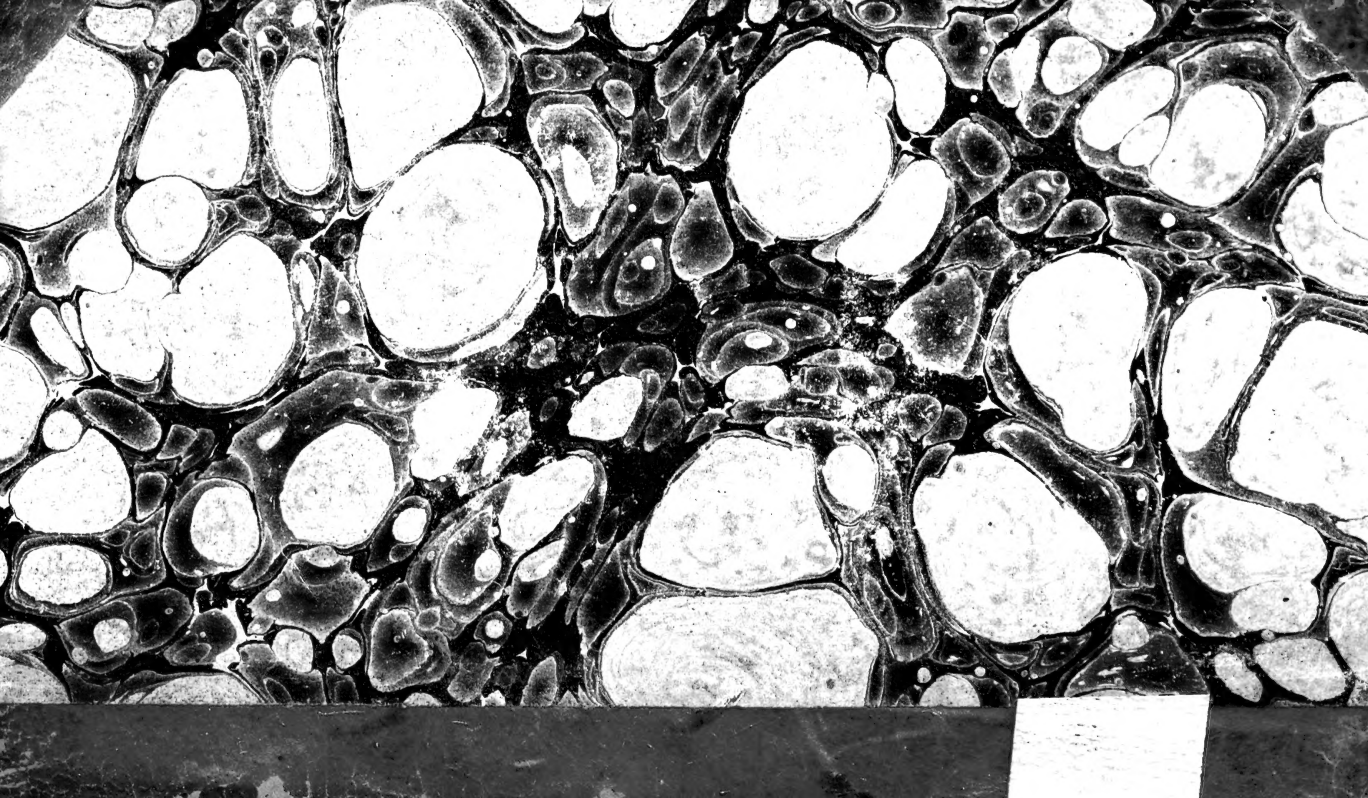
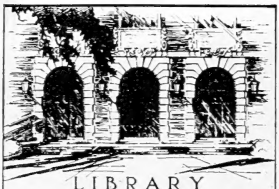
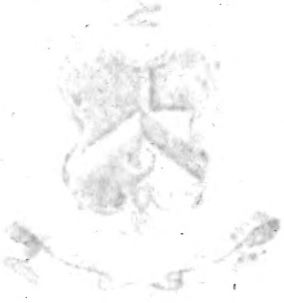




The Revd James Alexander



HIGH-WAYS AND BY-WAYS;

OR

TALES OF THE ROADSIDE:

PICKED UP IN THE FRENCH PROVINCES,

BY

A WALKING GENTLEMAN.

"I hate the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheba, and say 'Tis all barren!" *Sterne.*

FOURTH EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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AVE-MARIA-LANE.

1824.

THE

BIRTH OF HENRY IV.

"L'Enfant vint au monde, sans crier ni pleurer."

DE PEREFIXE.

THE

BIRTH OF HENRY IV.

THERE is not in nature a finer spectacle than a distant chain of mountains, covered with snow and glistening in the sun. It is impossible to describe this appearance, nor is it easy to define the sensations it produces in the mind. The object has in it something loftier than beauty, and possesses a softened sublimity totally unassociated with fear. Unlike other vast works of nature, it does not speak to our apprehensions, nor does it, like those of art, bring humiliating notions of imperfection and decay: but stretching far away along the horizon, in celestial splendour of colouring, it looks like the boundary of the world, and might be believed a fitting resting-place between earth and heaven.

Such were my reflections when I first discovered the Pyrenees, at about thirty leagues

distance, from the rising grounds near the town of Villeneuve de Marsan. I shall never forget that moment. My delight was of a kind to be felt but once in life, but which stamped an impression, vivid in proportion to its suddenness, and more lasting than that produced by years of calm and regulated enjoyment. In gazing on the golden transparency which the mountains seemed to present, I fancied myself transported to some scene of fairy-land, and doubted for a while their existence. They looked more like the cloud-formed imagery of the skies, and I many a time regretted, as I approached them, the illusion which their solid reality put to flight.

Every league which brought me nearer lessened the enchantment, but added to the romance of the scene. The visionary and fairy-like aspect gradually dissolved, as the charms of nature were growing into life, and as the actual beauties of existence appeared to force their way through the veil of radiance by which they had been covered. Step by step, the mountains rose into height and majesty. Dark green masses became evident, instead of the glittering heaps of snow

which I had seen at first. Woods, rocks, and streams, made themselves next distinguished, in all their variety of shade and form; and in three days, from that on which these magnificent hills were first visible to me, I reposed at their base, impressed with the fullest sense of their mightiness and my own insignificance.

It is not for me to describe the beauties of these mountains. Volumes have been poured forth on the subject, and will be succeeded by volumes, as long as the noblest scenes of nature can excite admiration, or until some miracle robs men of their desire to tell what they have seen, and express what they feel. Those scenes are certainly the region for composition. Wandering in their wild and exquisite paths, carried beyond the world's realities, absorbed in contemplation, and given up to the abandonment of fancy, the mind willingly indulges its overflowings, and cares not whether they take the form of poetry or prose. Indeed the productions of such moments must partake of the nature of both; and it was in one of those silent, sequestered, castle-building moods, that the following

lines forced themselves into uncalled-for utterance:

These are the scenes where nature strews
Our way with wonders;—where we lose
Thought's measured march for countless hours;
When stretch'd beneath embranching bowers,
Deep in the lap of some soft vale,
Our languid minds its sweets inhale;
Or wandering on some streamlet's brink,
We love to stop—to gaze—to think!
Then Fancy peoples the broad glades
With groups of early friendship's shades—
Changes the greenwood's sloping dell
To life's young play-scenes loved so well—
Hears in the far sequester'd spot
Sounds hush'd, but ne'er to be forgot—
Clothes nature in a robe more bright—
Fills heaven with youth's empurpled light—
Casts o'er the coarse weeds' drooping fringe
A shapelier grace, and lovelier tinge—
While memory bends, as prone to lave
Its feverish flushings in the wave.

But the quick mind, with forward rush,
Bold as the mountain-torrent's gush,
Springs from the thoughts of former years,
From faded hopes, from fruitless tears,
And bounding onwards, far and free,
Deserts dull fact for joys to be.
Then leap to life, in fairy train,
Those fond illusions of the brain;

Those shadowy structures that we raise
To hoard the bliss of unborn days!
Those lights from hope's ethereal beam,
Which sparkling through each treacherous dream,
Seem the false fabrics to enfold,
Like clouds by sunbeams bathed in gold.
Lightly the floating fictions rise,
As desert cheateries on the skies,
Till shatter'd by some thought of care,
The loosen'd fragments melt in air;
And worldly waters back reflect
The visionary architect!

And there are heaven-revealing times
Which reason's radiant flame sublimes;
When nobler views the heart inspire,
And faith lights high her beacon fire,
The clay-clogg'd powers of thought to guide
Across the waves of passion's tide.
Moments, when earth's rude hum is still,
And higher raptures lead the will;
When on the topmost mountain's breast
We lay our length, and all is rest:
Deep, deep beneath the plains are spread—
But motion slumbering seems, or dead.
To our far gaze the world below
Stands fix'd and silent: even the flow
Of the live rivers seems to cease,
And the eye marks their winding trace
But as a line of liquid light,
Noiseless, and motionless, and bright.

A soothing softness gathers round:
The wind sleeps stilly on its couch
Of fragrant wild-flowers; while no sound
The drowsy senses comes to touch,
Nor wakes the seraph calm that steals
Across the soul, whose trance reveals
Scenes of high heaven, no longer hid
From the full eye—each half-closed lid
Shuts out all earth; and only sees
On the broad ocean of the air,
Slow sailing onwards, though no breeze
Is felt which could have borne them there,
A tide of white, self-wafted clouds
Come rolling on like snow-wreathed floods,
And round the summit of the peak
In shatter'd splendour softly break.
But soon the fleecy fragments join'd,
Float on their course, yet leave behind
One lovely, vapoury shade, that seems
To hover lingering slowly nigh,
As if upheld by those bright beams,
Whose radiance lights it through the sky;
And o'er its breast such colouring flings
As fancy gives to angels' wings.
Oh! who such shadowy couch could mark,
Nor wish, nor hope life's deathless spark
In disembodied splendour spread,
Like light on this aërial bed;
And borne, beyond the beams of day,
On ray-form'd pinions far away
To the pure realms, for which we sigh
In pride of immortality!

But in all the varieties of the Pyrenees, their pics, valleys, rivers, and grottos, there is no part which conveys such a combination of rational delights as the ancient province of Bearn, the country of Henry IV. Natural beauties are every where scattered with a hand at once so liberal and just, that it is hard to particularize the parts most deserving of notice. Bearn has its ample share of loveliness and grandeur; but in point of moral charms, none of the others can bear comparison with it.

The inhabitants of this district, viewed in whatever point we will, are one of the finest and most interesting people of the earth. Whether looked at in their physical aspect, as the best formed, the handsomest, and most active race existing; or in their national character, as uniting nobility of feeling with true politeness, hospitality with temperance, and courage with humanity, they command our admiration and regard. Considered with respect to their history, they merit a deeper attention, for they are perhaps the people who present the most perfect example of an indigenous and uncorrupted race, preserving

its language, its customs, and its character, as they existed in the most remote antiquity.

From the period of the decline of the Roman empire, the confusion of races among the inhabitants of the Pyrenees was extreme. Mixed already with the Romans, they were so afterwards with the Alani, Suevi, Goths, and Francs; and, in some degree, with the Saracens during their excursions into France. In fact, but this one portion of the people preserved themselves pure in the midst of confusion, ravage, and defeat. This people, called by Roman writers *Vaccées* and *Vascons*, appear to have belonged to the country between the Pyrenees and the sources of the Ebro. Unknown to the Phœnicians and Carthaginians, who never crossed this river, and avoiding Roman subjugation in the refuge afforded them by their mountain fastnesses, they were able to resist successively the Visigoths and Moors. Finally possessing themselves of the country of the two Navarres, they penetrated early into Bearn; subjected for a while a part of the people of Aquitaine (who took from them the name of Gascons), and their posterity exist

this day in the persons of the Basques, and perhaps of the Biscayans, who claim a like origin.

While this extraordinary and ancient people remained thus unaltered, all around them was changed. The vivacity of the Gaul and the Iberian was modified more or less by Roman gravity and barbarian grossness. The inhabitants of Upper Aragon, Catalonia, and Bigorre, all, indeed, from the centre of the Pyrenees to the Mediterranean, showed no longer their primitive characters, a distinction destined for the people alone of whom I am now treating *.

Such was the race of whom Henry IV. was one; among whom he was born and brought up; and of whom his person and his character formed a distinguished and striking illustration. To such an origin and such a training he owed those fine qualities, inherited from his ancestors, and fostered by his people; and their obligations were reciprocal,—for to him alone are they indebted for their chief celebrity in modern times. The days being long since gone by when, ruled

* On this subject see Ramond's *Observations sur les Pyrenées.*

by their independent sovereigns, they made themselves remarkable either by their manner of choosing a king *, or by their conduct under his sway, the people of Bearn would have shared the common lot of other nations amalgamated and confused with their conquerors, had not the brilliant qualities of Henry stamped them with a proud distinction. As it is, they stand out as it were before us in an attitude of commanding and irresistible interest, and every individual forms a fine epitome of the dignified simplicity of his nation.

My readers may imagine with what pleasure I ranged these mountains and valleys, peopled by such a race, and consecrated by such remembrances. Abandoning the beaten track of common-place intercourse, it was ever my habit

* In 1173, wishing a master of the blood of their last sovereign, they sent a deputation to his sister to ask for one of her twin children. The request being granted, they had their choice. The infants both slept at the moment. One had his hands closed, the other had his open. The deputies saw in the latter attitude the sign of a noble and generous character. They chose him, and this monarch in his after-age acquired the title of Gaston *The Good.*

to throw myself into the by-roads of the hills; where, shut up, and in part identified with this isolated region, I breathed the very spirit of the people, and of the feelings by which they were guided and governed. It was in these rambles that I acquired a thorough esteem for these hardy mountaineers, and an enthusiastic attachment to the scenes they inhabit. My affection for them and their country was considerably strengthened from that sympathy excited throughout by the memory of the hero so worthy of his country and his people; whose reign was the real epoch of French glory, and whose name is a rallying word for every thought ennobling to humanity. But it was in an aspect less exalted, but full as remarkable, that he was now before me. As I wound through the passes of the hills, tracked the winding rivulets, or climbed the rugged rocks, Henry seemed always present to my view, as in his boyhood he scrambled over these mountain scenes, dressed like the peasant children, his feet unshod, and his head exposed to the sun and the wind *.

* Le grand-pere ne voulut pas qu'on le nourrist avec

The Biddissoa was in my rear, Spain in my recollection, and Bayonne in sight, when I turned from the high route between that town and Pau, and struck into one of the gorges leading to the depths of these mountain solitudes. Nature was fresh and fragrant. The sun was bright. The branches of the young pines, and the mountain ash, moved gaily in the breeze ; and the rivulets, gushing from the hills, danced down their sides, over beds of verdure which burst out in a profusion of richest vegetation.

I was so exhilarated and buoyant that, contrary to my usual wont, I walked remarkably fast, so much so as to keep Ranger at a regular dog trot. My thoughts were proportionately active, and ran on in that wild and curbless way, so frequently consequent on good health, good

la delicatesse qu'on nourrit d'ordinaire les gens de cette qualité, mais il ordonna qu'on l'habillast et qu'on le nourrist comme les autres enfans du païs; et mesme qu'on l'accoustumast à courir et à monter sur les rochers. On dit que pour l'ordinaire on le nourrissoit de pain bis, de bœuf, de fromage, et d'ail; et que bien souvent on le faisoit marcher nuds pieds et nuë teste.—De Perefixe *Histoire du Roy Henry le Grand*, *Q.* 1, *p.* 18, 19, 16*mo. Elzevir, Ed.* 1661.

spirits, and mountain air. "Come on, Ranger!" cried I, "never fear! our wanderings *must* have a term, and who knows how soon? Yes, yes, there is something yet in store for us. For me a snug cottage, a nice stock of books, good shooting, and a bottle of wine for a friend.—For you, the chimney corner and a cushion.—Come along, Ranger; come along!"

A responsive wag of the tail acknowledged the cheering address; and a joyous roll on a tufted bed of wild thyme, followed by some indescribable capers and curvettings, announced his sympathy with my ambitious hopes.

I never could reckon leagues, nor remember time correctly; and on the morning I now describe was less than ever adapted to aught mathematical. I was in that mood of utter abandonment, and loss of self, which was never new to poets since Horace, nor before him;—when we "think down hours to moments," and slide over space unheedful of its measurement. I am thus unable to say how far or how long I had journeyed, when descending rapidly the mountain path, which was skirted with flowers, and

fringed by two little streamlets running down the precipitous banks, I was stopped suddenly by a peal of laughter of enjoyment's finest and clearest tone. I was in tune for this cheerful note, and paused for its repetition. It came on my ear again and again—manly, honest, and hearty, and at length died away in jovial echoings, till nothing was heard but the chuckle of some stanch votary of fun, who never got farther, most certainly, than the mouth of Trophonius's cave.

The sounds were close to me, yet I saw no one; and I thought of the stories of Brownies, Kelpies, and other supernatural beings, of whose joyous revels I had many times heard from the peasants of the Scotch highlands. I moved onwards, however, concluding that a harmless and cheerful traveller had nothing to fear from mortal or other company, with whom he was so much in unison.

As I trudged along, I heard an occasional voice which always seemed to utter a shout of gladness and triumph. This was accompanied by sounds, at irregular intervals, as if some hard substance was struck by another, for they

rung echoing through the valley below me to the left.

The sounds became suddenly fainter as I got to a hollow part in the road; and I had almost lost them totally, when a quick turning in the path brought me round a projecting rock, and displayed to me, on the acclivity at the opposite side of a beautiful glen, the secret of these mountain mysteries.

Hanging on the slope of the hill was a village of most romantic appearance. The ten or a dozen neat cottages which composed it were built, with little space between each, in the form of a semicircle; by this means affording to all the inhabitants an ample view of that noble and manly game which forms the pride and pastime of the Basques. A group of the village youths was placed on the green in the full exercise of their sport. They were eight in number, fine, athletic, handsome fellows, from fifteen years old to twenty-five perhaps, dressed in the smart costume of the country. One or two wore light cotton jackets, the rest were in their shirts; some were bareheaded, others with round flat caps, having a

tassel of red worsted at the top, and all with short breeches, tied at the knees with red or blue knots, blue stockings, sandals laced to the ankle, and a scarf of scarlet cotton, tied sash-ways tightly round the waist. On each right hand was a glove of thick leather, which struck with incredible force and velocity the hard ball, that seemed to carry death in its whizzing course. Not being initiated in the game, I leave its various details to the imagination of my readers, but I may safely say, that in no match of English cricket, Scotch goff, or Irish hurling (and many a one of each have I seen and joined in), did I ever witness such agility, skill, and elegance of attitude, as in this party of *jeu de paume*.

On the benches were four or five old men, with about as many women, delighted spectators of the scene, and glad echoes of the bursts of joy which followed each superiorly successful effort. Some younger females were occupied in various ways about the houses, while two or three were washing at the rivulet below. One stepped upwards towards home, with a pitcher on her head, a white scarf thrown fancifully over her neck,

and tied with a bunch of blue ribbons, and her petticoats sufficiently short to show a pair of exquisite legs, to which every part of her form was suitable. The loveliest nymph of Greece, or even those goddesses whose imagined symmetry might have dipped the pencil of Apelles in his brightest tints, or shaped and polished the marble of Praxiteles, would not, I am convinced, have borne away the palm in a competition of grace and beauty with this rustic maid.

While my attention was taken from the sport of the young men, and fixed upon this still more attractive object, *her* eye seemed riveted on the group, or some one member of it, which mine had rejected; and so intently did she gaze on the progress of the game, that she forgot her own, and, her foot catching in a bramble, she stumbled and fell. A slight scream broke from her companions at the river, who saw the accident. An old couple, who had watched her with affectionate looks as she came up, hobbled towards her. The game was in an instant abandoned. The players ran to the spot; but I remarked that one of them, whose station had been at the other extremity

of the ground, overtook the whole party before they reached the prostrate beauty. It was the affair altogether of a couple of minutes. She was unable to rise from her knees; not that she was in the least hurt, but her scarf had got most awkwardly entangled in the briers which had tripped her foot, and during her endeavours to extricate herself, the whole population of the village had thronged round her. Every one offered assistance; but I observed that she repulsed all the hands stretched out to relieve her, with a sort of blushing and bashful peevishness at her situation, until she discovered the identical youth who had outstripped his companions, but was now confounded with them. She gave him a smile peculiarly gracious; and he had the honour of helping her on her feet, and replacing her pitcher, which lost its contents, but was not even cracked in the fall.

The scene ended gaily and good humouredly. Many a joke was, no doubt, bandied at the expense of the maiden, who darted once more down the winding path to refill the vessel; while her young squire sprang after her, probably to keep

her eyes steady when she next ascended. The old couple returned to their seat, their countenances showing that little agitation which *grandfatherly* and *grandmotherly* faces generally display on such harmless accidents.

The whole party were resuming their places, when I caught the general attention, in the advanced position to which I had involuntarily sprung, and where I now stood, my feet crossed, and my hands supported by the muzzle of my gun. When I saw that I was observed, I took off my hat and made a low obeisance. It was unanimously returned; and on my showing an inclination to descend to the stream, in a direct line from the place where I stood, several hands were waved, and three or four voices addressed me together. I did not understand a word that was spoken, but the purport was evident; for the stream was broadest in that particular spot, and a little plank was thrown across it, about fifty yards higher up, and to which the villagers pointed. But it was one of my moments of weakness and vanity; and, wishing to give a proof of my activity to these muscular and agile peasants,

I ran down the slope, my gun in my hand, determined to leap the stream. It was tolerably wide, but not within a third of the breadth which I was confident in my ability to cross at a running jump; but, as if to punish my vain-gloriousness, my foot slipped as I made the bound, and I came with my breast against the opposite bank, and up to my knees in water. It was vexatious as well as laughable, and I suppose there was a frown mixed with the smile which I could not repress as I scrambled up the side. All the young men ran to my assistance; the old people rose from their seats; the girls ceased their washing; but I did not see my smile reflected on a single face. One of the girls, indeed, who had laughed the heartiest at the fall of her young companion a few minutes before, turned her back towards me. I fancy she was forced to give way to her merry feelings at my ludicrous mishap, but she had the true-born politeness to keep their expression from my view.

I was soon on my legs, and was hurried to the nearest cottage, where a chair was placed for me before the kitchen fire. I here formed a centre

of attraction (if not of gravity) for the inhabitants of the village, who came, of all ages, to gratify their curiosity at the novel sight of a stranger. It was well for me that I had few personal secrets to conceal from these good people, for I became an object of the most minute and indefatigable scrutiny. A custom-house officer, a fox-hound in cover, or a ferret in a rabbit warren, could not have made a keener search in their respective pursuits than did the little black-haired urchins, from eight years downwards, in my knapsack, my game-bag, and my pockets. I know not what they looked for, if not the mere gratification of curiosity, for they certainly took nothing. The young men examined my gun, shot-pouch, and powder-horn, with critical attention; and the old fathers of the hamlet eyed me with a gaze worthy of craniological acumen and observation.

Fortunately for me, two or three of the party understood and spoke French. Among them was a young fellow, who, in resuming the costume of his native district, had not entirely thrown aside some of the distinguishing marks

of military service. He wore mustachios, and a black stock, and looked stiff-necked and formal in comparison with his elastic and loose-limbed companions. His manners, too, had something of ostentation and parade, and he seemed inclined to lord it over the others. He pushed himself forward in his civilities, and would have drilled his comrades into a more distant demeanor than was natural to them, or pleasing to me. He had not, however, any thing actually disagreeable in him; and had I met him in any other circle than among the children of nature, of whom he once was one, I should have probably singled him out as a soldier, but a little spoiled by the foppery and pomp of his profession.

Among the objects of wonder discovered in my knapsack (when, searching for a pair of stockings, I first opened it to the admiring gaze of the observers), two seemed to attract particular regard, viz. a pocket map of France, and an eleven-keyed flute. The first was greedily gazed on by an old man, whose keen quick eye seemed meant by nature for the study of the rule

and square; and had I but the requisite knowledge of the science of sciences, I think I should have found the algebraical bump particularly prominent on, what appeared to me, his smooth round pate. He was evidently much pleased, and not a little puzzled, by the mathematical mysteries displayed before him. His eye asked for information, but he could not make himself understood. He was forced to apply to the young soldier, who acted as interpreter, and by this medium I explained the purposes of those mystic lines, over which the old peasant had been pondering.

He was delighted when I pointed out Pau, and the windings of the Gave, on the banks of one of whose tributary streamlets we were then making our harmless partition of districts and provinces. But the parallels of latitude were quite beyond his powers; and I was not a little amused at the air of importance and learned research with which he announced his conjecture, that they were meant to designate the course of rivers; heedless, like many a profound theorist, whether they flowed up or down hill—over or

under mountains—or had their sources in the sea, or out of it.

As for the flute, it excited an admiration as boundless as it was general. Nothing like it had ever found its way into these remote parts. The slender reed of the mountain-shepherd, or the simple fife of the village musician, had no claims to those gorgeous and embarrassing distinctions which rifle the pockets of fools, puzzle their fingers, and falsify their instrument. In short, the monstrous improvements of a late immortal projector had probably never penetrated to the vale of Oleron, had not my knapsack been furnished identically as it was. I was determined, however, to make the best of a bad bargain; and when, yielding to the solicitations of the lads, and the wistful looks of the lasses around me, I took up the flute, to prove the possibility of using it, I made a clatter among the keys (clumsily enough had I chosen to confess it), which fixed my reputation as firmly as the principles of the music I so marred. I received in acknowledgment an ample dose of that silent applause so palatable and easy of digestion; and

luckily for me, there was no Plato of the party, to ask what I meant by the noise I made.

All this while the good woman to whom the cottage belonged was preparing for me a truly pastoral meal. Eggs, milk, honey, butter, and bread, were placed before me, all perfectly delicious in quality, and in such proportions as are fitting for mountain appetites.

As the table filled, the room emptied; and the delicacy of my rustic circle in thus retiring, caused me full as much pleasure, I warrant it, as they had experienced from the most extravagant exhibition of my musical skill. My kind entertainer appeared to enjoy high respect among the villagers. She spoke French well, and had a smattering of Spanish. I had no time to inquire the particulars of a history which, from her erudition, intelligence, and good manners, promised something above her station. I only learned that, in her youth, she had lived at Bayonne, where her father had been employed in the customs, and where she acquired her knowledge; and that on his losing his situation and his head, during the troubles of the Revolution,

she had retired to the protection afforded by the honest Basques, and their obscure village.

Having told me so much, she left me to the discussion of my exquisite repast. While I ate and cogitated, I heard a confused murmur, like the humming of a mighty swarm of bees; and in that kind of restless curiosity which often breaks in on our most important moments, I looked out of the window into the little garden, and on the lawn, to discover whence the sound proceeded. But it became fainter as I approached the open air. I was fain to sit down again unsatisfied, but the buzz continued; and, determined to explore the whole apartment, I opened a couple of little closets, a clothes-press, and a salt-box, without any result but disappointment. I next groped round the walls, and one side of the room being formed by a wooden partition papered over, I clapped my ear close to it, and found myself on the high road to information. The sounds were louder and more distinct; so feeling for a chink between the planks of the partition, I pierced a little hole through the paper with the screw attached to my pocket

knife, and applying my eye to it, I perceived about a dozen of the peasant children seated on a form, and conning over their lessons; while placed before a little rickety desk, in an old oak arm-chair, was my hostess, in all the tempered majesty of a village schoolmistress.

The temple was homely, the priestess plain, and the votaries of little worth; but knowledge was the goddess they invoked! That was sufficient for me; and I protest that the most dazzling display of academical pomp never inspired me with a deeper devotion for learning than I was filled with on beholding this humble tribute to its value.

Being refreshed and satisfied, I prepared to set out; but my proceedings being carefully observed by the young people on the green, they no sooner saw that I had finished my meal than they advanced towards me in a body. While I had been eating they had all prepared themselves for dancing, and they now came gaily forwards to request my performance on the flute. That being easily accorded, I took my station in front of the house, on a bench overhung by vines

and honeysuckles. The dancers were soon in their places, and the opera never showed a display of more *natural* agility and taste. Flowers and ribbons had been hastily twined in the hair of the females. They all, to use an Irish phrase, "handled their feet" with uncommon grace, and the whole group was a fine specimen of the living picturesque. Two of the girls had castanets, the use of which they had learned from some straggling Spaniards who had tarried awhile in the village. Two of the young men carried those little tambourins which form a constant accompaniment to the dances of the Basques; and I, discarding the use of a good two-thirds of my eleven keys, contrived to play, in tolerable time and tune, some of those sweet country dances in which the French do positively excel all nations.

The dance being ended, I fairly began to take leave. I shook hands with every one around me; and the reader may believe me, that when I relinquished the grasp of my erudite hostess, she blushed a deep blush of offended pride on finding a piece of money in her palm. She did

not speak a word, but stepping briskly up to me as I turned round, she replaced it in my hand, and there was in her manner a modest determination which utterly forbid a renewal of the affront.

My old mathematician was sitting under a lime-tree musing on the map. He stood up, and offered it to me with a look as if he had been parting from a dear friend. I put it between his hands as I cordially shook them, and in a way to mark that such was its final destination. He looked quite surprised and happy; placed one hand on his heart, and with the other took off his cap, and swept it down to the grass. I wished to say "good bye" to the soldier, but I saw that he skulked round a clump of acacias, and evidently avoided me.

I asked the schoolmistress if she knew the cause of this caprice. "Alas! my dear sir," said she, "you know not the wound you have unconsciously given to the vanity of the poor fellow. He is the musician, *par excellence*, of the whole village; but the shrill tones of his fife

are, I fear, for ever hushed. Nothing, I think, could console him for this day's disgrace."

No, no, said I to myself, after a moment's pause, it is impossible. By Jove, I cannot, will not, be always a fool! To buy it was bad enough, but to give it away in this manner would be worse. "My good hostess, I am indeed sorry that my gaudy instrument should have put the poor lad out of conceit with his more simple, but, no doubt, sweeter one. Tell him so for me, and that I hope he will soon change his key, and discard all discord from his feelings. To you I should be glad to give some little proof of my esteem. Do take this little edition of Massillon's *Petit Carême:* I have carried it in my pocket for some leagues, and it has helped to shorten many of them. It is not of value enough to be refused, and only worth acceptance for the excellence of the matter, and the good will of the donor."

"I take it with pleasure, and thankfully," replied she; "and the only thing I can offer you in return is this scrap of a pamphlet, which, as

relating to our country, may interest you for half an hour."

I took her present, and glancing my eye on the title, found it to be, in French, "The Birth of Henry IV." I rolled it up and put it carefully in my pocket to be read at my leisure.

Several handkerchiefs and *berrets* were waved after me as I wound down the hill, followed by Ranger, whose round paunch and sober pace did honour to the hospitality of the village. The last thing I saw of these unsophisticated people was the lovely girl, whose fall I have recounted, walking slowly in a shady path with her lover —for I would lay a good round wager that he was her lover, ay, and her favoured lover too.

As I passed them, they both, by signs and looks, wished me a pleasant walk—a compliment which I thought it quite unnecessary to return. My eyes said something to them in reply, however, which was answered on the part of the nymph

> With a smile that glow'd
> Celestial rosy red, love's proper hue;

and by the lover with a look of self-content,

which seemed to say that he agreed with me perfectly.

The echoing sounds of the ball, which once more came upon my ear, told me that the much-loved game was again in full play. I believe I had one passing thought of something like chagrin, to think that my departure had left so slight an impression on the villagers. But this was quickly replaced by the consoling fancy that they had recourse to their sports to banish their regrets; and one self-sufficient notion followed another, as fast as vanity could string them together, or folly give them utterance. It is, however, certain that I hurried my pace at a marvellous rate, to the great discomfiture of Ranger's digestion; and any ill-natured reader may account for my speed, by supposing that I feared to encounter a new burst of jollity, which might have thrown me back into the sad belief that I was no longer thought of.

I walked in a beautiful valley. A clear stream, as is usual in these mountain hollows, ran in the middle, and the hilly banks were covered with woods. A few straggling cottages, like outliers

from the village herd, were perched in little nooks upon the heights, and the dark green of the vegetable garden, attached to each, formed a rich contrast to the yellow corn fields and bright meadows which surrounded them. The variety of position in these lofty regions makes a variety of climates within a small compass. In some of the exposed and open places the harvest was far advanced. In others, more sheltered from the sun, it was just begun. The upland meadows were in some parts mowed: in others, the crop of after grass was springing, under the influence of continual irrigation from a dozen overflowing streams. The low grounds near the rivulet were now yielding their treasures to the labour of the mower, and in one spot, where I stopped to gaze on the lovely scenery, I heard the flail, the scythe, and the sickle, joined in a harmony of rural sounds.

Just there the confluence of several streamlets from the hills had formed a basin of water, which worked out a considerable excavation in the banks. The earth was quite washed away from the base of a large rock at the side where I walked,

and my path was abruptly terminated on the pebbly edge of the little lake. To have climbed the rock, by means of the creeping shrubs which covered it, would have been very difficult if not dangerous, and no one being in sight to stimulate my love of fame, I did not attempt it. Besides, I considered that if I even got to the top, I might have to descend again in search of an outlet. Something told me, too, that I was not the first who had arrived at the termination of the little road; and I thought the chances were against its having been made for the mere purpose of leading people into a scrape. I therefore determined to call for help, hoping, at least, that the genius of the stream would deign to come to my aid. I loudly hallooed "Boat! boat!" and my call was not long unnoticed. Close to where I stood, and almost touching the rock which projected over the water, a little pointed prow came suddenly towards me; and as the full length of the boat came in view, it swung up to the beach, by the management of a rope and pulley attached to the rock, but which escaped my previous observation. No living thing appeared, but I did

not hesitate to accept the courteous but silent offer of a passage, and, stepping gallantly over the side, I put myself under the protection of all the nymphs and naiades that ever ruled or sported in these waters.

As soon as I was embarked, the little canoe swung round again, and was pulled by some invisible hand round the rock, to a romantic little cove about ten yards at the other side. Still there was no one to be seen. This looked certainly very like enchantment—but it was no enchantment after all. For while I stood with one foot on the gunnel and another on shore, looking my inquiries from hill and dale, a hoarse gruff voice called out, "Here! this way!" I followed the direction of the ungracious tones; and, at half a dozen paces from me, observed a kind of grotto, or hut, or hovel, which was a puzzling mixture of the architecture of beautiful nature and rude art. Wishing to describe it by an epithet clear and concise, I shall call it the rustic-composite; and I shall be happy to show to any of my curious readers a copy from this

model whenever it pleases the Fates to allow me to

Call one spot of all the world my own.

Peeping out from a little loophole in this resting-place was a rough-looking personage, of an aspect such as Charon might have shown had he been a toll-gatherer instead of a ferryman. Having no strongly developed taste for mechanics, I did not feel any desire to examine the contrivance by which he brought his boat to harbour and then sent her out again for a new freight; and not finding any thing inviting in his physiognomy or address, I paid him his *sous*, and made my way up the path which ascended a tolerably high hill. I meant to indulge myself, when I should reach the top, with a view of the country, and a perusal of the schoolmistress's pamphlet; but a new rencontre retarded for a little the gratification of my curiosity, and the reader cannot grumble if he shares the same fate.

As I prepared to ascend, my eye was caught by a figure descending rapidly towards me. It

was that of a man, tall, stout, and vigorous. A broad-leafed hat covered his head. He wore a blue tight cotton vest, small-clothes of the same, with large ties of red tape. His legs were bare; and sandals of undressed cow hide, the hair inward, were tied round his ankles with thongs of leather. In a broad belt buckled round his waist were attached a small hatchet, for clearing his passage through the glaciers, and a pair of iron-spiked shoes, without which it is impossible to traverse the snowy regions at the summit of the mountains. Across his shoulders was flung a short carbine, and in his hand he bore a staff spiked at one end, to aid his ascent in the passes of ice then glittering far above us.

The moment he perceived me, he stopped short, sprung half behind a large stone; and in an instant his carbine was cocked, and his eye fixed fiercely on me. "Friend or foe?" asked he in Spanish, and in a tone which sounded like a positive declaration of war.

"I am a traveller," replied I, "and a foe to no honest man." He looked at me a moment sternly, but not so fiercely as at first; and seeing

nothing hostile in my attitude or manner, he stepped towards me, his carbine in his hand, ready for action if required, and taking care to keep the advantage of the high ground. As he approached, I rested the but-end of my gun upon the ground, and waited his address. "If I am not mistaken, sir," said he in French, "you are not a Frenchman."

"You are right," replied I.

"English, by the Virgin!" exclaimed he, and springing forward, he stretched out his hand. Though not quite in unison with the impetuous warmth of his friendship, I gave him my hand, and received a squeeze that tingled through every nerve of my body. His eyes at the same time brightened; a flush of swarthy red showed itself on the dark brown of his cheek, and he smiled as if he was sincerely and heartily pleased.

Viewing him in this light, without a shade of the ferocity which first struck me, I thought him, and still think he was, the handsomest man I ever saw. His black hair curled down upon his shoulders. He did not wear mustachios, but his upper lip only was shaved, and his beard and

whiskers were bushy and short, such as we give to a Roman hero of from thirty to forty years of age. His shirt was open at the neck, and exposed his breast covered with curly hair, and displaying a most imposing breadth and strength. "You are English," cried he, "I Spanish—are we not then friends?" He spoke his own language. I replied in French, which was easier to me, that I hoped our nations were and would be always friends.

"I hope so too," cried he, "for many a day have I fought side by side with the noble English. From the Ebro to the Adour we marched step by step together; and the passes of these hills have many a time heard the echo of my carbine joined with that of Wellington's cannon."

"You are no longer a soldier?" asked I.

"No, I am now nothing more nor less than a smuggler. Ever since the affair of Orthes, there below us, where I got a French bullet through my body, I have trod the roads of these my native mountains, making out life and cheating the king just as well as I could. You see I tell you frankly what I am, lest you might take

me for worse. A smuggler, mind you, not a robber. But, if you would know me better, ask Mina.—They say he is at Paris. Ask him the character of Josef Ramirez, the Guerilla of Jaca! But time presses. I have a long road before me, and must not tarry. God be with you! Adieu!"

Repeating, with these words, the friendly and forcible squeeze of the hand, the smuggler parted from me, and was in a minute or two in deep conversation with the toll-taker at the rivulet side. The latter pointed to me, as if counselling caution; but the other, without looking at me, shook his head, and clapped his companion on the shoulder, as much as to say, "Fear nothing —he is English."

The short conference being ended, the smuggler stepped into the boat, without once turning his head to salute friends or look for foes. He wheeled round the cliff, and was in a moment lost to my sight, but not for ever. In about an hour afterwards, as I gazed from the top of the hill, at whose foot we parted, at the splendid view, and thrilled with a delight ever new to me, at the near prospect of these stupendous

mountains—I saw a dark cloud come sweeping down their side; and marching stoutly to meet it, the hardy figure of the smuggler caught my attention. He had made most rapid way; yet the various windings of the vales, and the lesser hills which he had crossed, kept him still sufficiently near to enable me to view him distinctly. Wishing to give him a signal of recollection and good will, I fired a shot, which reverberated in a hundred echoes round me, but he either did not hear the report, or scorned to pay attention to it.

I sat down at the moment on a smooth spot; and on one of the fragments of rock which were scattered round me, I sketched the following lines. It was not the fault of either the subject or the scene that they were not better.

THE MOUNTAINEER.

Brave, enterprising, firm, and proud,
He boldly steps the dangerous path,
Faces the gathering thunder-cloud,
Indifferent to its rising wrath:
Scorning the shelter of the rock—
Shrinks not, but dares the hail-storm's shock;
Or in some wind-worn crevice laid,
A granite cushion for his head,

Proof 'gainst the blast, unharm'd by cold,
Alike from fear and sorrow free;
His rough bed freedom's vantage-hold,
His shade the wings of liberty.

The riot of the heavens gone by,
Once more the sun relumes the sky,
And strikes the hill with burning glow,
While lightnings scorch the vales below.—
But the bold mountaineer defies
These fierce contentions of the skies:
Bounds from the earth with active spring,
And like the untamed forest-king,
Who quits his couch, uproused by rain,
Shaking the big drops from his mane.—
This mountain monarch leaves his lair,
Dashes the cold shower from his hair;
Unfearing tracks his prompt advance,
Nor deigns to cast one backward glance.
No dastard doubts may linger near
The free-born breeze that wantons here.—
Pure as the fine and subtle breath
That sports o'er Erin's circling wave,
Wafting to every reptile death,
But health and welcome to the brave.

Such vigorous essence, pure and wild,
Inhales the mountain's roving child;
But the best boast of Erin's pride,
Soft, social joys, he casts aside.
He owes no binding ties to man;
But such as he is, fiercely free—
He scorns the jargon that would scan
The different shades of rank's degree.

To him all equal. By one proof
He measures mind and body both.—
Strength is his standard—far aloof
He flings all goods of meaner growth,
And judges by this general scale
The lowly hind of Lasto's vale;
The somewhat civilized, who bask
In the dull freedom of Venasque;
Polish'd or rustic; vile or good;
Plebeian, noble, learned, rude,
The beggar, wretch, or him who reigns
Lord of Iberia's wide stretch'd plains—
Feeble and false in every thing;
By force a patriot as by fraud a king!

Such is the tide of thought that fills
The wayward wanderer of the hills.
Boundless as Nature's self he roves,
And Nature for her grandeur loves.
No weakling power his passions stirs;
His friendships are with her and hers:
Unknown to him each siren charm,
Which lures the listening wretch to harm;
Those arts refined, which, meant to bless,
Sink into sorrows and excess.
His the bold intercourse that grows
To greatness from the things it knows:
His fellowship is grand and high;
He talks with tempests. The vast sky—
The massive glacier, huge and hoar—
The rushing blast—the torrent's roar—
These his familiars stern and strong;
He lisps in youth their lofty tongue,

Grows in their spirit, takes their tone,
And makes their attributes his own.
Such sure was man's primeval state,
Like Nature, noble, wild, and great;
Meant for a monarch, not the slave
Of self-born conquest;—proudly brave,
With lion look and eagle eye,
Firm foot on earth, and thoughts on high.
So came the being, rudely grand,
Warm-glowing from his Maker's hand;
So stalk'd in Eden's bowers, till sin,
Damping his energies, crept in,
And art entwined its chill caress
To tame his godlike savageness.

It is not necessary to state how often the verses have been reconsidered and retouched, nor the exact time occupied in the first rough sketch: but the mountaineer was out of sight when I had finished; and luckily for me, a cottage was in view, where I made sure of a lodging for the night, which was not far distant. But before I quitted my resting-place, I took out the schoolmistress's pamphlet; and fancying that I had, in even this one day, seen enough to give me a just notion of the people of Henry IV., I thought I was fitly prepared to read the account of his birth.

I found, on examining it, that what I had got of the pamphlet was but a part of a whole. All that preceded or followed the subject of Henry's birth was torn away; but these few pages were perfect, and seemed from the conclusion to have been recently published. When I thought of turning it into English, I did not conceive myself bound to adhere very closely to the original meagre sketch, nor the errors it contained; and I therefore made some most unmerciful interpolations. The reader being thus informed that I am not responsible for all of this trifle, will, I trust, make an equitable and candid distribution; viz. to place any thing that may please him to my credit, and give the merit of what he does not like to the French writer, on whose foundation my labours were built.

"Make haste, wife—I am just ready to set out. Make haste, make haste!"

At the voice of her impatient husband, the good wife called her son and grandson to receive the orders of the old man. The son came first.

"Joseph, you will remain all night upon the hill, until you see the flame glowing on the towers of the royal chateau. You will then light the faggots which are ready prepared, that the whole valley may learn at once that a child is born to our good king. You know, a single fire announces a girl: three—ah! if it was but a boy! woe to the Spaniards! our beautiful Navarre would not be long in their hands. But *now* our king is old, and the husband of his daughter sheds, in the service of Henry II., that blood which should be poured out in reconquering the paternal estates. And the Princess Jeanne! why, with all the courage of a man, oh! why is she a woman?"

Joseph set out for the hill, and Enriot waited for his grandfather to speak again. "My child," said the old man, after a long pause, "you are to-day twenty years of age. To-day I should like to present you to your king:—you must come with me." The lad trembled with joy; the grandsire went on. "Wife, give me my arms—those which I carried in our last battle against the Spaniards. Alas! it is a long time since then. I that day had the glory of shielding

with my body my wounded king." The dame obeyed the order; the arms were taken out of the family chest, and the old man brought them to the door of the cottage. The sun was sinking behind the hills, and threw a stream of dazzling light upon these relics of the veteran's glory. They were brilliant, for he took a pride in keeping off the ravages of rust. He placed the glittering helmet upon his head; a battered cuirass covered his broad and manly chest; in his leathern belt he hung the broad-sword which had parried the stroke meant for his monarch's life; and lastly, he flung across his shoulders the scarlet cloak, on which were embroidered, in blue worsted, the two cows—the arms of Bearn.

Enriot was quickly prepared. A graceful cap half hid his long, brown hair; an open vest, loose breeches, woollen stockings, embroidered in different colours, and worked by his mother's hands, with thick shoes, completed his dress. In one hand he lightly balanced the knotted staff, which served for support in climbing the hills. The other carried a small basket, into which his grandfather had put a piece of coarse bread, a

clove of garlic, freshly gathered, and a bottle of old wine of Jurançon.

After the old man had reminded the women to take to their prayers, the moment the bells should announce the commencing labour of the princess, and cautioned them to pray strongly for a boy, he and Enriot set out. For several days the whole district had awaited with anxiety this important event. Rising in the morning, they thought it impossible that it could be delayed till night; and many a sound-sleeping peasant had been startled from his rest, during the week just passed, with fancied tinglings from the steeple of Pau—while some, amongst whom was Ibarria, for so the old man was named, made regular daily pilgrimages to the castle gates. The result of these expeditions had been hitherto only disappointment, but a new dream every night promised *positive* intelligence for the following day. He moreover remembered well, that when he was a stripling, full half a century before, a reputed magician had foretold, that the day on which he had a grandson twenty years old would be the proudest day he had ever known. That

might, to be sure, have been the case from natural feeling alone, unconnected with the birth of princes; but Ibarria insisted that there was something great woven into the prophecy; and this day being also the day of full moon, he reckoned with a certainty, in which he was borne out by the opinions of all the old women around, that the Princess Jeanne was to become that day the mother of a race of kings.

Ibarria, having served for a long period in the body guard of the king of Navarre, had accompanied his master in his retirement to Pau. The grateful monarch had given to his old soldier a house at Jurançon, and had appointed him to the care of the royal vineyards. There this faithful follower, in his honourable trust, passed his quiet days; recounting to his children the virtuous and courageous actions of the master whom he loved so well. He nourished in their breasts two powerful passions—affection for his prince, and hatred of his foes. He had long indulged the expectation of seeing his king reconquer Pampeluna, but it was nearly dissipated, when the situation of the Princess Jeanne awoke his

slumbering ideas, and flattered his ancient hopes. He waited with impatience the promised infant, the anticipated redressor of his master's wrongs.

There never was a people more devoted to their sovereign than were the people of Bearn. There was a noble frankness in the character of the old monarch that associated admirably with their own. They loved him as a father; and his daughter shared their hearts with him. The circumstance of her having first felt the movements of the child within her bosom while in camp with her husband in Picardy, amidst the sound of drums and trumpets, flattered their warlike superstitions; and they had with one voice settled (and it was prophetic) that this forthcoming child was to be first a boy, and then a hero. Animated by this joyful hope, they waited the announcement of a prince with that respectful confidence inspired by faith in the goodness of the All-wise.

It was now the commencement of winter; but it was one of those winters into which the warm farewell of the departing season blends, as does the brilliant green with the dusky purple of a

rainbow; when the trees retain their leaves beyond their wonted time, and a casual nightingale is still heard to pour his melody upon the last traces of the dying year. The heavens still kept their serenity, and the earth its verdure; and the day seemed ruled by the lingering spirit of autumnal mildness.

As the travellers pursued their route, after evening had closed in, Ibarria had taken up his favourite strain: he was talking of the wisdom of the king, and the virtues of the princess. It was the first time, perhaps, that Enriot had listened to his grandfather with a forced attention, for they were close upon the dwelling of the venerable and gallant Franke. "Let us quit the road and take the mountain-path," said the old man suddenly, on perceiving the chestnut-trees which shaded the roof of his ancient fellow-soldier. "The way will be longer, but my heart will not throb with indignation against the perfidious friend who betrayed my confidence. My rage surprises you, perhaps.—Listen to me, child! Learn, that before I married my good wife, whom God bless and preserve! I had long loved

a young maiden of the vale of Maïa. Franke was my friend—became my rival—and, during my absence in the wars, possessed himself of her for whom I would have given my life. Oh, but she was good and handsome! You have seen her grand-daughter Laurinette? She is her very image. You must have remarked her—Is she not lovely?"

Enriot made an inclination of the head, for he *had* remarked the girl. He followed his grandfather awhile in silence; but just as they came to a little grove of acacias, he cast a look among the trees, and coughed. Receiving no answer, he suddenly clapped his hand to his forehead and exclaimed, "What a head I have here! Dear grandfather, will you forgive me? I have left behind me the bodice which sister Catrine has worked for Mademoiselle de Montbrun, and which I so positively promised to take to Pau. I must step back for it."

"You must *not* step back for it, stupid boy!" said old Ibarria, sharply. "What, keep me waiting at a time like this, when all the country is pressing to the castle—and for a paltry bodice,

forsooth!"—"But, consider, sir, it is meant to do honour to our princess, and the young prince she is *sure* to give us! And you know, my dear grandfather, that walk as fast as you will, I shall overtake you with ease before you reach the river."

This reasoning was conclusive with Ibarria, for he was fond of the notion of honouring the princess and the prince he was so *sure* of; and nothing was to him a trifle which tended to that point. Besides, he was proud of Enriot's agility, and loved to follow him with his eyes as he bounded along the mountain-paths, full as graceful, and almost as fleet, as the Izard which he chased from pic to pic. "Go along then, puppy!" cried Ibarria—and Enriot was in a moment at full speed.

Laurinette, whom Enriot had *remarked*, was at this identical moment in one of her most peevish and fretful moods; but her peevishness had something so gentle and bewitching in it, that it was often preferred to other people's good humour. Her temper was now, however, tried

to the utmost, for Franke, her grandfather, had made her sit down to her usual evening's task of reading him to sleep; but, by an uncommon perversity, had not begun to doze at the second or third page, as was his regular custom. Laurinette turned her eyes oftener towards a little *acacia grove*, visible from the window, than she fixed them upon the old history of the Kings of Navarre. The breaks which she thus made in the narrative kept up the attention of the old man, defeating her own object, and the natural effects of the narrative itself.

She thus went on for some time, but was at last on the point of losing all command of herself, for she saw the moonlight slowly mixing with the gray vapours that covered the mountain tops; and she would certainly have burst into tears had not her grandfather begun to nod in his chair, and in a moment more given a nasal notice that he was fast asleep. Laying down her book, she was preparing to steal towards the door, when a voice, not new to her, warbled from the garden the following

RUSTIC SERENADE.

I.

Laurinette dear, the sun is down,
His last glance fades on the mountain's peak;
And the drooping heads of the herbage brown
Are faintly tinged with his yellow streak.
The moisten'd foliage warmly weeps;
Still is the villagers' evening hum;
Nature is hush'd, and echo sleeps—
Laurinette dear to thy lover come!

II.

Mark in the eastern heavens a light
That shines on the flowers which the dews have wet;
'Tis the wakening glance of the queen of night,
And, slothful girl! thou comest not yet.
The nightingale warbles his notes of love,
Perch'd on the quivering branches high,
While the fluttering leaves might be thought to move
In time to his moonlight melody.

III.

The rivulets gush from the mountain springs
To freshen the still warm breath of the vale;
Zephyr is out on his silvery wings,
And pleasure is floating abroad on the gale.
But pleasure, and beauty, and music, all
To the heart of the lover are chill and dumb,
While the maiden he dotes on slights his call.
Then Laurinette dear to *thy* lover come!

The echo to this last line was a sweet embrace from the lips of the lovely girl; and Enriot forgot for a moment all else in the world. It will be divined by the reader that this young couple had been a long time very good friends, unknown to their grandsires, whose enmity had kept them asunder. It will probably be suspected too, that the asserted forgetfulness of the bodice was wholly a fabrication of the amorous Enriot. Such was the truth; for the bodice had been snugly deposited in his bosom on his leaving home, and had he but had a glimpse of Laurinette in passing the acacia grove, he would not have been forced to the falsehood. As it was, I hope it will be held venial in such a good cause, without any serious injury to religion or morals.

This stolen interview was as rapid as lightning, and as brilliant too. The moment it lasted might be called a drop of "the essence of time." The hearts of the lovers was the alembic in which it was doubly distilled; and its fragrance had not evaporated when Enriot rejoined his grandfather at half a league's distance from the house of Franke. "Well, sir, I have caught you," cried

he, panting for breath. "You are a good boy," replied the old man, and they went silently on.

The birth-day of an heir is joyous for a family. How glorious for a kingdom is the birth-day of a sovereign! Hardly were the first strokes of the bells heard by the anxious inhabitants of Pau, than they rushed out to inquire the news. The lively sounds spread quickly over the plain, through which the Gave winds tranquilly along. They struck upon the ears of Ibarria and Enriot, just as they had reached the rising grounds which stretch before the town and towers of Pau. They had both been for some time silent. Ibarria's thoughts had swept over a space nearly as extensive as is allotted to the life of man—had dwelt awhile on his early hours—then rushed back to present days—and ended by subsiding into mental prayers for a prince. Enriot was thinking of something else.

"On, on, my boy! we loiter. I would not for my whole vintage be too late." They hurried up the ascent. The straining eyes of the old man would have penetrated the hill. Enriot burned with impatience, but slackened his steps

to keep pace with his grandsire. At last the fuller sounds of the bells came unobstructed on their ears; they reached the summit; and the whole enchanting panorama, lit by the full moon, burst upon their sight.

The Spanish proverb says, that "they have seen nothing who have not seen Seville." How little have they seen who have not seen Pau! Its lovely sloping hill covered with gardens and vineyards; its neat buildings, rising in gradations of beauty, and reposing in masses of verdure; its proud and glittering castle towering over all, with white flags floating salutation to the rivers, the forests, the mountains! But who can describe it? O no one.—It is one of those views to be seen and felt; when the mind is raised by the contemplation of nature's magnificence; and the heart softened by the fulness of her bounty.

Ibarria and Enriot had many a time viewed this scene; but they stopped, even now, awhile in involuntary admiration, and gazed upon it till a dark cloud, covering the face of the moon, robbed the landscape of its lustre, and warned them to proceed. The bells are still ringing;

they have now a downhill path, and they gain upon the road. But just as they reach the borders of the river, and at the instant that they put their first step upon the bridge, the bells suddenly cease, and a fire bursts high from the castle's central tower. The travellers stop short —their expectant eyes are fixed upon the other towers. Let imagination fancy their appearance.—Their quickened pulse, and breath arrested—their gazing countenances, flushed cheeks, and flowing hair—their picturesque attire—their graceful figures!

Thus they stood for some seconds, every one of which appeared an hour. "But one fire—but *one*, grandfather?" asked, rather than exclaimed, Enriot. "Great God, thy will be done!" cried the old man. The suspense continued—it was intolerable. They could not have borne it longer, when a little gleam spread flickering on the western turret, and in an instant the combustible matter shot upwards its flames upon the sky. Another fire, on the corresponding turret, completed the signal for a boy; and salvos of artillery roared out. The shouts of enthusiastic

thousands joined the joyous chorus; and the hills sent on from crag to crag reverberations of the sounds.

Where are the travellers? Ah! behold them —on their knees; their heads uncovered; their hands clasped together, and raised towards Heaven; their eyes fixed upon the blazing signals; their cheeks streaming with tears!

They are soon again upon their feet, and quickly ascend the rapid path which leads from the river to the castle. They pause but one moment to look back towards home, hoping to see their little signal-fire. They turn their heads, and do see their signal-fire, no doubt—but it is in vain that they would hope to distinguish it amongst a hundred blazing from the summit of a hundred hills.

They reached the castle. The portcullis was raised, the draw-bridge down, and no guards were seen to obstruct the rush of the crowd. The court-yard was already filled when Ibarria and Enriot arrived. The uniform of the old soldier, his respectable character, as well as the well-known friendship of the king, were all so

many causes for clearing a way for his approach. He penetrated through the crowd, and directed his steps to the private staircase, by which he was privileged to enter, leaving the grand approach to the thousands who were, for the first time, promiscuously admitted. As he mounted the steps, followed by Enriot, a strain of music seemed to invite his approach. Instead of the plaintive cries which he expected to have heard, he distinguished an old song of the country, and was surprised at any one venturing to sing at such a time. The air was one of mingled tenderness and solemnity, and the words were pronounced in a feeble and tremulous tone. Fatigued by his long walk, and by the height of the staircase, Ibarria stopped awhile to recover breath. Enriot stood wrapped in astonishment and awe; and they heard the following

SONG OF THE PRINCESS JEANNE*.

I.

Sing! for the voice of the newly born
Falls in sweet sounds on the mother's ear;
Like the sun-beam mix'd with the cloud of morn,
On her cheek is a blended smile and tear.

* Jeanne d'Albret wishing to see her father's will, he promised to show it to her, " A condition que dans l'en-

II.

The vows of her lover, her husband's kiss,
Were dear when in joy's young hours she smiled;
But feeble and faint to her matron bliss
As she clasps to her bosom her first-born child.

III.

When the child is a man, to the battle field
He will follow his father the foe to meet;
And in victory's pride lay his foeman's shield,
With a high-throbbing heart, at his mother's feet!

During the last stanza of the song Ibarria and Enriot had reached the head of the stairs. The door before them was open and unguarded. They hesitated an instant whether they should enter or not, and interchanged looks of mutual uncertainty. While thus silently, mentally debating, a woman, from the apartment within, perceiving them, ran forward, and exclaimed in a transport of joy, "Come in, come in; he is

fantement elle luy chanteroit une chanson '*afin*,' luy dit il, '*que tu ne me fasses pas un enfant pleureux et rechigné*.' La Princesse le luy promit, et eut tant de courage, que malgré les grandes douleurs qu'elle suffroit, elle luy tint parole, et en chanta une en son langage Bernois."—*Hist. du Roy Henry le Grand, par de Perefixe*, t. i. p. 16.

Notwithstanding this authority of the Bishop of Rhodez, it will be observed that I have made the princess sing *after* the birth.

born!" She drew them along, and led them to the chamber of the princess, where they had been preceded by a multitude admitted without distinction or inquiry.

The old monarch was leaning over his daughter's bed. He took the infant from her arms, and raising it in his own, he turned towards the crowd, and showing it to all, he cried aloud, "You see it is a boy!" It was at this moment that Ibarria, taking from his grandson's basket the clove of garlic and the wine, presented them to the king, who kindly smiled, on recognising his old preserver. The monarch himself then rubbed the clove of garlic to the infant's lips, and having poured a little of the wine into a goblet, he offered it to the child. He drank it with avidity, and without uttering a cry; and, as though his imperfect vision had acquired its powers, he turned round the circle his half-open eyes.

"What is his name?" asked a voice. Another exclaimed, "Call him Henry, after his grandfather!" "Be it so," said the old king;

and all cried, " Long live Henry!" The crowd which waited on the staircase, in the halls, the chambers, and the court-yard, echoed the cry thus sent forth; and the sound of its genuine honesty would have been a good lesson for the venal and the factious, who sometimes open out their roaring throats.

The monarch caused a window to be thrown wide, and advanced upon the balcony. A tear of joy trickled down his hollowed cheek. The child which he carried in his arms seemed, to the admiring crowd, to wear a smile upon his unconscious lips; and his little hand, which was entangled in the grey beard of his grandsire, they would have it was playing there by design. The old king held up towards Heaven this son which it had bestowed upon his people; and making a sign that he would speak, an immediate silence succeeded the buzz which had prevailed in the crowd. " A child is born to all," said he. " He will love you as I love you." Observing near him an old soldier of Navarre, who could not restrain his tears, " Be joyous

and happy, my gallant friend," added he, with a tone and bearing that seemed like inspiration. "My Lamb has brought forth a Lion*!"

A burst of acclamation and delight, still louder than the former, welcomed these words of the monarch. Every approach to the chamber of the princess was then thrown open by his orders, that all might come and gaze upon the child—the hope of his race.

There was in the castle a large tortoise-shell, which some sailors of Bayonne had formerly found on a distant shore, and which they had presented to the princess as one of the curious productions of the sea. This shell was placed in a large hall adjoining the chamber of the princess, and it was in this extraordinary and unostentatious cradle that the old Henry placed his

* Les Espagnols avoient dit autrefois par raillerie sur la naissance de la mere de notre Henry, "Miracle! la vache a fait une brebis," entendent par ce mot de vache, la Reine Marguerite, sa mere, car ils l'appelloient ainsi, et son mary, le vacher, faisant allusion aux armes de Bearn, qui sont deux vaches. Le Roy Henry se souvenant de cette froide raillerie des Espagnols, disoit de joye, "Voyez maintenant, ma brebis a enfanté un Lion!"—*De Perefixe*, t. i. p. 17.

new-born namesake. "I choose," said he, "that he should sleep in a cradle the gift of my people; he who will one day be called on to wake and watch over their welfare." The crowd rushed once more round the infant prince, and all admired his strength and beauty. The child was not at all alarmed at the concourse—a thing little extraordinary in one just born, but which the people chose to consider a miracle, as if some early instinct made him already distinguish that he was in the midst of his devoted subjects.

Ibarria took this opportunity of approaching the monarch, holding Enriot by the hand. "At this moment of general devotion," said he, "my sovereign will not disdain the offering of his faithful servant." Then kneeling, with Enriot beside him, "Here, my liege, I give you this full-grown lad to be the honest follower of this noble infant, as I have been to your majesty." The king, putting his hand on Enriot's head, said solemnly, "I bless you, my worthy lad. Grow up in the steps of your gallant grandsire, and a better blessing—that of Heaven—will be with you! And now, Ibarria, you must return

me kind for kind. Here, give thy blessing to this child. The benediction of fidelity and courage must bring good luck with it."

Ibarria, with a half-diffident yet affecting solemnity, approached the cradle. He contemplated the child for some time in silence, then bending on one knee he cried, "I bless thee, noble infant, hope of the people! Thou wilt be brave, for thy mother felt thee bounding in her bosom in the middle of a camp. Thou wilt be good, for thou wilt resemble thy grandsire. Thou wilt be just, for thou wilt follow his counsel and example. Thou wilt be the joy of thy people, for cries of gladness, and not tears, have awaited on thy birth! Be blest, then, royal child! In thee finishes the name of Albret—in thee begins the name of Bourbon. May this glorious name become more famous than all the names of kings; and may God accord to thee and thy posterity the favours reserved for his well-beloved!"

Then, drawing his long rapier, Ibarria touched the cradle with the blade. "Now it is consecrated," said he, placing the sword in the hands

of Enriot. "You will carry it to defend him, since age disables me." But Enriot knew nought of this appeal. From the moment that he felt the royal hand upon his head, both sense and feeling seemed to have abandoned their throne. He remained fixed on his knees, his eyes fastened on the floor, his neck bent low, and his arms crossed upon his breast. He was aroused from his waking trance by the rough jokes of his young companions, who had formed a circle round him; and starting up, confused and ashamed, he hurried after his grandfather, whom he saw slowly making his way through the crowd. Enriot confessed, in many an after day, that the memory of this moment—when the dreams of wealth and ambition had made him forget awhile humility and love—was his best preservative against the temptations which many a time assailed him during life.

Returning towards Jurançon, Enriot wished to lead his father from the high road, by the path they had followed in going to Pau. "No," said the old man, "my heart is filled with joy; and there is no room for hatred to find a place

there." He then walked straight up to the house of Franke, pushed open the door without knocking, and entered the kitchen. This unlooked-for visit astonished Franke and his grandaughter, who were sitting by the fire, late as it was, conversing with some of their happy neighbours on the subject of the auspicious birth. Franke got up, and advanced towards Ibarria, whom he did not at first recognize. "Franke," said the latter with a faltering voice, and taking him by the hand, "we are old enemies—but older friends. I forget every thing now but our early regard. The birth of this prince should reunite all good royalists, who may perhaps require this union when the child is big enough to lead them to battle. Alas! I forget my years. No matter. Franke, we were once friends—let us be so again, and always!"

The warm-hearted and generous Franke threw himself into Ibarria's arms, exclaiming, "Oh! why is *she* not alive to see this happy hour? She, who was till death your truest friend!"

While the old men embraced each other, the whole circle around them shed tears of joy at the

reconciliation. The news spread quickly over the neighbourhood. Enriot, who had *remarked* Laurinette, married her amidst blessings and rejoicings; and it is even said that, to this day, their descendants are prouder of tracing their ancestry up to such a couple, than of the worldly distinction which has followed a long course of industry and virtue.

THE

EXILE OF THE LANDES.

With great courage and elevation of sentiment, he told the court that "the crime of which he stood accused was not a deed performed in a corner; the sound of it had gone forth to most nations; **** that for no temporal advantage would he offer injury to the poorest man or woman that stood upon the earth: **** and that he had still, through every danger, held fast his principles and his integrity."

HUME'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND, vol. vii. p. 356.

THE

EXILE OF THE LANDES.

EVERY body has heard of the Landes of France, and many of my countrymen have traversed them in their route from Paris to the Pyrenees; but few who have not seen them, or similar tracts, can form a notion of these monotonous solitudes.

Being unwilling to infringe on the rights of my brother scribblers, who dress up their loose thoughts in the form of tours and travels, I shall not enter into regular description, or details of distances. I shall content myself with saying, that the Landes stretch from the Gironde to the Adour, between north and south—are washed by the bay of Biscay on the west—and lose themselves to the eastward, by insensibly mingling with the fertile plains of Aire and Villeneuve de Marsan. A gazetteer and a map will tell the rest.

Extensive pine-woods cover this ocean of sands. Here and there a hut or a hamlet forms the centre of a patch of green, on which troops of ragged sheep or goats are seen to browse; while the unmeaning look of the being who attends them marks his mental affinity to the flock, as his sheep-skin mantle gives him an external similitude.

I left Bordeaux to explore these wastes, on a summer's morning, when the first beams of day were opening on the heavens; and the birds were shaking off the drowsiness of night, stretching out their little wings, and arranging their ruffled plumage—with the coquetry of a fine lady, settling her dishevelled ringlets, or the trimming of her cap.

It was then that I was forcibly struck with the belief that vanity was not peculiar to mankind: that the prancing of the steed, the strut of the cock, and the contortions of the monkey, were but some of those gradatory shades exhibited by poor mortality from pride to dandyism. Be it so! thought I; let the brute creation rival the *genus homo*, and share with us another of

our privileges.—God knows we often meet them half-way in coming to a level!

I was roused from the train of thought which followed these reflections, on finding my progress impeded by the nature of the soil I trod on. I was wading through sand, having wandered into one of the by-roads, which branch off in a hundred directions, on the borders of the Landes. I made an effort to reconnoitre my position, but with little success. Around me, on every side, were tall pines. No vista showed me the track I had travelled, for the road had wound, in most irregular meanderings, into this forest. Above was the dark blue sky, and below the sandy soil, deep and parched by the meridian sun. I was for a moment a little embarrassed, but I soon recovered myself. I first looked at poor Ranger's discontented face, but got no information there. He was stretched panting at the foot of a fir-tree, and his eyes were turned on me, as if asking for refreshment or consolation.

Having utterly lost my way, I had only to remark the direction of my shadow on the ground, and, making towards an opening which allowed

this observation, I quickly discovered that it pointed towards the east. Knowing that the sea lay in a contrary direction, I was satisfied, and went onwards, without fear of retracing my steps; and coming in a little while to a scanty patch of herbage, I sat down upon it, and produced from my wallet my stock of cold meat and bread.

After our repast, which the want of water rendered rather defective, Ranger and myself seemed inspired alike with fresh vigour. We set out again; and while he made some circular excursions in the wood, fruitlessly hoping to light on a rivulet or a covey, I plodded onward in whatever path presented itself on my route.

I calculated on falling in with some straggling village or hut, where I might repose for the night, if I found it impracticable to reach La Teste, a little town on the coast, to which I was more immediately bound. As I relapsed into my reverie, I forgot myself again; and I sauntered onwards in this mood, until the sun had sunk in a misty and threatening sky. The earth was overhung with clouds, and a wind of evil omen swept gloomily across the desert, and

shook the branches of the dark tall pines. I began now, in good earnest, to look about me, and increasing my speed in a straight-forward direction, I reached, in about half an hour, the extremity of the wood in which I had so long wandered. My path opened out into an almost boundless plain, but I saw at first no habitation nor living object. I felt excessively fatigued, from the heavy sandy soil through which I had all day laboured. I was also a second time hungry, and I had besides some inquietudes for Ranger. Those woods abound with wolves; and if night had actually closed in before I got to shelter, we might both have been in jeopardy.

While I thus communed with myself, I marked, on the dusky horizon, two figures of gigantic height, which I at first thought two isolated fir-trees bending to the blast; but their motion soon betrayed them to be no inanimate production, as with long and rapid strides they were quickly crossing the waste. Determined to bring them to, I discharged one barrel of my gun. They stopped; and, as I concluded that they turned towards me, I quickly fired off the other, and

then shouted with all my might, at the same time making towards them. They perceived me, and strided to meet me, with a speed at once ridiculous and appalling; and I may safely say, that since Gulliver was in Brobdignag, no traveller had reason to think less of himself.

As they approached, I saw them to be men mounted on monstrously high stilts, and I then recollected the accounts I had read and heard of the shepherds of the Landes. These were the first specimens which had come within my observation; and I had, in my abstraction, quite forgotten what I might so naturally have looked for.

When these singular beings neared me, I discerned every particular detail of their appearance and costume. The latter was composed of a coarse woollen jacket and breeches, loose at the knees. A round worsted cap, such as is worn by the Aberdeenshire shepherd, was placed on the head. Long masses of lank, black hair flowed over the shoulders, covered with a cloak of sheep-skin. Their legs were defended with rude garters of the same, and an uncouth

caricature of sandals was fastened to their feet. They both carried long poles, to aid their march and keep them steady; and they each actually held in their clumsy hands a coarse stocking, and a set of knitting rods (I cannot call them needles); thus putting art and industry in the only light in which they could appear a mockery.

They were both about the middle age, if I might form a judgment from their bushy beards and furrowed cheeks; but as to their dispositions, capabilities, or propensities (which some theorists are so fond of discovering at a glance), I could not even guess. They had faces fit for the study of Lavater: no one else could have made any thing of them.

When they came near me, they made a full stop. I accosted them in French, and asked if they could direct me to an inn, which I understood was somewhere in those parts?

A negative shake of the head was their reply.

I next demanded if I was near La Teste?

The answer was repeated.

I then begged them to inform me whether

there was any cottage at hand, where I might obtain shelter?

A positive "no" seemed shaken from each silent head.

I thought this the acme of inhospitality, and so unlike what I had met hitherto in the country, that I could scarcely credit my senses; but the immoveable and petrifying unsociability of the faces I gazed on confirmed the worst, and I wished for a moment that I were with a couple of Bedouin Arabs, on their native deserts.

During our short conversation, of which I had all the words, and they the eloquence (as far as it lies in action), I could not trace a change of muscle or variation of expression in their countenances. To finish the fruitless and uncomfortable conference, I rather abruptly asked them where I was?

A silent shake of the head left me as wise as before.

It was not till then that I began to suspect, what my intelligent readers will by this time, no doubt, be sure of—that the poor shepherds did not comprehend one word of my discourse. No

sooner did this notion strike me, than I strung together such words of Gascon as I had picked up during my sojourn in the Perigord; but it was now quite as useless as French had been; and I had a new proof of the truth, that in this part of France each district has its *patois* perfectly distinct, and scarcely to be understood by the inhabitants of parts almost adjacent. I was thus at length reduced to that universal and natural language, in which fingers supply the use of tongues, and gestures that of sounds. I pointed out, by every possible intimation, my wants of eating and repose. Bless your bright intellects! thought I, as one of them gave me a significant, assenting nod, which was silently echoed by the pate of his companion. They then muttered something to each other; and fulfilling the strict forms of desert etiquette, they advanced in mincing strides, beckoning me to follow their guidance.

Ranger and I gladly took the hint. Our conductors moderated their pace; we increased ours, and thus contrived to produce a harmony of movement. I shall not weary the reader with a de-

tail of our march for the first half hour, which was beguiled by the shepherds, by a communication in their own peculiar jargon, and by Ranger and his master in the selfsame way.

As we went on, in a westwardly direction, the wind blew fiercely, but not freshly, in our faces. It was hot and smothering. The labouring skies seemed preparing to discharge their overloaded breasts, and distant thunder rolled along the horizon, still reddened by the departed sun. The masses of clouds which came upon the earth quickly shut out the day, and rose at opposite extremities into huge mountains of vapour. They were illuminated by fitful flashes of lightning, and looked like giant batteries erected in the heavens. As they rushed onwards from the west, they shot down vivid streams, which at times pierced to the very earth, like quivering blades of fire. Again the electric fluid took a horizontal direction through the skies; and its dazzling streak fluttered like a radiant streamer, till it lost itself among the clouds. Darkness came on with a suddenness such as I had never before observed, and the gusts of wind were ter-

rific. They swept across the waste like floods of air, lashing the sands like waves, and bearing down all before them. Every single-standing tree within our sight was shivered into atoms; but the crash, when these whirlwinds met the opposition of the pine-woods, baffles description. It appeared as if whole chasms were rent away in the forest; and between each blast we heard the howling of the wolves, terrified at the storm, or probably wounded by the shattered branches, and angry with the element, which must have dashed them at intervals to the earth.

As for me, my guides, and my poor dog, we were in the opening of the tempest repeatedly thrown to the ground. The shepherds were early obliged to quit their stilts, and I found them in every way on a level with me. Their experience furnished them no resource that I had not at hand; and when at length a desperate gust whirled us round like spinning-tops, I flung myself prostrate on the sands; one hand encircling Ranger, who clung trembling to my bosom, and the other grasping the stem of a newly-shattered fir-tree. The shepherds followed my

example, and throughout the whole scene showed less presence of mind than stupid apathy.

This magnificent and awful war of nature continued about twenty minutes. The wind then dropped suddenly still, as if forced from the heavens by the torrents of rain which poured upon us. We raised ourselves up, and the shepherds pursued their course. They mounted again upon their stilts, and I followed their track. Reiterated claps of thunder burst directly over our heads, and the broad lightnings gleamed in liquid sheets through the sea of rain which every cloud cast down.

I was nearly overpowered with fatigue, for the wet sand was to me almost impassable; while my wooden-legged companions found but little obstruction from it. My delight may then be imagined when I saw them stop suddenly before a house, which the darkness of the night prevented my observing, till we were actually against its wall. They shouted together, and the door was cautiously half-opened by a woman with a resin taper in her hand.

At the welcome prospect of the open door,

our whole party made a simultaneous rush for entrance. Ranger, who was the first on the threshold, had scarcely put his foot there when a huge shaggy dog, of a breed peculiar to the Landes, darted upon him, seized him by the throat, and tossed him to the ground. I used, for a while, every effort to tear the ruffian from his hold, and called vociferously to the woman to take him off; but the demand being unheeded or unheard, I cocked my gun, and by a desperate threat (which the drenched state of the piece made probably very harmless) I strove to alarm the house for the safety of its guardian. I saw several men seated within, who took my appeal with indifference; and, resolved in my rage to attempt the perpetration of my threat, I was in the act of putting my finger to the trigger, when my arm was forcibly seized from behind, and I, at the same time, thus accosted: "Young man, what would you do? Shoot that animal, and you are sure to die upon the spot!"

"Let me go," cried I, with impatience; "my dog is strangling in the gripe of that monster—by heavens! I 'll——;" but before my sentence

was finished, the savage had loosed his hold, and was fawning at the foot of the man who had spoken to me.

A word from him had saved Ranger, his assailant, and, if this stranger was to be believed, perhaps myself. Ranger crouched between my legs, as I reproached the man for keeping a dog so dangerous. He calmly replied, "The dog is not mine—but he only did his duty. He belongs to the people of this house; and the group within would certainly have revenged any harm done to him. Permit me to say you are now in a region where prudence is a useful virtue."

There was a tone of softness and benevolence in this address; and the light from the house showed me his figure as he spoke. He was tall, and wrapped in a large blue Spanish cloak, fastened at the collar with a silver clasp. He wore a handsome fur-cap. His face was quite in unison with his voice—dignified and tender.

I was much struck with his appearance and manner; and expressed my thanks for his interference, and for the service he had done me.

"Ah! sir," said he, "you know not how much

I owe a life of servitude to mankind. This poor deed weighs light in the balance against a load of crime."

He seized my hand as he said this, and pressed it hard, without seeming to know what he did. He as suddenly let it drop—started back—pulled his cap upon his brow—muffled himself in his cloak, and turned from me.

"Good God, sir!" cried I, "you are not surely going out in this dreary night?"

"Yes, sir, I am," replied he sternly, "and let me see who dares to follow me!"

I stared after him, but he was lost in the darkness. I felt a thrill of curiosity, admiration, and, I believe, awe; but I turned in a moment, and entered the house.

CHAPTER II.

My first impulse was to address the woman, whose bustling mien pronounced her to be mistress of the mansion; while the whole decoration of the kitchen, in which I stood, stamped upon the house itself the joyous character of an inn. To my rapid question of "Who was the gentleman that has just gone out?" I got at first no reply. The hostess eyed me from head to foot, with an unflattering and suspicious look. The four or five rough fellows near the fire stood up and gathered round me. I appeared not to heed their curiosity, and persisted for the gratification of my own. I repeated my question.

"And pray, my friend," asked the hostess, "what business is that of yours? Who are *you?* A spy, perhaps, sent here to entrap a better man."

"It seems so,"—"like enough," and other

such expressions, were echoed from the group by which I was encircled; and I saw there was no friendly feeling towards me breeding among the party. "Foreigner!" and "Englishman!" and "*sacre*" and "*peste!*" and exclamations of like import were sent mutteringly round; and, knowing that prevention is easier than cure, I thought it wise to avert a storm which I might not be able to allay. Assuming, therefore, an air of frankness and confidence, which I never knew to fail, which I never saw even a gloomy group of Spaniards able to withstand, but which acts like a spell on the sociable disposition of the French, I told shortly my situation and pursuits. I convinced them that I was neither a spy nor an enemy; that my inquiries concerning the mysterious stranger proceeded from gratitude and good will;—and I was in five minutes seated down among them, quite one of themselves, and placed, by acclamation, in the warmest corner of the chimney. Similar regard was shown to Ranger, who stretched himself in great enjoyment before the crackling faggots, happily forgetful of the roughness of his first reception.

Many civilities were showered on me, in the shapes of sundry articles of dress (my knapsack and its contents being wet through and through), drams from the brandy bottle, and innumerable kind speeches and offers of service.

Having got myself dry and warm, a craving appetite was next to be gratified. I asked the good and handsome hostess what I could have; and she said that Bordeaux contained few delicacies which she could not give me as well. A long list of luxuries followed this assurance, and her tongue ran glibly over the niceties of a *traiteur*'s ordinary catalogue. But, lest I should be led away by hopes of these proffered dainties, one of the jovial fellows, who sipped a twopenny bottle of wine beside me, threw me a knowing wink, as much as to say that mine hostess had only a *poetical* licence for offering the good things recapitulated; and that ortolans, Bayonne ham, truffled turkies, and perigord pie, existed only in the larder of her imagination. As to me this was but little disappointment, for my appetite could ill brook the delay of such high-sounding preparations; and my eye seemed to turn in

natural humility to viands more homely, and more appropriate to the place.

Thanking the good lady, therefore, for the civil list with which she had been willing to cherish my expectations and regale my fancy, I begged her to give me a supper more suitable to present circumstances and pedestrian travellers. In a moment a coarse, but clean, cloth and napkin graced my little table. A bottle of sour wine, a decanter of muddy water, a loaf of brown bread, full three feet in length, a salt-cellar filled with salt, and another with pepper, a plate, a drinking-glass, a heavy, ill-formed silver fork and spoon, and a knife, which the clumsiest apprentice of Birmingham would be ashamed to own, were quickly scattered before me—in the fullest spirit of that want of order, which so peculiarly marks the preparation for a French repast.

My bustling landlady was aided in every thing by a rosy, smooth-faced lass, in a close and stiff starched cap, blue bodice, and red woollen petticoat; and in a little while they placed on the table a small earthern tureen, whose brown exterior was not a shade more dark than the mess

of soup which smoked within, and which sent up a savoury fume, where the odour of garlic had a proud pre-eminence. An omelet of six eggs, mixed well with herbs of all varieties, was already in the frying-pan, and the plump brown arm of Cazille was stretched out to place it on the fire. The hostess's hand was in the act of cutting from a string of black puddings one whose dimensions seemed suited to a Patagonian mouth. I was preparing with my spoon to dive into the cloud-enveloped mysteries of the tureen, when all our operations were suspended, and all our attentions roused by the tramping of a horse, and a loud accompanying shout from a voice of stentorian tone.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the landlady, "It is Monsieur the Inspector of the forests!"

Monsieur the Inspector!

The Inspector!

Inspector!

Spectre!

was re-echoed by every mouth, from Cazille's down to my own, in all the gradations from surprise to inquiry. Ranger himself filled up the

climax by a note, which might be something between admiration and interrogation. Every one started up and made towards the door, carrying with them all the candles and resin matches which the kitchen had alight. The string of black puddings dangled uncut upon the wall—the embryo omelet was upset into the fire—and the spoonful of soup remained untasted in my hand.

This moment of awful suspense was followed by the entrance of the important personage, to whom such unconditional homage had been rendered by mistress and maid, man and beast, black pudding and omelet. Monsieur the Inspector came bustling in, with that air of moistened dignity, which sits so naturally on a great man, drenched with rain.

He was a broad-set figure, with dusky skin and frizzled whiskers of vast expansion. His huge jackboots, redoubled doubles of silk handkerchiefs, and a multitude of many collared coats, had been all unable to secure him from the wet. He streamed like a river God, from the rowels of his spurs up to every corner of his large cocked

hat. In each hand he carried a pistol, and as he strode forwards to the fire, a long sabre rattled against the tiles of the floor.

He made his way over every obstacle, upsetting two chairs, a warming-pan, and a basket of fish. Every one made way *for* him, so that he was not long in reaching the wide and comfortable hearth. It must not be supposed that all this was done in silent majesty—no such thing. Every step was accompanied by an exclamation, and every exclamation echoed by an oath.

"What a night of hell! * * * * ! What a rascally storm! * * * * *! What diabolical weather! * * * * *!"

The asterisks stand for oaths; I am literal in every thing else, but they, thank God! defy translation. Of these disgraces of the language, and the peculiar scandal of this part of France, he was most prodigal, and would have reminded every reader of Gresset's *Vert-vert*, of the foul-mouthed parrot, when

> Les ——, les ——, voltigeaient sur son bec,
> Les jeunes sœurs crurent qu'il parlait Grec.

The Inspector rapidly disencumbered himself

of all extraneous matter, flung aside his great coat, hat, boots, pistols, belt, and sabre; and almost threw himself into the embraces of the flames, which the crackling pinewood sent out in broad folds across the chimney. I was so much amused with the scene, that I suspended all my projected operations, and fixed my attention on this new object.

He was at first gruff and surly, receiving without any acknowledgment, but an occasional curse, the officious attentions of the landlady and Cazille, and the humble addresses of the men around him. He flung himself into the arm-chair which was placed for him, and, his back being towards me, he quite overlooked me sitting in my nook. As the warmth of the blaze dried up his exterior it seemed to melt his heart, for he threw a "thankye" at the hostess, as she adjusted the second worsted stocking round his knee; and he chucked Cazille under the chin, and kissed her forehead, while she stooped to place the slippers on his feet.

The rest of the party came in for their share of kindness, in the way that follows. "And

who have we here, eh? A gang of blackguard smugglers, ****! Oh! I beg pardon, gentlemen —fishermen! Egad, one might have known your trade by your smell, ****! Stand back, friends; I hate perfumery. Well! what have you got in your baskets to-night? Turbot and brandy sauce, ****! I'll warrant it the bottoms are as well lined with bottles of Cognac, as the tops with stinking mackerel, ****! But take care; I'll give a hint to the Octroi *, be sure of it; and if you are once caught at the barrier you shall lie in the Fort † till you are as withered and rotten as a piece of salted cod, ****!"

A burst of laughter from the speaker pronounced this to be wit; and an answering peal from his circle told that they knew the time to acknowledge his joke. Several smart and pleasant sayings were retorted on the inspector; but the most substantial repartee, that is the best of the *good things*, appeared in the shape of a noble turbot, which one of the fishermen produced

* The toll-house.

† The prison of Bordeaux is an old castle called the Fort du Hâ, but familiarly "The Fort."

from his stock. This spokesman "hoped, in the name of himself and comrades, that Monsieur the Inspector would do them the honour of accepting the fish, and give himself the trouble of smelling it, to be sure that it was fresh."

"****! one can't refuse," was the reply; and he pulled out his purse, as with a would-be effort, to pay for the compliment.

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried the fishermen in concert, "what is Monsieur the Inspector going to do? Pay for it! Always like himself, generous and noble! No, no, no! It's the least we can do for monsieur; and we shall be too well rewarded, if he will do us the honour of giving himself the trouble to write a little word to the gentlemen of the Octroi at Bordeaux, to let us pass the barrier without search, that we may get to the market early, and pull up for the time we have lost in the storm."

"Oh, willingly!" cried Monsieur the Inspector. "God forbid I should refuse so slight a kindness to such honest fellows as I know you all to be. Give me a pen, Cazille! But hark'ye, my friends! you are sure there is no brandy?"

"My word of honour!" burst from every mouth.

"Hold!" cried the inspector, tender of their consciences, "Hold, don't finish the sentence, my good fellows! I know you are honest, healthy-lunged lads, and you'll want all your breath to puff off your fish to the fat merchants of the Chartrons * to-morrow. There! *(giving the paper)*. But, hark'ye, stuff the sea-weed well to the bottom; I thought I heard the shaking of glass in that basket."

"Nothing, nothing, monsieur, on my word of honour!" protested one of the party, "but two or three bottles of salt water, a cure for Madame Depuis at the Red Cross. Monsieur knows, perhaps, that Madame Depuis' legs are ——."

"Yes, yes,—very well,—I know it all. Be off! Be off! the moon is up, and I want my supper. Cazille, prepare that turbot for your mistress's master-hand. You'll find a fresh bottle of capers in my saddle-bags."

"Adieu!" "Good night!" "Safe journey!"

* The rich and commercial quarter of Bordeaux, lying near the river.

&c. &c. were bandied backwards and forwards; and as the fishermen reloaded their little carts with the baskets, which they had placed in the house to shelter them from the rain, I thought the care with which they lifted them up denoted a cargo more brittle than flat fish, and more valuable than a couple of bottles of salt water.

I came at length under the eye of the inspector, who seemed for an instant disconcerted, but as soon recovered his swaggering mien. He examined me as keenly as if he had been going to strip the bark or lop the branches off a fir-tree. He next turned his looks towards the landlady and Cazille, and I saw that a stifled inquiry was lurking under his eyelid, and trembling on his tongue.

Fond of being first in the field, I addressed him, and proposed in civil terms that he would partake of my supper. A curl of contempt stole over his lip, as he exclaimed, "Supper, ****! And has *madame* then nothing better to give her guests than Spartan broth and water of the Tiber?"

The landlady was preparing her defence, but he cut her short with "No excuse—not a word

—'tis infamous! Cazille, place another cover at my table, ****! must travellers be served in this way? You have read the Greek and Roman histories, sir?"

I bowed assent.

"Well, sir, if you cannot sup with Apicius, you shall not fare like Lycurgus, depend on't You are English, sir?"

I replied that I *was* a subject of his Britannic Majesty.

"So much the better," replied he; "I love the English. Many a fat capon our king owes to yours. This is the time to stick to one's friends, ****! and the king of England's subject shall sup to-night with the king of France's inspector of forests. Come along! Make haste, madame! Cazille, light us in!"

I promptly accepted the uncouth bidding. I thought the inspector was a precious morsel for such an appetite as mine; and as I followed him down a narrow passage leading to an inner chamber, our ears were assailed with a storm of snoring, which it seemed utterly impossible to sleep through.

"****! what do I hear?" cried the in-

spector. "Is the thunder at work again, or is it your lazy slug-a-bed of a husband that thus outrages all decency? What ho! Batiste! awake, you brute!"

This obliging reveillée was speedily replied to by a hoarse and feeble voice, and by a bound upon the planks of a room above stairs, as if the sleeper had shot out of bed in sudden terror—as well he might.

A red night-cap quickly protruded itself from a door at the top of the stairs, and a red nose, projecting far from a thin, but rubricated visage, snuffled out a welcome, as imperfect as the exclamations of a troubled dream. At length we comprehended some such words as these. "Aha! Monsieur the Inspector! Aha! I have been watching for you. I knew the steady-going trot of your horse; old *Trois-pied*'s hoof could not escape me. Ay, ay, I heard you humming your favourite air (singing),

L'on revient toujours
A ses premiers amours.

Aha! I knew we might look for you this fine moonlight night."

"Away, thou shadow of an impudent lie!" vociferated the inspector. "The trot of my horse, forsooth! I galloped at least three leagues through the forest, and came up at full speed to the house. Humming my favourite air, ****! the wind was near forcing open my fast-closed mouth, and choking me with my own teeth! This moonlight night! The moon is shining now, 'tis true; but the moon is not falser than your flattery, nor the clouds it broke through thicker than your skull. Why, madame, why do you let the dog lie thus through storm and fair weather, soaking in his bed?"

"Alas! Monsieur the Inspector, what else can I do with him? 'Tis the only place where he's good for any thing."

"And not for much there even, I'll warrant it, ****!" cried the inspector.

The jest-proclaiming laugh burst out at this sally, and he paused for a moment for the echo. The fishermen were unluckily gone; I did not take the cue; the hostess thought the subject too serious for merriment; Cazille could only give a significant but silent smile;—so poor

Batiste, who knew the inspector's humour, was obliged himself to reverberate the laugh. Having forced out a drowsy titter, he disappeared; and before we were seated in the inspector's room I heard him snoring away, as merrily as if he had not been aware of the interruption.

The chamber into which we were ushered was one of more comfort than was promised by the other parts of the house. It was low but spacious, boarded, and cleanly papered. Two beds, with white cotton hangings, filled a recess; the furniture was neat, and a joyous blaze sprang up from the pine-wood faggots, which took fire like tinder.

A table had been placed for supper, by the quiet assiduity of Cazille; and the difference which it presented to the one intended for me was striking. Every thing was of a finer and better order: the bread was white, the water filtered, and the arrangement had altogether an air of costliness in comparison with that which I had left. We seated ourselves by the fire, which even at that hot season was not unpleasant; for the house lay low and damp, and the late torrents

had nearly set it afloat. We soon got into conversation on public topics, which, however, were speedily suspended for one of more immediate interest—the private history of my companion; with every particular which he chose to reveal, of his birth, parentage, education, and adventures.

With not one of these details do I mean to gratify my inquisitive (or 'twere perhaps better said my curious) readers. It is enough to know that the narrator had been for many years a serjeant of hussars, and was now an inspector of forests. He had served, he told me, in many campaigns, from the sands of Egypt to the snows of Russia; had been known to and noticed by all the marshals, and most of the generals; had performed on many occasions prodigies of valour; and, to crown the business, had received thirteen wounds, which all the surgeons had successively pronounced mortal, but none of which had proved so as yet.

Now my little knowledge of life has taught me, as a positive lesson, rarely to believe more than half what I hear; and whenever I chance to light on a member of the Munchausen family, my

credulity diminishes again one half. In this case I should not perhaps have believed so much as the *fourth* of what was told me, had I not counted one scar on the inspector's forehead, one across his face, and saw that he was minus a finger from the left hand. That made fairly three wounds, which was the fourth of thirteen, all but a fraction, and that I made up by giving him credit for a spent ball, or some such slighter hurts in parts to me invisible.

I had thus satisfied myself that the inspector had fairly made out his title to that proportion of belief, which gave him the right of being regarded as a credible witness; and while I was occupied with the calculation, the supper was gradually appearing under the auspices of the hostess and Cazille; the former more than fulfilling the promise of her first bill of fare.

I am here held in doubt between the desire of recording our excellent cheer, and the knowledge of the effect produced by leaving important incidents involved in mystery.——Well! I have decided the point to my own satisfaction, and I hope to that of my readers. I *will* describe the

supper, for I think the sin of amplification more venial than that of neglect.

First, then, came a soup of really good materials, known to the lovers of French cookery by the title *à la Julienne*, and only approached in Great Britain by Scotch broth, and that distantly indeed. A piece of *bouïlli* flowing in tomata sauce, and a large melon with salt and pepper succeeded. A plate of Bordeaux oysters followed, and I am borne out by a work*, well known to fame, in pronouncing them unrivalled. Next came mutton cutlets, dressed *à la maître d'hôtel*. Then the turbot, flooded with melted butter, and thickly strewn with capers. Next a brace of partridges stewed in cabbage, a favourite dish in these parts, and in high odour with the inspector. After that a capon richly stuffed with truffles; then another plate of oysters; then four ortolans, so fat, that they seemed to melt before the inspector's longing gaze. Next a large dish of custard, with a tart of raspberry, or currants, I forget which; and finally a dessert of grapes, green figs, peaches, and Roquefort cheese; with

* Lord Blaney's Forced Tour.

a plate of *royans*, a little fish, not inferior nor less esteemed than sardignias. To moisten well this feast, were bottles of various kinds of wine of the country. During supper, Barsac and Sauterne; specimens of all the best growths of Medoc, from Lafitte to Léoville, with the dessert; and after it a bumper of that luscious liqueur the sweet white wine of Bergerac.

When enough had been disposed of, of solid and liquid enjoyment, a cup of strong coffee, followed by a glass of Annisette, from the authentic and unadulterated still of Messrs. Roger, of Bordeaux, concluded our repast—on the merits of which it would not be becoming in me to pronounce any judgment.

Our conversation during the period thus occupied was short and pithy. The words were few, but well chosen, and seldom stretched to a sentence of greater length than "Excellent!" "Very good!" "Not bad!" "Another slice?" "Help yourself." "Devilish hot!" and some others of the same tenor.

Two things surprised me in this supper. The excellence of the provisions, and the merit of the

cookery. But to relieve my readers' astonishment in much less time than my own was removed, I shall tell now that my hospitable entertainer had for his greatest failing, if it was one, a love of good living, which his situation allowed him amply to indulge; that he was in the constant habit of sending a stock of delicacies to this miserable inn, a day or two before his visits of inspection; and that the landlady had been established in the house, by his particular patronage, because of her talents in the arts of the kitchen, and for other reasons, which, being of a private nature, I am sure not one reader in a thousand would give a pin to know.

I had been hungry, and ate heartily; but before the prowess of the inspector my efforts were feeble indeed. Not one dish escaped his investigation; he drank in proportion; and at many intervals I saw him slip his hand under the napkin, which he had at the commencement carefully tucked under his chin. A short and convulsive snap followed each of these movements, which puzzled me much, until, on his throwing away his napkin, with the last change of plates, I per-

ceived his waistcoat unbuttoned and buttonless, from bottom to top; and I easily divined that he had made successive but too dilatory efforts to relieve himself, by what is in the technical phrase of epicurean philoso—no, philology, called *letting out a reef*.

Being at length fairly freed from the labours of the table, and settled quietly to a bottle of exquisite claret, I turned my attention to what was after all my main object in this convivial *tête-à-tête*. I had not, for one moment, forgotten the mysterious and interesting stranger, who had so forcibly fixed my attention, and excited my curiosity. I had from prudence suspended my efforts to obtain information from the hostess or the fishermen, but was resolved to renew them, when the abrupt entrance of the inspector had stopped the development of my plans. After a little while, I thought that he himself might become the means of affording me the information for which I panted. Thus in our conversation before supper, I had endeavoured, from time to time, to lead him on to the subject of local concerns, but to every attempt of that kind

I had an evasive answer. If I spoke of the country we were in, he said he knew little of home, and that soldiers were more familiar with the field of battle than their native plains. If I mentioned any striking domestic event, he always quoted some cotemporary action,—Marengo, the Pyramids, Jena, Austerlitz, and so forth; and when I spoke of dates, it was always "yes, yes, I was then making the campaign of Germany—Portugal—Moscow—or some other."

His loquacity and boasting always baffled me, and when Cazille had finally closed the door, leaving us to our claret, he burst out in a new but not less fluent ebullition.

"Well, sir, have you been able to sup?" I paid all due acknowledgment to the good fare.

"Well, well, I do believe that after all the disasters we have suffered, and with all our faults, the world will not deny us the glory of knowing what 's good,****! Ros-bif, bifteck, blom-poiding, and Woich-rabet*, are all very well in their

* Such is the orthography used by Mons. Beauvilliers, who would introduce roast beef, beef steak, plum pudding and Welsh rabbit, to his countrymen.

way, ****! but when you put them beside a *petit pâté à la bechamel,* a dish of *carpe à la matelote,* a *tête de veau en tortue*—et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, ****! What a figure they cut! I'll tell you what, sir, your nation knows nothing of cookery. An Englishman in Paris is no better than a Scythian at Athens, ****! Sir, you eat your meat raw, and call that cookery! So does an American Indian, or an African negro. You despise the arts of the kitchen, ****! But you forget that Gallienus, though an emperor, was chiefly famed for his culinary knowledge;—and that Cadmus, the great-great-grandfather of Bacchus, and founder of Thebes, began his career by being cook to the king of Sidon! Do you know, sir, that to fulfil such an honourable station, 'tis not enough to have the finest constitution, the purest health, and your senses in the utmost perfection; but the brightest talents must be joined to knowledge the most profound? I don't speak, ****! of the dirty-work of your kitchen, I only show myself there to direct the action of the fire, and to see the effect of my operations, ****! Seated in an ad-

joining room, I give my orders, ****! which my subaltern workmen execute. I muse on the productions of nature, leaving them sometimes in their exquisite simplicity; again arranging and disguising them according to new proportions, and fitting them to flatter the palate. Do you wish, for example, a sucking pig, or a large piece of beef? I simply boil the one and roast the other! Must you have a well-dressed hare? If it is young, ****! it wants nothing but its merit to make it appear with distinction and honour.—I put it on the spit, and serve it up smoking hot! But it is in the depth of combination, ****! that my science is most sublime. Salt, pepper, oil, and vinegar ——."

"Hold, hold in mercy, my good sir," cried I, astonishment, I am certain, stamped on my countenance, for it filled my brain. "This burst of eloquence and erudition is too much for me. You could not have been more at home had you been yourself a cook."

"****! What do you say, ****! A cook, ****!—I am a Frenchman, an officer, a man of honour, one of the inspectors of the royal

forests, highways, and bridges, ****! What do you mean?****!"

At this tremendous explosion of indignant and irritated honour, my companion bounced up and thumped the table with his clenched fist, loud enough to alarm and bring in the landlady and Cazille, and sufficient to have awakened any one of the seven-sleepers—whose name was not Batiste. The glasses rung, and the decanters danced on the board. The hand that produced such powerful effects was next instinctively clapped upon the thigh, where fortunately the sabre was not; so the inspector had no remedy but to seize his glass, and wash down the imagined insult, which he had not the immediate means of wiping away in a more becoming manner.

The appearance of the hostess and her handmaid brought him to himself, and calmed in a moment the transports of offended feeling. Having paid this involuntary tribute of devotion to the influence of female charms, he ordered them to retire in a tone more fitting a high-priest than a votary. They obeyed the man-

date, and I, finding the moment favourable, quietly told him many civil things in explanation of what I had said. He received the atonement, and the matter dropped; and I, thinking the opportunity favourable, turned the conversation abruptly to the object of my chief solicitude.

"And pray, Monsieur the Inspector," said I, "is this large tract of desert solely inhabited by miserable shepherds and goat-herds?"

The inspector shook himself a moment, as if this sudden transition from sharp to flat had grated on his well-organised mind.

Recovering himself, he replied, "Eh! why! yes, ****! and much worse than shepherds and goat-herds, believe me. Why do I travel armed through these tracts, eh? Do you think I carry pistols and sabre for show? ****!"

"You fear robbers, then?" asked I.

"*Fear!* ****?" vociferated the inspector, "what's fear? ****! I've often heard talk of fear, but never knew it yet."

I explained away once more, and he was once more appeased.

"Yes," replied he, to a less offensive way in

putting my former question; "yes, there are robbers here sometimes, but I never meet them. These fellows know their men, ****! But there are worse than robbers—refugees, revolutionists, republicans, ****! who plunge into these forests and escape the law. Had I my way with the scoundrels, I'd set fire to the pine woods, ****! and consume the rascals with pitch, tar, and resin—provided the king gave me another forest, ****!"

Here came in the laugh of acknowledged drollery, with which I was now familiar, and even inclined to join in to keep the inspector in good humour. I resumed the conversation.

"Have persons of any rank or importance found shelter here for political opinions?"

"Ay, that they have—and find it at this moment too. There is now, this very night, one man lurking in these deserts, whose head would pay for the trouble of arresting him, ****!"

"A tall man," said I hastily, and without a moment's thought, "in a Spanish cloak and fur cap?"

"He is a tall man certainly, but as for the

cloak and cap, they have little to do with his description. If you met him in that dress to-day, you might see him wrapped in a sheep-skin to-morrow, * * * * !"

"A handsome, dark, noble-looking man, about fifty?" was my next inquiry.

"Ay, all that," replied my companion. "He's handsome enough outside—but as gloomy as his complexion within. As for his nobility, it is all in his looks, * * * *! for he's no more noble than I am."

"I have met such a man," said I, recovering my caution. "What is the crime which forces him into these wilds?"

"I'll tell you that," said he; and I was prepared to listen with my whole attention, when we were both attracted towards the kitchen, by the noise of persons dismounting from their horses, and entering the house.

CHAPTER III.

"WHO the devil can this be at this hour of night?" cried the inspector. "Hold, let's listen a moment."

I had my hand on the latch of the door, but he seized it as he spoke. In spite of myself, I did for this once, what must be, in any circumstances, considered an unworthy thing; and the instrument which compelled me, that was the inspector, did not rise in my estimation.

"Ah! madame, is it you?" cried the landlady.

"He is here! my dear father is here!" exclaimed, in a tone half questioning, half certain, one of the sweetest voices I had ever heard.

"Hush!" said the landlady; and a low whisper followed. I was more delighted at it than if I had heard a long and valuable secret. I fancied I saw in an instant through the whole

affair. The lovely inquirer, felt I (for something told me that tones so sweet must have proceeded from a beauteous instrument, and whatever it was which said so told no lie), the lovely inquirer, prompted by duty and affection, has wandered here through this drear desert, to meet her proscribed and virtuous father—for such a being could not reverence or hold communion with guilt. My presence drove the sufferer from his shelter; and this coarse inspector is one of those prowling wretches, which we are told all governments must employ, lying in wait to pounce upon his victim.

"Not now, at least," said I, throwing aside his iron hand, which grasped my arm, flinging open the door, and running into the kitchen. A scream burst from the lady, who was young, and indeed most beautiful. The hostess and Cazille gazed on me with astonishment, mixed with alarm; and the inspector himself, who followed close upon me, did not know what to think of my abruptness;—and, for a moment, as he told me afterwards, returned upon me the compliment which my suspicions had affixed to him.

I advanced towards the lady, and was going to address her, God knows how! when a young man, of distinguished deportment, rushed in, attracted from the stables, by the scream of his lovely wife; and with fire in his eyes, which were fixed upon me and the inspector, and trembling tenderness in his accents, he called out, "What's this, dearest Stephanie? what has happened?"

"Nothing, nothing," replied she, "but this gentleman ——."

"What has he dared to do?" cried he, advancing fiercely towards me. I made some confused apology for my awkward intrusion, which I saw was received in rather a shy and suspicious way. I never made an explanation less to my own satisfaction, and was not surprised that it was so little to theirs. I got no reply, and retired a few paces, while the inspector advancing, addressed the stranger with humble familiarity, by a name which it is not necessary to mention here.

The young man received his address with infinite haughtiness, and a reproachful look, which

seemed to me to say, " you have betrayed us." The other made a nearer approach, and in a lower tone appeared to defend himself from the reproach of a connexion with me. I was little flattered by all this, and full as anxious as the inspector appeared, to cut the slender thread which bound our acquaintance.

Advancing, therefore, to the door, I looked out upon the desert, and thought that it would be for the common comfort of the whole party, if I trusted myself to the moonlight, and pursued the road to La Teste, which lay before the house. I strolled out, and by chance directed my steps towards the stable, a building larger than the house itself, and entering the open door, I saw by the light of a resin match, which burned in a distant corner, a man, in the act of arranging the clumsy cordage of a pair of oxen.

He came towards the door, and led them after him by the magic of some words in *Patois*, proved, by his tone and their compliance, to be soothing and affectionate. I wished the man " good night," and he repeated my salutation in French, which was at least understandable.

He was a comely young fellow, and of a civil demeanour. I asked him where he was going? He replied, "to La Teste." I proposed myself as his companion, and he readily consented. He proceeded forthwith to adjust his oxen, and yoke them to his little cart, which was loaded with packages, and covered with a canvas awning. I was inquisitive—he communicative: thus, while he got ready, I discovered that he was a carrier from the little town just mentioned, the only son of a poor widow woman, and now on his return from Bordeaux with a cargo of groceries and other matters for the La Testians. He finally informed me that he was in the constant habit of stopping at this half-way-house, for the purpose of reposing his oxen, and of refreshing himself—with draughts of wine or beer from the hostess's cellar, and draughts of love and hope from the reservoirs of Cazille's melting black eyes.

The preparations for departure were simple, and soon completed. As I re-entered the inn to arrange my baggage, I heard the inspector assuring the lovely traveller, that he thought any sacrifice slight for the daughter of so worthy a

father, or the wife of so generous a benefactor. This speech was accompanied by many obsequious bows, as he lighted the lady and her husband to the chamber where we had supped, and which I took it for granted he had resigned to them.

They passed down the corridor accompanied by the hostess, who was loaded with a warming-pan, sheets, and pillows. As my eyes were fixed on the elegant figure of the lady, I saw her start and stop, while her head was turned in the direction of the flight of stairs formerly noticed. I was too far removed to hear the cause of her alarm; but a murmur of explanation, and a closing curse from the inspector, made it plain to me that the interruption was caused by the nasal salutation of poor Batiste, with a comment in the inspector's peculiar style.

I looked round the kitchen in search of Cazille, but she was not to be found; so, arranging the contents of my knapsack, which the fire had completely dried, taking my gun under my arm, and rousing Ranger from the corner where he reposed, I waited the return of the landlady,

and announced my intended departure with the carrier.

"Faith, you are right, my good sir," said the hostess; "better repose in a carrier's cart than lie in a hayloft, or sleep on a kitchen chair. I could have offered you no better accommodation. You see, Monsieur the Inspector has given up his room, and we have only one bed more, which he must occupy."

I assured her that I was much better pleased to go on my journey, than interrupt the arrangements of so obliging a lady as she had proved herself to be; and I begged her to let me know how much I was indebted for the entertainment I had received.

"Indebted, sir? Nothing, to be sure. Didn't you sup with Monsieur the Inspector?"

"Very true; but I have given a good deal of trouble, and then there's the lodging and feeding the shepherds who guided me here, and to whom, no doubt, you have given beds and supper."

"Bless you, sir! The poor fellows are long ere this at home. They paid me for the glass of

brandy they had on entering, and left the house before you had changed your wet shoes."

I protest I felt a blush, of a mixed and almost undefinable origin, overspread my face. Compunction for my own neglect of these honest creatures, shame at my unrewarded obligation to them, and pleasure at their disinterested conduct, were pretty nearly, I believe, the materials which composed the colouring of my cheek. I had nothing for it but to place a trifle in the hands of the landlady on their account; and she carried an air of honesty about her, so much in unison with what I have most commonly met regarding points of confidence and honour in people of *her class* in France, that I was certain my remittance would reach its destination.

"And now, madame, for your own trouble—"

"My dear sir, I am more than paid by this proof of trust,—but if your generosity prompts you to remember the girl—"

"I shall not forget her, believe me, nor her mistress neither: but where is she? I am anxious to set off, as I keep the carrier waiting."

"Rest tranquil, he is in no hurry," replied the hostess, with a good humoured smile. "He also has a little account to settle for his evening's entertainment, and Cazille and he are, no doubt, making up the reckoning."

Being already in the secret, this intimation did not surprise me. As I was never disposed to interrupt the tottings up of love's ledger, I quietly sat myself down on a chair beside the landlady, leaving Cazille and her lover to balance their account in their own way; and I have no doubt but that hope and happiness were placed at the *profit* side, while not even time was allowed to burthen the columns of *loss*.

"Your pretty house-maid has chosen well, madame."

"Why yes, one must tell the truth. There is not in the department a better lad than Geoffroi the carrier. I believe he never did harm to man or beast but once, when he threw a bale of sugar on my poor man, who, in his haste to join Cazille, he overlooked taking his evening's nap by the stable door."

I had no time to ascertain whether this injury

to Batiste was cited as an exception to Geoffroi's good treatment to *man* or *beast*. The reader will therefore take it as he pleases.

"But what retards the union of this young couple?" asked I.

"Faith, sir, but a trifle, after all. You must know, sir, that Geoffroi has the whole support of his aged mother on his hands, and, poor fellow, he is tightly put to it these hard times. He is just able to make both ends meet; but, barring his cart and oxen, he has not a louis or a louis' worth. Cazille is one of the best lasses in the world, but she has but forty-eight francs a year wages; and since the courtship began, about six months ago, has been able to save only the half of that towards defraying the cost of the wedding."

"Why, how much would those expenses amount to?"

"Oh! sir, what with fees, and flowers, and favours; and a white dress for the bride, and a treat for the friends, and paying the priest, it would take a good hundred francs besides what she has by her."

"But has she no friend who would advance her the money?"

"She has friends enough, but all people as poor as herself."

"Would not you, my amiable hostess, yourself give such a trifle for the happiness of so good a servant?"

"Why, to tell you the truth, I might, perhaps, if I chose to strain a point, afford a hundred francs, and it might be worse disposed of. But, my dear sir, if I were to give the money, and the girl got married, what would become of me? Where should I look for so faithful, so industrious, and so good tempered a lass in her place?"

There was so much *naïveté* and frankness in this avowal that it overpowered the displeasure rising up at the woman's selfishness. Instead of answering her, I asked myself a question.

"Is it not hard," thought I, "that I am almost always thus thwarted when I wish to give people my *entire* esteem? That in the very moments when my heart is flattering itself with having found something *wholly* deserving its regard, an unlooked-for flaw, or crack, or stain, presents

itself to my eye, and checks the current of my good will? But let it be so. I see it is our nature; and henceforward I will only look at the smooth portions of character, and step over the inequalities by which every individual disposition is defaced."

Then turning to the landlady and our subject. "But the inspector? Would not he be disposed to forward the good work?"

"Lord bless you, sir! not he. Not that I would speak ill of Monsieur the Inspector, for, in truth, I have no right. He has made my children, and my husband, and myself, what we are; and we owe every thing to him. But he has enough to do now with every sous, in buying dainties, without which he could not live."

There was much in this last speech that admitted of various constructions, according to different fancies. But it was no business of mine to examine closely as to what the inspector had made of my hostess or her spouse. I turned then boldly and abruptly to another topic.

"Surely," said I, "the gentleman whom I surprised here on my arrival, and his daughter,

who is now in the house, have ability and inclination to step forward in a case like this."

"Ay, that they have, good souls! and it is from them that Cazille's happiness will come at last."

"Is the name of that gentleman a secret?"

"It is no secret here, sir, and, unfortunately for himself, is too well known every where."

"Is it not strange, that a man so good, as I think he is, should find it a misfortune to be known, or feel concealment necessary?"

"Alas! sir," replied my landlady with a pensive tone, "how little does our happiness depend on our being known! The world always hears what is bad. A hundred virtues speak less loudly than one crime."

"But can such a man have committed a *crime?*"

"Which of us, my good sir, has not some failing, which society calls a fault, or has not done some deed which it looks upon as a crime?"

This tallied so well with my late reflections, that it threw me back a little upon myself, and

I paused for a reply. I saw that I was gaining fast on the landlady's confidence, and, expecting to be in a few minutes in possession of the grand secret, I forgot how precious time was in such conjunctures. I sought for an answer to the last observation, which might advance the progress of disclosure; but before I found one fitting, the hostess cried to me hastily, "For God's sake, go, sir! I hear Monsieur the Inspector preparing to leave the inner room. He must not see you with me alone. Adieu! sir. Here, Cazille! Cazille! give a kiss to Geoffroi, and come and warm the beds!"

This last part of her speech was uttered outside the door, where she had moved, leading me gently by the arm; and the commands thus given to Cazille were answered from the bench in the front of the house, by a smack which echoed loudly, and sounded to me as chaste as any kiss which ever sent up its music to the moon.

Cazille came towards us, her head reclining a little, and her eyes cast down. Geoffroi sprang

lightly on the seat of his cart, crying, "Come along, sir! Good night, madame! Adieu! dear Cazille! Adieu! adieu!"

I shook hands with the hostess. I did as much, but no more, by Cazille, and lightened myself of a little load of obligation for her services; but neither got rid of, nor wished to be rid of, my gratitude, for the smiling attentions with which they had been performed.

As I flung Ranger into the cart and stepped up myself, a word which had, I am positive, nothing cabalistic in it, for it was fairly and honestly pronounced, but which was to me incomprehensible, set the oxen in motion. The whispered inspiration of an Icelandic driver to his rein-deer could not have had a more animating effect. The oxen set off in a full and steady pace, slowly pulling away their master from the spot where all his affections were centred, and me from a place which had, during the last four hours, awakened much of my interest on more accounts than one.

It was just midnight when we started. Every thing was hushed and still. Neither the wheels

of our little carriage nor the steps of our team were heard upon the sands. Geoffroi looked back a moment at the house, heaved a sigh, and sank into silence. It was then my turn to throw a parting glance at the scene of my late adventures, and I did so, more, I must acknowledge, from the common-place wish of fixing its appearance on my memory, than from any thing approaching the tender sentiments which my companion connected with it.

The landlady and Cazille had re-entered, as the reader will have inferred from Geoffroi's sigh, which had all the tone of parting love. The little building, its outhouses, hay-rick, and garden seemed all to sleep quietly in the shade of the tall pines; while the moon shone far and wide across the desert, and silvered the tops of the woods. Having made myself acquainted with the exterior appearance of the inn and its immediate vicinity, I turned round, and, affected by the taciturnity of my companion, I uttered not a word.

Nothing could be more beautifully calm than was the night. At one hand, as far as I could

see, before me, was a forest, and at the other an open waste, thick set with stunted fir-trees, which gave it an appearance of low brush-wood, and hid the sandy soil. Occasional clusters of sheep showed here and there a patch of dusky white, and the dull tinkling of a bell told that the flock was awake and browsing, while all around them was in deep repose. A wide cut drain marked at each side the boundary of the road, which was in this part quite straight, and very hard. It was generally smooth and safe, but the violent jolting in some parts made me examine it more closely, and I found that the causeway was formed of large pine-trees, thrown across and covered with layers of sand, and occasionally stones. It was, however, in very few places out of repair; and in half an hour we had entirely passed those uncomfortable spots. Affected not more by my previous fatigue than by the present monotony and the easy motion of the cart, I felt myself softly dropping asleep. I gave way to the gentle inclination, and reclining under the awning, and supported by the

packages, I soon forgot the world, its tumults, joys, and sorrows.

As I was dozing away, I heard Geoffroi exclaim, "Ah! he sleeps. He has left no cares, no agitation, no mistress behind him! I'll warrant it he is a happy fellow."

I felt a deep sigh rising from my breast, but I was resolved it should not have utterance; while Geoffroi, influenced, perhaps, by somewhat of the same feeling, sprang lightly on the sand, and addressing a cheering word or two to his beasts trudged on beside them.

I slept soundly for, I should suppose, a couple of hours; and was awakened by the rustling of branches against the awning which covered the cart. I started up, and looked out upon the narrow road which we travelled. At either side of us were trees thickly planted, the passage being scarcely sufficient to allow the breadth of our vehicle. The overhanging boughs struck from time to time against the awning, and no other sounds were to be heard but the soft movements of the wheels rolling over the natural

carpet, which thick-strewn leaves, acorns, and fir-cones formed upon the sand. We were in the depths of a thick wood, not composed of pine-trees alone, but containing all the varieties of the forest. Instead of the tall and straight monotony of the unvarying fir; beech, ash, and oak-leaves glittered in the moon-beams, and flung their canopy across our path.

As we proceeded the passage became darker, whether from the greater thickness of the wood, or the temporary concealment of the moon, I could not judge; but the effect of the scene, which soon broke upon me, was considerably heightened by this increased obscurity. While nothing around was to be distinguished, at even arm's-length from me, and the oxen and their driver were quite lost to my sight, a sudden turn to the left brought us suddenly to a spacious opening, and presented a view which enchantment seemed to have conjured up.

The whole expanse of heaven, lighted by the full moon and studded with stars, shone brilliantly above; and all its splendour was reflected in the unruffled breast of a lake spreading wide before

me. The road, which ran straight along the bank of this liquid mirror, sloped smoothly to its side, and the feet of the oxen were, at times, washed by its waters. The forest by which it was skirted threw down its dark reflection, and a sighing breeze sometimes scattered loose leaves upon the surface, stirring it with fairy undulations.

I thought for an instant that I still slept, and that imagination had raised for me a mirage of unexampled loveliness. But as I grew convinced of the reality of the scene, I marvelled how such a lovely sheet of water could exist in this sandy waste; and was some time moving along its side before I discovered that it was but a river, which narrowed as we advanced, and whose opposite bank I did not at first perceive, from the lowness of the road we travelled. The stream flowed on, in scarcely perceptible motion, nor was its beauty lessened by its decreased width; for the opposite bank, being formed of a ledge of the purest and smoothest sand, shone in the moonlight like a frame of polished silver rising above the water. The dark edging of the forest formed

a fine contrast, and was at times thrown into deeper shade by passing clouds, which could not, however, prevent the moon from illumining the whole scene, and giving the more distant parts of it the full brightness of her rays.

Geoffroi was still walking, at the slow pace which suited the inclination of his oxen, and seemed in harmony also with his own frame of mind. A low murmured melody kept time with his sauntering progress; and I know not whether it was the peculiar softness of the scene or the sweetness of his mellow voice, but I think I never heard an air more tender, or warbled with a simpler grace. It was a tune quite in the style of those wild and heart-moving airs which make the traveller in Ireland so often stop and listen: then prompt him to look round at the desolate grandeur of the scenery and the rustic songster, and wonder how strains so exquisite had birth in so rude a land, or found expression from so rough a tongue.

The words of Geoffroi's song were Gascon. I have already avowed my ignorance of the particular dialect of that language used in those

parts, but still I caught here and there an occasional word, the meaning of which I knew.

Thus *cla dé lune* means moonlight; *pin*, pine-tree; *beoïtat*, beauty; *forêt*, forest; and *la vie*, life. And at the end of every cadence the name of names, Cazille, filled up the close.

I made meanings for the blanks, to please my own fancy, and stringing together some lines which suited the music, I found that I had almost inadvertently composed a series of extempore stanzas, which a less candid story-teller might have called a faithful and literal translation.

SONG OF THE LANDES.

I.

The moonlight, through the branching pines,
  Floats o'er the sands with silver streak;
How like the chasten'd beam, that shines
  Through dark-fringed lids on beauty's cheek,
When timid glances trembling steal
From thy bright eyes, mine own Cazille!

II.

As o'er the desert-stream's smooth breast
  The night-winds from the forest shed
Light leaves to break the waters rest,
  It vibrates in its deepest bed.—
So doth my thrilling bosom feel
Thy soft-breathed words, mine own Cazille!

III.

I see thee not, but thou art here!
Even as heaven's lamp, obscured awhile,
Still lights the desert far and near,
Through sorrow's cloud thy mellow smile
Makes life's dull waste bright spots reveal,
And lights me on, mine own Cazille!

There were half a dozen stanzas more, pretty much in the same sing-song style; but I forget half of them, and will not inflict the rest upon my readers.

CHAPTER IV.

I WENT on contemplating and rhyming, while Geoffroi continued his strain, the mechanical cadence of which convinced me he was musing too, till I was roused by the dull and hollow sound of a horn, blown, as it seemed to me, on the opposite bank of the river, and echoing or answered in the wood beside me. The insinuations of the inspector rushed upon my mind, and I thought there were few more convenient places for rifling a poor traveller's knapsack, and levying contributions on his purse. But the reader will remark my forbearance, in saying nothing of the determined air with which I cocked my gun, nor the desperate resolution I formed, not to be robbed by less than six highwaymen at any rate.

I called out to Geoffroi (in whatever tone my

readers may severally fancy) to know what was meant by these sounds.

"Ah! sir, are you awake? Well, you have made a good sleep of it. Egad, I believe you had a lesson from the worthy slug-a-bed Batiste; but you are far from coming up to your master yet."

I confess I did not like this evasion, and I repeated my question somewhat sharply.

"Why, lord! sir, are you afraid of robbers? Having got so far, you may make yourself easy on that head; for certainly the most convenient time to have cut yours or any other gentleman's throat was while you were asleep in a dark wood we left behind us an hour back."

Here he laughed—with good humour or malice, just as it may be, thought I—and though generally relishing a jest in my heart, I was seriously indisposed for this gaiety at present.

I do conscientiously believe that something about cocking the gun flashed on my brain; but if such valorous thoughts were preparing to rise, they were quickly put to rest by Geoffroi's answer to my exclamation, that

"I *would* be satisfied, * * * *!"

Yes, reader! shower down your reproaches like rain! I do plead guilty to the whole line of asterisks; but *magna veritas est*, &c.

I was just going to jump down on the road, when Geoffroi seized me by the leg, and in a supplicating tone entreated that "monsieur would not give himself the trouble *to make himself angry* (I like that idiom); that the sounds I heard proceeded only from the postboy rousing the watchman at the little bridge, which monsieur saw so close upon the water, a little higher up."

I looked up, and did see the little bridge; and in a moment more the sound of the horn came again upon the breeze, evidently from our side of the river, and in a little while more the cracking of a whip, and the gallop of a horse was heard, and presently the sand was flung up around us; and then the postboy pulled up his little nag, and peeped under the awning, to see who was there, I suppose.

Geoffroi's oxen stopped, out of civility, I dare say, to the postboy's pony; and the postboy him-

self dismounting, and moving up to Geoffroi, with the exact proportion of light and easy familiarity which a bearer of *billets-doux* should assume towards the carrier of parcels, he touched his white cotton nightcap, and then offered his hand.

"How do you do, my little fellow?" said Geoffroi, cordially shaking the proffered hand. "Why you are late to-night, Jean? What kept you back?"

I thought this address a little out of the line of separation which I wished to trace between the parties; but seeing that the spare boyish figure of the courier did not reach to Geoffroi's shoulder, I set down the freedom of the latter to the score of seniority, which does and ought to level distinctions.

The postboy's back was turned towards me, and I could not help moralizing a moment on the nature of his occupation, which so checks and distorts the human form. "What a pity it is," thought I, "to see this poor little boy doomed for life to a drudgery of pitiful horsemanship, which already begins to stiffen his joints, and

shrivel up his limbs to the true horse-jockey standard!" And it was so, in fact, for his diminutive legs and thighs were flattened and bowed out by the friction of the saddle, so as to resemble a pair of old horse-shears, hollowed by constant wear. His large bony knees offered a resistance stronger than flesh and muscles, and were not yet reduced from their unnaturally disproportioned size. His long, tight, leather pantaloons were smooth-worn and polished, and, as he did not wear boots, they shone brightly in the moonlight, as he stood like a Lilliputian colossus, his legs involuntarily straggled open, and his arms akimbo. During my observations here detailed, he replied to Geoffroi's question thus:

"What kept me back! What always keeps me back? What has kept me back from the first, and will to the last, my good friend? Why love! Love, my boy! But no matter—a pair of long spurs make up for lost time, and a merry heart mends a broken fortune.—Yes, I *am* late to-night; but if that clumsy sack-of-meal of the wooden head*,

* I cannot well translate, or even explain, the postboy's pun. *La Teste*, where the miller lived, is a corrupt, or,

Joseph Antoine François Xavier Dumoulin, the miller, had smoked his tenth cigar, and drunk his beer in better time, I should not have been kept so long waiting to wish his wife good night! Now the secret's out, my boy! Have you got any thing in your flacon?"

"Always merry, always happy, always successful, my tight little Jean," cried Geoffroi, coming to the cart in search of his brandy bottle.

As for me, I was almost stupified by the intolerable impudence of the little brat, who ventured to talk of intrigue with his squeaking voice, and boasted of a conquest the meaning of which he could scarcely know. What, then, was my surprise, as he turned towards me, looking for the expected dram, to see him raise his cap, and wipe with his handkerchief a head, bald

perhaps, a civilized construction of *La tête de buche*, the proper name of the place, and by which the country people always call it. *Tête* (head) was in the old orthography written *Teste*. De Buche is the title of the noble family to which the town belonged; and *Buche* means a log of wood. The reader must arrange all these combinations, and then turn the sentence into the most convenient way to make out the pleasantry.

as a barber's unwigged block, which he felt no shame in exposing to the heavens,—while he raised full upon me a visage which showed the chiseling of sixty summers at least!

"Good God!" cried I, "can all this be true? Does this withered and worn-down abortion think of these things, and is there a miller's wife in all France ——." But why bewilder myself or my readers, many of whom have, no doubt, like me, observed and wondered at the unaccountable freaks played by the fancies of women!

When the old sinner (for sinner he was either ways, true or false) had quaffed a glass of Geoffroi's brandy, he prepared to depart. He placed his cap upon his head, and tightening the straps which bound his cloth jacket to the pummel of his saddle—the warmth of the night inducing him to ride in his cotton vest—he gave a finishing tug to his single and fragile girth, and then sprang on his pony's back with wonderful agility for a person of his years, though not, perhaps, with the actual grace of Mercury or young Harry.

"Adieu, then! my dear Geoffroi," cried he; "and what now for the black-eyed maid of the inn? Have you scribbled no notes of your journey, at the rate of a line a league? Ah! curse your father and mother, you dog, who didn't teach you to write faster.—Never mind, I'll do the business for you. Half a score kisses on Cazille's pouting lips shall be the token of your safety, and they will, moreover, keep me alive till I meet my little Marie, in the Place Dauphine at Bordeaux. Adieu, comrade! Take care of yourself!"

"Farewell, my lad! farewell! But remember I trust to your honour," holloed Geoffroi, with a laugh. The whip cracked—up flew the sand—away went the little courier, shouting "Love for ever! Love for ever!" and in a minute or two more the horn gave notice that he was gaining on the road.

"Well, sir," asked Geoffroi, after a long pause, "what do you think of that?"

"Why I think, my friend, that you are a bold man, to trust your mistress in such dangerous hands."

"Dear Cazille!" exclaimed he, and I thought he wiped a tear from his eye as he spoke, "Dear Cazille! I should be, indeed, an unworthy man if I could not trust you where there *was* danger."

"Have you no fears from this redoubtable fellow?" asked I.

"Poor soul! I only fear that yonder stumbling little pony will break his neck one night. He falls ten times a week, and it is well for little Jean that there is no *pavé* in the Landes."

"Does he always go at full gallop?"

"Always, when there's a chance of meeting any one."

"But is his time really lost in the pursuits he boasts of?"

"God help the poor little creature! no, sir, to be sure. Why I've known him, over and over again, shiver for an hour, concealed in the wood, until he saw some one coming; and then steal out of it, as if he had a mighty affair on his hands. That's pretty much the way he loses his time, I assure you."

"Then you don't believe a word of his boasting?"

"Who could believe the word of a boaster, my good sir? But tell me, sir, have you characters like this in England?"

"Why—really—perhaps—it is possible—that—there—may—be—by chance!—one or two—" replied I, and here the conversation dropped.

We reached in a few minutes the little rustic bridge, which, with the watchman's thatched cottage, and a shed for the convenience of travellers, gave a romantic finish to the landscape. The watchman raised the barrier, and received his toll, when Geoffroi began to untackle his oxen, to whom he meant to give some hay and an hour's rest.

I descended from the cart quite recovered from my fatigue. Geoffroi entered the shed, against one of the posts of which he stuck a resin taper, which he lighted at the watchman's hut, and which threw its dull glare upon the river banks, where the moonbeams were so sweetly sleeping. Morning, too, was making rapid strides in the east, and the landscape was thus illumined by a combination of lights, such as a painter would have gazed on for its beauty and

difficulty. I strolled along the sandy edge of the stream, and looked round upon the exquisite scenery.

I do not think I overrated its beauty at the time, but I could not at all events exaggerate, did I venture to describe what I thought of it. After pacing up and down for some time, I at length lay down on the sand, and gave myself up to meditation.

I retraced hastily in my mind the scenes of the night; the varieties of character it had shown me; and the new interest with which they had inspired me. But foremost in all my ruminations was the mysterious stranger; and I lost myself in mazes of conjecture as to who and what he was. I thought of this man so long and so deeply, that I began to give credit to some of those wild theories, at which I had often laughed, of secret sympathies and spells—when I at length started in doubt of myself and all around me, at seeing this identical figure, standing at a short distance from me, by the water's edge.

A group of dwarf firs was between us, and

concealed me from his sight; but as he stood bending over the river, profoundly buried in thought, I distinguished every feature of his expressive countenance, and I never beheld a finer picture of contemplative melancholy. While he thus stood for some minutes close to me, I felt at once the strongest wish to address him, and the utter impossibility of doing so; but as he turned from the river, and walked slowly away, the spell seemed to quit me. I rose, and was preparing to follow him, when the rustling of my feet through the scrub-wood attracted his attention, and he turned quickly round. The moment he perceived me, he put his hand to his bosom, and I saw the hilt of a stiletto appear from under his cloak. I returned this menacing attitude by taking off my hat and bowing. He seemed a man of that sort which, in times of least preparation, can see the state of things at a glance; and as I had disembarrassed myself of my gun, which I left in Geoffroi's cart, he divined at once that he had no hostility to apprehend from me. He therefore returned my salutation with easy pride.

"Sir," said I, "I make you no apology, for I have not intentionally thrown myself upon your privacy. Chance has brought me to this spot; but I cannot omit the opportunity of thanking you for your kindness last night."

"I am unwilling to suspect that you pursued me intentionally," said he. "*Individuals* of your nation rarely lend themselves to unworthy deeds; but know, sir, that I am in need of secrecy, and *must* not be broken in upon."

"I know it," replied I, "and"—

"You *know* it! You know *me* then?" and here his hand was raised to grasp the weapon.

"No, sir," cried I, "I know you not. In one word, you have nothing to fear from me. I am an utter stranger—an idle traveller—but fate seems to have thrown me in your way, and I am filled with interest for you. Mistake me not, then, but let me tell you that your daughter and her husband are at this moment in the inn where we met last night."

"Indeed! Arrived already!—Sir, I thank you. —Pardon my suspicions and my rudeness—they are the effects of persecution, and not my nature.

I go this moment to meet my child—my dear, dear Stephanie!"

"Hold, I entreat you: there may be danger on your path. There is another person in the inn—a government agent—one who knows you, and whose servility to your daughter and her husband seems to assort ill with the tone in which he talks of you."

At these words my companion paused; looked steadfastly on me; and seemed concentrating the whole powers of his penetration. He spoke.

"You say, sir, you know me not. How am I to reconcile these contradictions? You call yourself a mere stranger. Who is this agent, then, with whom you are so familiar? He has spoken of *me*. Who am I, then? Answer me!"

"Your surprise and your doubts are too natural to give me offence. I met the person I allude to by mere accident in the inn. He is inspector of these forests."

"Oh! it is he? Poor fellow! he dare not harm me.—He has not betrayed my name?"

"No: I am totally ignorant of that;—but I fear, sir, it was interruption only that preserved

any secret of yours which may be in his keeping."

"Perhaps so—he is a babbling blockhead."

Then, after another pause, he advanced closer to me, and held forth his hand. "Yes, sir," said he, with warmth, as I took it in mine—"yes, I am convinced of your sincerity. The frankness of your manner makes it impossible to doubt you more. Be satisfied, too, that I am in no danger. The creature you mention is safe and useful. With all his blustering, he has some good in him, and his own interests bind him closely to mine. Now, sir, farewell. I fly to embrace my sweet child and her noble husband."

"But, sir, you must excuse me still. I cannot part with you, except on condition that, should we meet again, I may consider myself at liberty to address you not quite as a stranger."

"Willingly—most willingly. But it is little likely that we shall meet again. I am the sport of fate, proscription, and tyranny. You are free to walk the world at will. I am chained to these arid deserts as my only safety—and dare not quit them."

"Is it indeed, then, possible that such a man is a mark for vengeance and oppression? You have partly given me your confidence—you have gained my entire esteem. I am free, it is true, but not when an innocent and persecuted fellow-creature may want such humble aid as I can give him. Command me, then, every way, I entreat you—I am wholly at your service."

I spoke this just as I felt it, and there was no chilling hesitation in my tone. Grasping my hand in both his, he replied with solemnity—

"Go not too far, young man, in your opinion of me. Be not rash in connecting yourself with me. The day may come, when you may turn your back on me, and shrink from seeing my face!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed I; "I can never turn from undeserved misfortune, nor from a face which is the mirror of a noble mind."

"Mark me a moment," said he. "You think me innocent. For half the years of my existence, I have borne upon my conscience the brand of guilt and infamy. Secret and deep it has gnawed into my heart, and under the laurels of

splendour and success has fixed these furrows on my brow. I am guilty of a great crime—ay, a heinous one! The private punishment has been ever with me, and now the public retribution is at hand.—It is but just too!—I dare not complain, and did the scourge fall fairly on me, I should meet it with a smile. But I am singled out—harassed—hunted down;—while those far guiltier—atrocious, blood-stained sycophants—are raised upon the ruins which have crushed me. It is that which drives me mad—that, too, which keeps me in this wretched world—for I would not deign to drag this chain of degradation, if it were not gilded by the bright hope of vengeance on those who have twined it round me!"

He seemed, at these words, worked up to a pitch of frenzied animation. He stopped abruptly; then took my hand again in his, and continued more calmly.

"But this is no place for such discourse. I have, indeed, no right to hold it with you at all. It is, however, soothing to me to repose upon one compassionate heart—and, if your interest

is excited for me, we may meet again. I am confined to the fastnesses of this desert for refuge; but there is amongst the woods on the sea-side, not far off, a little forsaken church. Near it I have secured a retreat, and in its vicinity you will be sure to find me. Any one at La Teste will direct you to the church of Arcachon.—You may, probably, see me there this evening at sun-set—and if, on reflection, you will run the hazard, you may be, perhaps, of service to me. Now, sir, farewell for the present. I have no time for further delay."

I assured him of my anxiety in his fate, and repeated my offers of assistance. We then parted. He advanced towards the bridge; and as he walked across it with an air like that of a sovereign prince rather than a refugee criminal, I saw the toll-taker and Geoffroi salute him with the most profound respect. While he proceeded on his way, they seemed to follow him with looks of sympathy and admiration. I advanced towards them, and heard the concluding observation of the toll-taker.

"Ay, ay! I have taken tolls on this bridge

for the twenty years since he had it built, and I never knew man nor woman to pass it who didn't give him a blessing.—They may take every thing else from him, but they can't rob him of the good-will of the people."

Geoffroi was about to reply, for he gave three or four consecutive pulls to the cuffs of his jacket, rubbed his hands together, and slapped his thigh with the energy preparative to real eloquence, when he observed me close to him, and checked his warmth. He took off his cap to me, and his example was followed by the toll-taker, in a style still more obsequious. They bowed to me over and over again; and I was not slow in perceiving that the civility which I had all along met with from the carrier was increased tenfold by my apparent intimacy with the stranger.

"Well, Geoffroi," asked I, "are you ready to proceed?"

"In a moment, sir.—Do but let me have one look more at the count."

"The count? Does that gentleman bear so high a title?"

"Ah! sir, you may well say that now. They have taken his title, it is true, and doomed him to death; but he is just as sure of the first, and as safe from the latter, as ever he was:—for we will all call him count, and he shall not die while the people of the Landes have strength in their arms, and blood in their veins!"

"No," echoed the toll-taker, "sooner than they should catch him, I would, with my own hands, blow up this bridge to atoms—though each stone of it seems somehow as dear to me as my children, who have every one been born and reared upon its arches! Yes, yes, he is safe enough at this side of the water; but he hazards too much in trusting himself at the forest inn."

"Nay, nay," replied Geoffroi, "he has nothing to fear there but from that swaggering inspector, who, besides his obligations to the count, owes his present place to the son-in-law. Depend upon it he is too fond of a snug place and a sound skin to venture treachery."

Then turning to me, he continued, "God bless you, sir! you brought good news, I am sure, from the countess, or madame Stephanie his daughter.

—See how quickly he walks through the heavy sand! Perhaps the appeal against the sentence is decided in his favour?"

"I fear, Geoffroi, that you overrate my intimacy with that gentleman and his affairs. I never saw him till last night—nor did I know his rank till you told me of it."

"What, sir!" exclaimed the carrier, with strong emotion—"what! you don't know him? My God, I have then betrayed him! What have I done! what have I done!"

"No, my good Geoffroi, you have nothing to reproach yourself with. Your error was quite natural, nor have you betrayed any thing. I know from himself that he is proscribed, and you have not let his name escape you."

"Thank God I have not! But who could have thought, to see you together, that you were not old friends!"

"We *are* friends, you see—and when you know the world as well as I do, Geoffroi, you will know that new friends are often worth more than old ones."

"Ah! my mother often told me so, true

enough, sir. Friendship, she says, is just like the shoeing of a cart-wheel—very tight and close fitting at first, but that it seems to wear out and slip away from one quite naturally, when rubbed a little on the rough causeways of hard fortune."

"Ay," said the tollman, "it is just like that little gate there, which flies wide open to the traveller that holds out money in his hand; but remains close-barred and bolted to the poor devil who has not a sous to oil its hinges.—It 's a poor thing your old friendship!"

"That it is," said Geoffroi; "but yours, I hope, sir, for the count, isn't of such fast wear."

"No, indeed, it is not, my friend. Be satisfied that I am sincere and warm in his interest; but you must not tell me his name for all that."

"Never fear, sir, never fear. I have had too great a fright already not to keep my tongue closer tied in future. Look, sir! There he goes, God bless him! He has just turned into the wood."

" Safe journey to him, and to you too, gentlemen !" cried the tollman, wheeling into his hut.

" Now then, sir," said Geoffroi, " when you like we are all ready to start."

In a few minutes more we were in fact on the road, which, being firm and well kept, allowed me to walk without annoyance from the sand. Every step brought us further into a cultivated track. Large patches, at each side of us, were reclaimed from the desert, and grass and cornfields, occasional comfortable houses, and plantations of forest trees, enlivened the scene.

The sun was risen, rich and proudly, as we came to the little town of La Teste. We proceeded at a lively pace down the neat street, and many a nod of welcome was shaken to Geoffroi from the rustic inhabitants, who stood at their doors gaily chattering, and all armed with a huge clasp-knife in one hand ndin the other a large slice of bread, well rubbed with garlic, and eked out with a green fig or a bunch of grapes. Such is the common summer breakfast of these parts. We stopped at a little cottage near the centre

of the town, where Geoffroi was received with a truly maternal embrace by its decent-looking mistress. I was presented to her in due form by her kind-hearted son; and her particular attentions led me to believe that in his whisper, on our arrival, he had connected my name in some way with that of the stranger—or of the count, if the reader will concede him his title.

I declined, however, entering the cottage, being anxious to take up my quarters in the neighbouring white-washed house, decorated with the sign and title of "the French Crown;" which, meaning merely a piece of money so called, must not be confounded with the regal ornament attaching to the occupier of another residence. Thither, then, as soon as Geoffroi had put up his oxen, I repaired; and Ranger, my gun, and knapsack, very soon occupied their usual places in my chamber. When I had shaken off the dust and other encumbrances of my twenty-four hours' journey, I had a breakfast of *café au lait*, and then sallied out on my task of observation.

CHAPTER V.

The district of Arcachon, including the little town of La Teste, its capital, is probably one of the most perfect retirements in any part of civilized Europe. Standing on the remote and uncultured border of the Bay of Biscay, it is utterly out of the way of communication with the world; and its name is never heard beyond the edges of the forest which surrounds it, except when a maritime report is given of some unhappy vessel beat to pieces by the breakers, which are eternally lashing the desolate sands of its beach. La Teste is very rarely ornamented with the appearance of a stranger: the unbroken intercourse of its inhabitants with one another gives them that sameness of thought and similarity of expression, which is remarked so often between man and wife, sufficiently unfashionable to live much together. Their views, both physical and moral, may be said to be

bounded on three sides by desert, and on the fourth by the wide-stretching sea. They are either fishermen, or dealers in the products of the pine-woods; and a few leagues, by land or water, seem the limits of their intelligence. The aspect of the place is wild and flat, yet not unpleasing. At that period of the day when the tide is full in, it is delightful to gaze on the placid lake of Arcachon, for such is the name of the horse-shoe excavation, on the deepest ridge of which the town is built. But when the waves recede, and for three miles out nothing is to be seen but a sedgy exposure, it is not easy to imagine a more unattractive landscape. It has none of the sublimities of ocean, for the great Biscayan Gulf is too far out to be visible from this part of the shore. There is, however, one remarkable feature in the prospect, which is not without beauty—the accumulation of those sand-heaps far to the right of the lake, which shine in the sunbeams with a dazzling brilliancy, and for a parallel to which we must travel to another portion of the globe. On the left stretches a thick forest, close up to

which the waves reach at high tide, when a long circuit must be taken to approach it; but the strand at low water is quite uncovered, and permits those who love the shady solitudes of the wood to reach them by a walk of about half a league.

This wood was the chief object of my research; for I made myself informed that the church of Arcachon stood buried in its shelter, not far off. Having lounged away some hours in the immediate neighbourhood of the town, and in taking some rapid notes of the preceding day's adventures, I ordered my own and Ranger's dinner, that I might lose no time in commencing my excursion, and advancing towards the interesting interview which I looked for at sunset. My homely, ill-dressed, unpalatable meal, was a practical eulogy on the last evening's repast; and as I bethought me of the inspector's luxuries, I hoped, for his sake, that the duties of his office never led him to the unseemly accommodations of "L'Ecu de France."

When I found myself on the borders of the

forest, I felt an anxiety which, like all anxieties, was of a mixed nature. Doubt of the stranger's meeting me, interest in his fate, curiosity in his secret, vague and awful conjectures at the nature of his crime, all tended to fill me with a restless impatience. I pondered, and moved onwards along the edge of the sea, without observing any thing to intimate the existence of the church in question. As I proceeded, the broad expanse of the ocean grew upon my sight, and I experienced all those sensations with which it ever inspires me. Its vastness, its measured motion, and the murmuring of its soft waves, as they seemed to melt into the sand, all spoke to me in different ways; but, as it were, in the varying modulation of a common language. I hastened my steps to meet the approaching tide, and was soon standing close to the snowy wreaths, which every wave deposited, like an offering, at my feet. I had laid my gun among some scattered rocks behind me, and Ranger took the opportunity of stretching himself in sleep beside it. I was a long time gazing on the waters, as they floated in

their self-impelled and waltz-like undulations. There was nothing visible on their bright blue bosom. No ship was in sight; and a few white seabirds, skimming along, were the only living objects which appeared to dispute my quiet sovereignty over this beauteous scene.

At some distance from the shore stood a low and rudely constructed fort, the apparent remains of a larger work of defence. It seemed ungarrisoned; and I should have thought it uninhabitable, had not some thin curling smoke risen from it, and pronounced it to be a signal station, or the refuge of some poor fisherman, living there on sufferance. This lonely mark of the labours of man, in a scene otherwise the exclusive work of nature, gained an importance from its singleness, and fixed my attention. There was something picturesque in its crumbling angles and weed-covered embrasures, which tempted me to record it, in the rough and hasty way in which my pencil usually performed such duties. I took out my book and began to sketch; but had scarcely traced the first rude outline, when I received a blow from

behind, full on the ear; and before I had time to stagger forward, a pair of lusty arms were wound round me, pinioning mine to my sides, while a chorus of triumphant but hideous shouts nearly deafened me to the violent barking of Ranger, who had flown to my defence.

I struggled with all my might; and turning round my head, saw a face resting on my shoulder, which no natural sign proclaimed as woman's, but which was marked as such by the decoration of a cap like those worn by the peasants of the country.

The large black eyes and open mouth which met my view seemed strained beyond all imaginable dimensions, by the exertions which she made to hold me fast. I plunged and struggled with all my energies, she shouting "Pierre! Pierre! Pierre!" with a voice of terrible sound; while a little amphibious-looking monster, something between a fish and a boy, was coiling a huge net round my entangled feet, and shrilly echoing the screams of my assailant.

We were up to our ankles in the water, which flowed fast upon us, and the contest

ended in a few seconds by our all three tumbling down into a frothy wave, which rolled over as we sank into the sand. She never let go her hold for a moment, but I had loosened one arm, and, grasping her by the leg which was next it, was gradually getting the mastery, when another figure, still more formidable, came to her succour. This was a man of most ferocious aspect, and in the fierce costume of military service. He had but one arm, which brandished a sabre over my head, and under his stump was my fowling-piece, both barrels pointed full in my face. He roared out to me, in French, a summons to surrender, with a horrible threat of cutting off my head, clear and clean, in case of refusal. My assent was a matter of course; but when he ordered me to stand up, obedience was not so easy. The young imp kept twisting the net faster and faster around me; and the woman proclaimed, by her yells, that she was entangled as firmly as I. I do not know how we got clear, but by simultaneous rollings up the sand, well washed by the waves and wreathed round with sea-

weed, we at last got beyond the reach of the water, and in a little time were on our legs. The woman, whose masculine voice and aspect were truly terrible, snatched the sabre from the hand of her associate, and never ceased vociferating, in her jargon, abuse, I suppose, to me and commands to him. He and I had a short parley together, as he stood with my gun cocked in his hand, the barrel resting upon his stump, after the manner of an American rifleman, the muzzle close to my breast. He told me pithily that I was a spy, and a prisoner, and that I should not, on pain of instant death, make any resistance to accompanying him and his wife to La Teste, to be handed into the keeping of the mayor.

I must confess that no prisoner, I believe, ever felt greater pleasure at a release, than I did at this threat of trial; for the outrage I had suffered, and the appearance of its perpetrators, promised any thing but legal and legitimate consequences. I expressed my readiness, and so we set off. The little urchin, following, as I suppose, the orders of his father, waded

away towards the ruined fort, of which I quickly understood the latter was governor. The tender helpmate of this veteran now carefully picked up the sketch-book, and began to wipe the water from its leaves, in which operation, to my utter misery, she scoured out the traces of many an hour's labour. I remonstrated, but in vain, French was Greek to her; and she was but little inclined to accommodate my wishes, even if she had comprehended them. We walked on: this marine Amazon in front, throwing fierce defiance over her shoulder at every step; Ranger sneaking beside me, his tail between his legs; and the old soldier hobbling after, with the gun in its unvarying attitude of hostility and preparation.

The leader of the procession sturdily proceeded at a pace which the rear-guard found it hard to keep up with; and the tide now flowing rapidly up to the bank of sand which the waves had raised along the whole course of the bay, we struck into a little opening in the wood on our right. On this manœuvre a halt was commanded by the soldier; and a short council

seemed to be held on the propriety of our taking to the forest, as I judged by their gestures. It was decided that we should do so; and indeed the only alternative appeared to be an attempt to wade through the sea to La Teste, a hazardous, if not impossible, proceeding.

Our narrow path was now obstructed, by branches above, and brambles below; and in addition to the risk of one of these catching in the triggers of my gun, and so executing me on the spot, was the possibility of my tripping up; on which they might put the construction of an attempted escape, and found a fair excuse for decapitating me or blowing my brains out—or both. In this way I seriously began to calculate the prudence and possibility of bolting and giving the slip to my escort. But the sea was at one side, and a tangled wood at the other; and I considered that, if even I succeeded in escaping, it would only involve me in difficulties, and mar the meeting with the stranger; while by my making my appearance before the mayor of La Teste, with Geoffroi and my passport to

testify for me, there could be no doubt of my release. I therefore cautiously trudged along; and becoming more accustomed to my situation, I began to perceive how much of the ludicrous it contained.

While my conductors kept up an unceasing chatter in their (to me unintelligible) *patois,* I was running through every link of a chain of thought connected with my adventure; which ended in the rather awkward reflection, that some officious subaltern might implicate me as an associate of the proscribed, and for ought I knew, guilty refugee. I was turning in my head a variety of ways for baffling such imputation, when the path we traversed opened out upon a little inclosure of most verdant herbage, and on raising my eyes, I discovered the identical church of Arcachon standing before me.

I stopped for a moment in unfeigned admiration. My conductors stopped also, for the soldier was fatigued by his forest walk, and the woman obeyed the orders to halt. "Great God!" thought I, "if thou wert always worshipped in the purity which such a temple and

such a solitude as these must inspire, how much worthier would thy votaries be to call upon thy name!"

This beautiful little structure, a chaste model of Grecian architecture, was erected at the expense of the crew and owners of a ship which was wrecked on the shores of the bay; and, being out of the direct resort of the inhabitants of La Teste, is known by the name of "The Sailors' Chapel." A priest was formerly retained, at a regular stipend, to perform duty in it; and a neat cottage, at the extremity of the grass-plat in front of the church, was his secluded and modest residence. At this time, however, the house was vacant and the church deserted, except on the anniversary of its patron saint, or when occasional offerings were put up, by crews escaped from the dangers of the sea, or others on the point of embarking to meet them.

I acquired all this knowledge from the fluent communications of the one-armed soldier, who, finding me very tractable, entered warmly into the interest which the church inspired me with,

and answered many more inquiries than those which led to the information above detailed*. The woman, however, less conciliating, and not understanding our discourse, showed signs of impatience, and indulged in some flourishes of rhetoric as well as of the sabre. "March!" was once more the word, and we plunged deep into the embowering branches of the wood.

It was now nearly sunset. I thought of the stranger, and hoped no ill had befallen him. The path was narrow; and as we walked on I could see nothing before me but the stiff cap, broad back, thick legs, and brawny arms of my female escort; until she came suddenly to a full stop, and, with gesticulation worthy of Grimaldi in one of his feminine metamorphoses, she commenced a rapid succession of low curtesies to some one advancing towards us. In the momentary depressions of her head, which bobbed up and down with incalculable vivacity, I was enabled to see beyond it, and discovered, with pleasure and mortification, the exiled wan-

* See note at the end.

derer, his daughter and son-in-law, standing in a group before us.

When they caught the eye of the old soldier, he stepped up towards them; and with all the grace which his mutilated frame permitted, he presented arms, standing stiff and erect beside me. Astonishment was in the face of the young man; fear in the charming features of his wife; while the father, casting on me and my companions a piercing glance, showed a countenance on which suspicion, the twin associate of guilt, was in full display.

There was, it must be confessed, something to warrant a fear of bad faith, in the hostile appearance of my companions, in the waylaying air of our rencontre, at the very time and place which the stranger had fixed on to meet me, but still more in the mixed expression of my look; which might, by a doubting mind, have been well supposed that of a rascally police agent, rejoiced at having entrapped his victim, yet cowardly enough to be ashamed of his vocation.

But the exile was still himself. He never

flinched from the path, but addressed the saluting veteran. "Why, how now, Pierre! What's this?" Then looking towards me. "And you, sir—How am I to salute you, friend or foe?"

"Oh! as neither one nor the other," replied I; "I am too shabbily placed for the first, and too harmless for the last. I am nothing now, but a positive prisoner and a suspected spy."

"A prisoner and a spy! Why, Pierre, I hope you have not committed another outrage in your capacity of signal-man. You have not used this gentleman ill?"

"Ill! bless your heart, sir, quite the contrary. Except for that wet jacket, which he got in rolling on the beach with my poor Josephine here, I never granted quarter to a prisoner who was better treated."

"But how comes it that you have dared to make prisoner a stranger and a traveller of such peaceable demeanor?"

It would be rather a puzzling matter to give a literal version of Pierre's reply; but if my reader will make allowance for foreign idiom

and blustering, and imagine the old soldier to have been a Chelsea pensioner, recounting the capture of a musing Frenchman near a Martello tower on our coast, the following may be considered a free translation:

"Why, please your honour! as to *daring*, you see as how I never was backward in that, and when a chap of a foreigner skulks along the wood near my signal-post, I thinks it my duty to take him into custody, without paying compliments. Your honour knows as I keeps a sharp look out both by sea and land; and as no English frigates were to be seen in the bay this morning, something told me as how that something was brewing ashore. It is peace time, to be sure, but that signifies nothing; for we make peace and break it now, as often as we change kings and emperors (touching his hat), and it is in peace that spies are most dangerous, for such folk rarely venture to show themselves in war. Well, please your honour, as I was saying, I had just twisted the telescope round, and turned its muzzle towards La Teste, and was pretty constantly clapping my eye to

the touch-hole, as a body might say, when all of a sudden I marks a man stealing quietly along down the side of the wood. With that I points the gun, the glass I mean, plump upon him; and his knapsack, foraging cap, green jacket, and brown barrelled piece, made me dead sure as he was a rifleman scattering out from a party coming to surprise the fort. Well, I calls Josephine and little Nicolas and myself together, to hold a bit of a council, and we takes another peep at the lad as he sloped down towards us. We sees at once, by his fair complexion, fresh colour, and close-shaved chops, that he was an Englishman; so taking my sabre in my hand, and loading my wife and child with the large mackerel net, we makes a quiet sortie out of the fort, and places ourselves in the wood hard by. Well, at last up comes the enemy, and we sees him halt and take up a position just in front of the fort; when thinking, no doubt, that it was abandoned, and nobody near, he lays his musquet on a rock close by the shore, and plants his dog, which is prisoner also you see, as sentry upon it. If

any more proof was wanting, your honour, what does he do, but pulls out a book and begins taking a view of the fort, which made me certain that he was nothing but a shabby bit of a spy, and no scout nor rifleman after all. So seeing as the dog was asleep on his post, we steps out all three to seize the man, and Josephine and Nicolas, being lighter-footed than myself, they soon comes up with him; and what with her arms, and his net, he was soon seized, as fast as the tall German general which your honour and myself made prisoner at Austerlitz. That's all, your honour."

When this recital was finished, the stranger frowned sternly, and cried, "Hark ye, Pierre! Your officious conduct will surely be your ruin. Remember that you have now no friend to screen your excesses. Return his gun to that gentleman, and think yourself well off if he pardons your outrages."

I took the proffered gun, thanked the stranger, smiled on Pierre; and marvelled how a banished refugee maintained such influence over a whole district, every individual of which

seemed to know his situation, yet admit his power.

Pierre turned with a scowling, discontented look, to his wife, who had never ceased to bob curtesies from the moment of our meeting the stranger. He addressed her in *patois*, and seemed to inform her of the rebuke which he had received, for she flung a surly glance upon the party, and turned off abruptly towards the church. Pierre muttered a few sentences in a confused mixture of French and Gascon, and then took his leave with the following speech:

"You were always hard on me, general, always. You call every thing I do excess. What if I did seize the old priest, who was reading his prayer-book by the wood side; or the philosopher, who was gathering shells and what not for the Bordeaux museum? Had I not good reason for thinking that the one was taking notes of some plan for surprising the fort; and the other sounding the depth of the bay with his boat-load of instruments! What am I there for but to look sharp at all comers, and what is a priest or a philosopher to me,

more than any other foe to fair play and plain dealing? But don't look angry, general. You know I'd die twenty times sooner than offend you! God bless you, and prosper you always, and every where! Adieu, gentlemen and madame!" With these words he limped away after his discomfited helpmate.

The stranger, then, took me by the hand, saying in a kind tone, "You have not to boast, sir, of the hospitality or politeness of our country. Suspicion and ill-treatment have pursued and fallen upon you, but you will excuse rude manners and troublesome times. Stephanie and Eugene! receive this gentleman with that consideration which only may atone for your last night's surmises."

The lady and her husband each offered me a hand, which I cordially accepted; and some words passed, common-place in their nature, but on which circumstances stamped a more than common value. During the discourse of Pierre, I had closely observed the interesting group, and saw enough to tell me they were in

deep distress. Her eyes were red and swollen, and her cheeks pale. Her husband's countenance bore marks of great agitation. The father alone seemed composed in the midst of the grief which his situation had excited. After the interchange of the civilities just mentioned, I prepared to take my leave; but on my doing so, the stranger said—"No, no, sir, you must not part from us so. I see the delicacy which actuates you, but your company is a solace to us at this moment; and although the intelligence brought me by my children precludes the possibility of your serving me, you may not, perhaps, dislike to pass with me the last evening I shall ever see in my native country. Yes, sir! I am now denounced to certain death, if discovered in the land that owes me no trifling gratitude. The last hope for justice lay in an appeal, which has been rejected; and those who have confirmed the sentence of my destruction now pant for the means of inflicting it upon me; but I shall thwart them all!—and I may yet return, when least they think of it, to act such

part as has ere now been performed, and wipe my injuries out.—But no matter! Excuse me.—"

He here grasped the arm of his son-in-law, and they walked forwards at a hurried pace, deeply conversing; while I, thus left to take charge of the weeping daughter, offered her the support of my arm, and closely followed their steps.

As soon as her sobs allowed her to speak, she exclaimed, in a voice of the most touching sweetness, "Ah! sir, is it not dreadful to see such a being as that—the best, the kindest, the bravest of men, thus driven from the country he has loved so much, and served so well? He whose whole life, as long as my memory can trace it, has been devoted to public services and private virtues; and whose only reproach has been, that in days of passionate enthusiasm he committed one act which in him is called a crime, while his judges and persecutors are the very men who urged, and some of whom participated in the deed. Such, sir, is the justice—

such the impartiality of our rulers! Is it not dreadful?"

"It is, indeed, afflicting," replied I, "to see the instances of wrong inevitable in times of public commotion. But your father has the hope of pardon left him, as he seems secure of escaping from his immediate danger!"

"Escaping! Alas! alas! and must he fly as a criminal from the shores which have so often hailed him with shouts of triumph—from the people who have so long enrolled his name with the band of heroes unrivalled in ages of glory! Yes, yes, he must fly; and this night is the last in which I shall gaze on him, perhaps, for ever!" Her sobs interrupted her, and I offered no reply.

We had by this time reached the church, on the green lawn in front of which the stranger and his son-in-law were pacing up and down, with papers in their hands, which seemed wholly to absorb them. Unwilling to interrupt them, and hoping to gain on the confidence of my lovely companion, I led her towards the

church, and we walked silently awhile under its classic portico.

There was something oppressively solemn in the scene, yet I felt as if I would not have changed it for one of life's lightest. As I contemplated the figures, with whose sorrows I had thus become associated, and while thousands of varying imaginings rushed upon me, I was astonished by the distant sound of vocal music. The lady and I stopped at the same moment, and I asked her, "Did you hear that strain?"

She answered me by suffocating sobs.

After a short interval, the sounds came again, nearer and more plainly. At this repetition of them, the stranger and his son-in-law paused suddenly in their discourse, and the former stepped quickly towards the clergyman's cot tage, and unlocked the door, which, taking out the key, he entered and locked after him. The husband came up towards us, and, having spoken a few words to his wife in an under tone, requested me to take charge of her for awhile. I willingly undertook the office, and

he stepped across the grass-plat, and knocked at the cottage door. It was opened; he entered, and the windows being all closely shut, there was no appearance of the house being so tenanted.

The sounds of the chorus became now more distinct, and more continuous as they approached. It was evidently a religious song, and chanted by a choir of not unpractised singers. It harmonized well with all that was passing, and threw a soothing melancholy over the sensations I had experienced. Not so with my lovely companion. As the voices came more fully towards us, her agitation increased; and my surprise was soon changed to painful sympathy, when she whispered me, in snatched and almost inaudible sentences, that the music proceeded from the rustic choristers of La Teste, accompanying a procession of sailors, who came, as was the custom, to offer up their prayers before embarking with the night tide, in the little vessel which was to bear her father from his country and friends. Having thus

explained the cause of her emotion, she drew her cloak around her, and leaned on my arm to witness the scene.

A verger first approached, and opened the door, and was followed by some children carrying baskets of flowers, which they scattered on their path. The singers, male and female, habited in white surplices, next came on, and then the priest advanced with measured steps. He was followed by the sailors, amounting to about ten or a dozen; each one carrying a taper, and most of them bearing some simple *ex voto*, such as a bit of cable, a rude daubing of a ship, or other similar offerings. A large party of peasants and inhabitants of the town closed the procession. It entered the church: we followed, and, as we stood leaning against a pillar, I had full leisure to admire the beautifully ornamented altar, the richly carved organ and pulpit, and the windows of stained glass, shining with a mellow richness, as the setting sun poured its full splendour through them. The religious service was soon performed; and that part of it which by its simplicity pleased and interested

me most was the repetition of the sailors' parting hymn.

HYMN TO THE VIRGIN*.

I.

O virgin queen of Heaven,
To whom we raise our prayer,
Thy presence cheers the exile's fears,
And calms the perils that we dare!
Let but thy murmur'd blessing breathe
Across the distant tide,
'Twill smooth those waves the hero braves,
Whose bark we go to guide.

II.

For stranger-seas we're bound,
Which wash the savage shore,
Where wild winds sweep, in chorus deep,
To swell the billows' frantic roar.
Send, then, a seraph from on high,
To fan with radiant wing
Our fluttering sails, while gentle gales
Waft thee the praise we sing.

* These lines were written for music, not yet published. The allusion in the last stanza is explained in the note which follows this tale.

III.

Our angel-guide shall beam
  Like that celestial form
Whose wings of gold, in times of old,
  Hush'd on this strand the angry storm;
And to our sainted patron gave,
  In token of thy love,
That Heaven-wrought gift man may not lift,
  Nor Hell have power to move.

During this hymn, the emotion of the afflicted daughter increased to a violent degree, and at its conclusion she yielded to the movement with which I led her out. In every eye that gazed on her, as we passed down the aisle, I plainly discovered compassion and sympathy, but no one seemed to recognize her; and I thought these feelings were awakened by simple motives of charity for its own sake, without being dependent on any personal excitement. But when we got into the open air, which breathed freshness and relief to my companion, she informed me that every one of the congregation within knew perfectly who she was; but not one would give utterance even to the blessings

which they silently poured on her, fearing to add to her distress by any public display. Who would exchange the consolation of such eloquent silence for the heartless and indelicate condolence of the world!

We walked apart, while the assembly left the church, and dispersed in irregular groups through the wood. When the doors were closed, and no one to be seen, the lady advanced to the cottage, and tapped gently at the window. The signal was answered by the appearance of her father and husband, who both offered me their thanks for having accompanied her during the ceremony, which they had thought it imprudent to witness. "For even here, sir," said the exile, "has the spirit of corruption spread itself; and my being publicly discovered might bring down the strong arm of persecution on the whole of this district, whose devotion to me is well known. I am prudent, for their and my family's sake—but on my own account indifferent.—Now," continued he, "we must go on towards the town. The little bark which my friends have engaged to convey me to another

shore lies riding at the mouth of the bay, and at high-water a boat is to be in readiness on the beach. The sand-heaps scarcely show the red tinge of the sinking sun. We have no time to lose. Stephanie, my love, retain that gentleman's arm: Eugene and I have much to talk of yet—and at supper we shall have leisure for our leave-taking.—Come on!"

The assumed cheerfulness with which he spoke did not conceal from me the melancholy of the speaker, nor produce the effect he wished for on his daughter. We walked onwards according to the arrangement he had made, and for a few minutes no words were exchanged. But there is something in the French heart that must have vent, whether in joy or sorrow. The first is increased, and the latter seems diminished, by communication; and if sympathy is discovered in the listener, his being a stranger is no obstacle to the confidence.—My fair companion soon, therefore, sought the solace most natural to her sex and nation, and she freely told me, as we walked towards La Teste, much of the secret of her father's situation. On two

points, however, she observed a caution, which I did not feel at all inclined to remove. She neither mentioned his name, nor the nature of that crime which had called forth his banishment and remorse. The first, she said, she dared not reveal until he was safe from the possibility of detection or betrayal. The latter she could not venture to tell me, lest my national or private prejudices might destroy the sympathy which had been so forcibly excited in her father's favour. I participated in her precaution on both points, and guardedly avoided any expression that might lead to the knowledge of one secret, which must almost necessarily have carried with it that of the other. The fear of learning that the stranger had been guilty of some really serious crime made me shudder. I was not much of a politician, and had great leniency for state offences, which often sprung, I knew, from private virtues. I hoped that the crime of the stranger was of this nature, until I recollected his self-upbraidings; and then the memory of d'Enghein, Wright, Palm, and Pichegru, flashed all together across my mind.—But I

would not dwell upon the possibility, and struggled to get rid of my bewildering conjectures.

"Whatever may have been his error," said I, in reply to an observation of the lady, "it cannot, surely, have sprung from a vicious heart; for had it, I am convinced that though your natural affection might make you overlook it, it would have utterly prevented that devotedness which is displayed towards your father by all who know him, from your noble husband, down to the meanest peasant of the land."

"If, sir," said she, "the act for which he now suffers *was* a crime, its effects upon him almost raise it to the dignity of virtue itself; for such has been his remorse, even through years of splendid prosperity, the consequence of that act, that his whole life has been spent in deeds of benevolence and goodness, from a principle of retribution to mankind."

I did not then stop to examine deeply the pardonable sophistry of this observation, nor shall I now. It will be more interesting to my readers to learn an instance of that philanthropy by which the affectionate daughter thought her

reasoning justified. For the sake of conciseness, I shall relate the circumstance in my own way, but I deprive it of much of its effect by not giving it in her colloquial phrase.

CHAPTER VI.

This best loved daughter of the then exile, but once count, general, and man of influence and wealth, was sought for in marriage by some of the first characters of the day—anxious for an alliance with such a man as her father, and for the possession of such loveliness as distinguished her. Amongst her suitors was one of those marshals of France, who, with a title of almost the highest rank, possessed a celebrity which none of his illustrious brother-soldiers eclipsed. He was incalculably rich; and his alliance might, at that period, be considered as one of the most splendid which the country afforded. The father, mother, and family of the beautiful Stephanie were delighted with the offer, for they knew nothing of her secret attachment to a younger lover. Eugene de S——, the marshal's aid-de-camp, was twenty years of age. The marshal had numbered more than fifty summers, and his blanched locks did not

form a stronger contrast to the dark chestnut of Eugene's flowing hair, than did his stiff and uninviting manners to all that was beautiful and manly in Eugene's person and demeanor. The marshal and his aid-de-camp had been presented to Stephanie on the same day. The public courtship, and the secret attachment, proceeded at the same time, and nearly at the same pace: two or three interviews had decided both, and the rapidity of each was astonishing. The marshal and his aid-de-camp were equally the sport of their feelings. The one was sure of marrying Stephanie, and was raised to the highest pinnacle of an old man's rapture. The other was sure of losing her, and sunk in the depths of youthful despair.

The whole business was so sudden, that Stephanie was half bewildered. Her consent to the alliance had been scarcely demanded: it was proposed, and she made no objection. The surrender of her affections had never been asked; yet they were irrevocably disposed of. The conduct of the rivals, too, was not a little embarrassing. The marshal had never talked

of love, but a great deal of the importance of his functions, and the dignity of his station. Eugene had never declared his sentiments, but Stephanie suspected them from his looks, and other tokens which lovers only can understand. But he had not dared to speak out; and the preparations for the union were all arranged, and the day fixed, without his venturing to tell Stephanie in plain terms, that he loved her. She knew very well that he did love her notwithstanding, and he saw that his passion was returned with an ardour that fully equalled his own. But it seemed utter insanity to indulge the slightest hope; and the young couple mutually and tacitly submitted to the certainty of their despair.

Eugene was the marshal's favourite officer, and it was on him that the negotiations devolved which led to the matrimonial preparatives. Public business occupied the marshal incessantly up to the very day of his projected wedding; while his youthful deputy was constantly despatched with messages and letters. He had strict orders to bring matters to as

speedy a conclusion as possible; for, as the marshal used to say, "The affairs of a great nation ought not to wait on the *trifling* of individuals."

On the morning fixed on for the wedding, Eugene was sent with a verbal message from the marshal, to be delivered to Stephanie herself. "You will tell her," said the marshal, "that I am in utter despair at being obliged to disappoint her anxiety, and strike such a blow to her affection"—(Eugene's heart was bounding, and almost bursting through his breast)—"but that matters of state have unexpectedly occurred, which make it totally impossible for me to fulfil my engagement to go to church this morning"—(Eugene nearly fainted from emotion)—"until half an hour after the appointed time." Eugene made an obeisance, staggered out of the house, and, more dead than alive, hastened to mount his horse, and rode up to Stephanie's dwelling.

When he arrived, the bustle and magnificence of preparation nearly drove him mad. A Parisian marriage is a grand and boisterous affair,

and this was intended to be one of the most distinguished every way. Eugene asked for the count. He was dressing. "The countess?" "Dressing." "Mademoiselle?" She was already dressed, and anxiously waiting the marshal in the drawing-room."

"Anxiously! I must see her, then, immediately," cried Eugene, in a fierce tone, of which the servants did not comprehend the meaning, and of which Eugene was himself unconscious. He was ushered in, and there sat Stephanie alone, decked out in roses which had no fellow-tinge upon her cheek, and in finery which ill-assorted with her heart's misery. Eugene stammered forth his message in a voice so choked and faltering, that Stephanie, unable to restrain herself, burst into tears. To what frenzy does not excessive love at times drive on his victims! Eugene, for a moment, believed Stephanie's tears to flow from offended vanity and pride, and little suspected that she did not comprehend one word of the marshal's message, while shocked at the appearance and manner of its bearer. The hapless messenger stood

awhile dumb and stupified; but she wept so bitterly, that he could not resist her distress, and advancing some paces towards her, asked if he should summon the servants.

"And would you, for the poor triumph of displaying your power over me, expose my despair?"

"Despair! Power over you! What do I hear? Oh! speak out, speak out, my Stephanie!—Tell me, do I deceive myself, or are these your real sentiments?"

"Spare me—spare me their confession," cried she; "surely you are conscious of my misery!"

"You love me, then!" exclaimed he, throwing himself on his knees before her—"now, then, let me die; I have lived long enough!"

He here took her hand, on which he imprinted a thousand burning kisses—and a scene ensued which not even the actors could describe. They had recovered their calmness in some degree; and were exchanging consolations on their mutual despair, when an outrider of the marshal galloped into the court-yard; and in a moment more a servant entered the room, to

inform Stephanie that the impatient veteran had abandoned all matters of state and business, and was driving up to the house in the utmost haste. At the abrupt delivery of this message, Eugene started up, hurried to the window, and seeing the superb open carriage containing the marshal, and followed by his splendid suite, he attempted, without knowing what he did, to fly from the scene; but tottered when he reached the middle of the chamber, and fell, without sense or motion, on the floor.

The wretched and fainting Stephanie, roused to sensation, and half frantic, flew towards the sufferer, and threw herself on her knees beside him. She would have cried for help, but she was almost suffocating, and could not utter a sound. In this crisis the door was flung open, and, with all the pomp and solemnity suitable to his state—in came the marshal, ushered by the happy father, leading the mother in his hand, and followed by a crowd of common friends. Imagination may picture the surprise, the disappointment, and the compassion which actuated more or less the several witnesses.

"You love him, then?" said the father, after some broken explanations on the part of Stephanie. "Indeed, indeed, I do!" replied she.

"And you, Captain de S——, you love my daughter?"

"To distraction, count!" cried Eugene, who had recovered his senses, and burned with hope at the turn which affairs were taking.

"Then, by heavens you shall be her husband —and no one but you! What say you, marshal?"

"Why, my dear count, I am a man of few words, and it strikes me that little can be said on an affair like the present.—Besides, public business of great importance waits for me—and my functions are manifold. I can only, therefore, assure you, that the happiness of your daughter being the first object of my desires—next to the duties which my public functions impose—I am enchanted to have discovered the method of promoting it. I shall, therefore, beg to retire, offering to Mademoiselle Stephanie the assurance of my profound homage, the use of my equipage which waits below, and

my advice that she and my friend Eugene set off to the church without delay, nor disappoint the priest and the amiable society which surround me."

The marriage of the lovers was in consequence celebrated, but not quite so quickly as the marshal had recommended; and the count had soon good reason to rejoice in his noble conduct, for the changes of affairs hurled the marshal from all his grandeur, and he soon after died: while Eugene's father having gone over, and remained firm in his allegiance to the new sovereign, the son was enabled to afford very considerable protection to his wife's family and dependents, although without power to screen her father altogether, as has been already seen.

In addition to this trait of disinterestedness in the character of her father, Madame de S—— made me acquainted with several others of equal liberality; and she accounted for his present influence and security among the people of the Landes, by informing me that he had been intimately connected with the district, by

public employments and constant efforts for its improvement, for the last twenty years.

The short twilight of this climate was now passing rapidly over, and when we reached La Teste, it had become nearly dark. As we approached "The French Crown," the exile and Eugene stopped till we joined them, and we then walked all together towards the inn. "Here are, no doubt, your quarters, sir?" asked the exile. "Yes," replied I. "And here, too, are we going to take our last repast together, my daughter," added he, taking one of her hands in both of his.

"Oh say not so, my dear father!" she replied. "There may be yet bright days in store for us: once escaped to a land of liberty, you may securely look forward to some change—and none can be for the worse. Cheer up, my father. I cannot express to you how my heart feels lightened from having communicated to this amiable stranger so many acts of your virtue. Heaven will not, surely, cast off so good a man."

"Ah!" said he, mournfully, "If Heaven did always favour the good in this life, how few would take the trouble to be vicious! But we must hope for that justice hereafter, which we find not here.—But how durst I speak thus? Am I not justly punished? Heaven knows my guilt, and will not be appeased.—Then let me suffer!"

With these words, rapidly uttered, he rushed into the inn, and mounted the stairs. Eugene and Stephanie followed; and they all three entered a chamber where I observed a table laid with preparations for supper. I was glad to leave them awhile to themselves—so I retired to my own room, where I had the luxury of getting rid of my clothes, still soaked from the adventure on the beach. The operation of changing being completed, I descended, and resolved not to intrude upon the privacy of the party above—I was making my way to the kitchen, the usual resort for amusement and information in houses of this kind. As I approached the door, I heard first loud speaking, and then a burst of merriment from several

mingled voices, but one of which appeared familiar to my ears. This was succeeded by a hushed attention, while some one spoke to the following effect—in sounds which I thought I recognized.

"Yes, my lads! as I was saying, ****! many a gentleman follows by choice what an artist pursues professionally. If I choose, for example, to cook a supper for a friend, I honour my office, ****! instead of it degrading me.—Hand me that frying-pan, Marie! Jump! ****! if you had but half the activity of your cousin Cazille, there might be some hope of you; but you'll never be more than a slovenly kitchen-wench, never!"

Astonishment and alarm for my friends above held me breathless, as he went on.

"Yes, gentlemen, you may despise the arts of the kitchen; but you forget, ****! that Gallienus, though an emperor, was chiefly famed for his culinary knowledge—that Cadmus the great, great grandfather of Bacchus, and founder of Thebes, was cook to the king of Sidon! do you know"—

Although sure of my man, I wanted still a visual proof of his identity, and I gently pushed the door, which was already partly open. Before me was the kitchen fire, on one side of which were four sailors drinking, and at the other stood Monsieur the Inspector of the Forests, with his back towards me, his head covered with a white cotton cap, his coat off, his shirt sleeves tucked up, a long apron tied round his waist, a knife in one hand, a frying-pan in the other—and altogether, in short, a figure fit for the frontispiece of a cookery book. The flow of his eloquence was for a moment interrupted by his occupation; and as I had seen and heard enough to satisfy me every way, I made a precipitate retreat up stairs, and, without any ceremony, entered the room where the party was seated.

"Pardon me, sir," said I, addressing the principal personage; "I do not wish needlessly to alarm you, but I fear there is danger of your being discovered!"

"How!" exclaimed the two gentlemen, start-

ing from their chairs, "Have you seen any one?"

"Yes," said I, "that very questionable person the inspector of the forests is at this moment in the house."

"Indeed! In the kitchen, I hope," said the father.

"Is that all?" cried Eugene.

"Oh! poor La Broche!" exclaimed Stephanie; and a smile which would, in happier circumstances, have expanded to a hearty laugh, was exhibited on each of their countenances.

"To remove your astonishment, my good sir," said the stranger, "know that that poor fellow was my cook for many years, until, through the interest of my son-in-law here, when I was ruined, he got the appointment which now brings him to this place—that he has been the chief instrument in procuring means for my escape—and is at this moment dressing my supper, as a last mark of his respect."

"Your *cook!* Is it possible!" exclaimed I—

"but he has been a soldier—a serjeant of dragoons?"

"Yes, yes, he had the rank to entitle him to forage and allowances."

"Known to, and distinguished by all the marshals, and most of the generals, for his courage?"

"For his cowardice, his conceit, and his cookery."

"He has made the campaigns of Italy, Germany, and Russia?"

"True; in my kitchen."

"Then his wounds?"

"His wounds!"

"Yes! the loss of his finger?"

"Oh! in chopping off the tail of a leg of mutton."

"The scar on his forehead?"

"Received in falling over an iron pot one evening, when drunk."

The cut across his cheek?"

"Given him by a scullion with a carving knife, in return for a volley of curses, and the stroke of a soup-ladle on the shoulders."

"But his fluent discourse—his knowledge of ancient names—his acquaintance with Cadmus, Bacchus, Gallienus, Lycurgus, Apicius——?"

"Picked up here and there from books which touch upon cookery, and strung together for his use, most probably by some poor pedagogue."

"Is it possible?"

"Are you satisfied?"

"Perfectly!"

"Then sit down to supper, for here it comes."

And true enough the supper was coming, for the savoury fumes of soup appeared at the door; and in the midst of them was enveloped the fiery face of the inspector, who bore himself the smoking tureen. He advanced with proud strides towards the table, and was just in the act of placing the tureen in the centre, when, by ill luck, his eyes encountered mine, fixed full upon him with a stare of many combinations. The shock was like that of an electric battery, and made him bound and spring sideways, plump against Ranger, who lay stretched under a corner of the table-cloth,

when he stumbled and fell upon the fragile table, which broke down with a crash, mingling in one common ruin soup, dishes, plates, glasses, and all the paraphernalia of the forthcoming repast.

Curses from the inspector—roars of laughter from Eugene and myself—screams of inquiry from the landlady, and of explanation from the maid—with piercing yells from poor Ranger, who was more frightened than hurt, formed the accompaniments to this exhibition of mishap. Even the exile and Stephanie found it impossible to resist a momentary feeling of mirth—but he soon relapsed into serious looks, and Eugene and I caught the contagion; the landlady and the maid hushed their screams, and put on grave faces, from veneration to the count; Stephanie was silent and sad; so when the mortified inspector scrambled out of the ruins and stood before us, wiping the soup from his face with his drenched and scalding night-cap, he met nothing but a group of blank and dismal countenances, on which to repose his agitation.

"* * * * !" said he, looking wofully at me, "what devil has brought you here to catch me in this pickle, and destroy the best *consommée* ever tasted within the walls of The French Crown?"

He was quite crest-fallen, and had totally lost his bullying tone. I pitied the poor fellow, for I remembered his hospitality; and I liked the humility which made him, for gratitude, descend from his new-born honours to his former station. I therefore stretched out my hand to him, saying, "Never mind, never mind, Monsieur the Inspector: we can all sup without soup, I am certain."

"Oh yes! that we can," was echoed round; and he looked somewhat consoled.

"But * * * *! to be caught in a cook's cap and apron!"

"What of that!" said I. "A gentleman often follows by choice what an artist pursues professionally—and if you choose to cook a supper for a friend, you honour the office, instead of its degrading you."

"A generous sentiment,* * * *! and expressed

in my own words! Yes," added he, winking significantly yet respectfully towards the others, "yes, these gentlemen and this lady know that I have dabbled in the kitchen as an amateur, and like now and then to relax from my labours —fanning myself with a gridiron, or shaking hands with a stewpan*." This sally was followed by the self-approving laugh (which yet tingles in my reader's ears, I hope), for it appeared that the inspector could not restrain his jocularity, even in the presence of his patrons.

"Well, well, La Broche," said the exile, "forget the soup, and think now of what follows it. Go, change your uncomfortable trappings, and join us at the supper which we owe to your skill. Make haste; for you know time does not wait for me, nor tide neither."

The inspector bowed low, and retreated to arrange his toilette. The exile heaved a deep

* This last remark appears to have been borrowed, heaven knows how, from that savoury work "The Cook's Oracle;"—a book which every man must relish, who likes sound sense garnished with genuine humour, pages of "sauce piquante," and precepts at once philosophic and palatable.

sigh, the first which had escaped him in my presence. His children echoed it more heavily; and their sadness infected me. The new modelling the architecture of the tables diverted my attention for awhile; and supper was soon followed by the appearance of the re-organized inspector, who took a chair at one end of the table, with an ease, as if he was quite in his proper place; and he was treated by his former master with a cordiality which would look odd to persons not accustomed to the continent, but which, somehow, does not *there* seem at all undignified or degrading.

The repast went silently on, four-fifths of the party lost in thought—the remaining one more substantially employed. When the inspector appeared to be about half-done eating, and the rest of us were entirely satisfied, the door was opened by the landlady, who advanced, with a corner of her apron to her eyes, and sobbed out to the exile that a poor fellow below-stairs entreated permission to come up, and express his gratitude and duty.

"No, my good woman, not now," said the

exile: "do spare me any unnecessary scenes of sorrow."

"Ah! sir, it is not sorrow that makes me weep just now. There will be time enough for that in half an hour hence—when you are going to leave us for ever, and perhaps to be swallowed up in the wide ocean, or dashed to pieces against the rocks. You will see that I can be as sorrowful then as any one in La Teste; but at present I am crying for happiness, because poor Geoffroi, the carrier, is laughing and crying, and singing and dancing altogether in the kitchen, half wild with joy."

This combination of methodical sentiment, horrible anticipations, and ill-timed happiness, was sufficiently ludicrous to light up the features of the exile with another gleam—but it was like the latent glimmer of an expiring lamp, for he smiled no more that night.

"Then let poor Geoffroi come up. It will be a comfort to me to see one heart happy in this heavy hour, and honest enough to put on no mask of sorrow. Send him up!"

The landlady tripped across the room, and

called shrilly at the door for Geoffroi, who answered in person, by popping in his head, as soon almost as she had pronounced his name.

"Here I am, sir," said he: "I knew you would let me in, so I followed Madame Benoist up stairs, and waited outside. Oh! my noble count—for I would give you your title though your neck was under the guillotine—how am I to thank your bounty? My heart was breaking for your sake, and you have mended it all for my own—and a little for Cazille's, to be sure! Oh! sir, your generosity has been near killing me—but I am easier now that I can thank you."

"Your discourse is quite a mystery to me, my good fellow—you owe me no thanks.—I have shown you no bounty.—What do you mean?"

"Ah! I knew how it would be, count; and I told my mother, and Madame Benoist below-stairs, and Marie, and the sailors all, that you would deny the fact as flat as a criminal at the place of execution."

These home strokes, sent out by Geoffroi in

the way of illustration, did not at all ruffle the exile; but they were torturing to Stephanie and Eugene, and dyed my face a deep scarlet; while the inspector took them so much to heart, that he started up, and, with genuine delicacy, called out fiercely to Geoffroi,

"What do you mean, ****! you sneaking dog, to talk of executions and guillotines to the count there, who is condemned to and flying from both the one and the other? Have you no sense of decorum in your stupid head? Monsieur, you must excuse the fellow's bluntness for his honesty's sake. He 's an honest fellow, ****! after all."

"Thank you, Monsieur the Inspector," replied Geoffroi; "it is well for every man who has so good an excuse for his roughness. And thank *you* once more, noble sir, in my own name and that of my dear Cazille. These hundred francs (chinking five gold Napoleons in his hand), these hundred francs will make us the happiest couple in the Landes; and we will bless you for them every day, night and morning—after to-morrow, when, God willing,

we shall be married, and not much at leisure for any thing else."

He here blubbered like a child, and laughed most irresistibly; and was meanwhile bowing his way backwards towards the door, when the exile addressed him, in that benevolent and soothing tone which so fixed my attention on our first meeting. "My good Geoffroi, I must not suffer you to load me with unmerited praise. This money did not come from me. My daughter here, or her husband, perhaps, has taken this method of rewarding poor Cazille's attentions and fidelity. For myself, I must candidly confess that I forgot both you and her."

"Why yes," said Stephanie, "I did, indeed, give this sum to Cazille on leaving the inn this morning; but I scarcely know how Geoffroi could have received it without knowing who it came from."

"You gave a hundred francs to Cazille, madame?" exclaimed Geoffroi, hysterically; "then we are rich indeed, for this money came from some other source. I got it half an hour ago from the post-office, enclosed in this paper."

He here produced a letter addressed to

"Monsieur Geoffroi, the Carrier,
Living with his mother,
La Teste."

Within was written, "From a friend;" and in it had been enclosed the five gold pieces.

"Then," exclaimed the exile, "this secret doer of good must have been no other than La Broche himself! Come, come, La Broche, do not be ashamed of a generous deed. Look up, man, and receive the honest fellow's thanks."

The inspector waved his hand, in rejection of praise or acknowledgment—rubbed his whiskers—pulled up his shirt collar—muttered a few nothings—and, in short, displayed all the pitiful and paltry flirtations of those who accept of thanks for services never performed.

"What a scoundrel!" thought I to myself, as I turned in disgust towards the window, and while poor Geoffroi loaded his supposed benefactor with blessings, and offers of himself, his cart and oxen, for ever and ever, to carry Monsieur the Inspector from La Teste to Bordeaux and back again, with all his stores of

eatables—barring fish, which he never admitted among other goods!

The whole party joined in honouring the inspector's liberal donation; and I warrant that Geoffroi is to this day ignorant to whom he owes his wedding gift.

The hour of departure now fast arriving, La Broche was despatched to make the final arrangements with the sailors who waited below. The exile seemed to summon up every energy of his soul to meet the separation from all that was dear to him. His daughter was quite overpowered as the moment arrived; and her temporary calm was succeeded by a whirlwind of anguish and despair. She threw herself on her father's neck, as though she would have clung there for ever; and the scene becoming insupportably painful, I retired from the chamber, quitted the house, and walked out upon the beach.

The night was quite dark, for the moon had not yet risen. There was not a breath of wind. Nothing was to be seen near me but the little boat, just beginning to float on the tide which

was now full in, and three or four fishing vessels with the dusky huts of their owners close by, made visible by their scanty lights. The waves rippled onwards with a mournful murmur, and I thought every thing was suited to the melancholy of the moment. In less than ten minutes I distinguished the party leaving the inn, lighted by the landlady, the inspector, and Geoffroi. The exile seemed in the act of consoling his daughter, while Eugene stepped on before to place some trifles in the boat. No sooner did they reach the beach, than a number of the poor inhabitants came round them, weeping real tears of honest attachment, and sending up prayers which came from the bottom of their hearts. The exile walked through these groups with an air at once noble and gracious; and approaching me, he took me by the hand.

"Well, sir," said I, returning his cordial pressure, "this farewell is surely consolatory."

"It is," replied he, "I acknowledge it. I was always an ambitious man, and loved to believe myself the people's idol. This is the first

moment in which I could be certain of their attachment, and it is delightful!"

As the resin torches threw their red glare on his face, I saw that his eyes were swimming in tears.

"No," said he, "they will not out. I would weep, but that is a luxury long, long denied me. You see me moved—I am not ashamed of it. Shouts of victory—my personal sufferings—my children's anguish—the memory of my mourning and desolate wife—nothing could have brought the moisture to my eyes but this unquestionable proof of public regard. This is my proudest triumph. I will and must cherish it."

He then turned to the people, and addressed them for a few minutes in a strain of exalted eloquence and feeling. His discourse having been chiefly political, it is not necessary to attempt a skeleton record of it here. Every sentiment was noble, and every sentence well-expressed. He spoke to them of their duties as citizens and subjects; gave them honest and

sound advice; and compressed into this brief and unpremeditated harangue matter which a less skilful orator might have swelled to ten times its extent. The effect of this address was prodigious on both the speaker and his audience. Every one of his listeners seemed elevated beyond the common height of feeling and character; and these simple fishermen showed like a band of bold and well-informed beings, while the very women participated in their looks of energy and intelligence.

When he ceased, a murmur of applause ran round the circle which encompassed him; and one voice, more daring than the rest, ventured, or perhaps could not repress, a shout. The impulse thus given, a cheering and simultaneous burst escaped from the crowd, and resounded in a dozen distinct repetitions along the beach.

"Now, my friend," said he, addressing me with a mien of glowing energy, "now then, farewell! Your generous sympathy has sunk deep in my heart; and we may meet, perhaps, again—when I shall be able to express my gra-

titude in the way I like the best. I am no longer sunk in gloom. Hope sheds her lights upon my soul; and this night, so lately the most miserable, is transformed by her magic touch to the happiest of many a year.—In thus parting from you, I have but one request to make. My name is unknown to you. Do not seek to find it out: for I would not have it reach your knowledge, unaccompanied by the explanation of that crime which has most distinguished it, and which none but I could give you. Should you, however, discover it by chance, and with it learn the secret of my shame and my remorse, shrink not from my recollection as from something monstrous; but remember I am mortal, punished, and penitent!"

I made no answer but by a pressure of the hand—for it was one of those moments in which I dared not trust to words.—He acknowledged my reply in the same way, with equal warmth; and then turned towards his daughter. Her aspect was quite changed. She was no longer depressed or in tears. The eloquence and

heroic bearing of her father, and the enthusiasm it produced in the people, had worked on her as on the rest. She embraced him with fondness, but at the same time with animation. While they were locked in each other's arms, a flash appeared far out in the bay, and then the report of cannon rolled along the waters.

"Hark! The signal for sailing!" exclaimed the exile.

"Away, then, my father, away!" said Stephanie.

"Adieu, noblest, best of men!" cried Eugene.

"Bless you! bless you!" burst from every other tongue. The exile stepped into the boat and seized the helm, as I gazed on his face for the last time. The sailors took their oars—another, and another gun sent out its signal-flash and its swelling peal.—Answering shouts from the shore returned the salute—the splashing of the oars on the water soon died away—and the sparkling lustre which they struck

from the waves was in a little more lost in the darkness.

I stood for a while riveted to the spot, as the actors of this scene gradually retired. I soon found that I was alone, and I turned my steps towards the inn. In the yard stood Eugene and Stephanie. They were just preparing to mount their horses, being determined to gain the forest inn that night, so as to reach Bordeaux the next morning. They only waited for the inspector, who was to accompany them to the borders of the Landes, where they were to separate, for fear of attracting observation; and, finally, Geoffroi was setting out on foot, to throw himself into Cazille's arms, and entreat her to accompany him to the altar on the morrow.

I took a cordial farewell of the affectionate daughter and her well-matched mate. He parted from me like a friend. Her voice did not falter when she bade me adieu! but I saw her face in the faint light of the hostler's candle. It was deadly pale, and I thought the excite-

ment which hitherto supported her had nearly died away. But on observing her more closely, I remarked a brilliancy in her eyes, which seemed the offspring of some high resolve, and shone on her pallid cheeks—like the sun on a bed of snow—with painful and almost unnatural lustre.

They rode off; and, as I entered the house, the inspector caught my attention, making his way out of the kitchen—his mouth crammed—his jaws at work—a huge unpicked bone in one hand, and a bottle in the other—the first of which he was striving to stuff into his mouth, and the latter into his pocket—while a confused jumble of suffocating sounds was vainly struggling for utterance from his overloaded maw. Geoffroi was ushering him out and carrying his sabre, pistols, whip, and great-coat, with the willing obsequiousness of gratitude. I thought them a fine contrast, as I walked up the stairs, and gave to one a smile of good-will, and the other a sneer of contempt, while I compared their characters, and shut my door behind me.

I set out the next morning, in a different direction from that by which I had approached La Teste; and that part of the country having no farther interest for me, I left it to be examined more minutely by those to whom it might offer new attractions.

CHAPTER VII.

DISTANT countries and different pursuits soon called off my attention from dwelling on these scenes; and in some time from my leaving La Teste, my mind only retained the recollection, but had lost the fresh imprint of my adventure. It so happened, that immediately after having bade adieu to the Landes, I quitted the country altogether, and seas and mountains intervened to cut off the sources of information respecting it. I heard of proscription lists and pardons, and deaths, and other casualties among the condemned or exiled persons obnoxious to punishment, or considered worthy of mercy; and many names reached me publicly, but not one which gave me any clew to the knowledge of the Exile's fate. I felt also his last request as a serious obligation, and I therefore sought no direct means of obtaining any intimation of his name.

Circumstances threw me once more into France in eighteen months after my parting

with him; and in the midst of that season, when frost and snow with us wrap comfort in its winding-sheet, and famine stares the wretched in the face, I found myself walking in a richly swelling country—where the olive, the pomegranate, and the fig-tree were still in bloom; where the hum of bees, and the sighing breath of the south, formed the music of the air; while orange-groves and myrtles poured a fragrance upon months, which were elsewhere wintery.

I had entered France at a quarter far distant from that which had been the scene of this story, and was, as usual, musing my way through the by-roads of a beautiful landscape, when I came, at the approach of evening, to a village that seemed decorated with all the preparations for a fête. The houses were decked out with the whole finery of their interior ornaments; curtains and counterpanes were hung upon the walls; the treasures of the gardens were displayed in the windows; festoons dangled across the little street; preparations for bonfires were ready on the road; and every one was dressed in the high-holiday costume of the country.

On a rising ground, close to the village, the upper part of a handsome mansion was discoverable through tasteful plantations and vineyards. It had every appearance of wealth and respectability; and, as the gate which opened on its fine avenue of palm-trees seemed to invite the crowds of peasantry, collecting from every point, I deposited the appendages of my journey in the village inn, and, with my stick in my hand, joined one of the groups which were ascending towards the house.

Whenever I want information on occasions of this nature, I invariably address myself to some old peasant, from whose frankness I am sure of sincerity, while the garrulity of age makes such a chronicler invaluable.

"A joyous scene this, my friend," said I, saluting a little, active old man, in whose sharp chestnut-coloured visage, and fiery black eyes, shone the intelligence which marks the character of his country.

"You may well say that, sir. When an honest man returns to his home, after nearly two years banishment, the scene which wel-

comes his coming should be joyous; and when the returning exile happens to be of consequence, by rank and wealth, as well as by virtue, it is a proud day for the country."

By one of those irresistible strokes of conviction, which sometimes determine us, on lighter proof than this, I was on the instant satisfied in my own mind that fate had thrown me here to witness the triumphant return of the persecuted and pardoned Exile of the Landes. I burned with excessive curiosity, or any better feeling the reader likes; but I would not suffer a question to escape me that might lead to the mention of the name, which I was now resolved not to hear but from his own lips. I was, however, anxious to be certain that my belief was well grounded, and I went on. "When is the count expected to arrive?"

"In an hour certainly."

"Is the countess at home?"

"Where else would she be on such a day as this?"

"And his daughter and her husband?"

"Oh! they are at the house too, I suppose."

These answers left me no doubt, and I walked up the avenue without any more hesitation; and filled with a nervous yet pleasurable anxiety, which—like a summer breeze on the breast of ocean—seemed at once to ruffle and warm my bosom.

When we arrived close to the house, the appearance of every thing was beautifully striking. It was an edifice of noble structure, built in the regular and simple majesty of Grecian taste. All was on a princely scale—façade, columns, balcony, and balustrades. In front was an extensive lawn, bounded by a terrace of considerable extent. Here were laid out tables, covered with a profusion of costly refreshments, of which all comers seemed indiscriminately to partake. Several groups of dancers exhibited on the grass—and the music, the flowers, the silk flags, and other emblems of rejoicing, seemed all as it were reflections from a sky of the brightest hue and purest serenity.

My eye sought, amidst the crowd of well-dressed gentry and gaudily-attired peasants,

for Stephanie and her husband, but in vain. It then asked for the mistress of the fête, and soon fixed itself upon the person of a tall and handsome female, whose air of happiness, and hospitable activity, pronounced her to be the object of its inquiry. Knowing that my foreign appearance must have attracted notice, and impatient to explain that I had some claims to offer, in excuse of my apparent intrusion, I advanced towards the lady, and told her that, having arrived by accident in the neighbourhood, I had taken the liberty, though a stranger, to join myself to the crowd of visitors who had assembled to hail the joyous event of the day. She replied, with a demeanour of noble courtesy, that none were strangers at such a time—but that all who felt an interest in the return of her husband must be considered in the light of friends.

"Then, madame," said I, "since as a mere unknown you favour me with that title, I cannot resist the pleasure of advancing a claim to it—on slight grounds certainly—but stronger than that universal feeling to which you grant the

privilege. In short, madame, I had the honour of the count's acquaintance, as well as that of your amiable daughter and her husband; and it would be difficult to express the sensation with which I anticipate their recognition of me, on such a day as this."

"You are then, sir, really a friend of my husband's!—I say a friend, for all who know him are so. You formed his acquaintance, then, during his hours of exile? You are an American?"

"No, madame, I am a British subject."

"A British subject, and yet my husband's friend! Where then, or under what circumstances, could you have known him?"

At this question I began, for the first instant, to fear that I might be going too far, and was, perhaps, mistaken. It was very possible that some other person might be in question, instead of *my* exile, and I felt a momentary embarrassment, which prevented my replying directly to the countess's question.

"Ah! sir," said she, "I think I understand you. You are, perhaps, one of those persons

who fled from England, during the late order of things, with intelligence to our government —and you may not, under present circumstances, wish to compromise yourself. Keep, then, your secret, sir,—and excuse my imprudence."

The devil! thought I—am I, on all occasions and circumstances, to appear to the members of this family—if it is the same family—in the loathsome aspect of a spy, an informer, or a traitor!

"Madame, you mistake me," exclaimed I with warmth. "If I could have the pleasure of seeing your daughter or her husband, they could give an answer to your dishonouring supposition."

"Pardon me, sir, I entreat you," cried the countess—"in the confusion and flutter of my feelings, I scarcely know what I say.—But here comes my daughter, Madame de V——, and her husband, who will receive you according to your merit, and make my apologies."

The reader may well believe that at the name of Madame de V—— I was thunder-

struck, for no sound could be more unlike than it was to that of Madame de S——. I turned round, only to have my worst fears most fully confirmed; for in the lady who approached I saw a total stranger, young and handsome certainly, but not half as handsome as Madame de S——, of short stature, and inclined to *embonpoint*—while the gentleman, on whose arm she leaned, was a meagre, stiff-looking, powdered personage, of upwards of forty.

"Here, my dear Lucille," said the countess, in an habitually gracious, but hurried tone, as if her mind was any where but with me—"here is a very particular friend of yours and Monsieur de V——, as well as of your dear father."

Madame de V—— dropped me a low and astonished curtsy; her husband flung upwards a supercilious salutation; and I exclaimed—

"Your pardon, madame. I said neither old nor particular—I said a mere acquaintance—and did not even mention the name of Monsieur de V——. In short, madame, I am all error and confusion.—I quite mistook your house,

family, and husband, who I now find is a totally different person from the count, my friend."

"Sir, I am sincerely sorry for your embarrassment.—Who—what count could you have meant in similar circumstances with my husband?"

"Who—what count?—Why, madame—really and—honestly—I cannot answer your question! I am quite ignorant of his name—it is now a long time since I saw him—and then only once. I can only say, madame, that his daughter, for whom I had mistaken this lady, was much handsomer—that is, rather taller, madame—and not so fat—somewhat more slender, I should say.—In fact, madame, her husband was not so old—I mean he was a good deal younger than this young gentleman.—In short, their names were Monsieur and Madame de S——, and that is really all I can say on the subject."

"Heavens!" cried Madame de V——, not at all annoyed or confused at my blundering, "the gentleman means my dear sister, Stephanie."

"The very same, madame!" exclaimed I, in the utmost delight. "Stephanie—your dear sister, Stephanie—and her husband Eugene—your dear brother-in-law Eugene—and your husband—(How stupid!)—your father, I mean, madame. Quite a different looking man—much older—that is, not quite so young looking.—In short, ladies, I am enchanted, and almost beside myself, to find that I am right after all," cried I, wiping away the dew of agitation and confusion which overspread my brow.

"And you did really know our dear Stephanie, Eugene, and my father?"

"Yes, to be sure I did, my dear madame, and passed several hours with them in the Landes of Gascony, at the very latest moments of your father's stay in France!"

"What! what!" cried the mother and daughter together. "Is it then, indeed, true that we see before us that liberal and generous traveller, who was the solace of those dreadful hours? Are you, sir, that man, and have we hesitated an instant in acknowledging you, my dear, dear sir!"

Here they took each a hand; and I am certain that had I given my countenance to their wishes, they would have each possessed themselves of a cheek as well.

"Ah! my friends," said the mother to the persons around her, "look upon this gentleman as one of yourselves. This, then, is he so fondly mentioned by my Stephanie—who was the companion of my dear husband's last lingerings on the shores of his beloved country—and whom Heaven has sent to be the witness of his triumphant return!"

While the company made me their acknowledgments, she continued, "Now, then, sir, you will enter our dwelling in your true capacity as *a friend of the house**. Follow me; and as you have only seen my husband in the poor disguise of an exiled criminal, let me show you his semblance in his days of rank and distinction."

I followed, with Madame de V——, by the grand entrance into the house; and, passing through vestibule, ante-chamber, and saloons,

* Ami de la maison.

reached at length a little *boudoir*—that elegant sanctuary of every Frenchwoman with any pretension to fashion. The furniture and decorations were in a style correspondent to the whole appearance of the house. A recess contained a bed of the most costly kind, from which the countess drew aside the curtain, and displayed, hanging against the wall, a portrait of her husband in the full costume of a general officer, and glowing in the splendid colouring of manly beauty and military distinction. This fine exhibition filled me with delight; and I anticipated with new pride my meeting the noble original as a friend. The transition to his daughter was a matter of course: and I inquired if I was not to have the pleasure of seeing Stephanie and her husband.

"See her! oh! that you shall, sir;" replied the countess with brimful eyes, "and in a situation fitting so rare and inestimable a daughter. You shall see her the returning companion of her father—she who was the comfort and support of his banishment."

"How, madame! I do not comprehend you.

Surely Madame de S— — did not accompany her father?"

"No, sir, but she followed him almost immediately. When my dear Stephanie, overpowered by grief, had nearly sunk under its excess, and was roused to a new existence by the eloquent farewell of her father—to which you also were a listener—she took at the moment the inflexible resolution of sharing his exile and his fate. Under that impulse, she hurried his departure, as you saw; and having communicated her intention to her husband, whose thoughts were as her own, they only returned here to embrace me and my dear Lucille. Then hastening with the whole speed of duty and affection, they embarked at the nearest port, and, by a happy chance, the ship they sailed in reached the shores of my husband's exile some days before that which carried him; and when he at length landed on the beach, worn out and miserable by his agitated feelings and long voyage, the first signals that he saw were the outstretched arms of his daughter, and his first harbour of repose her throbbing

and affectionate bosom.—From thenceforward, till the hour when his pardon reached him, did she and her husband pay back their debt of gratitude by entire devotion to his service; and they now—even at this moment—approach together, to share the rapturous welcome of myself and my friends."

Before I had time to express any one of the emotions which this recital excited, the countess resumed. "But at this instant I recall to mind that a letter is in my possession for you, sir."

"A letter for *me*, madame!"

"Even so—a letter written by my husband on board the vessel the very night you parted from him, and sent by a fishing-boat to La Teste the next morning. It was enclosed to Monsieur de S——, to be given to you; but he and you had alike quitted the place, and it was forwarded to him here, and reached him the very day of his and Stephanie's voluntary banishment—which was indeed that of their arrival from the Landes. Not knowing where to discover you—being ignorant even of your name—and willing still to hope that there was

a chance of your being one day led to this house—they entrusted it to my care; and here it is with the seal unbroken, and the contents sacred from every eye."

During this speech she had opened a satin-wood secretary, where, after a little search, she discovered the letter, which she put into my hands. I took it with a mixed sensation of surprise, gratification, and curiosity; and, being anxious to indulge those feelings unobserved, I begged the countess's permission to retire into the shrubbery, where I might be able to do so. She assented—I bowed to her and Madame de S——, and passed out upon the lawn. The crowd had considerably increased; and much bustle was excited by the arrival of an *avant courier*, who announced that the travellers were little more than a league distant, and that their arrival could not be delayed beyond half an hour at furthest.

My heart palpitated with pleasure; and, resolved not to lose a moment in perusing the letter, which I felt an almost necessary preparation for my meeting the count, I passed

hastily along the terrace to a little arbour at its extremity. I had a full view of the road, the avenue, and the grand entrance; and I saw the long train of dancers, with their garlands and gay dresses, lining the approach as far as I could distinguish. The air resounded with music—every combination of pleasure seemed to raise my mind to its highest pitch;—and in this mood I broke the seal. The letter was addressed

"TO THE GENEROUS STRANGER.

"On board my vessel. Thursday night.

"We have only just parted; yet I feel the chain of circumstances which brought us together still unbroken—for something whispers me that we shall meet again. Under this impression, I cannot resist the impulse which leads me to address you. One of a thousand probable chances may inform you of my name; and I cannot endure the thought of your learning who and what I am, without knowing why and wherefore I am so.

"In the hurry and confusion which surround

me, and in the agitation of my harassed mind, I can perform this task but in a broken and imperfect manner.—I cannot presume to call you friend—I will not address you by a colder title—and I expect from your mind that liberality which is promised by your manners.

"You have heard me accuse myself of a great crime—you have heard the expressions of my remorse. I spoke truly in the first instance, and did not exaggerate in the latter. Yes! to me, and me alone, must be attributed the act which, more than all the congregated crimes of ages, stamps the foulest stain upon my country. Yet do not shudder—this act was mine—virtually mine, though many were concerned in its accomplishment. I had the power to have prevented it—to have saved, by one word, my country from shame—myself from infamy—and my——but I outrun myself.

"This self-accusing is all too true—yet, paradoxical as it may seem, this very act was the offspring of excess of virtuous feeling—of that overstrained enthusiasm in politics, which, like religious fanaticism, hurries its blindfold votaries

to the most monstrous deeds.—But when *this* deed was done—when the veil fell from my eyes —when the body of my virtuous and innocent victim was stretched in death, and his blood reeking to the heavens—'twas then that I awoke from my dream—that conviction of my enormity burst upon me, and the demon of vengeance uprising from the blood-drenched scaffold, seemed to shake before me the scorpion whip of retribution!—Even now I see the phantom scourge—my pores send forth a flood of suffering——

"In the full flush of youthful vigour, I was thrown into the midst of awful events.—I saw the monstrous march of despotism, and I flung myself before the fiend, to stop his strides or be crushed in the struggle. It was no common contest. It was the immortal rights of man opposed to the powerful yet paltry workings of tyranny—the wrestlings of liberty with oppression—the clash of intellect with intolerance —the manacled but mighty arm of millions against the nervous pressure of corruption.—The popular mind was phrensied—what could

be looked for from its actions? We were forced and goaded on to desperation—and the crimson flood of guilt swept alike over tyrants and slaves.

" Will the warning be listened to? Will the despots of our days look back on those which are no more? Or will a bold, yet thoughtful band throw themselves between mobs and tyrants, and force them to their own salvation! The people never cast their eyes behind them. —Let their rulers think on the fact, and profit by its knowledge.

" I entered that assembly which was to open the path to my country's freedom, like a young lover burning to embrace the idol of his heart and his mind. My passions were roused—my head on flame. Discussion followed discussion —and frantic denunciations against royalty were the forced fruits of the madness of monarchs. They defied and denounced us. We dared their contempt and their anathemas—we met them in the conflict—and we triumphed!

" In the assembly of the nation, of which I was such a member as I paint myself, I had

three friends, over whom my control was so unlimited, that they swore to follow my leading on every question, great or small. The greatest of all questions came.—I had no waverings—I gave my vote—my friends echoed the sound—fatal and horrid sound! The die was cast—the lists were reckoned—the majority announced. *Four* voices had decided the question—or rather one voice, and that one *mine!* The sentence was DEATH—my king was sacrificed—and I—

A REGICIDE!"

The first effect of this letter upon me was a stupified astonishment—next came a bitter sorrow, as if I had lost a friend by death—I then resolved to quit the place for ever.

I do not mean to make here a confession of my political faith; but I unhesitatingly avow one of my political prejudices, the rather as it is one which I intend religiously to preserve. I mean my repugnance to the persons who condemned Louis XVI. to the scaffold. That some of those persons may have been good men is a

startling, but, nevertheless, a very proveable theorem. That a vile deed may be done from a mistaken principle of right is too true—but in the cause of liberty even—the noblest cause of all—there is something which makes us shrink from the name of an assassin. But in the case where it is murder for its own sake—where the victim is the victim of his virtues—where policy and humanity alike forbid the blow—and where it is struck merely that blood may follow it, the mind is almost withered by the influence of the deed it execrates. There is a sorcery in crime of this sort which raises up a spirit of ever-enduring horror.—Such I have ever considered the deed in question; and although I have striven to depict one of its perpetrators in the light through which many of them should, no doubt, be viewed—I could not venture the contact of an intimate connexion with even such a man—lest sympathy for the actor might weaken my abhorrence for the act.

My resolution on reading his letter was then instantly formed. I took a path leading to the village, which was visible below me; and as I

neared the bottom of the descent, a shout of triumph told me that the count had arrived. I looked to the avenue gate, and saw the carriage stop. The countess and her daughter were there in the midst of the crowd. They received in their arms first Stephanie and her husband; and, lastly, I saw the fine figure of the exile bound upon the earth, and rush into the embraces of his wife.

I caught no glimpse of his face; but turning abruptly to the inn, I made my preparations for immediate departure. While my resolution was unshaken, I determined to place myself out of the reach of temptation—so I took my place in a diligence just then passing through the village, and night quickly fell upon me and the scene from which I fled.

It may appear strange to my readers, but it is, notwithstanding, true, that I am to this day ignorant of the exile's name. Two reasons prevented my becoming acquainted with it—

want of inclination, and want of opportunity. I never asked it from any one; and being out of the way of public people and events, it never reached me accidentally.

I have, however, made inquiries respecting some other personages connected with this story; and late accounts from the neighbourhood of the Landes have informed me of some important changes.

Monsieur the Inspector, from his unhappy prating propensities, found it utterly impossible to keep secret his connivance at the exile's escape. His own blabbing betrayed what his honest associates never would have divulged; and in the summary punishment of the day, he was deprived of his place, shorn of his honours, and stripped of every thing but his culinary knowledge; to which he now owes his support, and devotes his whole attention. He is now, and has been for several years, simply and unadornedly "La Broche, Traiteur, Restaurateur," at the sign of Le Grand Gourmand, in which the wag of a painter has hit off to the life a likeness of the host himself, and which

hangs over a shabby little shop off one of the Boulevards of Paris—where any of my readers may dine, any or every day in the year, on soup, three dishes, half a bottle of wine, and bread at discretion—for eighteen pence, and a penny to the waiter.

The Forest Inn is no longer in existence. In one of those terrible conflagrations which frequently desolate the pine-woods in those parts, the little inn was burned to the ground. Poor Batiste, its nominal master, fell a victim on this occasion to his old habits. Sleep, which was his greatest enjoyment in life, was also his latest, for he was smothered in his bed, after having resisted every effort of his wife to make him rise from his danger. The disconsolate widow, seeing her house destroyed, and her old protector removed, had nothing left for it but to abandon the site of the one and follow the fortunes of the other,—whose helpmate and partner she now is, under the title of Madame La Broche, and ostensibly his bar-woman, housekeeper, and marketmaker.

Little Jean, the postboy, lost his place, or, as I am told he expressed it, was flung from his saddle, soon after my acquaintance with him. In a general movement of the great political machine, even this poor atom was displaced. —From the postmaster-general down to the postillions, all were turned out, Jean among the rest—when casting his eyes to the capital—like all other aspirants for distinction or intrigue—he worked his passage up to Paris on board the back of a diligence near-wheeler; and is now proprietor and conducteur of one of those little cabriolets which ply between St. Germain and the Place Louis Quinze, and to which people give, among other homely appellations, that of "*les coucous*."

Geoffroi and Cazille ply their several trades of carrying dry goods between Bordeaux and La Teste, and giving practical essays on population, at the rate of a boy or a girl a year. My correspondent could not tell whether Geoffroi was happy or miserable in his home—but it has been remarked, by almost all who meet him on

the road, that he continually hums one unvarying ditty, the concluding words of which seem to be "Mine own Cazille."

NOTE.

By far the greatest curiosity of the forest of Arcachon, and one, indeed, of the greatest any where, is the chapel of St. Thomas Iliricus, originally built by the contributions of the fishermen of those parts, and dedicated to the Virgin, in gratitude for a miraculous favour conferred upon their neighbourhood in the lifetime of the saint, and somewhat about the year 1521, if the traditionary records of the old people (the only chronicle of the La Testians) be a sufficiently accurate voucher for the date. The venerable Thomas was celebrated, in his time, as a great preacher, and for having exerted his uncommon eloquence against the heretical encroachments then creeping in upon religion in France; and after sermonizing and anathematizing for some time to little purpose—for the impious work of enlightening the human mind gained ground in spite of his forensic hostility—he resolved on withdrawing from the world, before the vexatious ripening of intellect, which was then in the bud, should overpower, in its blossoming odour, the fragrance of his own sanctity. He, in pursuance of this sage and saintly resolution, turned his steps towards the west.

"The world was all before him where to choose,"

and, passing through the hamlet of La Tête de Buche, the original appellation of La Teste, he arrived on the

borders of the Lake of Arcachon, where he scooped himself a hut, the site of which is still marked out by the pious visitations of many a pilgrim. Thomas was fond of a solitary ramble, which formed, in spite of time or tide, his daily exercise for body and mind. One evening, while pursuing his favourite walk during the continuance of a tempest, that would probably have driven him to his hut, had not a secret inspiration urged him still to keep abroad, he discovered a vessel far out at sea, in great distress and apparently on the eve of perishing. Not being able to render the least possible assistance otherwise than by his prayers, he betook himself to his knees, and had scarcely commenced an impassioned invocation, when the little vessel, as if it had been possessed of the powers of mortal vision, perceived him, and instantly turned its prow towards the spot where he knelt, and with a rush of sail that belonged not to any human management, it cut through the mountain-billows, and in an instant traced its frothy path from the utmost verge of the horizon to the edge of the strand on which the anchorite was placed. He, bewildered and fixed in admiration of the miracle, lost all power of speech, for he beheld upon the prow a bright form robed in white, and surrounded by a radiance that he knew to be of Heaven. The hands of this celestial being were raised above his head, as if something was suspended in them. Its bright wings fluttered a moment in the foam of the waves which sparkled in the sunny tints—an instant more and all was a blank. The vessel had totally disappeared; whether it sunk in the furious element, or "vanished into thin air," the monk by no means could divine; and all that he heard to give him a clew for unravelling the miracle, was the flapping of wings above him, and a strain of ex-

quisite melody, that seemed to die away in the upper regions of the heavens. Thomas arose from his posture of devotion, and gazed with a holy wonder on the scene around him. The waves were in a moment still—the wind was hushed—the sun darted from the clouds, which were scattered across the firmament in a thousand beautiful and fantastic forms of brightness—the roaring of the surge was changed to the gentle murmur of the tide, as it flowed in upon the sand, and seemed to sink into it, as if in repose from its recent agitation. At the feet of the monk lay a small image of the Virgin. He approached it with a mixture of devotion and awe; when, to his delight and admiration, it sprang up into his arms, where he folded it with a rush of overpowering sensation that may be better imagined than described. He brought the heaven-sent relic to his hut, where he erected a rude altar to its honour; but the rustic inhabitants, thinking such a shrine unworthy the miraculous image, built him a little chapel around the spot. The overflowing of the lake, in one of its accustomed inundations a short time afterwards, levelled the little building to the ground; and when, wonderful to tell, the pious erectors attempted to move the little image from its shrine, which the waves had no power to overthrow, it resisted the efforts of dozens of men to remove it; and it was only by the powerful prayers of Thomas that forty pair of the strongest oxen had force sufficient to effect that object. The image, be it known, is full twelve inches in height! Another chapel was built, and another catastrophe was at hand. It was utterly cast down by one of the moving sand-hills, which spared not in its impious progress the holy place, but the image defied its rage. It stood erect amid the desolation, and was seen in the morning after

the tempest, perched on the topmost point of the mound that covered the ruin. Once more a fitting receptacle was prepared, and that is the present chapel, the simple elegance of whose outward construction, and whose richly-ornamented interior, are remarkable specimens of good taste and gorgeousness blended together with surprising harmony. The desolate wilds around—the profound seclusion of its site—the deep-embowering woods—the superstitious veneration of the simple souls who there offer up their orisons—all the union, in fact, of natural solemnity and religious enthusiasm, give to the place an indescribable and irresistible charm. There is a hermitage close by, inhabited in the summer season by a good and enlightened curate, who is looked on with a veneration more than common, as the direct descendant of the holy Thomas. But it is on the 25th of March, when the *fête* of the village is held, that the traveller, who enjoys such primitive and touching scenes, should place himself at the porch of the chapel, to witness the ceremony of devoting the earliest fish of the season to the Virgin, from whom the image is believed to have been directly sent from Heaven. They believe that it descended directly from Heaven, like the Palladium of the Trojans—or like the Liafail, the enchanted stone brought to Ireland by the first settlers, from which the island received the name of Innisfail.

THE END.

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