her eyes, above the level of human weakness; and the conduct, which in its action so startled and surprised her, appeared now, in the weakness of reflection, accordant with the character of one superior to the common usages and general responsibility of men.

Melanie's was a mind as simple as it was pure. She possessed all the blind reverence given to their priests by the greater portion of her sex, in priest-ridden countries. But affection for Ernest mingling with respect for his office, her immediate feeling towards him was free, without becoming familiar. She held him in awe, but not in dread. During his long disappearance she had shuddered, in common with all his friends, in the apprehension of death, or some ter-

rible misfortune, having been his lot. When, therefore, she heard from his own lips the happy solution of the mystery in which he had shrouded himself, her delight was without bounds. She longed for the moment when she could freely converse with him on the subject of his flight from home, enter at large into the interchange of sentiments and feelings, and fully open her heart, under the guarantee and sanction of his holiness. That moment had now arrived; and Melanie, without reserve or scruple, availed herself of it.

"Oh, Ernest," said she, and she inclined towards him as she spoke, "what a day of mixed sensations is this! Oh, tell me, how it is that the heart can beat at the same time with such opposite feelings—with grief and joy—despair and delight! Our poor father, even in his hopeless state, joins I am sure in all this—then how must I feel it, dear Ernest! and what happiness to tell you what I feel—to speak to you as I think—to communicate with you without restraint—and this for the first time in my life!"

"The *first* time, Melanie?" said Ernest, with an involuntary sigh, as his mind flew back to the day-spring of life, when he thought that Melanie's heart was as open to him as the sky above their heads, or the romantic paths of the valley in which they wandered together.

"Yes, yes, indeed it is the first time, Ernest; for, strange as it may seem, I never felt towards you as fearless and unrestrained as on this day. During our early intimacy, although you were but a boy, and I a heedless girl, there was a something, I knew not what, that made me shrink from you, even when I liked you most. But now that you are a priest and I a married woman, I possess a confidence that I never before knew: I feel as if called upon to confess to you—not crimes but feelings—and that I ought to avow to you what I would never before acknowledge to myself—how very much I loved you."

"That is a strong word, Melanie—loved me?"

"Oh, yes, better than all the world!"

"What! better than Nicholas? better than my brother?"

"Oh, yes, yes—I may surely say it now, without shame or sin. Had you not been a priest, or I been married, I never could have said it; but it seems to take a weight off my heart, and is it not right that *you* should know that heart truly at last?"

Her quickened respiration, and blushing cheeks, were

eloquent tokens of her emotion, and the almost visible boundings of the heart, which she described, testified its freedom from the pressure that secrecy had laid upon it. But not satisfied with her own feeling of this, she took the hand of her silent, but deeply agitated companion, and placed it on her side.

"Feel my heart, Ernest—oh, feel it. Does it not bound lightly? Never, never have I known it to do since the last time we walked together up the side of Scarpenberg: the day that Nicholas asked me to marry him, and I ran out and told you, and you caught me in your arms and were so surprised. But it beat then with fright, I think, but now it is with happiness."

The unresisting hand of the priest was placed over Melanie's heart, and both hand and heart perhaps stirred with reciprocal attraction; for the pressure of the one, and the throbbing of the other, seemed too electrical for the guileless pair, and they mutually recoiled, as if instinctive propriety had felt itself warned in each. But with the removal of Ernest's hand, Melanie was released from all restraint, for it was through the medium of the senses alone that her moral feelings had been momentarily affected. Her thoughts were pure and calm, and no words were uttered by Ernest to discolour or disturb them.

As for him, his priesthood had not the power to unman him, nor did his contact with holiness act a miracle on his mortality. He was innocent, but not insensible; and he possessed, in common with his species, feelings which fanaticism calls *sin*, but which are not so in themselves, for to become sin they must be indulged. When restrained they are component parts of virtue, which is but a mixture of temptation and resistance. They are, however, for the wise purposes of nature inflicted on all men, and Ernest had his share. But they had hitherto lain dormant and concealed, and it was now to be proved whether in him they were meant to lead to good or evil. Melanie's words were fraught with powerful interest to the Trappist. He was scarcely aware of the act of placing his hand to feel the pulsation of her heart; but his turbulent sensations soon brought a consciousness at once painful and ecstatic.

"What words are you speaking, Melanie? and why do I listen to them? You recall scenes and revive feelings that should be forgotten."

"Forgotten, Ernest! Oh, no—they ought not, at least they *cannot*, be forgotten by *me;* and you do not look as if you wished to forget them. They were the happiest of my life, the only really happy ones till *now*, and now I am almost as happy as ever—more so I believe;" and as she spoke, her arm lay gently upon Ernest's shoulder. He took her hand in his, and, drawing closer to her than before, he said with an air of mild reproach,

"Well, well, then, Melanie, since you must be indulged, answer me truly the only question I will trust myself with. Why did you conceal your love from me? Why leave me to suppose you indifferent to the passion—what do I say!—to the friendship—the affection—the friendly affection you had inspired me with? Tell me why!"

"Indifferent! Indeed, Ernest, I never thought you cared more for me than in common regard you might. You never told me so. It was your place to speak. Wasn't it?"

"I never *spoke* it, indeed—I never told it in mere *words*, Melanie; but my thoughts must have made themselves known to you. My ardent affection—my respect—my despair at your acceptance of Nicholas—all this must have found utterance, though it had no tongue."

"So help me Heaven, Ernest, I was ignorant of it all! Had I ventured to believe it, could I have become the wife of another—of your own brother! Oh, no—the world could not ——"

"No more, no more, Melanie—another word and we are lost! Fool that I was—my cowardice has been my ruin! I dared not tell *you* what I felt—and your father, Melanie—I now reveal it for the first time—your father spurned me, scorned my proposal, and scoffed at what he called my boyish presumption. He had, in fact, given his sanction to my brother's offers—and *he* had made them without deigning to imagine the possibility of my intending the same. *Thus* it was that I lost the happiness which I now learn was within my reach; and when do I learn it? where? and from whom? Fool that I was—madman that I am—what thoughts am I indulging in—what language do I hold! Heaven pity and pardon me—I know not what I say or do. This is too much for me."

"Oh, Ernest, Ernest, speak not, look not so! This is not fitting you—have you not renounced all feelings that should lead to this? Forgive me, forgive me! Little did I dream

of causing you an instant's pain. I am a weak, foolish girl still, as you left me years ago, Ernest; oh, then, forgive me! I never dreamed of this—I knew not that you ever had those feelings, and little thought that a priest could entertain them, and for his sister, too. I hoped to make you as happy as I was myself—but I am a criminal and unfortunate wretch! Oh, then, do forgive me!"

"Sweetest and most innocent," cried Ernest, in a tone of passionate tenderness, "cease to torture yourself. Be happy, be still happy in that innocence—and think no more of me. Too late I see what I have lost—too deeply feel the loss—too desperately deplore it! I *might* have been, then, all that my young affections sighed for! Alas, alas, Melanie, this is indeed misfortune! I have lost the only object that earth held of value, irretrievably lost it—and I abhor my craven heart that feared to take what Heaven meant to be its own. When I dared not dream of your loving me, I had power to combat my misery, for wounded pride was strong—when I saw you snatched from me for ever, the open bosom of religion seemed to invite me to repose; but now that all is revived anew—that I feel the fire burst forth which has been so long concealed and consuming, what refuge is left for my despair? Religion will reject me—I violate even now her mandates—I am false to my duties—recreant to my oaths—rejected of my faith!—but *this*, this is supreme bliss; and, suffer as I may on earth, I will, I must take this foretaste of Heaven."

During this speech the Trappist held Melanie in his arms. His latter words were interrupted by the repeated and passionate kisses which he poured upon her. His lips were pressed to hers, and the pressure returned through floods of tears which had burst forth when she ceased to speak. The delirium of the moment caused every thing to be forgotten. Father, mother, danger, guilt, *self*, and its thousand associations, ceased to exist for Ernest and Melanie—and they stood in each other's embrace, until roused by the sound of rapid footsteps, close to the outer door, which was quickly burst open by Nicholas, whose whole frame shook with agitation. The pair so miraculously saved from a danger, the extent of which they knew not, in the instinctive impulse of self-preservation loosened their enfolded arms, and sunk on the seats which, in their forgetfulness, they had quitted.

As soon as Nicholas entered, he securely bolted the door; and then, in half-suppressed and hurried tones, he said,

"Well, Melanie, the worst is at last arrived—my suspicions were too well founded! You were observed in the procession to-day by the harpies who have so long sought our retreat. In the house to which I carried you, some of our incautious words were overheard—we mentioned my father, and the wretches have never since lost sight of us. When I left you on the road and went towards Rousbrugge to seek the doctor again, I saw that I was watched. Now all is confirmed. Four bailiffs are entering the pasture, with a cart to convey our poor father to jail. What is to be done? Can we conceal him? To remove him would be his death."

Melanie could make no reply. She strove to speak, but her tongue clove to her palate. She would have risen, but her trembling limbs refused their office. She wept no more. The sources of speech and motion, and even of tears, seemed at once and indissolvably congealed. Ernest reclined upon his chair, and covered his face with his hands. He appeared for a moment insensible to his brother's words; and Nicholas continued:

"Come, come, Melanie, rouse yourself! Ernest, there is no use now in giving way to grief: we must all exert ourselves. Come, come, give me your advice—what can we do to conceal our father? His life is at stake."

The emphasis laid upon the last words produced an immediate effect. Both Ernest and Melanie rose quickly, and, by a prompt transition of thought and feeling, their minds were wholly turned aside from all that had just absorbed them. The danger to their unfortunate parent produced a shock which overpowered every other emotion, crushing, for a while, even the giant force of passion. They sprang to the closet door, as if the first impulse was to fling themselves as a barrier before it; but Nicholas, with more command of himself, and not unprepared for the occasion, looked for better means of security. His first thought was to remove his father to the loft above, make his mother occupy the bed within, and thus lead the bailiffs to believe their prey had escaped. With this view he opened the door, and seeing that his father still lay calmly unconscious of the coming peril, he beckoned his mother from her place

of watching. It was a delicate task to break the calamitous news to her; and Nicholas was not the best qualified for such a task, for he had been too long in contact with the rudeness of Joos Cooperslaugen, and had a too natural tendency to copy it. He, however, explained how matters stood, in the gentlest phrase which his nature and the urgency of the case allowed. The mother received the communication with a calmness that surprised her children. She opposed Nicholas's plan of removing her husband; and when he urged the necessity of that only chance of avoiding the misfortune which must otherwise befall them, she answered with words and looks, the drift of which none of them understood,

"Be it so, my son: what is decreed must happen. I have been long prepared for the worst. It has come at last, and if there is a change it must be for the better. Wait patiently, and fate will take its course. Heaven has foredoomed the events of this day, and I feel that relief is at hand. But to gather the fruit we must not break down the branch. Let Providence work out its own ways!"

Having uttered these words, she quietly sat down, looking towards the window, and piously crossing herself, and muttering a prayer when the lightning flashed, and the thunder pealed loudly above the cottage. But Nicholas persevered in his intention of active resistance. Moving into his father's little chamber, he was alarmed by the whispering of strange voices; and to his astonishment and grief he saw that two men had already entered by the window, while a third was following their steps. Nicholas, overlooking all consideration but those prompted by his natural boldness of heart, sprang on the intruders, and was immediately engaged in a desperate contest. The bailiffs, being satisfied as to the helplessness, and consequent security, of their prey, turned their whole force against their daring assailant; and soon overpowering him, they dragged him into the outer room, amidst all the confusion of his own imprecations, Melanie's screams, the groans of the disturbed sufferer, and the united prayers and entreaties of Ernest and his mother. While two of the fellows held Nicholas, fiercely struggling, on the ground, the third opened the door for the admission of one, who seemed, by his air of superior ruffianism, the leader of the party. He had remained outside in the safe charge of the horse and cart, while his satellites assailed the

house. They were only armed with bludgeons, but their chief immediately produced a pistol, which he swore he would discharge at random into the group before him, if Nicholas made another effort at resistance. This threat, and his exhaustion, produced an obedience which danger to himself could not have gained; and the head bailiff produced and read aloud his warrant and authorities, for the seizure and lodgment in jail of Martin Vandersteen, at the suit of a petty creditor, for the sum of a few hundred florins—with all the clogging technicalities that are meant, no doubt, to give dignity to such missives.

Ernest listened calmly to this performance, and then, avowing himself to be a priest, commenced a strain of religious remonstrance, and implored the forbearance of the official wretch, picturing his father's desperate and almost dying state, and dwelling on the impious violation of the Sabbath which was about to be committed. But the bailiff had no understanding for considerations of piety or pity. He scoffed at both; and pushing aside the Trappist, with irreverent force, exclaimed—

"Hark ye, mister priest, if you are one, which I very much doubt, I do not want your preaching. I came here for another purpose—I must have my man—his body must be mine—and dead or alive is all one to me. As to violating the Sabbath, I have a special order, and therefore there is no impiety in the case—the law is the law, and makes Sunday just as good a day as Saturday, or Monday either. So no farther hindrance to the discharge of my duty, do ye see, or I'll have you all indicted for a rescue—every one, men, women, or priests, or whatever the devil you may be; —let me pass, I say, to seize the body."

Ernest, stunned and stupified by this ferocity, shrunk as the speaker passed by him; and at the instant, his mother, who had anxiously listened to and watched him, flung herself upon him, and spoke—

"Oh, Ernest, Ernest, my child, can you farther bear that this should go on? Can you see your father dragged dying from his bed, with the means of saving him in your hands? You have money about you—more than enough for this demand—it is the money of charity, and how could charity be better applied than in saving your parent? Heaven sent you here expressly provided with the means to avert this calamity. Believe it, my son—it must be so—do not hesi-

tate.—Oh, Ernest, in the name of Heaven, listen to your mother!"

The moment that Ernest caught the meaning of his mother's first words, he felt a pang of terror and affliction. His hand instinctively grasped the secret pocket where the money raised by his collection was secured. The blood suffered a revulsion in all parts of his frame, and he shook in every joint. None of his late emotions were equal to this, for no mixture of enjoyment now softened the shock. His mother's voice sounded like the summons of some fiend, tempting him to the commission of a sacrilege. His oaths of fidelity to his trust,—the wants of his brethren—the sacredness of the funds which he held—the curse of the church on him who dared to misapply its rights—the eternal punishment of the perjured violator of its laws—all rose before him, in a confounding chaos of evil, past, present, and to come.

"Ernest, Ernest," cried his mother, "a minute more and it will be too late. Oh, God! they are lifting him from the bed.—Oh, Nicholas, Melanie, speak to this hard-hearted man! He is not my son—he is not my once-loved Ernest—yet speak to him—speak to him—for I can do no more!"

She tottered into the closet, where the bailiffs had actually commenced to raise their victim from the bed, and she caught them in her arms with loud cries of mercy. Nicholas, still held on the ground, gnashed his teeth, and furiously uttered reproaches and imprecations; while Melanie threw herself on her knees, and seizing Ernest by the coat, exclaimed,

"Ernest, I call on you, in the name of Heaven! Oh, God! listen to your father's groans—see, they drag him out—listen again—Heaven and nature speak to you, and command you to prevent your parent's murder! Look at him, Ernest, I cannot—I cannot!"

At this moment the bailiff came forward, dragging the screaming wife, who clung to him with desperate strength, and embarrassed his movements. He carried high in his clasped arms the once robust form of Vandersteen, now dwindled to a skeleton figure. The victim, thus forced along writhed and struggled, and a hideous expression of suffering glared from his face. At Melanie's exclamation, Ernest involuntarily cast his eyes to the door of the closet, and this spectacle met his gaze. Melanie still clung to him in an

attitude of entreaty; and he sprang forward, and violently tore open his secret pocket from the breast of his coat, produced the leathern purse which contained the whole sum of his collection, caught with one hand the arm of the bailiff, with the other poured the money on the table, and mechanically thrust back the empty purse into his pocket; then, without uttering a word, he snatched his father from the bailiff's arms, and lifting him in his own, he tottered back to the closet, and sank on the bed, still held in the fast embrace of *the corpse*—for the last convulsive struggle of Martin Vandersteen was this death-grasp clinging to the neck of his child.

The unconscious widow dropped on both knees, and with hysteric utterance, poured blessings and praises on the son, who had, as she thought, saved his father! Melanie stood with clasped hands, in silent emotion at the scene. Nicholas, at length released by the wretches to whom the sight of Ernest's money was a warrant of freedom, sprang lightly on his feet again; and raising his mother, and taking Melanie by the arm, they proceeded to follow Ernest to the closet, leaving the chief bailiff counting the money, which his practised eye had at once acknowledged as more than enough to cover his claim.

Ernest laid his dismal burthen on the bed, gently disengaged himself from the close-locked arms which encircled his neck; and as he bent over the body, a vivid flash of lightning broke through the dusky twilight, and showed him the fixed and death-struck features of what had been his father.

The look of death speaks a language of terrible veracity. It may not be counterfeited nor mistaken. Ernest read the truth with one glance. A convulsive shriek burst from him —and he sprang upwards, rushed past the group that blocked the entrance to the closet, bounded across the outer room, and through the open door, followed by a yell of laughter from the bailiffs, who were grouped round the table, reckoning their ill gotten booty.

Nicholas, still ignorant of the sad catastrophe, left his mother and wife to give their aid to his too tardily rescued father, and hurried after Ernest, shocked at his frantic air. He overtook him just as he had cleared the plank that crossed the moat, and seizing him round the waist, he implored him in a few words to return to the cottage. But

Ernest wrenched himself from his brother's embrace, and in a voice of frantic rage, exclaimed,

"Back, back, hateful wretch! Leave me to the fate which you have brought upon me. I have robbed my brethren—murdered my father—ruined the peace of her I adored:—thanks to whom? I am covered with crime—Heaven is ready to blast me—hell yawns for me—listen to the laughing fiends! Who has made me what I am? Who thrusts himself between me and the bliss that was my own? Who follows me to the edge of the abyss? You, you! Leave me then to my despair."

"Ernest, for all our sakes, for your mother's, your poor father's, Melanie's ——"

"Monster! dare you to mock my misery!" Uttering these frantic words, Ernest raised his hand, and with a force that seemed more than his own, he struck a blow upon his brother's head that felled him to the earth. He then ran headlong into the gloom, his desperate path lighted at times by the glaring flashes of the storm, and feeling as though the curse of Cain were seared on his throbbing brow.

Nicholas rose unhurt, and would have still pursued the poor fugitive, had he not been recalled to the cottage by the piercing screams of the women, which told him the tale of death.

CHAPTER VI.

At the very time that these distressing scenes were taking place, Joos Cooperslaugen, having been safely carried home by his valuable, though sometimes restive mare, was seated snugly before his own kitchen fire. But ere he betook himself to the refuge of his huge and well-stuffed elbow-chair, he saw that the partner of his rapid return from Huysenclaus was well cleaned, fed, and bedded in the stable which she exclusively occupied, apart from the coarser animals of the farm. Joos then proceeded to disencumber himself of his jack-boots, and his other riding habiliments. He next ordered Micha, his faithful maid, to place upon the table his pipe and leaden tobacco-canister, his pint-measure drinking

glass, and a pewter vessel containing a *litre*, filled from a cask of Madame Vermoot's brewing, at "the Tulip," in the village hard by. Thus provided, the honest farmer and overseer of the roads sat down to his lonely indulgence, listened to the storm that rioted through the glen, and drank a frothing bumper towards the better health of his old friend, at the very moment in which poor Vandersteen heaved his dying gasp!

Joos Cooperslaugen was a man of hope, who never despaired, set a bold face against fortune, and held ill luck and the fever in scorn. In short, he had strong nerves, and no superabundance of bile. He had not, therefore, quite given up his friend, notwithstanding what he said to the Trappist. While he was by the sick man's bedside, and saw his suffering and exhaustion, he could not resist their influence, and he thought the case a bad one. But embedded in the seat and sides of his arm-chair, warmed by the fire (which in the damp valley was always in season,) dozed with strong ale, and enveloped in tobacco-smoke, he took a different view of things. He began to grow skeptical as to the existence of what he had half believed in, and wondered how people could be so weak as to give way to illness, or create misfortunes, by imagining themselves unfortunate. So that by the time he shook the ashes out of his fourth pipe, and threw the dregs of his fourth glass into the fire, Joos Cooperslaugen had no memory for the evils of life; and sat in a quiet doze of self-contentment and good will towards all mankind.

His old *vrowe*, a strong-built, dumpy little woman, who had many a year's experience of her master's ways, was as regular as clockwork in her duties. She knew to a minute the time he took to disqualify the *litre*; and was never out in her reckoning as to the fit moment for replenishment. In the intervals of this duty she used to sit nodding on the rush-bottomed chair, which, to suit her stature, had suffered amputation in all its members, and rested on the stumps of its wooden legs in a corner of the chimney. Thus placed, she formed a sort of substantial shadow to every movement of her master; and while appearing to sleep, she watched him from under her half-closed lids, and, by acute observation of his habits, was ready to anticipate every wish. She often surprised her master by this species of divination; for he, like many a wiser man, was ignorant of the treacherous

way in which looks and motions anticipate words about to be spoken, and betray thoughts that are meant to be concealed. He never calculated that his forefinger being buried up to the second joint in the bowl of his pipe, told a tale of emptiness to Vrowe Micha, just as sure as if she had felt the void; nor was he aware of his invariable trick of smacking his lips, and wiping them with his hand, *before* he drank—thus reversing the natural and very cleanly custom of ale-drinkers in general. These, and many such signals, unconsciously telegraphed his wishes, which the ready *vrowe* replied to incontinent; and at the time alluded to, about a page ago, (if such reckoning be admissible,) when old Joos had despatched his fourth pipe and fourth pint, Micha started from her lowly seat, and shuffling across to a corner press, took out the remnant of an Antwerp ham, a loaf of bread, some cheese and butter, and placed them on the table.

"Why, what the devil are you about, Micha?" said her master, rather gruffly, but with a look at the repast that spoke him "nothing loth."

"You are hungry, ar'n't you?" said she, giving him question for question.

"Yes, I am—but how did you know it? I did not tell you so?"

"No, but I *thought* you were," answered the *vrowe*. But she might have honestly said she *knew* it; for she could not misconstrue the farmer's constant habit of rubbing his broad and brawny palm over the surface of those regions where the appetetic action, in a healthy man, becomes pleasantly importunate about three times a-day.

"I 'll tell you what, Micha," exclaimed Joos, mechanically putting his finger into his unfilled pipe, "this sort of knowledge of my thoughts, which you certainly have, somehow or another, acquired, is convenient enough now and then; but it is, after all, a devil of a disappointment not to have occasion sometimes to say what one wants. There now, why do you put that canister close to my elbow? couldn't you wait till I asked you for it?"

"I thought you would like another pipe," said Micha, drily.

"Ay, and so did *I* think it, but I must not be thwarted in this way, I tell you," rejoined her master, smacking his tongue against his smoke-dried palate, and passing his hand across his parched lips. "What are you about there, Vrowe

Micha? what are you doing in the bear closet?" continued he.

"Filling the litre," answered Micha.

"May the big rock of Rosenberg crush me to atoms, if I was not just going to bid you do it!" exclaimed Cooperslaugen, slapping the table with his hand, and rising up, in all the height and consequence of a big man in a passion. But Micha took no notice of that—at least she displayed none, but quietly sat down; and Joos finding no opposition in her imperturbability, dropped into his chair, where his wrath exploded harmlessly, like a bomb-shell bursting in a morass.

"I tell you, Micha," grumbled he, "I don't like this officiousness—I hate a servant who forestalls her master's orders. It's quite enough to obey when you are commanded. To have the word taken out of one's mouth is downright insult—and I can bear any thing but that. What are you looking so glum for? Why do you sit there under the chimney, like a toad peeping out of a hole in the wall? Can't you be good tempered, and not drive me into a passion? What are you about, Micha, I say? Can I eat ham and cheese without a knife to cut them? Am I to root at them with my snout, like a hog in a trough? Why don't you give me a knife?"

"Because you did not ask for it."

"I say I did ask for it, Vrowe."

"I say you did not, Mynheer."

"I tell you, Micha, you had better not put me into a passion."

"I tell you, Mynheer Cooperslaugen, you had better put yourself out of a passion. It is a shame for you to be always quarrelling this way, and vexing yourself when one does all that one can do to please you. And I'll tell you more, I don't deserve this from you. It's a poor return for all my services; and it's a bad heart that gives such a bad temper."

A snuffling burst of tears cut short this reproach, but it was quite long enough to probe the master to the quick; for he could not deny that the beginning was true, and he was alarmed at the thought that the ending might be so as well. Besides the sight of tears always melted him; and Micha's copious tides never failed to wash away the landmarks of his resentment. On the present occasion, he was, as usual, the

first to seek reconciliation. He spoke, but his voice fell a couple of octaves; and he stretched out his hand, which Micha, softened in her turn, seized and blubbered over.

"Come, Micha, forgive and forget;" cried he; "but I am sorry you think my heart so bad—you ought to know it."

"I do, I do know it well, for the best that ever beat; and I am an ungrateful wretch to say what I did. But I didn't *think* it—I didn't indeed—and you may forgive—a word or two—of hasty—oh, oh, oh!" and the imagination of her master completed poor Micha's sentence.

The quarrel was thus made up; but the vrowe continued for a long time her sobbing accompaniment to Joos' masticating operations: for her temper, though joined to a good disposition, was of that sullen and dogged kind which is sure to have its fling.

"Yes, I certainly was a little too hot," said Joos, not over articulately, through obstructions of ham and brown bread; "but you must make allowances for me, Micha. You know I may say, without any offence, that you are but a sorry substitute for my daughter. To be always rubbing against such a lump as you is enough to set one's temper an edge, like the teeth of a harrow striking against a frozen clod. I don't wish to flatter you—but you are a good girl, and have been so for a couple of dozen years to my knowledge. But you have no mind, Micha; you can't converse with me; and little as I have to say to you, you stint me even in that. I don't like to sit with my pipe in my mouth, and drink beer without talking, like the Blackamoor's head over Madame Vermoot's shop door. I want society; and am not *myself*, since Melanie and her husband left me. She was such a good listener! and Nicholas always had a word for each of mine, no matter of what sort. But I am now forlorn, as it were. Since good Mr. Ruysten has taken up with those toad-eating Trappists, I have no one to drop in of an evening. I hate the parish priest, because—because—because he's a priest—and the excise-man hates me, because I keep the roads clear of his bribing cronies the smugglers. I have quarrelled with farmer Vranken, and farmer Cloots, and two or three more neighbours; and old Cassanootem, the notary, says his nerves can't bear my loud talking. All this is very unfortunate, Micha! It is enough to waste a man, mind and body! Just toss a couple of those black puddings into the frying

pan—I don't much like this ham;" and he put aside his plate, with the bare bone he had so industriously unfleshed. "What would I not give for a pleasant companion to pass an hour or two with me, and silence the growling of these thunder claps!"

"Hush, hush, Mynheer!" cried Micha, "don't you hear a voice outside? Some one is caught in the storm!"

"I think I do hear a faint call—yes—certainly—some traveller—though few venture this way after dark—who can it be? To the door, Micha—take the lamp—stop a moment—just let me cock my gun. No, go on quickly—the cries are close by the house."

No sooner had Micha unlatched the door, than it was blown open by a gust of wind, and her lamp was at the same time extinguished. But the continued flashes of lightning amply illuminated the farm-yard, which was in front of the house, and brought out every object in vivid relief from the intervals of gloom which obscured them. Micha, however, wanted no light to enable her to steer through the obstructions of the place, every inch of which she knew so familiarly; and her heart being to the full as stout as her person, there was no impediment to her stepping forth in search of the benighted person. She did so unhesitatingly, first calling close to her the two fierce dogs, which prowled about the yard, and, luckily for the traveller, were kept within its precints, by their instinctive alarm at the storm. Joos Cooperslaugen stood at the door, with his gun cocked to guard against treachery, and hallooed repeatedly, in a key that seemed meant to challenge the very thunder. No answer was returned to these sommonses; and Joos, being officially of a suspicious turn, called out to Micha to take heed; but Micha did not share his misgivings, or if she did, they were kept in the shade, by the outspreadings of the charity so deeply implanted in her heart. She heard her master's cautions, but did not heed them. She knew that a fellow-creature had called out for succour, and she felt irresistibly impelled to afford it, without arguing whether the appeal was true or false.

Micha made an ineffectual search in every corner of the farm-yard. She gave repeated invitations, in the kindest phrase which her Flemish jargon admitted, but no answer was returned; and she then began to entertain fears for the safety of the poor being whose voice both she and her mas-

fer had so positively heard. Neither the farmer or his wrowe believed in any one of the varieties of ghosts and goblins, which common credence attributed to the glen of Scarpenberg. Joos was one of those men, emphatically distinguished as "fearing neither man nor devil;" and Micha was a matter-of-fact lump of mortality, unlightened by the poetic leaven of superstition. They therefore persisted in supporting each other's conviction that it was a man's voice they had heard; and while Micha got soaked to the very skin, her master, ashamed to be outdone in exertion, prepared to share her labours; and having tied the flap of his hairy cap under his chin, and provided himself with the stable-lanthorn, he was in the act of wrapping himself in his cloak, when Micha discovered the object of her search, and saved both cloak and cap the necessity of repulsing the rain.

The sturdy wench had a heart so kind as to allow of compassion for pigs as well as men; and when she had convinced herself that nothing of the last mentioned species was within the reach of relief, she turned her attention to the large company of the former, which grunted and squeaked most furiously in the square enclosure which they occupied close to the farm-yard wall.

"Poor things!" sighed Micha to herself, "they know my voice;" and as she looked over into the piggery, to speak a word of recollection, a broad flash of lightning displayed the whole community standing in a circle round the body of a man, who had apparently dropped among them from the top of the wall. This intruder appeared to Micha seriously hurt, or horribly frightened, for he coiled himself up like a hedge-hog, and resisted every intimation from the eight or ten snouts that simultaneously urged his removal. Micha's efforts were more effectual, for without a moment's delay she stooped down, and raised the body on her shoulder. A pair of stout arms in an instant encircled her neck, and the knees of her burthen instinctively fastened themselves against her ribs. Thus loaded, Micha waddled through the mud and manure of the yard, followed by the whole population of the piggery, grunting forth their recognition of the hand that fed, and their resentment against the body that disturbed them.

Just as Joos Cooperslaugen stepped out of the house-door, Micha stepped in, and they came in contact rather abruptly, but not enough so to shake the new comer from his seat. He, however, opened his eyes at the shock; and

the fierce and hair-fringed face of Joos, close to his own, was an object of legitimate alarm, sufficient to make him shut them again.

"Heaven have mercy upon me!" exclaimed he, as Micha disburthened herself, by shaking him off into her master's arm-chair.

"It has had mercy on you, my friend," said Joos, "in giving you a billet for such snug quarters. So cheer up; don't be afraid, you now have the laugh against the storm. Come, come, open your eyes and your mouth, and swallow this glass of real Scheidam, and look upon a man that no one need be frightened at—Joos Cooperslaugen of Scarpenberg, overseer of the roads, from Ypres to Poperingue, from Rousbrugge to Steinwort—east and west, north and south—the same all round the compass—and pretty well known in these parts."

The stranger shook himself, and rubbed his eyes at this very reassuring speech, and swallowed unresistingly the proffered bumper of Geneva.

"That's right, my honest fellow," said Joos; "don't be afraid of it. Let your heart once get afloat in stuff like that, and nothing can sink it. Will you try another? You will? ay, silence gives consent. But open your eyes, man—look at the glass, and be grateful to it. It was my father's before me."

The stranger could not resist the appeal. He looked for a moment or two at the family relic, which was one of those capacious dram glasses so common in Belgium, of thick chrystal, with a white spiral mark in the heart of its long shank, like a little snake worming its way up to the liquid at top. The stranger lost no time in useless observation, but instantly disposed of the contents with which Joos had liberally brimmed it.

"Well, well," said the latter, with a plaintive look, "I never take this glass in my hand without thinking of my poor father. But sorrow is as useless as it's dry—so here goes!" and he tossed off a bumper in his turn.

"Oh, Lord!" moaned the stranger, "if *my* poor father could but see his prodigal son, like an evil spirit in a herd of swine!"

Micha shortly explained this allusion to her master, understanding French and the Bible sufficiently to comprehend it. Joos burst into a fit of laughter, more suitable to the

stable than the kitchen. The stranger, however, did not take it ill-temperedly; but said, with a jocose leer at the string of black pudding which Micha had laid upon the table,

"Laugh away, laugh away, most worshipful overseer—it's all fair; and I mean to take my revenge on the pigs, by an intestine attack on some of their progenitors. I confess a craving for one of these puddings, or a sausage, or any thing of that kind. Pray, my good girl, will you dress a few of these? You will join me, perhaps, Mynheer Cooperslaugen? I fear I interrupted your supper; but there is plenty left for both of us—pray sit down."

It was Joos's turn to stare, and he did so broadly, as if he expected to see the brass oozing out of the stranger's forehead. So complete a recovery of self-possession, so quick an adaptation to circumstances, so much ease, and such undoubted impudence, had rarely been witnessed in the valley of Scarpenberg.

"Come, come, my worthy host," continued the stranger, "you see I make myself at home. That is the best way to prove my gratitude; and true hospitality wants no other return. You like a joke, I find, and no doubt you can *take* as well as *give*. That is a golden rule, believe me. A *generous* jester receives freely, and sparingly bestows. Pray sit down, Mynheer. Give a chair to your master, vrowe. Here's to your health, Sir; your beer is indeed a fair match for your Geneva"—and the pint measure emptily echoed the smack of the drinker's lips.

"It is not bad, I believe," muttered Joos, hesitatingly, and quite confounded; and then (to Micha's absolute consternation), he calmly drew over a rush-bottomed chair, and placed himself at the table—resigning *his own* side of the fire, and *his own* two-armed, double-stuffed throne to the usurper, who dropped into these domestic duties, with as much ease as though he had (like a mightier monarch) "found the crown in the mud," through which he had been struggling.

Some desultory conversation, to which the stranger contributed, profusely rather than generously, according to his own theory, now took place, while Micha smothered her wonderment in the smoke of her culinary proceedings. The black puddings were ravenously assailed, and the litre two or three times filled and emptied—Joos Cooperslaugen par-

taking of the repast in about the same proportion as he had shared in the conversation. For full twenty years Joos had never felt so uneasy. He had been until that moment the very despot of his fireside circle. Every nod and wink had been a law; and his privileges of place and person were held as sacred as those of any other sovereign of the Fee-faw-fum dynasty in any country of the earth. He now appeared, on the contrary, a mere cipher in his own territory, having abdicated in favour of he did not know whom, and every thing went cross-ways. He found inconceivable difficulty in managing matters; his right hand seemed to be doing the work of his left; and he ate and drank, as it were, at the wrong side of his mouth. Micha was just as much embarrassed as her master; and she gazed, from her little chair, in silent bewilderment at his confusion.

But Joos felt amused, notwithstanding, by the fluent rhodomontade of his guest. He talked and eat with prodigious facility, and there was a quaintness in his discourse and manner, which rather tallied with the farmer's taste; so that as the glasses were successively filled and emptied, he began to be satisfied that he had actually beside him the "pleasant companion" he had been longing for about an hour before. There were none of the many subjects of the stranger's conversation on which he was more amusing than *himself*. He gave a most ludicrous account of his wanderings through the valley—of his fears of the storm—his joy at discovering the lights of the house—his alarm at their sudden extinction, and the terrible sounds of Joos and his handmaid's lingo, and of his prudent determination to lie close in the base security into which he tumbled by accident, after he succeeded in scaling the farm-yard wall. But to all this he gave a turn of drollery, which deprived the facts of the colouring of cowardice that a less embellished portraiture would have left on them—and he finished his personal narrative as follows:

"But I am somehow thinking, friend Cooperslaugen, that you yourself have been put a little out of sorts to-night. All men and all things are alike subject to mishaps, ecclesiastics and laymen, church and state. In the bustle of revolutions, individuals and empires are both turned topsy-turvy—and if I have met the common fate, you have not quite escaped; for an overseer of the roads, deprived of his arm-chair, seems

as much out of place as a priest in a pig-sty. Isn't that true?"

"A priest! why, what the devil do you mean by that?" asked Joos, that cabalistical word having banished all the other parts of the stranger's speech.

"Mean, my worthy host? why, nothing more than that I am a priest."

"You a priest!" uttered Joos, in a mixture of astonishment, and something very like alarm.

"Ay, that I am, and a man that no one need be frightened at. Brother Petrus Maria, of the order of La Trappe, perambulator of the roads from Amiens to Aire, from Arras to Abbeville—north and south, east and west, and quite as well known in Picardy as Joos Cooperslaugen in Flanders."

"Brother Petrus Maria, of the order of La Trappe!" exclaimed Joos, in his former tone.

"Ay, or if it pleases you better, Father Pierre, the Trappist, and begging brother to his convent."

"Begging brother!" vociferated Joos, starting from his seat, which he overturned in his alarm—"Thunder and furies! What can this mean? Another of ye! Two in one day! This is too bad, and is not to be borne—it is a downright insult! What plot is hatching? What demon brought you here—and how did I suffer you to cross the threshold? Come, come, neighbour, this is a joke—I 'll be cursed if you are a priest, or a beggar either—or, if you are, I forswear, from this blessed night, my hatred of both tribes, in honour of such a pleasant, bold-faced, impudent fellow. So down I sit again, though I have made a vow never to cross my legs under the same plank with monk or mendicant. Tell me truly who and what you are; and, be what you may, I trust to *your* absolution to wipe out my perjury.

With these words Joos resumed his seat; filled fresh bumpers for himself and Petrus Maria, and calmly listened while the latter related, that having quitted the diligence at Bailleul, to cross the valley on foot, he had missed his way, and got entangled in the thickets in search of the monastery on Catsberg, where he was going on a special mission from his prior. This is a brief summary of a very circumlocutory recital, interlarded with dozens of Gasconisms, both in manner and matter; and interrupted by an abundance of hiccuping and hemming; and other consequences of what might be termed a *debauch*.

Joos seemed quite a metamorphosed man, under the influence of his companion. By the time they were both fairly fuddled, they seemed to have thoughts, feelings, glasses, and goblets all in common. They changed sides repeatedly, without knowing one from another; and there was not an object in the room that did not appear to turn round and round, even oftener than themselves. But Micha stood still, the steady pivot on which they made their various evolutions, and by her continued meditation their balance of power was preserved. She kept them on their feet, and finally put them into their respective beds. Joos Cooperslaugen's last waking thought was one of skepticism as to Micha's assurance that his head did not lie at the foot of the bed. Father Pierre chuckled even in his sleep, at having bullied so great a bully, who was overcome by the main force of impudence—a consummation that never could have been effected by all the united modesty of mankind.

CHAPTER VII.

The farmer and the priest both felt as if they had but just closed their eyes, and as if their mouths had never been shut, when they were roused, at daybreak, from that state of feverish lethargy which hard drinkers call sleep. "Water! water!" was the first word uttered by each, and the very call for it seemed to choke them. A couple of the carters, in a room adjoining their master's, started from their wholesome repose, with moist palates and clear heads, supposing the house to be on fire. Micha rushed into Father Pierre's chamber, with the same conviction; but both he and his host were discovered, sitting up in their beds, each with a large brown pitcher (provided by the forethought of Micha) at his head, and pouring down torrents into their respective throats. Knowing only that they were abruptly disturbed, they made no effort to ascertain why or wherefore; and they prepared to resume their broken slumbers with unconscious mutterings of dissatisfaction. But the loud knockings against the house door, and the calls upon Joos Cooperslaugen by name, were not to be slept through. Father Pierre, as soon

as he could collect reason enough to comprehend any thing, fancied that robbers were breaking in, hid his face under the bed-clothes, and instantly became sober from the effect of fear. Joos Cooperslaugen recovered *his* senses by the force of feeling. Recognising, with a sudden conviction, the voice of his son-in-law Nicholas, he sprang out of bed into the middle of the floor, and as if a stream of light had burst upon his mind, and imparted to it the clearness of a purer source, he clasped his hands together, and with fixed looks and painful energy, exclaimed—

"Martin Vandersteen is dead!"

Nicholas, admitted into the house by the servants, mounted quickly to their master's room, and, as he entered, he saw the giant figure of Joos standing before him, in an attitude and air of unwonted despondency. Nicholas, not imagining that any sinister presentiment could have penetrated his father-in-law's sternness of mind, supposed that some personal mishap must have caused his evident sorrow.

"Why, how now, Mr. Cooperslaugen," said he, laying his hand on that of Joos, "what is the cause of this? What has happened?"

"What has happened!" repeated Joos, with a firm, but mournful tone, and a compressed expression of features which announced an internal struggle; "what has happened, Nicholas! Is it for you to ask that? Does the bearer of ill-news need to be told his own story? Or is it that you think to prepare me for it—to break it to me? But I hope you know me too well, Nicholas. Joos Cooperslaugen is no child, nor chicken-hearted. The old elm in the avenue there, may be bent by a storm-gust, but does not need a zephyr to tell what is coming. Just so with Joos Cooperslaugen. I am always ready for the blast, and I feel that it is come *now*, without any one to say so. I am not a bit superstitious, I believe, but I can calculate a little, though no great scholar: and I well know that one thing only could have brought you here, through such a night as the last. Women may be left to watch by a *corpse*, but a son could not have quitted a father, *struggling* with death. Martin Vandersteen is dead! You have lost a good father, Nicholas, and I the best of friends. He is not to be replaced either ways. But we may do much for each other, my boy. Be you always *my* friend, and I will, please God! be a father to you. Let us bear this blow like men, Nicholas.

What are you whimpering about? It is for your poor mother and Melanie to cry, but you and I—two men—aye, and brave ones, though I say it—we should not *show* a weakness, any how, let us *feel* what we may."

And with this philosophical axiom he dashed away the *evidences* from his eyes, and strove to deceive Nicholas, as well as himself, by hoarse and half-articulated calls to Micha to prepare some dry clothes and other refreshments for her young master. While she so employed herself, Joos as quickly completed his rustic toilette, Nicholas briefly detailing the events of the preceding night, which had made the cottage at Huysenclaus so sorrowful a contrast to the residence of its owner.

Joos listened with deep attention to the circumstances affecting the death of his friend, and with unbounded astonishment to all that related to Ernest. He fully entered into Nicholas's anxiety as to his brother, of whom he was now in search, having, as Joos justly supposed, left the duties to the dead to the care of his grief-stricken wife and mother.

The most likely place of discovering Ernest appeared to be his monastery—at least so calculated Joos and Nicholas; and there they resolved on going immediately. The latter having changed some parts of his dress, from his homely wardrobe, urged an instant setting out, and Joos declared his readiness, but suddenly exclaimed, in answer to a whisper from Micha,

"The devil! That 's very true—I had quite forgotten—this sad news drove him utterly out of my head. I wish he was well out of the house—he brought nothing but bad luck into it. Call him up, Micha, and tell him I am ready to show him the road to the monastery. Little did I think I should ever pay it a visit, or have one of its hypocritical tribe within my doors! Wait a minute or two, Nicholas. One of your unfortunate brother's fraternity is here—the very fellow, perhaps, that kidnapped poor Ernest five years ago. Let us wait for him, he is going to Catsberg as well as ourselves; and, to tell you the truth, I don't like to leave him in the house behind me. Nothing has been in its own place since he came; and there is no knowing what might stick to him, should he go off unwatched. He calls himself a beggar,

and seems just such a one as would never be at a loss to find a wallet, and wherewithal to fill it. He says he is a priest. That may be—but if so, the breed is well crossed since the revolution—he is the first I have sat with since. But here he comes—he must have been ready before Micha summoned him."

And so, in fact, he had been; for having cautiously uncovered one of his ears, while the rest of his person lay wrapt in the counterpane, he had heard a considerable part of Nicholas's communication to Joos. Thus satisfied of his safety from the fancied danger, he quickly dressed, and came down stairs as soon as summoned, thinking to hide the memory of his excess behind an *unblushing* face, which, however, turned truth's evidence, by its scorched and bloated appearance. He exchanged salutations with his host, wearing an air of daylight propriety; and darting a glance at Nicholas from eyes of liquid flame, he gave his morning benediction to both, bowing down his head with a mock humility, worthy of any that ever bent to the pressure of the mitre which its tongue had just refused.

Under these ill-omened auspices Joos and Nicholas set out, accompanied by him who was fitter to be their secular follower than their spiritual guide. They had scarcely quitted the farm, and passed by the avenue to the narrow road leading through the glen, when they found their passage obstructed. One of the oaks that skirted it, but which had been shivered by the lightning, lay scattered across the way. The rivulets which ran down the acclivities at each side were swoln by the rain; and, overflowing their channels, they carried down clay, stones, and shrubs, which, cementing the prostrate branches, made at that particular spot a temporary lake of considerable extent. The wooded side of Catsberg was opposite; and while Joos and Nicholas held counsel together, as to the better direction for seeking a passage, their companion, whose thirsty glances seemed quenching themselves in the pool, perceived nearly at the farther side, the body of a man, partly in the water, and partly entangled in the branches. He communicated his discovery to the others, who instantly ran with him close to the spot; and all three casting eager looks upon the face which lay clearly exposed, exclaimed together,

"Placidus!"

"Ernest Vandersteen!"

"My brother!"

They were all right in their epithets—but the hapless being recognised, replied not to their joint exclamations. Without another word they all stepped into the water; and wading through it nearly breast high, they reached the body, which they immediately lifted to the bank beyond.

Joos Cooperslaugen feeling the pale face, and taking up one of the wet cold hands in his, exclaimed, "Poor fellow, he is stone dead!"

Petrus Maria, pulling forth the empty purse from the tattered coat, cried out, "Unfortunate Placidus, he has been robbed and murdered!"

Nicholas, in the instinct of affection, tore open the vestments, and placed his hand upon his brother's heart—"He lives—he lives! His heart still beats! He may yet be restored—to the monastery, to the monastery!"

Such were the exclamations of Nicholas, and as he spoke he lifted the body in his arms. He soon gained the summit of Catsberg, occasionally relieved from his pitiable burden by his strong-limbed companions, who readily joined in what they, nevertheless, considered a hopeless exertion. The monastery was now close to them, and Petrus Maria advanced to the little door of entrance to the garden. At his loud signal it was instantly opened, and the prior, with some of the brotherhood, hurried out, surprised at the unusually early visit which the bell so loudly announced.

The prior and his followers were struck with horror at Petrus Maria's hurried expression of his own worst fears, and at the fatal confirmation which seemed stamped on Ernest's corpse-like face. With the utmost promptness the body was conveyed into the house, and the best means were resorted to for restoring suspended animation, with an energy, steadiness, and skill, that gave every possible chance for success. In a short time those efforts were rewarded. All the symptoms of life appeared—but no evidence of returning reason became visible. A confused mixture of opinions and conjectures was put forward, as to the best method for leading back the mind to sensibility. Cooperslaugen, Nicholas, and Petrus Maria had each his separate theory; but the prior took upon himself the direction of the subject; and the means he employed turned out as efficacious as they appeared singular.

He ordered the freely-breathing but motionless body to

be gently carried to the open air, and thence into the chapel, where the brethren were assembling for the morning service. Stretched on a mattress in the centre of the aisle, and close to the altar steps—a line of his brother monks on each side, and he so placed that his opening glances would rest upon the most sacred objects of a pious Catholic's belief—lay the still senseless form of Ernest, awaiting the process of that new creation which was to raise him up again, in all the power and spirit of mortal life.

Nicholas and his father-in-law watched, from the gallery above, the progress of the strange and solemn scene. They looked down on the monks, with bare heads and bended bodies; on the prior prepared for officiating at the plainly decorated altar; on Ernest's outstretched figure and pallid countenance; and this simple combination of human forms sent a feeling of solemnity through the rough and irreverent observers that the proudest display of sectarian splendours would have failed to excite. Both Joos and Nicholas were affected, in a manner unknown to them before; and when the deep chanting of the matin service commenced, they involuntarily sunk on their knees, and joined in the prayers which the brotherhood addressed to Heaven for the restoration to mental life and light of him who absorbed the thoughts of all.

During the progress of the ceremony the measures taken by the prior were amply justified. The tolling of the bell, the low-murmured sounds of the opening service, and then the swellings of the chorused harmonies had acted on the mind that gradually tended towards resuscitation. The new development of its faculties was witnessed with joy by the little congregation, each individual feeling his separate share in the result which seemed to flow from the united supplications of all.

The first proof of Ernest's awakened sensibility to the scene, were the spasmodic movements of lips and eyelids, and the rapid clenching and opening of the hands, as if the senses were making simultaneous efforts at expression. Flushings came across the face, the breast heaved, low sighs burst from it, and finally a rush of tears seemed to remove the last obstruction to returning reason. Then memory began to work. A sudden start—a rapid change of posture—the body raised on one knee—the hand passed across the brow—an astonished glance sent round—a momentary gaze

upon the priest—and an instant relapse into insensibility—these were the signs that spoke the mind's revival, and the first impressions by which it was affected.

The service was now ended, and the prior motioned to the brethren to retire. He instantly followed them; and proceeding to the gallery, with a few of the monks, he watched, in conjunction with Nicholas and Joos, the further display of Ernest's recovery. He had not long to wait. The momentary relapse into exhaustion was now past. Ernest again raised himself up, and after a brief space, which appeared occupied in rallying his scattered thoughts, he rose upon his feet; and then, with uplifted hands, sunk in the attitude of prayer, and finally prostrated himself upon the altar steps. The fervent solemnity of his manner spoke a full conviction of his situation; and it was further confirmed by his soon quitting his kneeling posture, and, with clasped hands and downcast looks, taking the direct passage to his own cell. No obstruction was offered to his way; and he was observed to enter silently, and sink on his bed, as if his strength had failed at the moment he reached that haven of refuge from the world.

It was thus that the considerate good sense of the prior had smoothed for the poor sufferer the path of recovery; and by letting him revive, as it were, within the very bosom of religion, allaying the anguish of recollections which could not be suppressed. The broken details which Nicholas gave of his father's death, and the unexplained fact of Ernest's loss of the money on his tour, were causes enough for the prior's precautions, and for the channel into which he so successfully strove to turn his awakening thoughts. Had the prior known *all* the combining feelings that drove Ernest out into the storm, and sent him wandering on, till the rain and wind and fatigue had beaten him down, to be saved almost by miracle from death, he had probably abandoned in despair the task of ministering to a mind so agonized.

It would be fruitless to trace the labyrinth of conjecture, as to Ernest's sensations while he lay in his solitude. His mind must have reproduced, in its own despite, many of the scenes and much of the feelings he had so lately acted in and suffered. But religious devotion had regained its wonted ascendancy, and happily for him, its impression was now even stronger than before. The past events, mighty as had been their effect, were totally overpowed by the inspiration

which seemed newly poured into him; and he felt as though he had wandered in a gloomy dream, and awoke in the sunshine of Heaven. His only anxiety was to throw off the load which secrecy laid on his heart, to avow the enormities of which he was self-accused and self-convicted; and to bury in the dreariest seclusion and severest penitence the very memory of the world, which he now finally and for ever renounced. Such was the progress of recovered thought in the mind of the young Trappist; and while it powerfully worked its way in heart and brain, the prior, Nicholas, and Joos conversed together on Ernest's past and present state; Petrus Maria attending on their conference, in right of the share he had had in rescuing him from death.

The prior anxiously entered into particulars relating to the object of his solicitude. His inquiries were not confined to the mere circumstances of his immediate situation and its causes, but went back into the details of his early life, ere he had joined the fraternity. On these points Joos Cooperslaugen felt himself quite competent to speak; and he entered into a fluent, and somewhat boisterous detail, which need not be repeated here. It wound up by a sort of spoken appendix, to the following effect:

"So you see he was always inclined to laziness, and superstition, and religion; and no wonder (saving respect) that he took up with you and your like. He never worked at the farm, like Nicholas, there; he employed himself doing nothing; he never took the plough in his hand, nor attended markets, nor studied any thing worth while—nothing but books, and trash of that kind. God knows what put matrimony into his head; but when he asked me for Melanie, I told him he was fitter for a priest or an opera singer, than a husband to a pretty girl—and that, perhaps, gave him the notion of joining company with you. And here you have him now again, and I hope you 'll keep him fast. For myself, I am now more than ever rejoiced at the part I took. I see what good luck my daughter had, in getting such a fine rough-handed fellow as Nicholas, instead of a whimpering booby like Ernest, who is fit for nothing better than fasting and praying, starving and begging, wasting himself, and worrying Heaven. So now, Mr. Prior, I wish you good bye; the morning is wearing fast; and Nicholas and I must ride some leagues, to bury the poor father of this good-for-nothing son; and I wish you joy of your bargain!"

During this communication of facts and opinions, to which the prior listened with calm attention, Petrus Maria had beckoned Nicholas aside. He had learned enough, from the broken statements of the latter, to take it for granted that Ernest had somehow made away with the money he had gathered; and having a tender conscience for the piccadillos of others, whatever might be its severity in relation to his own, he whispered into Nicholas's ear,

"Now take a friend's advice, Mr. Nicholas, and when you speak to the prior again, say nothing as to how the money disappeared. What so likely as that poor Brother Placidus was robbed? Didn't I think so when I found him in the puddle, with his empty purse in his pocket? Where 's the use in denying that? Will it bring the guelders back? Then leave things just as they are—a silent tongue is a safe witness—if it explains no fact, it tells no lie. Leave the money matter all to me. I will state the fact of the empty purse and the torn pocket, and when Brother Placidus is able to see me, I will give him a lesson as to what he should say, and what he should *not* say—a point of much more importance, and equally great in the ways of the world as in a Trappist's cell. So, hush! not a word about florins or stuyvers; you know, I suppose, that the worst crime against the church is making away with its money. It is the most heinous of heinous sins, if it be found out; and should excommunication follow the discovery, there is no chance for the culprit here or hereafter, for Heaven *must* ratify the sentence that sends him to hell. So, St. Peter take care of you, and bless you, and keep your tongue from wagging!"

Nicholas felt no disposition to injure his brother in this world or the next, and he observed the hint thus given him. Agreeing with the prior, that Ernest should be left for some time free from all intrusion, he and Joos took leave of the monastery and its inmates; and, first returning home, they provided themselves with horses, and proceeded on their painful duty to Huysenclaus' farm.

As soon as they had left the monastery, Petrus Maria proceeded to communicate the object of his mission to the prior. It consisted merely of some directions for domestic discipline, which strict secrecy and their probable insignificance put beyond my reach, and left me no inclination to strain after. Petrus Maria then taking plenary advantage of his dispensation, paid a visit to the cook, and conscientiously overhauled

the private stores of the larder. I cannot say exactly what he found there; but it may be safely inferred there was not much of such materials as he rejoiced in, for he was soon seen trudging down the hill, and entering Madame Vermoot's hospitable door. A thick vapour curling up from the chimney gave an almost immediate announcement of his visit and its object, but we may safely suppose that, begin as it might, it did not *end* in smoke.

The prior, in the mean time, visited Ernest in his cell. Their conference was a long one, but its particulars did not transpire. It may easily be believed that the confession was both ample and honest; and that Petrus Maria's cunning, and the caution of Nicholas, were rendered nugatory by the conscientious revelations of the penitent. The self-inflicted penance was a vow of perpetual silence which no circumstance was ever to absolve; an attendance for life on every religious rite observed in the monastery; a total seclusion from all lay intercourse, without exception; an abstinence from all but one scanty meal a day until nature might sink under the privation; and the public avowal of his story, as a warning to all who might follow him in the perilous temptations of a "Begging Brother's" career.

These hard conditions, towards a reconciliation with himself, and Heaven's forgiveness, had been for a long time rigidly observed. The victim to a too fervid imagination and over-excited mind, bore up, as best he could, against a punishment, outrageously violent in comparison with his errors, and murderous in its effect upon his health. The brilliant but consuming meteor of fanaticism shone on his cheerless doom; but it was to him the light of Heaven itself. In this delusion he was happy—happy in despite of all he had suffered in reality, and in remembrance again endured. For whatever he had known of pleasure was not revived in recollection; but long-buried feelings of misery seemed to start from their tombs, and haunted him still. These formed the earthly purgatory from which he was at length set free, by the force of that exalted and exaggerated fervour, which raises the fanatic to a sphere of transport, that exists for him alone.

Thus the young Trappist finished his wordly course; for the frail link which held him still to life could scarcely be called a tenure of the world. Thus did I see him, and mark him, as I have faintly sketched in the introduction to his story.

Consumption had too plainly settled in his frame, which was at once supported and worn down by the intenseness of his devotion.

A long winter has passed since then! I know not what results it may have brought, or what resistance to its wasting damps and colds was offered by Ernest's broken constitution. In all human probability he has ere now sunk into that remote and simple grave, which he had claimed from his superior's indulgence, on the little eminence that overhung the vale of Scarpenberg. And, even now, I can fancy the gentle form of Melanie gazing upwards on the spot, and putting forth prayers for the repose of his soul, whom she had loved so well without sin, and mourned so deeply without repentance.

Note.—It was in the year 1650, that one Mannaert, a soldier in the regiment of Colonel Vauboquet, at the time in garrison at Furnes, urged by want of money and the bad advice of a comrade called Mathurin Le Jeusne, committed an act of sacrilege, that inspired a horror almost as great as did the famous outrage of Jonathas, the Jew of Louvain, three hundred years before, which gave rise to the *miracle* of the bleeding Host, and the jubilee by which it is so splendidly celebrated at Brussels every fifty years.

The crime in question consisted in the soldier Mannaert having approached the altar, in the feigned humility of a communicant, and having immediately removed the consecrated wafer from his mouth, wrapped it in a pocket-handkerchief, and carried it safely and secretly to his quarters. There, in conjunction with the instigator of his sacrilege, he proceeded to burn the sacred Host, hoping, by some preparation of the ashes, of which we have not the recipe on record, he might succeed in rendering his person invulnerable, and gain an unlimited command over the wealth of the world. But scarcely had he consummated the unholy deed, than, conscience-struck, and nearly frantic with remorse, the infatuated man rushed from the scene of his impiety, fled, like a maniac, through the town, and at length, exhausted and worn out by fatigue and agitation, he was arrested: when, perhaps unconscious of the self-destroying effect of his

avowal, he amply acknowledged his crime. Mercy, the most god-like attribute of Power, slept deeply in those days; nor was she awakened by the sounding voice of Bigotry to stretch her protecting arm over the doomed offender. On the Ash-Wednesday following the commission of his crime, (the interval being spent no doubt in the tortures of repentance and *the question*) he was led to the various corners of the town, amidst the execrations of the people, strangled by the common executioner, and his body, with that of his associate in daring ignorance, (then construed wilful guilt,) burned in the market-place, and the anathematized ashes scattered to the winds.

To appease the divine wrath, and give a warning lesson to posterity, the procession of the Passion was instituted; and, to the disgrace of human reason and the age we live in, it is not yet abolished.

THE END.

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