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BELLAH;

A TALE OF LA VENDEE.

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B E L L A H;

A T A L E O F L A V E N D E E.

FROM THE FRENCH.

EDITED BY THE

AUTHOR OF "TWO OLD MEN'S TALES."

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BELLAH;

A TALE OF LA VENDEE.

"The knight that you behold yonder, with gilt armour, is the valorous Lauralco, Lord of the Silver Bridge; that other is the redoubtable Micocolembó, Grand Duke of Quirolia."—DON QUIXOTE.

At the extremity of a small bay, scooped out by the ocean on the southern coast of Finisterre, nestles the village of F——, which, before it was infested by artists, contained numerous very pretty women dressed in very charming costumes. Unfortunately, in course of time, the artists appeared among them, and the women of F—— learned that their colouring was good and their style becoming; in short, that they were picturesque; so they now wear their national costume awkwardly, and appear as if they had stolen their ancestral head-dresses.

In the year 1795, the happy calm enjoyed by this little village seated peaceably on the shore, as one may say between the ocean and the Revolution, was a phenomenon worthy of observation. Till this period, the Breton insurrection had few adherents in this extreme point of the peninsula, though, it is true, the Republic was not much approved of, especially since it had changed the bishopric into a department. The fishermen of F—— had not heard with indiffe-

rence of the trick played them by the vexatious authorities, as their rector called the Committee of Public Safety; but vexatious as in truth the authorities were, their direct connexion with the fishermen being confined to this piece of childish folly, they had not been provoked into carrying into execution a project for joining "*les gars*," as the young fellows were called, of Coquereau and Bois-Hardy. Their boats, their houses, and their property, being respected, and even their old rector, in spite of the intolerance of his language, remaining either unknown or tolerated, these good people, finding that the Republic had forgotten them, learned on their side also to forget the Republic.

Such was the disposition, at once prudent and generous, which the inhabitants of F—— entertained towards the National Convention, when, at break of day, on the 12th of June, 1795, this harmony, the fruit of mutual toleration, was suddenly disturbed. The noise of blows, struck with the butt end of a musket against the doors of the most considerable houses of the place, awakened the inhabitants, who beheld with dismay the blue uniforms and red plumes of the grenadiers of the Republic appearing in the church-square.

A detachment of fifty men, preceded by two officers on horseback, had invaded the village, and thus violated all the neutral rights which time seemed to have secured for this little corner of the world, as yet unstained by revolutionary tears.

However, the panic caused in the village by this unexpected aggression, gave away by degrees before the pacific assurances of the officers, and the friendly proceedings of the soldiers; and the inhabitants soon felt no other anxiety on the subject than to discover the object of this expedition. In spite of the smallness of the detachment, the rank of one of the officers, who wore a colonel's epaulettes, seemed to indicate that the

object of this military incursion was not without importance. Behind the little republican column, were seen several saddle-horses led by a Breton peasant, dressed strictly according to the old national costume; an addition which, though it certainly bore an amicable appearance, yet threw fresh mystery upon an event already sufficiently mysterious.

While the honest fishermen of F—— were thus puzzling themselves with vain conjectures, they were disturbed by another appearance equally unusual. A frigate, apparently English, appeared in sight to the south of their bay, evidently manœuvring so as to approach the coast as closely as prudence would allow a ship of its size to do. This second event was so far fortunate, that it furnished the inhabitants with the natural explanation of the first. It was clear that the frigate was preparing to land an invading force upon the coast, which the Blues who had arrived that morning had orders to resist. Now, a short mental comparison between the forces of the republican detachment and those which the frigate might contain, was sufficient to show the inevitable issue of the fight. This ingenious discovery put an end to the public fears, but it was not received in the village with unmingled pleasure, for to do the population of the Armorican coast justice, the colours of old England were not looked upon with a more favourable eye than were those of the French Republic.

By a remarkable coincidence, the idea which the appearance of the frigate had awakened in the minds of the fishermen, was exactly that which was gaining ground amongst the soldiers scattered on the beach. Rude though pious children of that Republic, of which heroism was the daily and essential food, educated amidst the sound of deeds of fabulous hardihood, full of that patriotic pride which springs from great recollections, and is the inspirer of great actions, these brave fellows felt no alarm, however, at the prospect of that

prodigiously unequal combat which they believed to be at hand.

The question, nevertheless, was discussed with warmth by a group of five or six young grenadiers, who in their inexperience had considered it prudent in this imminent crisis to take the advice of a serjeant, whose grey moustaches gave indisputable signs of long service. This personage, named Bruidoux, instead of answering the questions of his inferiors at once, judged it right in the first place to assert his dignity. He took from his hat a little checked handkerchief, spread it with precaution upon the sand, and seated himself with a kind of mock majesty upon this humble divan. Then taking some tobacco by little pinches from a leathern purse, the proper appellation of which escapes me, he began to fill his short earthen pipe with the methodical circumspection of a man who knows the value of things. After having pressed his thumb upon the mouth of the pipe, in order to level the surface of the precious weed, Bruidoux drew out a match-box, and struck a light with much solemnity. When at length the lighted pipe was well fixed in the corner of his mouth, the grave serjeant stretched himself at full length upon the sand, placed his clasped hands between his head and the damp beach, and sending enormous puffs of smoke upwards to the blue sky—

“Now,” said he, “what was it that you did me the honour to observe, Colibri?”

“It ain’t me, serjeant,” replied the awkward and puffy young man, whom Bruidoux addressed by the friendly soubriquet of Colibri; “it’s my comrades here, who declare that that great devil of a ship is going to land a set of *ci-devants*, and that we are here to hinder it. Do you believe that, serjeant?”

“To this question,” replied Bruidoux, “the learned might make fifty answers. As for me, Colibri, I shall only make two: *primo*, I believe it; *secundo*, I

hope it." Upon these words, which acquired a sort of sybilline authority from the lips from which they emanated, the young grenadiers looked askance at each other, communicating their secret impressions by a movement of the head, accompanied with a particular grimace of the lower lip.

"I suppose, serjeant," began Colibri again, somewhat timidly, "that when you went to fight in America, you must have been a little time on ship-board?"

"Naturally, my boy; because the land route was not invented when I crossed over to the New World; and to swim across would have been attended then, as it probably would be now, with many surprising difficulties."

"Well then, serjeant, you must know how many men a vessel of the size of that now in sight is able to carry?"

"In a ship of that build," replied Bruidoux, phlegmatically, "I have seen as many as fifteen hundred jolly fellows with bag and baggage, and yet some of them could play on the fiddle, with as much room for their elbows as a blind man in a public square."

"Then," said Colibri, to whose mental vision this declaration disclosed a mournful prospect, "then you think, serjeant, that your frigate might contain a thousand men?"

"With as much ease as I can smoke this pipe. What next, young man?"

"We have only fifty," observed Colibri, with some hesitation.

"Go on," said Bruidoux.

"They'll be twenty to one, serjeant."

"Will you do me the pleasure to tell me," replied the old soldier, "what is the name of that coloured rag which is perched at the top of the mast, and which begins to affect my sight disagreeably?"

"It is the English flag," said Colibri.

"Good! and will you be so amiable as to recall to my memory the name, surname, and title, of that jewel yonder?" demanded the serjeant, pointing to a tricoloured ensign, which fluttered in the wind above a pile of bayonets.

"It is the standard of the Republic."

"One and indivisible, citizen Colibri. Now, my boy, as at the present period a man is exposed to rather awkward encounters, if ever you find yourself upon a sudden in face of an army of Prussians, English, or any kind of federalists, tie a trifle like that to the queue of their general, and you will see him instantly turn tail with all his army, as fast as a young *ci-devant* when his worshipful mother's cook has trimmed his jacket with a dish-clout: that's all."

"But, serjeant," began Colibri again, "if we are here to fight, what is the good of those saddle-horses which that lubberly peasant with the long hair is leading behind us?"

"Those horses," answered the serjeant, after a moment's reflection, "are apparently destined for the prisoners of distinction."

"Look there," cried Colibri, suddenly; "the frigate's standing still!"

Serjeant Bruidoux, quitting his comfortable position, raised himself upon his elbow, shaded his eyes with his hand, and examined the frigate attentively for a minute.

"They are lying-to," answered he, "and, if I do not mistake, they are lowering the boats. In an hour's time, my lads, we shall be exchanging a few hard blows." Thereupon Bruidoux shook the ashes from his pipe, and charging it with as many tender precautions as at first, he proceeded: "one thing, Colibri, you will be glad to learn, viz. that we are beyond the range of their cannon. If this coast, instead of being set with rocks for a league round, had been such a one as I have often seen, where a first rate

man-of-war sails along as quietly as a lady in a drawing-room, the frigate, do you see, would have taken ground to our left, while the troops would have attacked us on the right; in this way, we should have been fired at in front, and at the same time raked in our flank, which would have rendered our position somewhat critical."

As the serjeant finished speaking, the frigate was seen to lower a boat. This circumstance excited fresh interest among the fishermen and soldiers. Scrutinizing looks were turned now on the vessel, now anxiously on the leader of the republican troops, who, posted on a rock, was examining the movements of the English ship through a telescope. This person, who did not seem to be more than five-and-twenty, wore the heavy uniform of a colonel of the republic, with an elegance rather uncommon in the military manners of the time. The style of beauty which distinguished his countenance, the perfection of all those external signs in feature and proportion through which the eyes of the learned in such matters trace the marks of high descent, would at first sight have insured for the young officer a fraternal reception in the drawing-rooms of Vienna; whilst his lofty brow, and the pensive sweetness of his eyes which contrasted with the firm lines about the mouth, would have also procured him a flattering attention from any assembly of women, without regard to party. A few paces behind him stood a young man, barely nineteen, with fair hair and rosy cheeks, and wearing a light aide-de-camp's uniform. This youth figured as lieutenant on General Hoche's staff, and shared the command of the expeditionary column with the young colonel.

"Colonel Hervé," exclaimed the youngest of the two officers, perceiving that the tide was surrounding the rock which served him as an observatory, "I warn you that the tide is rising, and that the water will shortly be up to your knees."

Colonel Hervé turned round with an absent air, looked vaguely at the young aide-de-camp, like a man who is uncertain whether he is spoken to or not, and then returned to his telescope and his observations. The young aide-de-camp burst out laughing. "I tell you, colonel," he repeated, making a speaking-trumpet of his hands, "I tell you the tide is gaining upon you, and that you'll be drowned—be drowned!—do you hear!"

The colonel started like a man awaking from a dream, looked round, and perceiving that his boots were already covered with water, sprang with one leap upon the beach, uttering an exclamation, the discreet and moderate character of which testified to his refined habits; for a well educated man differs from a ruffian even in the most violent expressions into which he may be hurried. Then closing his telescope with deliberation, he began to pace rapidly to and fro upon the sands, apparently without any other object than to calm the agitation of his mind.

The anxious soldiers did not lose one of the movements of their commander.

"I am sure," Colibri ventured to say, speaking loud enough to be heard by Bruidoux, though without addressing him directly, "I am sure the colonel is sorry he did not bring the whole batallion."

Bruidoux continued to smoke with true oriental placidity: Colibri grew bolder.

"The general must have been deceived as to the force of the enemy, otherwise he would have come himself with two or three batteries—"

"Why not with the whole division, with the staff and the band?" interrupted Serjeant Bruidoux, in a thundering voice; "the whole republic ought to have marched, with all the *sans-culottes* of France and old Navarre, to preserve citizen Colibri's complexion. The general, do you say, you plucked sparrow? You—you're about to amuse yourself with disquisi-

tions upon the general's ideas, I presume! I suppose you are at present one of his council? Have you ever even read the *Manual of a True Trooper*? I doubt it, and this is the reason why I doubt it: because you are a perfect stranger to the theory of moral force; and therefore, Colibri, it is impossible for you to conceive in your pate the commanding splendour of the idea, the magnificent moral effect of the simple fact, that fifty grenadiers are sent against a thousand *ci-devants*. That we shall all be minced up to the last morsel, appears to me as probable as it does to you; but the moral effect will not be the less produced, as the *ci-devants* will learn the exact value which we set upon them. And now, Colibri, as your courage appears to me to be a little tempered with prudence, I ought to warn you that if, while the balls are whistling in front, you were to feel blows from the butt end of a musket assailing you from behind, you need not give way to a childish surprise, seeing that I am personally acquainted with the individual who keeps such treasures in store for you!"

Before Serjeant Bruidoux could perceive the moral effect of his last sentence upon the countenance of his subordinate, a sudden exclamation from the group which surrounded him, attracted his eyes to the sea. He then perceived, with astonishment, that one boat only had left the frigate, and was rowing towards the shore, while the noble ship herself was running out to sea.

"They are sending us a parley," said the serjeant: "one might term that prudent, if nothing more. You, Colibri, who have eyes like a stuffed eagle's, be so kind as to tell me what you perceive in that small boat?"

"With all due respect to you, serjeant, I think I perceive half-a-dozen petticoats."

"Then they are Scotch," said Bruidoux. "Among all the armies of the civilized world the Scotch are the only soldiers who fight in petticoats."

"Serjeant," asked Colibri, "do the Scotch wear women's caps as well?"

"Women's caps!" said Bruidoux: "no; I don't think they do. You must mean turbans."

"But there undoubtedly is one cap, serjeant. They are most likely Scotchwomen."

"All things are possible," returned the serjeant, lying down again with philosophical composure; "but if women are going to meddle with the game, good-night to you all."

During this conversation, Colonel Hervé, seated on the hull of an upturned boat, was drawing cabalistic figures on the sand with his sheathed sabre, while his thoughtful eyes seemed to be reading the invisible words presented by the confused pages of hope or recollection. A hand, laid softly on his shoulder, startled him out of his reverie; and at the same time a clear and almost boyish voice behind him uttered: "Well, Pelven, this is a happy moment for you!"

"Happy! Francis," replied the young man, smiling with a thoughtful air; "that is as it may be. I have lived long enough already to know that no moment ought to be called happy or unhappy till it is past and gone."

"How!" replied Francis, interrogating, with a look full of affection, the melancholy countenance of his friend; "does not this vessel bring you your beloved sister? Is not this the happiness for which you have been sighing these last two years?"

"And do I even know," said Pelven, "whether I shall find in her that sister whom I parted from, and whom I hope to meet? She has lived so long among my enemies! She is taught to hate the uniform I wear by every one by whom she is surrounded."

"No, no, it cannot be so!" cried the young aide-de-camp with vivacity, and his brow flushing. "I only require to know what you have told me of her, Hervé,

and what you have shown me of her letters, to be certain that such a thing is impossible!"

"And then," returned Hervé, smiling at the chivalrous outburst of the young man, "my sister is not coming alone; she is accompanied by several people who, I know, do not love me; and you can understand, Francis, that it must be painful to me to see coldness and hostility upon faces formerly familiar and friendly."

"Would there be any extraordinary indiscretion, Colonel Hervé, in asking you to describe the female occupants of the boat?"

"At a time when politeness is one of the rarest of jewels, Lieutenant Francis, it is impossible for me not to satisfy a curiosity which is expressed with such punctilious propriety. I shall tell you nothing of Mademoiselle Andrée de Pelven, my sister; for I have said too much about her already." Francis blushed again. "But," continued the colonel, "you can excuse this weakness in a brother. Besides that young lady, the boat which you can discern at half a league's distance is honoured by carrying Madame Eleanore de Kergant, *ci-devant* canoness; she is sister to the Marquis de Kergant, my guardian. She is the most bitter enemy of the French Republic that I know, and the most tender friend to etiquette, *savoir-vivre*, and *poudre à la reine*, who has survived these days of abomination. Behind that lady, and at a respectful distance, you will perceive a young *Basse Brette*, who promised to be one of the most lovely creatures imaginable. She is called Alix. She is the daughter of Citizen Kado, that tall Breton guide who leads the horses, and whom you see yonder leaning against a mast. I beg you to observe, *en passant*, that with his long locks, broad-brimmed hat, and swelling lower garments, and his coat *à la Louis XIV.* the man is, after his fashion, a type of much beauty, and will give you an idea of the style that characterizes his

daughter. Alix was brought up at the chateau, where she lived in a sort of mixed condition: she is not a young lady, nor is she a waiting-maid. She has white hands, and can spell. To conclude, I presume you will remark, or you will not remark, at a distance still more respectful, an English or Scotch lady's maid or waiting-woman—a Miss Macgregor, who counts chieftains among her ancestors, and whom misfortune has reduced to a state of dependence. As the canoness has only recently attached her to her service, I have never seen her; however, if you have a fancy for her portrait, I can give it to you: she is awkward and tall, with red hair, and takes snuff, under the rose. Are you satisfied, Francis?"

"Not yet, colonel; for there are five women in the boat, and you have only enumerated four."

"True," replied Hervé de Pelven; and he continued, with an air of embarrassment which did not escape his friend; "there is besides, (or there ought to be, for I can see nothing distinctly from this distance), Mademoiselle Bellah de Kergant, daughter of the marquis, and niece of the canoness. The name of Bellah is traditionary in the family from the times of the Conans and Alains."

"What! is that all," asked Francis. "Not one word of praise, nor even of criticism. I am compelled to conclude that the young lady is either deformed or but too perfect, since your pencil does not condescend, or does not dare, to paint her."

"It is always difficult to speak of one's enemies," said Hervé. "I regret to say that I must count Mademoiselle de Kergant among the most ardent adversaries of the cause which I maintain. She is my sister's friend; I may say she felt for me, for many a long year, a sister's affection; but now I am nothing more to her than a wretch stained with the blood of his king, and defiled with the funeral ashes of all that she held sacred."

A minute's silence succeeded these words, which the young colonel pronounced in a broken yet clear-toned voice, and he then went on:—

“You shall see her, Francis; you shall tell me if ever artist represented the purity of a virgin and the soul of a martyr by a more divine countenance.”

Hervé stopped again; and it was only after having turned away his head to conceal the alteration of his features, that he added:—

“The struggle is sometimes hard enough, Francis, between the opinions and duties of a man's ripened age, and the sweet and cherished feelings of his childhood!”

The young colonel rose as he spoke, and hastily strode across the beach, while the youthful lieutenant remained where he had received this half confidence, his eyes glistening, and his brow shaded with a cloud of melancholy to which the habitual gaiety of his countenance gave a touching character.

We shall take advantage of the short space which still separates the English boat from the shore, to complete, as briefly as possible, an explanation unfortunately indispensable to the most humble tale.

Hervé and his sister, left orphans from their earliest age, had been bequeathed to the guardianship of the Marquis de Kergant, an old friend of the Count de Pelven, their father. The marquis had acquitted himself with scrupulous fidelity of the office which he had undertaken at the foot of a dying friend's bed. The two sorrowing children had found a parental home at the hearth of the loyal gentleman; and in the society of Bellah, his only daughter, they had shared with her all the advantages of a most careful education. At sixteen, Hervé was sent to a college in Paris, which he only left to enter the military school at Brienne. At the close of every summer the young man came to pass a few weeks at the Chateau de Kergant; but although he always brought with him the

same grateful veneration for his guardian, and the same tender affection for his sister and her charming friend, who received him with equal joy, he had nevertheless found certain new ideas gradually superceding the principles which had been instilled into him during childhood. The marquis recalled his ward from Paris the day on which he learned the fatal termination of the flight of Louis XVI. to Varennes, foreseeing the desperate efforts by which the Breton nobility were doomed to prove their devotion to their threatened religion. Hervé obeyed, and returned to Kergant. He lived there for several months in cruel anguish of mind, distracted between the affections so dear to his heart, and the settled convictions of his understanding.

At last, he formed his resolution, and secretly returned to Paris. A short time afterwards, M. de Kergant was informed, in a respectful letter, that the son of the Count de Pelven was serving as a volunteer amongst the soldiers of the Republic. From that day, though Mademoiselle de Pelven could perceive an increase of attention in her guardian's conduct towards herself, she never dared to mention her brother's name before him, preferring apparent forgetfulness to bitter reflections on his conduct. The other inhabitants of the chateau maintained the same strict reserve, and thus all alike expressed their abhorrence of the part Hervé had chosen, though this feeling was differently coloured by the different ideas and character of each individual.

The marquis looked upon the son of his old friend as a renegade and a felon, who, as a traitor both to his God and to his king, deserved pardon neither in this world nor in the next. In the narrow-minded and fanatical views of Madame de Kergant, her brother's former ward appeared under the most astonishing forms. She saw him brandishing a pike crowned by a bloody head; she saw him clothed in a frightful *carmagnole*,

and dancing, without any regard to time, violent *Ca Iras* under lamp-posts decorated with pendant aristocrats.

To young Bellah, Hervé appeared as a man born with the noblest qualities, but deceived until he was betrayed to crime, and the victim of an unaccountable madness. She felt so deep a horror for such a desertion of all her domestic altars, that from that moment the proud girl dared not, or would not, mingle the traitor's name even with her most secret aspirations, though it might still perhaps have been found written in the silent recesses of her heart.

Hervé de Pelven, his musket on his shoulder, joined the army of the Moselle, just as General Hoche had assumed the command.

Hervé's conduct in a skirmish won for him almost immediately the rank of lieutenant. Afterwards, during the attack upon the lines of Wissembourg, when his battalion was falling back in disorder before the formidable artillery of an Austrian redoubt, he sprang alone upon the fascines, with a tri-coloured ensign in his hand, and remained there for a minute unhurt, exposed to the enemy's fire—a miracle of audacity and good fortune. The republicans, electrified and brought back to their duty by his example, found him almost expiring, surrounded by the corpses of the enemy. The general-in-chief, who witnessed this deed of arms, desired that the young man should command the battalion which he had saved and rendered illustrious; but, before Hervé had risen from the bed of suffering to which his wounds confined him, General Hoche, betrayed for the first time by fortune, had passed from his victorious camp to the prisons of the Committee of Public Safety. Hervé lost more than a patron! The touching attentions and the affectionate kindness which Hoche had already shown him, seemed better suited to the similarity of their age, than to the differences of their rank, and already gave him the

right to regret as a friend the chief of whom he had been deprived.

It was at this period that Pelven learned, by a letter dated from London, that his sister Andrée, Made-moiselle Bellah de Kergant, and the canoness, had emigrated to England, by order, and through the care, of the marquis. As for the marquis himself, Andrée's letter did not mention him. This silence was painfully explained to Hervé by his seeing M. de Kergant's name shortly afterwards among those of the royalist chiefs who created such a formidable opposition in the west to our armies on the frontier. From this time, the young officer received letters from his sister at brief intervals. The mystery of this correspondence, which could be carried on only by underhand means, shook the confidence which the converted patrician had at first acquired for himself in the republican army; and in spite of the high military qualities which he continued to display, the half suspicion which thus attached to him sufficed to keep him in that rank to which his first few steps had raised him, and which at this period of rapid progress, as of sudden reverses, must have appeared hard to a young man of merit and courage.

The uneasiness of this doubtful position put the finishing shade to Hervé's character. He had for some time past felt himself oppressed by the most deep-seated melancholy. The fever of enthusiasm which had both inspired and sustained him in his generous resolution, had calmed down when once the sacrifice had been made; for nature, while she has permitted the chords of the human heart to be strained to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, has limited the duration of this effort, which by being prolonged would rapidly extinguish life. To Hervé there now remained only the calm support of an exalted and firm conviction; enough to prevent him from repenting the step he had taken, but not sufficient to make him happy.

To few is it given to find happiness in the exercise of the intellect and in the acquirement of knowledge alone. The greater number, too weak, perhaps, to maintain at all times the high ground to which they have attained, seek a refuge, and acquire fresh strength, from consolations of a softer nature; and gifted, also, it may be, with a more exquisite organization than that of others, they unite to their manly and lofty aspirations more tenderness of feeling, which in its turn demands to be satisfied.

Hervé scarcely understood the full extent of the sacrifice he had made till it was completed. Then, and then only, his feelings, freed from their feverish state of irresolution, appeared before him in their full force, and he discovered, from the inflexible fidelity of his memory, that Mademoiselle de Kergant had as if in retribution left behind her an impression not to be effaced. But even had Hervé been so little acquainted with the character of Bellah as to retain any doubt as to the manner in which she would look upon his conduct, Andrée's letters would have sufficiently enlightened him. Not only did Mademoiselle de Kergant never add to her friend's letters one word of civility to the man who had been so long to her as a brother, but it was evident besides that Andrée was forbidden, by the most inflexible prohibitions, even to touch upon the subject. Hervé was certain of this from the conciseness of the never-varying postscript: "Bellah is well." Once only did Andrée dare to exceed the limits of this cruel bulletin, and at the end of the usual formula, "Bellah is well," Hervé was astonished to read these words: "She is as lovely as a saint." It is impossible to say why this little addition, so natural from a woman, irritated Hervé to such a degree that he began to think that the violent feeling which the recollection of Mademoiselle de Kergant excited in his heart, must be hatred, not love.

The 9th of Thermidor, however, restored General

Hoche to his country, and he was appointed shortly afterwards to the command of the army of Brest, and recruited his forces with several corps detached from that of the North. The 60th demi-brigade, in which Pelven was serving, was the first which Hoche demanded, and Hervé thus re-entered his native country as a soldier. He found the young man whom we have made acquaintance with under the name of Francis, in high favour with Hoche, who, according to the gossip of the staff, had met the mother of this boy in prison, where she had recommended her child to him, before she herself went to that terrible tribunal from which there was no return. Whether it were merely from anxiety to fulfil the wish of a dying mother, or from some more tender feeling, it is certain that the general loved the young man tenderly.

One winter's day, in the year 1794, as Hoche was returning to his quarters with three battalions, he was attacked upon the banks of the Vilaine by Stofflet's "Whites." From the top of a bank, where he had placed himself during the fight, he beheld his young aide-de-camp dragged off by five or six partisans almost from under his feet, when, just at that moment, a republican officer, his bridle in his teeth, dashed among the group of enemies who were carrying off the brave boy, and, lifting the prisoner to his saddle by the collar of his coat, he brought back this living trophy to the foot of the mound, upon which the whole staff stood vehemently applauding. By this act of chivalrous prowess Hervé added a feeling of lively gratitude to the friendly interest which Hoche had formerly professed for him, and as for Francis, he conceived the most passionate and enthusiastic attachment for his preserver.

A few weeks afterwards, the first pacification of La Vendée and Brittany was signed. Hervé then received a letter from his sister, who begged him to obtain permission for herself and her companions in

emigration to return to France; she begged also that an escort of republican soldiers might be sent to protect them, till they reached Kergant, against the Chouans, who were inimical to the pacification, and who might wish to revenge themselves for the part the marquis had taken in bringing about this happy event. In spite of the slight amount of confidence which he placed in this imperfect peace, Hoche did not imagine that the presence of two or three women could render Brittany more dangerous to the Republic. By the events of the 9th of Thermidor, besides, the Reign of Terror had given way to a more merciful administration; and moreover the Marquis de Kergant was among those royalist chiefs who had been amnestied; so that Hoche did not hesitate to grant this favour to a man to whom he was personally a debtor, and in whose honour and probity he felt the utmost confidence. The reader is now acquainted with the motives which brought the detachment of republican grenadiers to the village of F——, and to them we will now return.

The English boat neared the shore, and, the tide being high, it glided into a little creek formed by a group of rocks at the extremity of the bay. Hervé and Francis approached these rocks to assist in the disembarkation, while the soldiers, full of curiosity, stood a few paces behind them. Serjeant Bruidoux alone had remained at a distance from the spot, still stretched on his back, and watching the movements of a few gulls flying in the sky, testifying by his contemptuous attitude his indifference to the scene which threatened to give the lie to his prophetic assertions. When the boat was but a few yards from the shore, the rowers stopped suddenly, and at the same moment the young midshipman who commanded the party sprang aft, and, politely bowing—

“Sir,” said he, while Hervé touched his cap in reply to his salute, “if you are the person I presume you to be, you will not take it ill if I demand your

credentials before I deliver into your hands the precious charge intrusted to me."

"But sir," interrupted a woman's voice from the boat, "I assure you it is my brother!"

Hervé waved his hand to the pretty speaker, then taking a paper out of his pocket, he placed it on the point of his sabre, and presented it to the midshipman, who read the commission in a loud voice as follows:—

"By virtue of the powers with which the National Convention has invested me, I authorise the *citoyennes*, Eleanor Kergant, formerly canoness, Bellah Kergant, and Andrée Pelven, accompanied by the *citoyennes* Alix Kado and Macgregor, their servants, to return and reside freely in the territories of the Republic.

"Signed, HOCHÉ."

After having finished reading this document, during which time Madame Eleanor de Kergant thought proper to shrug her shoulders repeatedly, the midshipman delivered the paper to the old lady, and the boat touched the rocks. Eluding Hervé's eagerness, the canoness sprang upon the shore, and making him a curtsy, *à la Pompadour*, immediately turned round and offered her hand in turn to each of her companions in exile. Whether it were by chance, or by a piece of premeditated cruelty on the part of Madame de Kergant, Andrée was the last who landed.

"Dearest brother," cried she, springing into Hervé's arms, and kissing away the tears which were coursing down his burning cheeks, "I see you once more and exactly the same as when I parted from you. Is it not extraordinary, Bellah? I was afraid that his hair would have turned quite grey!"

"But, dear child," said Hervé, laughing, "remember that it is not more than two years since we parted."

"Not more!" answered the young girl; "why I think two years is an age!"

"Much too long, certainly, but not long enough, my dear Andrée, to reduce a man to a state of decrepitude."

"Well, it is all the better as it is, but still I expected to find it so," said Andrée, pouting; then laughing again, she embraced her brother, and leaning on his arm, accompanied him from the beach to the village.

The canoness had already proceeded forward with Bellah, so as to prevent the republican officer from nourishing even a hope of success in any polite offer of assistance which he might have had the boldness to make to her.

A few yards off the Breton guide was seated on the edge of a boat, holding his daughter's hand in his, and talking to her gravely in the language of his ancestors. Alix's somewhat Jewish style of beauty acquired a peculiar charm from the elegance of her national costume. The perfect dignity of her face, which was lighted up by large black eyes, was admirably relieved by her Breton cap, the high white wings of which were united at the top of her head. There was nothing in Alix's attitude or style of walking which betrayed that embarrassment which so often renders the movements of women of an inferior class awkward or affected.

Hervé could not help observing how completely the most humble of his childish companions had kept her promise of youthful loveliness; but her beauty sank into the shade when compared with that of Bellah, which, though cast in a similar mould, had been softened and refined by the cultivation of the understanding. There was the same dignity, with less of the wild perfume of nature, if one may so speak, and more exquisite elegance of form. Bellah seemed to be the second copy of a divine work, finished with more

care in the details than the first, and gaining in perfection what it might have lost in original force.

While Colonel Hervé was ascending the beach, listening with delight to the voice of his young sister—sweet echo of by-gone years—the aide-de-camp walked slowly away, his heart oppressed with that melancholy feeling with which a meeting of dear friends always inspires us, when we have no claim to share in the happiness it bestows.

CHAPTER II.

"Ah! sir, it is a ghost. I am sure of it by its walk."

MOLIERE.—FESTIN DE PIERRE.

AT the colonel's command, the soldiers soon resumed their arms and fell into their ranks, and the women mounted the horses prepared for them, and took their places in the centre of the detachment, which then left the village, preceded by the forester Kado. In order as much as possible to escape remark, Hervé, in obedience to the orders of the general, avoided passing through inhabited places; and the little company, following in the steps of their gigantic guide, was soon winding among bye-paths faintly traced out across marshy plains, or arid heaths. Hervé, to his regret, was obliged to leave his sister's side, because the canoness had addressed a question to her which she was compelled to answer; and he therefore rode forward to the young aide-de-camp, who was at the head of the cavalcade.

"Well! Francis," said he, "was my presentiment a mistaken one with respect to this interview?"

"Most decidedly so, colonel; unless you place an equal value on the absurdity of a frigid old woman, and the overflowing tenderness of that angel your sister."

"No! that I certainly do not; but now that you have seen Mademoiselle de Kergant, Francis, what do you think of her?"

"She is good-looking, Colonel Hervé."

"Really! good-looking, Lieutenant Francis? You are moderate in your expressions of praise. And

the reception she gave me, are you so kind as to call that good, too?"

"Neither good nor anything else, for she gave you none at all, that I could see; but your sister, Pelven! your charming sister—"

"My charming sister," returned Hervé, with a little ill-humour, "has no need to be defended, that I know of, inasmuch as she is not attacked."

Francis gave no answer to this ebullition, and looked at Hervé with an expression of pain and surprise, which immediately subdued the vexation of the young man.

"But why the deuce!" said he, laughing, "must you talk to me about Andrée, when I was speaking to you of Bellah. But come now, really my dear fellow, confess that the style of Mademoiselle de Kergant's beauty may almost be called terrible."

"Terrible is the word," said Francis. "A few minutes ago I picked up her riding whip. She thanked me, fixing her eyes on mine with such a resolute air, that I trembled to the soles of my feet. I had intended making her a polite speech, but I could only utter a kind of low mumbling, and I confess to you that I owe her a grudge. She is extremely beautiful certainly, but her beauty is more wonderful than charming. What a difference, my dear Pelven, there is now—"

"Between her and the canoness," said Hervé, sharply: "certainly the difference is considerable; I admire your discrimination greatly."

While they were talking, the two young men had ridden on a little in advance of the others, who at this moment were mounting the steep slope of a hill. The landscape consisted of a succession of bare downs, between which ran streams murmuring over beds of broken rocks; whilst the line of the soldiers, as they followed the windings of the paths, the graceful appearance of the female cavalcade, their fluttering veils,

their white plumes, which floated in the wind—all this life, movement, and colour, in so wild a spot—formed a picturesque scene, which did not escape the observation of the two officers.

“Look down there, Pelven,” cried Francis; “could you not imagine yourself to be some enchanter carrying off a whole bevy of princesses prisoners, not forgetting the queen dowager at their head?”

“I should rather imagine myself to be an enchanted wight than an enchanter,” answered Hervé. “I must tell you, however, Francis, that I do not quite like this wild country we are marching through. I have but little confidence in our guide. He is, after his fashion, a very honest man, but as great a royalist as the royal tiger of Bengal himself. I beg you will watch him. Look! what is he doing down there, for instance, I should like to know?”

The forester was then walking along the edge of a bank which descended precipitously on his right, and was stopping, from time to time, and kicking down bits of rock into the dark abyss below.

“Well,” said Francis, “it appears to me that citizen Kado is only diverting himself after a most innocent fashion.”

“It is the very innocence of the amusement that seems suspicious to me,” returned Hervé; “a man with such a grave disposition and appearance does not amuse himself with such childish games for nothing. See, he is listening now; he is bending down his head to the brink of the precipice.”

“I suppose he is listening to the sound of the stones leaping from rock to rock. I tell you this worthy savage has a taste for simple pleasures.”

“Hush!” interrupted Hervé, touching the young lieutenant’s arm; “did you not hear?”

“Hear? what?”

“That whistle; and I saw the guide exchange glances with the canoness.”

"Oh, yes! I heard something like a whistle, but still more like the whistling of the wind through the heather. As for the intercepted look between the canoness and the savage, I lost that, and I am sorry for it. But really, colonel, I cannot understand your apprehensions. Are not we sufficiently protected by your sister's presence? Can you for a moment imagine that she could have anything to do with a plot of which her own brother must fall the first victim?"

"She possibly knows nothing of it."

"Besides, however carefully I examine the canoness's powdered head, though I can plainly see that it resembles the sign over an umbrella-maker's shop after a snow storm, yet I cannot believe that any barbarous ideas could take their origin there."

"The old lady is very cunning, lieutenant; nevertheless, whatever resemblance you may find for her head, I have no doubt but that she was an active politician in England. She may very possibly have had direct communication with Pitt."

"In that case I pity Pitt," returned Francis.

"That may be: but amongst the ideas which might have been hatched in the canoness's brain, what do you say to such a one as this: suppose the escort of Colonel Hervé were drawn into an ambush, and at the same time the said colonel's life were spared? A suspicion of his being an accomplice would attach itself to him, which would compromise him irrecoverably in the eyes of the Republic, and, in such a case, he would be compelled to join the Holy Cause whether he would or not. Eh?"

"Hum!" said Francis, "this is specious; but they could not have known Colonel Hervé if they believed such a thing possible."

"Passion might blind them to such an extent as to make them do me this injustice. However, these are foolish thoughts; I only wished to remind you

that we are, after all, in an enemy's country, and that it is better to keep one's eyes open."

"Be satisfied, colonel, I will keep my eye upon the forester, the queen mother, and even upon—"

"My charming sister?" asked Hervé, softly.

"No: M. de Pelven, no! I would sooner suspect innocence itself. I meant to speak of that beautiful wild flower, the forester's daughter."

Andrée now put an end to the young men's conversation, by approaching her brother. It was mid-day: the cavalcade was following the windings of a path, on each side of which lay a plain of the most desolate aspect, extending farther than the eye could reach. A few clumps of tall broom, as high as a man, were the only objects which now and then gave an appearance of vegetation to this Breton desert; and here and there ridges of granite, covered with black lichen, broke the monotony of the arid soil. In the distance, five or six huts were visible towards the centre of the vast plain; but these tokens of the presence of human beings had nothing re-assuring in them to the traveller's eye; they wore a gloomy, miserable appearance, well calculated to add a feeling of alarm to that of desolation.

The cavalcade made a halt of half an hour in this melancholy hamlet. Before the door of the cabin which was nearest to the road, a young man, clothed in rags, with a haggard eye and withered features, was sitting upon a stool chafing his hands by turns in the sunshine, with a look of foolish pleasure.

"That is my poor heaven-smitten boy," said an old woman, who had come out of the cabin upon seeing Hervé approach him with a look of interest. Hervé put a piece of silver into the hand of the unfortunate mother, and left this melancholy spectacle; but, turning suddenly round a few minutes afterwards, he was surprised to see the "poor boy" engaged in an animated conversation with the forester. He was

stretching out his arm towards the north, and spoke with extreme volubility; then perceiving that Hervé's looks were fixed upon him, he at once resumed his idiotic air. "What a misfortune; is it not, sir?" said Kado, coming up to the young colonel. Hervé made no answer, but being rather suspicious of such an intelligent idiot, took care that he should have no further opportunity of communication with the guide.

After a short delay the march was resumed, and the day glided past without any fresh incident occurring to awaken Pelven's suspicions. The sun was near its decline, and Francis, feeling the peculiar charm of this period of day, was in the highest spirits. He was composing aloud, as he rode along, a sort of ballad in the chivalric style, in which each of the personages of the expedition had a part. Hervé could not help smiling at the epic improvisation of his young friend, and at the heroic, and at the same time, burlesque character, under which he himself figured in it.

Stopping all at once, as he came to the name of the "Daughter of the Macgregors," as he called the Scotch waiting-woman—"Do you know," said he, "that she seems to me to be the most discreet waiting-woman, and the most closely-veiled Scotch-woman, that I ever beheld? I am sorry to tell you, colonel, that I do not discover in her the smallest resemblance to the red-haired caricature which you palmed upon me as her portrait!"

"I told you, Francis, that I had never seen her, and I may add, that if she continues to travel with the same precautions as hitherto, I most probably never shall see her."

"I have been more fortunate," said Francis; "a gust of wind allowed me to perceive a graceful, oval-shaped face, and a double range of pearly teeth of the most perfect colour. As for her figure and the

beauty of her hands, you can see them yourself as well as I can."

"It seems to me, sir knight," said Hervé, laughing, "that this matter concerns our squires more than ourselves."

Serjeant Bruidoux, who might be taken for the principal squire of the expedition, was at that moment, as if to justify his colonel's words, whiling away the fatigues of the march by going to the bottom of the subject thus lightly touched upon by his superiors.

"There are," said Bruidoux, who loved to harangue upon every subject, whether he knew anything about it or not, "there are women of all sorts. There are some who attract the eye by their plumpness, there are others made like a cavalry sabre. Some are brown and some are fair. But to return to this Scotch citoyenne of whom we were speaking, I must tell you, that if I did not owe fidelity to a certain countrywoman of mine, whose name is inscribed on my left arm, I should have already offered my hand and heart to the said citoyenne, and——"

But here Bruidoux was suddenly interrupted by repeated exclamations from all parts of the column. It was now night, but the sky was very clear. They had reached the top of a steep hill, and were beginning to descend the other side, while the bottom of the narrow valley which lay beneath their feet was half concealed by the shades of night, and half by the veil of white fog which was rising from the marsh. About half a league farther on, rising through the mist, was visible the undefined summit of a knoll, upon the top of which the black and dilapidated mass of a feudal castle rose into view clear against the sky. Two pointed windows broke the line of the ruined wall in front, and through them streamed the pale light of the moon, whose disc was still invisible, presenting a mysterious and ghastly appearance. At this sight

Hervé and Francis were the first to halt. The women, with a vague feeling of terror, drew close to each other, and approached the two officers.

"Is not that, mademoiselle," said Hervé, turning to the Scotch girl, who had at length raised her veil, "is not that a scene such as might grace your own country?"

The young girl bowed without answering.

"Dear brother," said Andrée, "are we really to pass the night in that dreadful place which is frowning down upon us?"

"You know, dear Andrée," said Hervé, "that I have had nothing to do with the planning of your journey; you must blame honest Kado, not me, if your bed-chamber does not please you."

"I assure you I shall die with fright, then," said Andrée.

"I hope," said the canoness, in the pointed and solemn manner which distinguished her mode of speech—"I hope that Mademoiselle de Pelven will soon be reconciled to this chateau, when she learns that it was built by her brave ancestors, and that it is the oldest patrimony of her family."

"Thank you, madam," cried Andrée, "I am truly obliged to you; this was the only thing wanting to complete my satisfaction. My brave ancestors? Well, then, the descendant of my brave ancestors is a coward: that is the truth. I have all their portraits by heart, and I am certain I shall see them passing through my room all night long in solemn procession, from Oliver with the large feet, to Geoffry Twist-beard."

"And even if you were to see them, my dear," said a voice, whose singularly sweet and grave modulations made Hervé's heart beat fast, "what need you fear? You are their loyal descendant, you have preserved the honour of their name and kept the faith which they believed. It is not you, Andrée, that

should fear to look upon the face of those who knew how to live and die for God and for their king."

The young republican colonel felt the blood rush to his face. "If I am at all acquainted with the history of my family," said he, in a voice that betrayed no little emotion, "more than one among those of whom Mademoiselle de Kergant speaks, fell fighting for his country's liberties, and in arms against his king. In those days a Breton's country was Brittany alone, now it is France."

After saying these words, Hervé urged his horse along the broken path which, with many turns, led down the side of the hill. Francis, after having commanded the detachment to resume its march, rejoined his friend. "You are right, colonel," said he, "that is no ordinary woman; her voice has a kind of penetrating melody which astonishes one. I admire you for being able to answer her as you did. As for me, I should have fairly run off."

"She hates me," muttered Pelven, "she hates me, and what is worse, she despises me."

"That she does not love you, Colonel Hervé, is possible, though the reverse also may be the truth, but—. Well! what on earth is our guide about? Look at him making signs of the cross with both hands!"

"Some Breton superstition!" said Hervé; and, on approaching the guide, he fancied he heard him praying in a low voice, and saw that he was kissing with fervour the beads of an enormous rosary. Astonished at this sudden fit of devotion, the young man laid his hand gently on the guide's shoulder, who started.

"Your pardon, my friend," said Pelven; "but this road is a difficult one, and we have need of all your watchfulness. The moment is ill-timed for you thus to be absorbed in prayer."

"It does not become the son of those who sleep

yonder," answered the Breton gravely, stretching out his hand towards the ruined castle, "to say that it is wrong to pray when one is about to enter the Valley of the Groac'h."

"You know, Kado, that I have never lived in this part of the country; I am perfectly ignorant of the mysteries of this valley, whose very name I now hear for the first time."

"Those must be bad times, my master," said the forester, with solemn emphasis, "when the bird loses its way in that thicket where its parents sang over its nest."

"Kado," interrupted Hervé, with some severity, "we were friends in former days; do not force me to forget it now. I ask you whether there is any peculiar danger in this valley, that you think fit to enter it in this way?"

"This valley is haunted," said Kado, lowering his voice, and again kissing his chaplet.

"Why did you not take another road, then? You have only yourself to blame as the cause of these ridiculous fears."

"I have no fear," answered the Breton: "I have crossed many a haunted valley alone, and at night, and I have never feared. My conscience is between them and me. The rocks never rise and dance before him whose conscience is at ease. Let me pray, M. Hervé, for I am not praying for myself."

"And for what offender are you praying then, Master Kado?"

This question was put in an angry and meaning tone, to which the guide seemed indifferent, for he answered immediately, and with perfect calmness, though his voice was softened by a shade of sorrow:—

"I was praying, my master, for those who must have forgotten to pray for themselves, when they learned to threaten those of their own country who

had cradled them in their arms when they were little children."

This appeal made to his tenderest recollections by a voice formerly dear to him, suddenly melted the young man's pride. By a singular caprice of the human mind, he felt the simple sentence of this peasant, with whose rude straightforward understanding he was well acquainted, more than the anathema which had fallen from the lips of Bellah. He could not resist a wish to overcome those prejudices by the force of which this honest man had found him guilty.

"You are right, my dear Kado," he returned; "they are unhappy times in which the children of the same land, and the same house, become enemies to each other. But who is to blame? You, who have an upright mind and who know me, can you believe that I would have renounced all my dearest affections, had I not been compelled by some commanding duty which heaven itself had made binding upon me?"

"There can be no new duties," answered Kado, in a sententious tone; "what was right for my father to do, is right for me. Truth is unchangeable."

"And yet," said Hervé, "I have heard you yourself relate that in times long, long gone by, the people of this country adored rocks and stones as if they were pagans."

"That is true, my master."

"Well then, that was truth to them; and when the religion of the Cross was preached, the first who renounced these false gods to follow the new law were also called faithless and traitors. The same names were given to them that you now give to me, and they were told, what you tell me, that truth is unchangeable. But she had changed nevertheless."

"The law in the gospel is good," said the Breton, shaking his head; "it does not command men to rob or slay their brethren."

"It orders them," returned Hervé with vehemence,

"to treat each other as if they were children of one race, creatures formed of the same clay; and it is because there are found sinful men who have forgotten this law, who believe that they are of a nature superior to their brethren, and who have despised and oppressed them, that the cause of truth and justice is now with those who fight against such tyrants."

"If I understand you rightly, my master," said the forester, who had listened with great attention to the words of the young officer, "these men are those whom we call lords and gentlemen; but all your fathers were lords. Do you say then that all your ancestors were criminals?"

"My ancestors, my old friend, deemed themselves right in acting as they did. The times in which we live are enlightened by a knowledge that was denied to them. I should have been the guilty one if, for my own private interest, I had remained attached to the opinions of my fathers, when my conscience had convinced me of the error of those opinions. They did their duty: I do mine."

"These are ideas," said Kado, "which I never thought of." Then he reflected for a moment before continuing:—"I am no scholar, M. Hervé, as you know, and I have much difficulty even in signing my name; but I have been in the habit of pondering much upon what I hear, except only upon religious subjects, which belong to a higher power. Well, my master, people say that you wish there should be no more great or little, rich or poor, but that everybody should be equal. Thereupon, I must tell you, that this can never be. God has made men, some weak and some strong, some clever and some stupid, some industrious and some idle; you may destroy the creature, but you cannot alter the will of God."

"You may add to that, my good old Kado, that we should be miserable fools if we nourished such fancies. Far from trying to change what God has made,

we try, as much as it is possible for men, to regulate our government by his. Does religion tell you, Kado, that God condemns any before they are born? Never, I am certain! He places man upon the earth with free will to act well or ill, and he waits, before judging him, till his life is closed. Well, we desire that no man should be condemned to despair from the mere accident of his birth, but that every one should be able freely to use the gifts which he has received from God, so that by his own acts alone he may deserve happiness or misery. Our republic declares that all her children have an equal right to honour her and to serve her by becoming honourable themselves; for her first law is, that he who sows should reap."

"These things appear right," said the Breton, in a thoughtful voice. "Certainly there is much both good and beautiful in all this. They did not tell it us like that. I thank you heartily that you have talked upon this subject with me. I have known you from your childhood, M. Hervé; I taught you to fire your first shot; you were always a brave chip of a gentleman. Swallows only depart when winter is coming on. It makes me glad to know that you had such reasons for leaving us. My heart will not be so heavy when I think of you in future."

Kado walked on a few steps in silence, with his head bent; then he added, sorrowfully—

"I am too old; but if I were younger, I should like to think about it all, for there is much that is good and beautiful in what you say; but at my age, do you see, my master, if I were to try to take out of my heart all the things and people which I have kept at its core for so long a time, I might perhaps find better to put in their places, but I feel that it would kill me to try. Do not let us talk any more about it, I entreat you."

"Give me your hand Kado," said Hervé, warmly pressing the hand trembling with emotion which the

old forester immediately gave him with delighted surprise.

At this moment the young aide-de-camp joined the speakers.

"What were you telling me, Kado," Hervé resumed, "about this Valley of the Groac'h, as you call it?"

"I said it was haunted, my master."

"Haunted! what does that mean, colonel?" asked Francis.

"It means, my dear lieutenant, that Old Nick, otherwise called the Devil, holds a royal court in this valley, and that you may probably see him capering about in the moonshine with the groac'h, which means the fairies, and with the korandons, who are tiny little citizens, sorcerers by trade!"

"Good!" returned Francis, laughing; "we shall have a good laugh then. I am truly enchanted."

A gesture and exclamation from the forester, who had suddenly stopped, silenced the young man. The little cavalcade had accomplished about two-thirds of the descent, and was slowly following the winding and precipitous path, which had degenerated into a perfect staircase of rocks. In spite of their confidence in their steeds, which, like all the horses of that mountainous country, were as sure-footed as the mules of the Spanish sierras, the women and even the soldiers, devoting all their attention to the difficulties of the road, travelled on in perfect silence, so that the guide's exclamation, and the conversation which followed, was heard and commented on even by the rearmost files of the column.

Kado had stopped, shading his eyes with his hand, and stretching out his head in the attitude of a man who seeks to confirm the truth of some important event.

"What is the matter?" asked Hervé, in a low voice.

"I was deceived," answered Kado, "and I thank

heaven that I was, for although I have never seen anything of the sort with my own eyes—" He again stopped abruptly, and trembling in every limb, as if he were agitated with the most violent fear. "No! no! I was not deceived: it is them! Hush, my master!"

Pelven and the whole party listened, and soon heard distinctly the noise of hollow and regular blows, resembling the sound which would be made by a hammer falling upon a wooden anvil. The blows ceased at intervals, and then began again with the same strength. Similar noises were heard at the same time rising from different parts of the valley.

"What the deuce sort of noise is that?" asked Francis. "It is like women beating linen!"

"Yes," answered the forester, in a grave and melancholy voice, "they are washing the clothes of the departed;" and he uncovered his head, raised his eyes to heaven, and began to pray in a low voice. Hervé was painfully embarrassed; he felt the necessity of putting an end to this scene, which might have a contagious effect upon the women's minds, and even upon the understanding of some of his soldiers; but he could not bear to take any violent measures against the man with whom he had just renewed his former friendship. In the midst of his irresolution, he felt his arm lightly pressed.

"Dear brother," whispered Andrée's caressing voice, "you will scold me, I know, but I must tell you that I am dreadfully nervous. They must be the *lavandières de la nuit*. Don't you think so?"

"Hush! hush, you little fool!" answered Hervé, laughing: then bending down to the forester's ear, "my good Kado," said he, in a low voice, "move on, I entreat you. Do not terrify my sister."

Kado looked at the young man for a moment, hesitatingly, and drew a long sigh, after which he walked on, praying with the rosary in his fingers.

Hervé then turned to his soldiers: "My good fellows," cried he, gaily, "it appears that there are some *ci-devant* washerwomen down there; but you know the republic declares there is nothing of the kind now; therefore, forward!"

"Colonel," answered Bruidoux, "here's Colibri, who will undertake to give them some work with his six dozen pairs of silk stockings."

Re-assured as to the spirit of his men, by the laughter with which the serjeant's pleasantry was received, Colonel Hervé resumed his place near Francis with more tranquillity. However, as they came nearer to the foot of the hill, the extraordinary sounds which proceeded from the deserted valley became much more distinct, resembling exactly the peculiar noise of a beetle on wet linen, and at times the harsher sound of the wood striking against a stone.

"May I ask you, colonel," said Francis, "what exact species of animal, now, may be termed a *lavandière* in art magic?"

"The *lavandières*, lieutenant, are diabolical women, who at midnight make a grand washing of all the shrouds of their friends. It is said that they beg the passers-by to assist them in wringing out the linen; and in that case, the only possible safety lies in carefully twisting on the same side as the ladies themselves do, for if one were to twist the contrary way he would be inevitably crushed to pieces."

"Aha!" cried Francis, "much obliged for your warning, colonel. I should like to know, now, to what cause you attribute the ridiculous noise which strikes on our ear; for although the fog is rising, and the moon shining full upon the valley, I really see no appearance of any habitation?"

"True; but there is a portion of the valley which we cannot see from this, by reason of this rock which we are rounding. A shepherd-boy, strik

ing with a stick upon those stones, would be sufficient to make such a noise."

"Upon my word, I can scarcely think so colonel, unless you imagine at least a dozen shepherd-boys at work, with a dozen very thick sticks."

"Might there not be a waterfall round the point?"

"No waterfall ever made such a noise as this. It is very strange after all. Don't you think there is a strong smell of brimstone about, Pelven?"

"Our ears are very apt to deceive us at night," said Hervé, answering his own thoughts. "These blows are really extraordinary. Do you believe in spirits, Francis?"

"I am beginning to do so a little, colonel. Really, it is quite absurd, but I am getting rather nervous?"

"Hush! keep it to yourself then, at least, my boy. But, to tell the truth, I was beginning to get a little nervous too, had I not found out the riddle. This valley has an echo, which repeats the sound of the horses' feet upon the stones; I have heard as distinct an echo twenty times before, and—"

"On my life!" exclaimed Francis, "*lavandières* or demons, there they are!"

The two officers had rounded the point of the rock which till now had concealed a part of the valley from their sight. Hervé directed his eyes towards the spot which Francis pointed out, and saw with amazement, at a distance of about a hundred yards, a group of women clothed in white, some on their knees before the pools of water, the others appearing to spread out the linen upon the tufts of marshy grass. A few stifled exclamations and confused murmurs acquainted Hervé, at the same instant, that the women and the soldiers had also discovered this strange spectacle.

"Hallo, Colibri!" said Bruidoux, "now is the time to get your silk stockings out of your portmanteau."

"Hervé," cried Andrée, throwing her arms round her brother, "in the name of heaven what is this?"

"They are Chouans, my dear. I was warned that I should find these gentry here. Stay here, and fear nothing."

As he finished this speech, which was designed to calm his sister's superstitious terrors by suggesting apprehensions of some positive danger, Hervé thought he saw the canoness make a sudden gesture of astonishment, and look at him with a penetrating glance. This glance revived all his half-forgotten suspicions: he bent down towards Francis, and said hastily, "See! the canoness shows no anxiety: it is some snare!"

"Ah! so much the better!" answered the latter, drawing a long breath. "Shall we charge them, colonel?"

The two young men, turning round with some curiosity to look into the valley, saw that the *lavan-dières* were continuing their work apparently without taking any notice of the republican detachment. The soldiers became a little unsteady.

"This has lasted long enough," muttered Hervé. "My lads," said he, aloud, "we will soon make them fold up their linen. Make ready! Ladies, and you too, Kado, get behind the rocks, I entreat you." The rattle of the ramrods in the barrels of the muskets was heard, and the two officers, having formed their men into a compact body, advanced on the damp soil of the valley.

As the soldiers approached the nocturnal workwomen, whether it were an illusion produced by the moon's uncertain light, or arising from the peculiar disposition of their minds at that moment, they plainly perceived that the shape and stature of these unknown beings gradually increased to a size really supernatural. They were not more than forty paces from them when the strange group suddenly abandoned their work and commenced dancing an extraordinary round, accompanied by a kind of low incantation, like

the humming of bees in a hive. Hervé commanded a halt.

"Hallo! you there!" cried he; "*qui vive?*" Then, after a short silence, "I warn you, whatever you may be, that I will not expose a single one of my men in such a mad affair. Present, soldiers!"

"Look out now for broken crowns!" muttered Bruidoux.

But the *lavandières* continued their dance and, mysterious chant, without heeding this appeal.

"Fire!" cried Hervé.

As soon as the smoke had dispersed a little, and the soldiers could see the effect of their volley, a peal of laughter echoed through the ranks. All the actresses in this fantastic ballet, were seen stretched at full length and motionless upon the ground, not unlike so many white table-cloths exposed to the night-dew.

"That will teach them," said Bruidoux, "not to dance unseasonable dances by moonlight."

But Hervé, rather suspicious of so complete a success, ordered the muskets to be re-loaded, and commanded the grenadiers to keep their ranks, after which the detachment moved on, preceded by the two young officers. They had not advanced ten paces, when suddenly the white shapes, which were lying pell-mell upon the ground, rose up in a body and trotted across the plain, jumping and frisking with an air of great vitality.

"Forward, Francis!" cried Hervé; "after them, full gallop; and you, my men, chase them as you think best." As he spoke, he dashed his spurs into his horse's side, and sprang forward side by side with the young lieutenant upon the traces of the fugitives. Unfortunately the soil of the valley was marshy, and the horses sank almost at every step into mud-holes, which the phantoms had either had the wit, or possessed sufficient acquaintance with the spot, to avoid. The grenadiers rushed in disorder after their leaders,

and the chase, frequently interrupted, and accompanied by a concert of cries, shouts, curses, and peals of laughter, added another strange scene to those of which the haunted valley had been the theatre.

The troop of *lavandières* having reached the extremity of the valley, half running, half dancing, began to climb the bank upon the top of which were placed the huge mass of ruins. Hervé and Francis redoubled their efforts, and had at last the pleasure of feeling the firmer ground of the hill-side under their horses' hoofs. Pelven was a few steps in advance of his friend.

"Wait for me, colonel!" exclaimed Francis; and seeing that Hervé, without listening, went on scaling the bank, "beware!" cried he, "you will get into some mess! There may be a hundred Chouans up there for aught you know!"

"If there were a hundred thousand, with the great Chouan himself at their head," answered Hervé, who was maddened past all endurance, "I swear I will charge them."

At the same instant, the young colonel reached the top of the ascent, and perceiving the *lavandières* only a pistol-shot off, he gave a shout of triumph; for upon the level ground of the table-land the struggle became greatly in favour of the horsemen. The fugitives finding themselves hard pressed, made a turn to the right, and fled as fast as they could towards the ruins; but Francis foreseeing this manœuvre, had, as he was climbing the hill, taken ground in the same direction, and Pelven saw him suddenly appear at a short distance off, riding in such a way as to cut off the *lavandières*, who were thus hemmed in between the two officers. Hervé now perceived them disappear behind a portion of the wall which stood apart, and which was surrounded by the remains of an exterior postern of the castle, but could not perceive them emerge on the other side. Francis was disappointed in the

same manner. "They are hidden behind that wall!" cried he. A few seconds after, leaping their horses over the ruins, they met from opposite sides behind the solitary wall; but all traces of the *lavandières* had disappeared. They dismounted, knelt upon the ground, and proceeded to examine the spot, lifting up the rubbish and striking the earth with the pommels of their sabres; but whether it was that the night, which had become darker, prevented their success, or whether they were mistaken in attributing this sudden disappearance to the natural course of events, it is certain they could discover nothing which might explain in a natural manner this disagreeable conclusion to their pursuit.

CHAPTER III.

"Seigneur, j'ai reçu un soufflet."—MOLIERE.—LE SICILIEN.

"THIS is a comedy," said Hervé, rising, "which I shall ever regret not having been able to turn into a tragedy."

"But I presume, colonel, that as soon as our men come up, we shall examine every spot, and turn over every stone, till we discover our fair fugitives."

"I do not mean to do so. We have not the necessary instruments, and besides I have no wish that my grenadiers should be picked off one by one from the trap-hole of a cellar, or that we should be made fools of a second time. If, as I believe, these fellows have other exits by which they can escape in spite of us, we have only to keep a careful watch to-night, and so keep this Jack-a-lantern affair locked up in its box till to-morrow."

"So be it, colonel; but the canoness will have a rare laugh at the way in which we have been caught."

"Let her laugh; we shall laugh in our turn, when the proper time comes. Silence! I hear our men."

The soldiers now ran up panting and covered with mud; they shouted for joy when they beheld their officers, and crowded round them full of curiosity. Hervé thought it more prudent to tell them that the Chouans had had time to descend the opposite side of the hill before he had reached the top; he even pointed out at some distance a pine grove into which he said he had thought it useless to pursue them. He was beginning to get embarrassed in his explanation, when he was extricated from his difficulty by the arrival of the

women and the guide. Andrée sprang from her horse, and threw herself trembling upon her brother's neck, who briefly repeated to her the invention with which he had just entertained the grenadiers. Then, having placed a sentinel at the foot of the wall, under the pretence that he was to observe the pine wood, he gave his arm to his sister, and turned towards the chateau, followed by the whole company.

"Dear Andréo," said Hervé to his sister, seizing a moment when the canoness could not hear him, "do you still feel any interest in me?"

"Any interest? Good heavens! Hervé, is interest the word for two orphans like us to employ? Say affection, the most sincere, the most tender affection."

"Thank you, dearest Andrée, for banishing a painful thought from my mind."

"What thought?"

"The thought that my sister might be an accomplice in some enterprise undertaken against my honour both as a man and as a soldier."

"Your honour, Hervé? That is a word upon which I fear we shall not agree."

"I will explain to you, then, the way in which I look upon it," answered Hervé severely. "My honour consists in serving to the death those colours yonder; and I must tell you, Andrée, that any plan which should have for its object the making me fail in this duty, would be turned to the confusion, grief, and pain of all those concerned in it."

"In the name of heaven, dear brother!" said Andrée, "what suspicion can you have formed against me?"

"Against you in particular, none; but the scene which has just taken place, has not, I fear, been, so inexplicable to all the ladies as to you. I fear that it may be only the prelude to less harmless jugglery, and therefore I tell you, in order that you may repeat it to them, that I am utterly incapable of

ever preferring my life to the honour of dying with my soldiers."

Upon hearing these words, which revealed the nature of Hervé's apprehensions, the young girl, as if involuntarily, heaved a deep sigh. "Heaven be thanked!" said she, hurriedly, "I am perfectly certain that you and yours run no greater risk than ourselves in this journey;" and then bringing her mouth close to her brother's ear, "you know quite well besides," continued she, in a mysterious tone, "that to two at least of the party, your welfare, colonel, is not wholly indifferent."

Leaving this drop of balm to produce its effect on the mind of the suspicious young man, Mademoiselle de Pelven, bounding lightly up the steps, disappeared in the vestibule of the deserted manor-house. The vast and irregular edifice, which the country-people called the Chateau de la Groac'h, bore the impress of the different centuries through which it had passed since its foundation. The most considerable part of the ruins, the lofty donjon, which was still standing, and the remains of a battlemented wall of circumvallation, retained the imposing character of a fortress of the twelfth century. Other less lofty buildings displayed, by the peculiar nature of their formation, the traces of a period of architecture still more ancient, while the building with pinnacles which formed the wing opposite the donjon, seemed hardly so old as the latter days of the Valois. This part of the edifice was still fitted up with windows, ornamented with balconies of iron tracery.

Mademoiselle de Pelven rejoined Bellah and the canoness in this pavilion. Conducted by the guide, they passed through the ruined apartments which formed the first story, and made a few hasty preparations for the night in the two rooms which seemed best fitted to afford shelter; whilst Kado set out a table for the women, and placed upon it some

provisions which he had procured in the last village through which they had passed. The meal was a brief and silent one, and Andrée and Bellah soon retired to the apartment prepared for them. The canoness shared hers with Alix, and the Scotch waiting-woman took possession of a little oratory formed in a turret. Camp beds had been arranged beforehand by Kado's foresight, to whom the care of regulating the plan of the journey had been entrusted.

When Bellah and Andrée were left alone in their vast apartment, which was lighted only by a solitary lamp, they knelt down together and prayed for some time in silence. Andrée rose the first, and approaching a window, she appeared to observe with interest what was passing in the court-yard of the old chateau. The soldiers had made fires here and there, the light from which flickered at intervals through the ruined arches and mutilated windows, whilst they were all establishing themselves in the best way they could for passing the night. On the grass-plot before the façade of the manor-house, Colonel Hervé was walking alone, occupied, doubtless, in pondering and commenting in his own mind upon his sister's last words, with that restless childishness common to lovers. He suddenly stopped, and raised his eyes to the window from which Andrée was observing him.

The young girl started back hastily, and began to pace in an agitated manner up and down the room, twisting her handkerchief in her fingers. Bellah had concluded her devotions, and remarking the extraordinary emotion which coloured Andrée's cheeks—

"What is the matter, dear sister?" asked she, with some anxiety.

Andrée made no reply, but pushed away the hand which attempted to take hers, and continued to walk hastily up and down, tormenting her little handkerchief.

"What now?" returned Bellah. "Are you vexed, dear Andrée, and about what?"

"Sister," said Andrée, stopping suddenly before her, "this cannot last! I shall not be able to sleep to-night, nor the following night; I shall never be able to sleep again."

"What! are you frightened to such a degree as that? But come, *ma mignonne*, I am with you, am I not? Your brave ancestors are not dreaming of frightening us. Besides, we have a light, and you know that ghosts——"

"Oh, I don't care for ghosts!" retorted Andrée, "nor for my ancestors either. I wish I had never had any."

Upon receiving this sharp answer, Mademoiselle de Kergant raised her eyes with that enchanting look which was peculiar to her, and then resumed: "But what does hinder you, then, from sleeping and allowing me to sleep, mademoiselle?"

"I don't know," said Andrée.

Mademoiselle de Kergant sighed, made a slight gesture of compassionate interest, and, at length, answered gently; "Nor I either, I am sure, my dear Andrée."

"Your aunt is an old dragon," cried Andrée violently.

"Sister!"

"And you are another, Bellah!"

"Indeed!" said Mademoiselle de Kergant quietly, with another upward glance. Andrée lost all patience.

"It never even entered your heads," cried she, "to invite my brother to sup with his sister! No! you have left him to wait outside, as if he were a dog. My poor brother! how we deceive him! And that *you* should treat him in this way, too—! As for your aunt, it cannot be helped; I was sure beforehand that she would; but you, who knew how devotedly Hervé——"

The young girl paused, and seemed to hesitate whether or not she should complete the sentence, while her companion's look expressed at once anxiety to hear and assumed disdain of the subject.

"I am aware," said Bellah, "that Colonel Hervé is the brother of my dearest friend, and it is because I do remember it, Andrée, that I have been able to put such a restraint upon my feelings—I, a noble and a Christian—as to treat merely like a stranger a man whom I know to be an apostate, and a gentleman whom I know to have forfeited his honour."

"Is it come to this?" cried Andrée. "Then as certainly as you have now with those words effaced the remembrance of ten years of affection, the apostate and the felon shall know this instant what service he may expect from your hands. He shall know, at least, that he is not the only traitor here. Let me pass!"

"Andrée," said Mademoiselle de Kergant, "you will not do this!"

"I will!" returned Andrée, whose firmly closed lips evinced her settled purpose. "You have made me blush for my brother; I am resolved that you shall blush in your turn before him."

Bellah seized Andrée's dress with a supplicating gesture, and almost falling upon her knees before her: "In the name of your family," said she, "by your dearest hopes, I implore you to stay, darling Andrée!"

"No; no! you were pitiless, and I will be so too," returned the young girl, stamping on the ground with her foot, in a sort of madness. "Let me go!"

Andrée sprang to the door. Bellah rose, and stood immoveable; her face had assumed a marble paleness, but her soul of fire was betrayed by the lightning of her glance, and by her nostrils dilated with anger. She raised her right hand with a queenly gesture, and speaking slowly and with dig-

nity; "Andrée de Pelven," said she, "is this the hospitality which you practise under your father's roof? This place will be cursed in all future times for your crime; but, since the matter is becoming serious, since this misfortune must happen, yield in your turn. I will spare you the disgrace of treachery, and you shall see if I still blush when I bring martyrdom upon myself."

The young enthusiast, her lips still quivering with emotion, turned with dignity towards the door, against which Andrée was leaning, her eyes fixed, and trembling all over. As Bellah attempted to pass her, the poor child ceased to tremble, her charming countenance was covered with a deathlike paleness, her eyes closed, and she slid gently upon the floor. Bellah fell upon her knees, took her friend's head in her arms, and covering the forehead and lips of the fragile being with kisses:

"Holy Virgin!" said she, "what have I done? Andrée! my sister! oh pardon him—help her! Poor heart! poor heart! It is I, Andrée; nothing has happened, darling! Poor innocent, she does not know where she is. How could I have been so angry with her? Look up! speak to me—I will do anything you like, only speak to me, my sweet sister!"

Andrée recovered her senses by degrees under this shower of caresses; she opened her eyes, smiled like a waking child, and throwing her arms round Bellah's waist—

"Confess," said she, "that you love him a tiny little bit!"

"She is dreaming still," said Bellah. "Dear Andrée, do you feel yourself better?"

"I am better, if you love him; I am worse, if you do not," answered Andrée.

"Oh Heaven!"

"Your heaven will be his heaven; your law his law, whenever you choose."

Then, rising quickly, and falling on Bellah's neck; "Listen to me," continued Andrée, "I do not want you to scream out of the window to him, 'Colonel, I adore you!' but you owe him some little recompense for all his misfortunes; you must give him something. Let us see, what shall it be?"

"Nothing, I assure you."

"Ah! I have it," replied the mischievous girl, dexterously snatching the white feather out of Bellah's hat, "what a triumph for you to make a republican officer wear the king's colours!"

This artful compromise was not at all to Mademoiselle de Kergant's taste: she sprang forward to regain the feather which her adopted sister was about to employ so traitorously; but Andrée, more active in her movements than her friend, had already half opened the window, and Bellah was only in time to give by her presence a still more precious meaning to the light token, which fell fluttering down upon Colonel Hervé's head. Andrée burst into a laugh, and Mademoiselle de Kergant withdrew hastily from the window with a gesture of dignified vexation. It might have been imagined that the charming missile, which now lay at Colonel Hervé's feet, was endowed with some magic power, for, since he had felt its light touch, the young man appeared to have taken root at the spot where this event had interrupted his walk. He felt certain that they were watching him from the window, and he remained in a true state of agony, his eyes fixed upon the mysterious plume, not daring to take it up, and still less daring to leave it there. If he evinced the delight which he really felt, to what ridicule should he not expose himself if it had been accident or merely a jest of Andrée's that had directed it in its flight. If, on the contrary, he left it lying there with apparent indifference, should he not run the risk of deeply offending her from whom he hoped at the bottom of his heart that this discreet message had

proceeded? Between these two fatal fears, Hervé decided upon a middle course. He picked up the tiny plume, not with the gesture of an eager lover, but with the air of a man who has found something strange, and whose curiosity is excited; and he then resumed his walk, examining his prize with a sort of *nonchalante* simplicity, as if he were saying: "Why it is an ostrich feather! Where the deuce could it have fallen from, and who would have expected to find an ostrich feather in this part of the world?" But as soon as the young man was concealed from all curious eyes by the angle of the wall, his manner changed, he pressed the feather warmly to his lips; then, smiling at his own weakness, he unbuttoned his uniform, folded the plume in four, and placed it carefully next his heart.

After having concealed his treasure, with as much anxiety as if he were concealing some bad action, Colonel Hervé, seeing that the apartment of the young girls, as well as all the other parts of the ruins, seemed now buried in repose, turned towards the hall of the manor-house, where Francis had already sought refuge against the coldness of the night. The young colonel was mounting the steps which led to the threshold of the vestibule, when a feeling of precaution induced him to turn his eyes towards the isolated portion of wall at the foot of which his hunt of the *lavandières* had terminated in such a puzzling manner. Hervé had himself chosen the soldier, who a short time before had relieved the sentinel first placed at this important post; he was a young grenadier named Robert, whose courage and intelligence were well known to him. He could not see the man; but, while examining the spot where he was placed, he perceived a white handkerchief fluttering above the ruins, and waved backwards and forwards apparently with the intention of attracting his notice.

Hervé hastily descended the steps, and walked

rapidly, though cautiously, towards the ruined postern. When only a few paces from it, he distinguished the sentinel, who, having also recognised him, took off the handkerchief which he had placed on the end of his bayonet, and was satisfied with making signs with his hand, as if to entreat him to redouble his speed and his precaution. A few seconds more, and Hervé was close to the wall, face to face with the soldier. "Well, Robert," said he, in a low voice, after having satisfied himself that no one was within hearing, "what is the matter?"

"The matter is, colonel," answered the soldier, speaking very softly, with a kind of terror, mingled with gaiety, "the matter is, that it lies with us to catch the bird on its nest, and the king on his throne, and the courtiers and all the old *ci-devant* troop. They attempted to make you swallow a cheat as big as a church, and as long as from here to China: you are betrayed!"

"Betrayed! How! by whom? Speak quickly!" cried Hervé.

"Speak lower, colonel, speak lower, returned the sentinel: this is the story: I was marching quietly up and down, with my eyes fixed upon the pine wood, according to orders, when, all at once, what do I hear behind or below me, I was not sure which, but a great noise of voices, as one might say a set of lawyers holding forth, and as I am naturally anxious to learn, I creep, and creep, and at last I get my nose into the hole, and—"

The soldier stopped, and stood with his mouth wide open, with a gesture of the most extreme terror; then Hervé saw the unhappy young man bound backwards, and fall heavily upon the earth. At the same moment he heard the explosion of fire-arms, and was immediately afterwards received by a heavy blow on the head, and fell completely senseless to the ground, a few paces from the grenadier. Then a man of athletic

proportions, the person who had just committed this double act of violence with such cruel success, advanced from the foot of the wall out of which he appeared to have risen, and threw a scrutinizing glance towards the chateau. Meanwhile, a figure of more fragile appearance was bending over the inanimate body of the republican colonel, and was touching his head with care.

"There is no harm done, I think," said he, in a voice the tones of which were remarkably sweet.

"The shot has awakened them," said the other. They'll be all running up here, which will give us a fine opportunity to escape on the other side." As he spoke he followed his companion through a large opening made at the bottom of the wall, which instantly closed after them, and so effectually as to leave no trace of their passage.

CHAPTER IV.

"Comment vous nommes vous? J'ai nom Eliacin."—RACINE.

At the sound of the shot, all the soldiers, led by Francis, rushed in disorder to the spot from which it appeared to have proceeded. The young lieutenant wrung his hands when he saw the body of his friend stretched motionless upon the ruins; but his anxiety was relieved, when, with the aid of a torch, he convinced himself that there was no appearance of any wound.

"The hand which gave that blow," said Bruidoux, gravely, picking up the colonel's hat which bore the marks of a fearful stroke, "the fist, I say, which made this pancake, certainly does not belong to a young lady's arm."

"We must thank the wretch too, whoever he is," said Francis, "that at least he did not wish to spill blood."

"My opinion, lieutenant, on the contrary is that he has spilled a full bucket of it. I could not make out what it was that was running under my feet, but—"

"Wretch that I am," exclaimed Francis, falling again upon his knees beside Hervé's body; "I must have examined him carelessly, there must be some horrible wound!"

"Horrible, indeed," said Bruidoux, in a pained and serious tone which was not natural to him; "but you are not looking for it in the right place, lieutenant. Here is the wounded man, or rather the deceased, for the lad appears to me to have pressed his musket to his left arm: yes, he has mounted his last guard."

While he was speaking, the serjeant, with the help

of the soldiers, was trying to raise Robert's body which the ruins had till then prevented them seeing.

"Dead! are you sure he is dead, old Bruidoux? Is there really nothing that can be done?"

"Nothing now, beyond a prayer for his soul, as in the old times, citizen lieutenant. The ball has pitched upon the best place, like an aristocrat as it was, and it has plumped itself into the heart. It's a pity," continued Bruidoux, "it's a pity to see a lump of lead, thrown by a cowardly rascal, enter so easily into the breast of an honest man; I would give my left eye to have that hag of a *lavandière* who pressed her skeleton finger on the trigger, in a *tete-a-tete* for two minutes! It is needless to observe to you, citizens, that we are not going to leave our comrade stretched out there like an old gaiter. He shall have his bed six feet long, as if he were a duke or peer of the old regime. Hem! hem! I loved that lad, my children, he was a brave fellow. He had not, no more than I have, the stuff in him to make a general-in-chief of, but sitting round the soup-pot or facing the enemy, there was much pleasure in being next to him: he was a companion of the most irreproachable description. Hem! hem! Citizens, a tear may fall upon a grey moustache without dishonouring it, when we are bidding our last adieu to a friend. That poor devil Robert, citizens, it is all up with him!"

The unacademical Bruidoux, passing his sleeve across his eyes, concluded his harangue. The solemnity of the time and place, the presence of the corpse, to whose features the vacillating glare of the torches seemed to give a strange vitality, the respected character of the speaker, had aided the moral effect of his funeral oration. The grenadiers, who formed Bruidoux's simple auditory, looked at each other and nodded their heads with a satisfied air, as if to assure each other that a soldier could desire no better a panegyrist than their old serjeant. During this

interval, Francis had succeeded in restoring his friend to consciousness, but Hervé's weakness would not allow him as yet to answer the eager questions of the young lieutenant. Some of the soldiers, under Bruidoux's directions, busied themselves in digging a grave with their sabres, in which the remains of their unfortunate comrade were interred. Others, forming a sort of litter with their muskets, prepared to transport their colonel to the chateau. They had traversed about two thirds of the distance, when the noise of a fresh explosion, and near at hand, suddenly arrested them. Hervé made an attempt to rise, but fell back, exhausted by the effort. Francis, leaving two grenadiers with him, hastened with the rest of the men towards the donjon, from behind which the shot seemed to have been fired.

The sentinel, who had been placed at this part of the ruins, was found at his post reloading his musket. When questioned by Francis as to his motive for giving this alarm, he replied that he had seen a procession of black and white phantoms suddenly appear at the base of the escarpment upon which the donjon stood; that after having challenged them, without receiving any answer, he had fired at them. The soldier added, with a slight trembling in his voice, that they had instantly disappeared, as if the earth had closed upon them. A thick fog rising from a little river which ran at the foot of the donjon, explained to Francis in a more natural way the cause of this new disappearance of their slippery enemy. He could not restrain an expression of bitter vexation; then recommending the sentinel to use the utmost vigilance, he ran to join Pelven, who, already quite recovered from his swoon, was advancing to meet him. The young men, having related to each other the events which they had witnessed during the night, then dismissed the grenadiers to resume their interrupted alumbers.

"I have no doubt," said Hervé, when he was

alone with his friend, "that all this has happened without my sister's knowledge; for this very evening she assured me that she knew we were exposed to no danger, and I know she is incapable of falsehood. What appears to me the most likely interpretation of these strange occurrences, is that we have disturbed a band of Chouans in their retreat. Unfortunately, we cannot pursue them in this fog."

"And Robert gave you reason to believe that he had discovered there was an understanding between our travellers and the lawyers of the vault?"

"The poor fellow seemed to think so," returned Hervé, "and the somewhat rude forbearance which they showed to me, convinces me of the truth of what he asserted. The canoness is mixed up with it, I am certain; but my sister must have been kept in the dark as well as myself."

"I would swear it," said Francis.

"That is unnecessary," replied Hervé; "but really my head begins to pain me more than is quite pleasant. I feel that I have great need of rest, and I shall endeavour to procure some. Try to sleep, too."

They then separated; after having agreed to leave the ladies and especially Andrée, in ignorance of the events of the night, in order to avoid giving cause of anxiety to some of the party, and cause of secret triumph to others. As Francis, after having quitted the colonel, was passing in front of the façade of the manor house, he could not help remarking, with astonishment, the perfect quiet which reigned in this privileged part of the chateau. That the sleep of its fair occupants was unbroken by the shots and the noise which had followed, might be explained by that profound slumber which is one of the sweetest privileges of their age; but neither the canoness nor the forger could allege such an agreeable excuse to account for their hardness of hearing. This insensibility to sound, while it increased the young lieutenant's

vague suspicions, inspired him with a mischievous idea, which he seized upon immediately with boyish delight. He picked up a stone, and having convinced himself that nobody was observing him, flung it against the canoness's window, after which he ran and concealed himself behind a wall, laughing heartily with that joyous and thoughtless mirth which renders the school-boy happier than an emperor.

At the noise of the breaking glass, which announced the complete success of Francis's exploit, some of the soldiers, who were stretched here and there amongst the ruins, lifted up their heads with anxiety; but the profound silence which succeeded, convinced them that they had again been the dupes of one of those thousand practical jokes which the demons of the night invent to plague unhappy mortals, and they quietly fell asleep again. Francis now perceived a shadow cautiously approaching the broken window, and thought he could recognise the sharp profile of the person he had principally intended to annoy. The canoness appeared to press something in the shape of a nose against one of the uninjured panes of glass, and Francis stooped down quickly and picked up a second stone: young men are pitiless. But the shadow, whether it had terminated its investigations, or whether it were impelled by some salutary presentiment sent by good geniuses sometimes even to old maids as well as to other creatures, retired from the window, and there the affair ended.

About three hours after the innocent conclusion of this episode, all the soldiers were astir, stretching their stiffened limbs, and warming them in the sun. The forester Kado began to saddle the horses with his usual gravity, while Hervé and Francis, standing a little apart, seemed engaged in a lively discussion. Serjeant Bruideux took his pipe out of his mouth, approached the two officers with diffidence, and lifting his hand to his cap—

"*Salut et fraternité!* citizens," said he; "you seem as fresh as a two-year old this morning, colonel. I perceive with delight that the blow inflicted by a first-rate fist has had no more effect upon you than if it had proceeded from the hand of a young girl. And is it your intention, citizens, that we should leave this old den without knowing precisely in what style the boudoir of these lady *lavandières* is furnished?"

"That is exactly what I was saying to the lieutenant," said Hervé. "Though we have every reason to believe that the rascals have made off, still it is better to examine their stronghold. A very slight trace might give us the clue to their proceedings."

"Of course," cried Francis. "There is no second opinion. Only let us all go. It is not right that you alone should run the risk of being caught in a trap."

"And what evidence have you that there is any trap?" asked Hervé.

"Have I not pointed out to you the door by which they escaped at the foot of the donjon? They have left it wide open."

"If it is a trap, it is a very cunning one. Light me a torch, Bruidoux. I repeat it again, lieutenant, I will not allow a single one of our men to risk a hair of his head in this affair. It is enough, it is too much, that I have already to reproach myself with the death of that poor fellow Robert."

"Permit me," said Bruidoux, who returned with a lighted torch in his hand, and carrying two others under his arm, "permit me, citizens, to set you at one. Let us all three go; if there are any ladies, they will have all the more cause to be pleased."

Hervé, in spite of his wish to visit the suspected vault alone, consented to this arrangement, fearing to awaken the suspicions of the honest serjeant by any further refusal. So having skirted the donjon,

they all three began to descend with some difficulty the steep hillock which served as its foundation, by the assistance of the stunted shrubs which grew in the clefts of the rock. Having reached the foot they found themselves only a few feet above the bed of the ravine, and in front of a small door which Colonel Hervé had discovered from above, and which was contrived in such a way as not to be easily observed from the plain below. This door, fastened to the rock, formed the entrance of a sort of narrow dark cave. Hervé, his torch in his hand, entered stooping, closely followed by his two companions. After a few steps this passage terminated in a vast vaulted hall, to which arches perfectly untouched by time gave a certain character of gloomy architectural elegance. A few torches were still smoking on the damp soil, but this was the only trace which could lead them to guess that any living beings had recently occupied this retreat.

The principal cave communicated by an arched door with smaller chambers, in which the young men and the serjeant continued their researches. Hervé examined that portion of the vaults corresponding with the wing of the manor-house which the canoness had occupied during the night. In the angle of a recess the red light of his torch suddenly flashed upon the steps of a winding staircase which was lost in the roof. Hervé sprang hastily up the steps, but when he had reached the level of the roof, he found that the staircase was broken; five or six of the steps had been forced out of their places, and were lying at the bottom, leaving a space which it was impossible to cross. After a minute examination of these dilapidated remains, Hervé was convinced that the demolition dated only from the preceding night, and his suspicions against the politic canoness were confirmed by this discovery. A careful search in the apartment of the old lady would not have failed to throw light on the conjectures of the young colonel upon this

head; but such had been his education that the thought of invading the sanctuary of any woman, however aged or culpable, was rejected with repugnance.

Hervé rejoined the young aide-de-camp in a distant vault, just as the latter had laid his hand upon an enormous bolt which fastened a kind of low and broad trap-door, formed in the wall, and which was reached by a steep ascent of earth. Uniting their efforts, the young men pushed back the bolt, when the door fell down like a portcullis, and the daylight streaming full into the vault, they perceived that accident had directed them to the mysterious opening which had so conveniently concealed the *lavandières* the evening before, and through which Robert's assassin had escaped. The door was made of strong oak boards, lined on the inside with sheets of iron, and masked on the exterior with a slight brick work which fitted in exactly to the rest of the wall. The young men quitted the cave by this issue; but, just as they found themselves on the solid ground, they heard loud cries proceeding from the cavern, and they were about to plunge into it again, when Bruidoux appeared triumphantly at the opening, holding by one ear a captive of an unexpected kind.

At the old serjeant's cries, the grenadiers, the forester, and the brilliant company of the emigrants, hastened towards the wall. The prisoner, in the midst of the wondering circle by which he was surrounded, employed himself quietly in rubbing his eyes, to dissipate the dazzling effect of the sun. He was a child of about ten years of age, with blue eyes and a charming countenance; his black hair was cut square upon his brow, and flowed down upon his shoulders, and he wore a long vest made of brown cloth.

Hervé recognised him at the first glance, and looked at Kado with a mingled expression of

reproach and pity, to which the guide replied by an almost imperceptible gesture of grief. The women meantime exchanged secret glances expressive of terror and confusion.

"Only imagine, colonel," said Bruidoux, "that this son of a *lavandière* was sleeping like a young otter on a heap of straw. His mamma must have forgotten him in the scuffle. By signs, and otherwise, I addressed two or three polite questions to him; but my young gentleman seems a stranger to the habits of good company, and remains as mute as a fish."

While the serjeant was speaking, the child looked round with staring eyes; then, crossing his arms behind his back, he said, with an air of simplicity, which, if not genuine, was admirably acted—

"Oh! oh! what fine gentlemen are here, and beautiful ladies as well! Good morning to you all! Well! what are you all come here for?"

"What are you here for yourself, you little imp?" cried Bruidoux. "I believe he will ask us for our passports next."

Any doubts which Hervé might still have entertained as to the duplicity with which he had been treated, vanished almost entirely at the sight of the well-known features of the captive child; but the young officer, touched by the anguish which he read on Kado's pale and contracted lips, hesitated to take the full advantage of his good fortune.

"My little friend," said he to the child, "you look too intelligent to play the part of a fool. You must tell the truth, or your age will not protect you from a severe punishment. You have passed the night with fellows whom we have more reasons than one to conclude are our enemies."

"I should think so, indeed," muttered Bruidoux, "if it were only on account of that *ex-devant* fisty cuff."

"Silence! serjeant," said Hervé. "Come, my little fellow, who brought you here?"

"The groac'h," said the child; "the groac'h of the valley."

"The groac'h!" interrupted Bruidoux; "I'll give it you, with your groac'h! I suppose it was your beauty of a groac'h that pulled the trigger which"—

"Citizen serjeant," said Hervé, sharply, "let there be no more of this. This affair does not concern us, we will lose no more time in questioning him; only you must search his pockets. This child belongs to the law, who has punished younger than he. I am sorry to be forced to allude to it, but those hard-hearted men who sacrificed the poor boy should have remembered that."

"Yes, yes! I know," said the little fellow, laughing; "but you may do as you like! The fairy will save me. Between ourselves, gentlemen, I must inform you that she is my wife."

"And this, I suppose, is her wedding present," said Bruidoux, pulling out of the young prisoner's pocket a humming-top and string. "You would have done better, my little man, to have stuck by this game, which, as you well know, citizens, is no potentate's amusement, but merely an honest and democratic pastime. When I was no bigger than this youngster, I used to pass the greater part of Sunday, and the whole of the week, playing with an instrument of this size in the church porch, which made our curate declare that I should end where I began, namely with the rope; and all because one day I had driven my top into his shoe, a feat which enchanted my father, who was a shoemaker in our town."

While he was speaking, the old serjeant had carefully wound up the top, and now proceeded to spin it off, watching its rapid evolutions with a paternal smile; then suddenly stooping, he gathered it, as he expressed it, into the hollow of his right hand, and continued to admire with a low laugh the endless gyrations of the toy.

The women, meantime, had mounted their horses. Kado advanced to hold the colonel's stirrup, who bent down to the Breton's ear, and said in a low voice—

"You are severely punished for having deceived me, Kado, and I am so likewise for having trusted in your good faith."

The old forester shook with agitation, and replied, with his eyes bent upon the ground—

"Yes, yes! sir; the trial is sharp, and might have been worse if you had chosen, I know. You were sorry for the child. Do you mean to take him with you, poor little fellow?"

"If I did my duty, Kado, I should take both father and son too!"

"The child is very delicate, my master. I loved to look at him, for he is the image of his departed mother. They say that Alix is like me, but the little one is his mother alive again. He is very delicate, sir; and, if a prison is to be the end of all this, or—"

The forester stopped, and put his hand to his throat, as if he were choked by his emotion.

"Master Kado," answered Hervé, "I have given way too much already to old feelings, of which the rest of you seem to take so little account. Can you, or will you, confess aloud, before all these men, what is going on, and what is intended?"

The Breton, after looking round with an air of painful indecision, lifted his hand towards heaven, and said, in a firm voice—

"The child is in the hands of God!"

"Fall into your ranks, and march," cried Hervé.

"Colonel," said Bruidoux, bringing the forester's son forward by the collar, "this little ape was making off to join his wife."

"I give him into your charge, serjeant; you are answerable for him."

"In that case, come close up, my boy," said Bruidoux; and, taking a long thick strap which had been used to fasten the baggage, he passed one end round his own waist and fastened the other firmly round the body of his young prisoner, and in this fashion rejoined the detachment, which descended the hill of ruins as the last morning mists were being scattered by the rays of the rising sun.

CHAPTER V.

"Ride no further sire! return, for thou art betrayed."
OLD CHRONICLE.

DOES not that serious burden, Life, seem more easy to bear, when, in the morning sun, under the deep blue sky, we set forward on foot or horseback, journeying along banks covered with flowers, looking upon the distant purple horizon, and breathing an air fresh as dew?

In this first moment of delight, with all the elasticity of the frame restored by rest, the blessing of existence is suddenly realised, we are astonished that this could ever have been denied, while we contemplate the enchanting framework in which it is surrounded, and we rejoice that we were born. A man passes by who speaks of the price of the funds, or of the elections—the charm is broken, and the divine picture spoiled.

The delight afforded by such reflections was pictured on the countenances of the travellers. Hervé and the old forester alone looked oppressed with care. Hervé walked his horse a few steps in advance, seeking to reconcile his disturbed conscience, and calm his agitated mind. After what had passed, he could no longer have any doubt as to the species of treachery of which he was the victim. He felt that he would be justified in withdrawing, nay that he was called on to withdraw, his protection from those who were so openly abusing his confidence: every step he took made him the accomplice of an unknown but too certain deceit. On the other hand, to interrogate these women, to whom he was bound by so many

powerful recollections, with the severity of a judge or of an enemy, was a task for which he wanted courage; besides, it would open the soldiers' eyes to a system of duplicity to which one of their comrades had fallen a victim, and would at once abandon the emigrants to the rigour of the most fearful reprisals. Andrée herself might become implicated in dangers which she had no share in provoking; in short, it would be to sacrifice helpless women, to murder his own sister, and Hervé, notwithstanding the severity of his principles, still wanted stoicism to burden his conscience with one of those acts which, however violent party feelings may applaud, are still condemned as infamous by the eternal laws graven in the heart of man. So Hervé determined to continue the journey as far as Kergant, hoping that some opportunity would soon arise when he might repair this momentary neglect of his duty, and determining, in any case, to place himself at the general's mercy as soon as he should rejoin him, by acknowledging to him all that had passed.

More easy in his mind after having taken this resolution, Hervé's thoughts reverted to a more trifling subject, but to one scarcely less delicate: namely, the white plume which had floated down from Mademoiselle de Kergant's window, the precise meaning of which flight it was difficult to penetrate. A glance convinced him that the elegant riding hat of the young girl was no longer ornamented by its feather. That at first appeared decisive; but at the same time he observed with some vexation that the little Andrée's hat had also lost its streaming ornament, and this made it all doubtful again. Andrée, who had been on the look-out ever since they set off, had not failed to observe Pelven's twofold glance, though without making any remark upon it. She now struck her horse with her whip, and trotted up close to her brother.

“Well, brother,” said she, “this is a delicious morning. But what is the matter with your hat, colonel?”

At the mention of a hat, Hervé, who already grievously suspected his sister, felt his disturbance increase, and began to whistle and tease his horse by way of excuse for not answering; but Andrée was not a woman to be so easily thrown off the scent.

“What an odd-looking hat you wear,” she began again? A very odd hat, indeed!”

“Odd! in what way?” said Hervé, at last finding he could not escape her.

“In what way? Why it looks so flat. Why do you not wear a plume of feathers in it?”

A plume of feathers was, of all the phrases in the language, the one best calculated to vex Hervé at that moment.

“A plume of feathers!” repeated he, mechanically, and in a low voice.

“A plume of feathers!” said Andrée, making her horse dance.

“Did you sleep well last night?” asked Hervé.

“Not so badly! not so badly, colonel! only I had a plume—I mean a dream—of all kinds of coloured feathers.”

“On what plume did you walk this morning, to make you chatter so about them, little one? and *apropos*, what have you done with your own?”

“What! have I lost it? Ah! I remember; it was carried away by the wind last night.”

“And the wind, it appears, had no greater respect for your friend’s.”

“Ah! ha!” cried the young girl, laughing, “now we have it! No; the wind only carried away one. But which? That is exactly, citizen, what I have promised not to tell you, because if I were it would make you too happy, and therefore—in short, I am not going to put you on the scent.”

As she finished speaking, Andrée wheeled her

horse round, and resumed her former place by the side of her companions.

While Colonel Hervé was forgetting in more happy meditations the annoyances consequent on his equivocal position, Lieutenant Francis was studying with the corner of his eye, and with ill-dissembled delight, the features and deportment of his friend's charming sister. The young man seemed to find such a particular interest in this study, and moreover gave himself up to it with so much assiduity, that Mademoiselle de Pelven could not have helped observing it, even had she not been gifted with extraordinary powers of observation. A woman is seldom displeased with herself when she has attracted the attention of a man of suitable appearance, and quite as seldom is she displeased with the man who has judged her worthy of such attention. It may be added, that if her admirer is classed, for any reason of politics, or social difference, among the enemies of the lady, this circumstance in general gives a more piquant flavour to the regale. Francis's slender figure, his lively air, and that youthful coquetry which made him twist his moustache and place his hat with an air upon one side of his curly locks, gave him altogether the appearance of a handsome page, at once innocent, saucy, and graceful. Mademoiselle Andrée, therefore, had no good reason for being indignant beyond measure at what had befallen her; only, like any young girl who feels that she is examined with particular attention, she was now more silent and quiet than usual; and again, rushing to the opposite extreme, she appeared possessed with a restless, chattering spirit, which gave wonderful activity to her tongue, and to her every movement.

Francis, who felt as if he had been in love with her for centuries, thought he should look like a fool if he did not declare his passion without further delay, and in a manner not to be mistaken. He suddenly

spurred his horse forward, passed Hervé as if he were exercising his steed, disappeared for a minute in a thicket, and then returned full gallop, concealing with care a little bouquet of primroses, violets, and other wild flowers, for which he had heard Andrée wishing a minute before. By good luck, Andrée was then a few steps in advance of the canoness; and Francis reined up abruptly before her.

"Mademoiselle," said he, presenting his nosegay, "your brother sends you this."

The fib was a flagrant one. If Andrée had only had time to foresee what was coming, and to reflect for a moment, the young man would have been lost; but the ignorance of all danger common to lovers of Francis's age, and the happy audacity which is its natural consequence, often procures for them the no slight advantage of taking the fair one by surprise. Andrée, therefore, not very well knowing what she was about, took the flowers from his hand and bent her head, murmuring at the same time her thanks.

It may well be believed that such a scene was not one which the canoness was likely to contemplate with indifference. She immediately rode forward to the speakers at a sharp trot scattering a cloud of perfumed powder in the air as she passed, so that she might have been followed by the scent like some ancient goddess, and fixing on Andrée's blushing countenance a look which presaged a storm: "What has happened?" asked she. "What strain was that patriot troubadour breathing in your ear?"

"He begged me, madam," said Andrée, "to offer this nosegay to you, not daring to do so himself on account of the respect with which your,—what did he say—dignified—yes, your dignified countenance inspired him."

During this speech, the flowers had passed from Andrée's little white hand into the withered fingers of the canoness, while Francis spurred his horse with

such violence that it plunged, kicked, and had almost thrown him.

"Hi! *M'sieu*! young man!" said the old lady: "how do you call these kind of people? My friend, lieutenant!"

"Citizen, madam," said Andrée.

"*M'sieu* citizen!" cried the canoness; then observing the handsome features of the young officer, who had at last approached her—"My child," asked she, "where did you learn respect for women?"

"From my mother, madam;" answered Francis, dryly.

"That is well said," replied the canoness, "and I will keep your nosegay. You have early lost your way in an evil path, my child."

"Evil! not so, madam," said the youth, smiling, "since I have the honour to meet you in it."

"This is wonderful!" said Madame de Kergant. "And how happens it that a young man, well born as you appear, can be devoted to the service of these ferocious ignoramuses, these blood-thirsty rustics—"

"Of the National Convention?" interrupted Francis. "I am naturally fond of fighting, madam; and, naturally too, I prefer fighting for my country, rather than for foreigners."

"Unhappy child!" cried the canoness, "they have warped your judgment with high-sounding words, so that you cannot understand. But how can your mother, since you mentioned her—"

"I did mention her; but let us speak of her no more, madam, I entreat you," said Francis, quickly. As he spoke, his eyelids, fringed with long lashes like a woman's, drooped hastily, as if to arrest the tears which had sprung to his eyes.

A moment's silence followed this involuntary expression of hidden grief. Then Andrée, suddenly addressing the canoness with an indifferent air, which was belied by the tear on her cheek, said—

"Let me see, dear aunt, have those violets any smell?"

As she spoke, she took from the canoness's hand two or three of the flowers, which she was careful not to return.

Francis thanked the fair speaker by a look, the tender expression of which covered her face with blushes. At this moment an alteration in the line of march forced the young officer to leave the two ladies, and relieved Andrée from her embarrassing position.

The country which the detachment was traversing had by degrees changed its appearance. It no longer wore its former bleak and melancholy aspect; the horizon had become more confined, the roads were more regular, and now wound between tall green hedges, which were raised like natural intrenchments, and crowned, at short intervals by large trees in full leaf; the hedges inclosed fields and meadows planted with apple-trees loaded with pink and white blossoms. At the noise made by the horses, large oxen passed their thoughtful heads over these thick hedges, and contemplated the travellers with an abstracted air. Here and there amidst the trees appeared low cottages covered with moss and lichen, while the oaks in the hedge-rows, and the apple-trees in the fields, grouping in large masses, made the country appear as if it were covered with a thick forest, rising from which a slender church steeple indicated, from time to time, the site of a village.

But the thoughts of peace and happiness which were excited by this charming landscape, faded away before the recent and disastrous tokens which appeared at almost every step in the shape of ruined dwellings, smoking roofs, and long funereal mounds. Nature hastened in vain, with a mother's care, to conceal the traces of the crimes and misfortunes of men by covering them with flowers and vegetation; the fields were lying fallow, and those who should have cultivated

them were buried in the barren furrows. From time to time the travellers heard a broken sob, or the low murmur of a voice, in the vicinity of the road, and saw women and children kneeling and praying—living effigies upon otherwise unmarked tombs. Broken trunks of trees, scattered boughs, suspicious-looking breaks in the hedges, the still fresh marks of a desperate struggle, the strange colour of the mud in the ditches, announced, from time to time, the theatre of one of those combats where the glory of the victor, on whichever side he might have fought, was obscured by the crime of the fratricide.

"It must be confessed, colonel," said Francis, at length breaking the silence under which he had till now concealed, in common with the rest of the party, the thoughts produced by these mournful traces, "that civil war is an awful spectacle."

"Say all war, Francis, whether civil or otherwise. Do you think that what is misery here, is not so in foreign countries? Does the crime, if it be a crime, cease at our boundary line? Do you think that the agonies and curses are less bitter or less reasonable because they are expressed in a language which is not ours? The human mind requires centuries to master the most simple truths; it can only comprehend truth by degrees, and it understands at first only those features which touch it most nearly. A duel between two men is called an absurd prejudice; and a duel between two nations, which is only an application on a large scale of the same principle, is looked upon as a reasonable action. What do we term civil war—we, the children of that Christian religion in the eyes of which the human race is but one vast family? If the earth is our common country, of which all men are the citizens, all war is civil war, all war is a barbarous folly."

"And yet you are a soldier?" said Francis, laugh-

“The period in which a truth first starts to light is not that in which it exercises most power,” answered the young colonel. “We may think differently from our age, but we must act with it.”

“But this fearful intestine war, Hervé, has at least come to a conclusion?”

“Yes, for a few days, for a few hours,” replied Hervé, sadly.

It may be as well to mention here upon what appearances this opinion of the young colonel's was founded, an opinion secretly shared by the chiefs of both parties, and which events were about so speedily to justify. The treaties of La Taunaye, La Mabilaye, and St. Florent, signed in succession by Charette, Cormatin, and Stofflet, appeared, it is true, to have included in the pacification all the insurgent provinces — Anjou, Brittany, and Upper Vendee; but the republican generals and representatives were too well acquainted with the persevering intrigues of the royalist party in Paris and London, to have had any other object in view in concluding this armistice but that of increasing division among the rebel ranks, and of disgusting the peasants with war, by inducing them to resume their rustic labours. On the other hand, the extremely favourable conditions, open and secret, granted to the royalists in these treaties, would have been sufficient to awaken the suspicions of the chiefs of that party, even if they had been as sincere in giving their adhesion to them as the most public documents of history prove them to have been the reverse.

The amnesty, no doubt, had been proposed and accepted with reciprocal good faith, but it could not have been so with those articles which, organizing the most warlike of the Vendéans and Chouans into territorial guards under the command of the royalist chieftains, allowed a state to exist within a state, and formed a perpetual nursery of rebellion in the very heart of the Republic. These secret and unheard-of conces-

sions especially, by which the republicans engaged to restore the young king, Louis XVII. to the chiefs armed in his name, could not be sincere, and required an imperial testimony to make them credible. The credulity of the Vendean diplomatists, in the face of these political impossibilities, would be inconceivable, if it were not known that while they pretended to believe all they were told, they showed plainly at the same time that they knew the full value of these feigned professions. This peace, in short, was nothing more, even in the minds of those who had concluded it, than a suspension of arms in which each side hoped to find its advantage.

This slight historical digression is necessary in order that our tale may be understood: but it must not be supposed that this story has the slightest pretension to be historical; that being a dignity which it can in no way pretend to, and which would carry us far beyond our knowledge and ability.

At noon the cavalcade halted for an hour to dine, and the journey was then resumed till evening without any further incident than the passing two or three republican cantonments with whom the pass-word was exchanged. The outlines of the horizon were becoming more sharply defined in the twilight, which was now beginning to fall, when the modest Colibri thus addressed the circumspect Bruidoux:—

“Am I far wrong, serjeant, when I picture America to myself as being a country in which the greatest part of the men are asses?”

The serjeant shrugged his shoulders with a brusque movement, the effect of which was to make the little long-haired captive whom he had in tow nearly stumble.

“March then, young jackanapes,” said Bruidoux. “I must tell you first, Colibri, by way of preamble, that this little federalist almost cuts my back in two. As for the idea which you have formed to yourself

of America and its inhabitants, whom you take to be asses, it would stamp yourself as an ass in any society. Will you march, you little rogue? If you pull the rope again you shall become acquainted with the shape of my foot! There are no such things as asses, Colibri: that is a creature invented by tyrants to humiliate the free man! America, Colibri—do you dare to pull the rope again, you young rascal? Prepare your pipes, for I am going to play on them—America, my boy, is exactly as I told you—*Ha! dia!* little Coburg—and you may now converse about it with facility and—very good, my chicken, you do not weigh more than a feather now—with facility and confidence, Colibri, my friend—Hey! twenty thousand devils! where is that Chouan's son? He has cut the rope! Stop!—stop the prisoner! In the field! to the right!"

The child had, in fact, profited by the first shades of evening to effect his escape, the means for accomplishing which he had no doubt been furnished with during the last halt, and was now scampering across a ploughed field, which was separated from the road by a narrow ditch. Bruidoux strode across this, and dashed after the fugitive, the soldiers following him with loud shouts; but he had hardly reached the middle of the field when the child scaled the hedge at the farther end, which bordered on a thick wood. The boy turned when he had attained this position, and made a sign with his hand, as if to speak. A dozen muskets were levelled at the little fellow.

"How now!" cried Bruidoux, panting. "The first that fires, I swear I'll knock him down! Are we murderers of children? Speak out, my jewel!"

"Take great care of my top," cried the escaped captive, springing into the wood and disappearing.

"Well!" said Bruidoux, regaining the road amidst the ill-concealed laughter of his comrades, "take your laugh, my lads. Your top, you little sauce-box!" added the old serjeant between his teeth. "If I live

long enough to meet you again when your beard is grown, see if I don't make you swallow it, string and all.

"Well, serjeant," interrupted Hervé, dissembling with difficulty the satisfaction he felt at the result of the adventure, "so you have gone over to the royalists?"

"Faith, citizen colonel," answered Bruidoux, with a little vexation, "if you mean to say that I ought to have had the little varlet shot, and that I deserve to be punished, why let them lodge a dozen bullets in my heart at once, and have done with it, for that is not my way of thinking."

"Nor mine either, my old Bruidoux," said Hervé. "I know how you can acquit yourself face to face with a man. As for women and children, let us leave them to those gaolers and executioners who dishonour the Republic."

The brave serjeant, completely restored in the eyes of his subordinates by the young colonel's speech, undid the now useless strap, and whirling it round his head made use of it to inform the loudest laughers of the party that he had not failed to perceive their indiscreet gaiety. He was interrupted in this recreation by the forester Kado, who offered him his gourd with cordiality, saying, "We may not think exactly alike upon many things, comrade; but all I possess is at the service of the man who has pity upon helpless creatures."

The serjeant appeared more surprised than displeased at this overture on the part of Kado. He paused a second, then accepted the gourd, from which he took a long draught, and returned it to the Breton. "All brave men," said he gravely, "have the same ideas upon certain points."

The march was once more resumed, and, under the combined influences of night and fatigue, silence was soon restored in the ranks of the column. Hervé

having remarked more than once that Andrée drooped in her saddle, as if she could hardly keep herself awake, rode up to her, and continued by her side. Under this protection the young girl yielded to a drowsiness which was assisted by the quiet pace of her steed. She was awakened by the distinct though still distant sound of a clock which struck eleven. Andrée listened attentively, and then, clapping her hands for joy, exclaimed, "Follow me, Bellah!" yonder is our Kergant! that is the chapel clock! Pardon me, brother, I must ride on—you will give me leave?" and without waiting for an answer, the charming girl put her horse to a gallop up a wide dark avenue, at the end of which lights were seen sparkling between the trees.

The seignorial manor-house of Kergant was a building of a severe, almost conventual character. It was built in the form of almost a perfect triangle, each angle of which was terminated by a high turret with a pointed roof. The foundations rose from a moat filled with water, but a permanent bridge occupied the place of the draw-bridge of former days and gave access to the principal entrance. The little chapel, the clock of which had just struck, rose to the right of the castle on the top of a little hillock, the sides of which were clothed with green turf. Several out-buildings, used as farm-yards and stables, enclosed a space in front of the manor-house which served as a court-yard. In the middle of this open space, servants carrying torches were listening with respect to the orders given them by a man whose head indeed age had whitened, but without bending the lofty figure, or relaxing the muscles of the manly and rigid countenance. The Marquis de Kergant was clothed completely in black; a band of crape encircled his arm, and a like token of mourning was fastened to the hilt of the hunting sword which hung
Andrée and Bellah sprang from their

horses simultaneously, and the marquis pressed them together to his heart. The old lord then approached the Scotch waiting-maid, and pointed out the castle to her, bowing at the same time with ceremonious politeness. The daughter of the Macgregors took the canoness's arm; and turned towards the entrance of the chateau.

"Follow them, my daughters," said the marquis; "you must be half dead with fatigue."

"Pardon me, my father," interrupted Andrée, in a supplicating tone, "but we did not come alone; there is one—what shall I say?—there is one.—"

"Go! my child," answered the marquis, "your brother's room is prepared."

Andrée seized her adopted father's hand, and pressed it to her lips; a tear dropped upon it, and she followed her friend. M. de Kergant accompanied the young girls to the bridge which crosses the moat. There he stopped, ordered his people to range themselves behind him, and waited.

At this moment, the republican detachment entered the court-yard of the chateau. Hervé dismounted, and advanced towards the marquis with an emotion he could scarcely conquer. Francis and the soldiers followed him at a little distance. On reaching the bridge, he uncovered, and saluted the old man profoundly.

"Sir!" said the Marquis de Kergant, returning his salutation, "receive my thanks."

"I hope, sir," answered Hervé, "that they are given me sincerely as I trust I have deserved them!"

"Be assured, citizen colonel, since such is your title," returned the marquis, "that I am not one of those whose mouth says 'yes' when their heart says 'no.' Permit me to offer hospitality for the night to the son of the Count de Pelven."

Hervé was surprised and offended at the bitter, haughty tone in which these words were spoken.

"Sir," said he, "I must beg the same favour from you for my lieutenant and my soldiers."

"And these gentlemen will know how to take it for themselves, I presume, in case of a refusal."

"Sir, I entreat you—"

"It is what I am curious to see," interrupted the marquis, raising his voice. "I have taken an oath never while I live to allow any of the butchers of your pretended Republic to enter under my roof, and it is enough that I break my oath for your father's son."

At this insulting declaration, an angry murmur burst from the ranks of the grenadiers. Hervé imposed silence with his hand, and then turning again towards the marquis:—

"And may I ask you, sir," said he, "if you took this oath on the same day that you signed the treaty with our representatives, and accepted the amnesty of our pretended Republic?"

"No!" cried M. de Kergant, with violence; "but I made it on the day when you dyed your banners in the blood of your king, and I renewed it when I heard only yesterday in what esteem we were to hold your word of honour, when I learned that you had basely assassinated the son of the martyr in his prison. There are no more treaties! there is no more peace! Enough! citizen Hervé, enter, fear nothing, but ask no more from me."

"You cannot seriously believe me capable of accepting such hospitality," said Hervé, with a smile, the quiet politeness of which made the blood rush to the forehead of the old gentleman. "Since I find that I am in an enemy's country, I am well aware how soldiers are accustomed to pass the night under such circumstances. Come my men! we will bivouac together."

The grenadiers answered with a shout, and followed the young man, who left the chateau with hasty steps.

"Colonel!" said Bruidoux, "he would not be so saucy if he had not a few dozens of Chouans in his cellar. But it's all one—give the word, and we shall see who'll sleep in the open air to-night."

"No!" answered Hervé; "they would say again that we were the first to violate treaties. I am not displeased, moreover, at this reception; it spares me a painful effort. But who is that following us? Ah! is it you, Kado? Well! my friend, do me a service; take care of our horses. I suppose the poor beasts are not included in the oath of exclusion."

"I will, sir. Can I do nothing more?"

"These brave fellows have empty stomachs, my good Kado. Go to the village, and bring us something for supper. You will find us on the Rocky Mount. Here is my purse."

"But, M. Hervé—"

"Take my purse, I tell you, and, on your life, pay for everything, even if you have to force the money into the old man's hand."

CHAPTER VI.

"Your voice pleases me, child of the night,
For phantoms cannot terrify my soul;
Your voice is charming to my heart."

OSSIANIC CHANTS.

GUIDED by the still vivid recollections of his youth, Colonel Hervé, followed by his company, entered a labyrinth of paths which led them, after a march of a few minutes, to the foot of a bare steep knoll. With the exception of a few tufts of reeds, the only vegetation which grew upon the ungrateful soil of this hill was a grass as fine and short as moss which covered it from the top to the bottom, and on which it was difficult to keep a firm footing. There was not a rock to be seen, not even the tiniest little pebble, which could justify the name of the Rocky Mount which Hervé had given it. The soldiers paused, and seemed hesitating to climb this barren slope across which the night wind swept keenly, and which appeared, of all places in the world, the least calculated to afford them shelter.

"Patience, my lads!" said their young commander; "you will be surprised when you reach the top."

The soldiers then commenced the ascent by the first path that presented itself. Hervé was preparing to follow them, when the accents of a panting voice, calling him by his name, arrested him.

"It is your sister," said Francis.

"Yes, yes, it should be so!" murmured Hervé.
"Accompany the men up, my friend, and I will soon rejoin you."

The young lieutenant disappeared, and at the same moment Andrée, terrified and out of breath, threw herself into her brother's arms.

"Come! my darling, take courage," said Hervé; "we ought to have expected this. No weakness, I entreat you." -

Andrée raised her head to answer, but a fresh burst of grief threw her sobbing and panting again on the young man's breast.

"My poor little sister! come, take courage," whispered Hervé. Then raising his troubled brow to heaven, with a sudden gesture of despair, while Andrée continued to sob as if her heart would break upon her brother's bosom, "Oh, heaven!" he said, "she prays for peace! Listen to her! She is imploring the termination of our discords! Oh! grant her prayers!"

"Take me away! take me from this place!" sobbed Andrée.

Hervé made her sit down by him, and took her hand.

"Take you away, dear child? Where? To a camp, to a prison?"

"Anywhere, dearest brother; I cannot remain under a roof from which you have been repulsed with insult."

"But you mistake, darling; they have merely treated me as if I were an enemy, which in truth I am. It is quite natural that the report, whether true or false, of the death of the young pretender, should have exasperated M. de Kergant to such a degree as to make him forget his proper dignity."

"Will you not take me with you, Hervé?" entreated Andrée, in the most caressing tone.

"Till I can offer you a safe and honourable asylum, my child, I must leave you in the one our father selected for you." Hervé rose as he spoke: "We must part," continued he, "I will not give my

soldiers time even to conceive the idea that I have abandoned them."

"Part!" repeated Andrée. "Have we met only to part so soon, and in such a manner?"

"I promise you, Andrée, not to go to-morrow till I have seen you."

Andrée made him repeat his promise, and Hervé, after having pressed her to his heart, turned abruptly away, and hastened up the steep side of the hill.

The slope of the down was too abrupt, and the grass which covered it too slippery, to make it prudent to ascend it in a direct line. Even in the active excursions of his childhood Hervé had generally taken a side-path, which ran twisting and winding between the inequalities of the hill; but the obstacles and perils which deter an indifferent traveller are unfelt or disdained by one agitated by violent emotion, and whose mind is engrossed by some fixed idea; they even afford a fancied relief, by withdrawing for a time the thoughts from the subject which so painfully engrosses them. Hervé, with a tortured heart, had sprung in a species of frenzy up the steepest part of the hill: but towards the middle of the ascent he could no longer keep his footing upon the burnt-up grass, and bending down on his hands and knees he was often obliged to seize hold of the tufts of thorny furze, which tore his hands, to prevent himself rolling to the bottom. Francis, attracted to the spot by the noise he made in climbing, and by his quick breathing, imagined that his friend was the object of a fierce pursuit.

"Courage!" cried he, "we are all here. Have we more *lavandières* on our hands? In the name of heaven, what is the matter?"

"It is nothing, only I think I am about to lose my senses," said Hervé, falling down exhausted at the lieutenant's feet.

The summit of the knoll formed a large level space

as smooth as a lawn, the edges sloping gently down to the exterior; its aspect was singularly wild, bounded as it was by a stormy sky, which, in the broken light of the moon, assumed strange and fantastic forms. Towards the centre of the plateau, a considerable space was strewn with blocks of stone, which from afar presented to the eye nothing but a confused mass; but on a nearer approach it was plain that a certain mysterious order prevailed amongst them. These stones were of all shapes and sizes. Some rose in solitary grandeur, like colossal obelisks, or were ranged symmetrically in long parallel lines, like phantoms petrified in their grey mantles; some were placed across others, rudely imitating a long and narrow table fixed on one claw, while a great number were laid horizontally on two uprights, on that elementary principle of architecture which children put in practice when building their houses of cards. In other places several massive blocks and flat stones had been arranged in such a way as to form low covered galleries, closed at one extremity, which appeared to be the utmost limit of the builder's art, and with which the unknown fashioner of these shapeless monuments had apparently been satisfied.

The soldiers were strolling amongst these remains, examining them with curiosity. No ridge of rocks pierced the soil, no irregularity in the ground indicated the spot from which these gigantic materials had been taken; they must have been brought to this crest from the bottom of the valley. But by what means, and for what object? This was a question which even the sagacity and experience of Bruldoux himself could not determine. However, one of the favourite axioms of the serjeant was, that a military chief should never allow himself to be taxed with ignorance by his subalterns; so he made no scruple of asserting positively to Colibri that, at a period now somewhat distant, the son of a certain aris-

toerat of a giant had amused himself by piling these pebbles one upon the other, instead of going quietly to school as he ought to have done; "for," added the serjeant, "a father ought to be obeyed, even were he an ogre; and even Pitt and Cobourg's sons ought to obey Pitt and Cobourg, strange as that may appear!"

These disputations were interrupted by the arrival of Kado, who was driving before him a little horse tottering under a load of eatables and dry wood, to which the soldiers immediately paid their respects. The old forester offered his assistance in lighting the fire, exchanged a hearty shake of the hand with the serjeant, and then left them, promising Hervé and Francis to bring their horses the next morning by day-break to the foot of the knoll.

After supper, the grenadiers chose their several quarters for the night under the shelter of the Druidical remains, and soon all slept peacefully beneath these stones on which the rust of centuries now concealed the stain of human blood. Francis himself yielded by degrees to the sweet influence of sleep at the entrance of one of those clumsy galleries of which we have spoken, while Hervé was relating to him how he had formerly seen old people praying on these relics of the religion of their ancestors. The young colonel smiled when he perceived that he had lost his auditor, arranged with a fatherly care the folds of Francis's cloak, and then left him, with a sigh of regret for that age, now passed for him, when the eyelids are so easily closed in slumber.

After having walked round the formerly sacred edifice, Hervé seated himself upon one of the flat stones which were scattered here and there over the knoll. This spot still retained in the memory of the inhabitants of the country a vague trace of its ancient character. The uncertainty whether it ought to be feared or respected, sometimes drove them away from

it as from a cursed spot, sometimes prostrated them at the foot of these pitiless altars with prayers upon their lips. That feeling of superstitious curiosity which exercises so much power in childhood, and from which the mind of man is never completely free, had marked this spot among the liveliest recollections of Hervé's youthful days. When quite a child, his mind imbued with ancient legends, he had been attracted to the Rocky Mount by that kind of luxury of fear with which we all are familiar. He remembered that one evening when he had ventured under the dark shade of one of the covered galleries, he was sought for at nightfall and found senseless there, as if he had suddenly encountered the awful presence of the deity which the old priests used to crawl into these dens to seek.

Bellah, whose thoughtful disposition and turn of mind were powerfully attracted by this romantic site, often accompanied Hervé to the Druidical mount. When twilight peopled this melancholy city of stones with doubtful shadows, the terrified girl would appeal to the age and experience of her adopted brother, and the charm of protection thus given and received, had been to them the presentiment of a more tender affection, and the first link of a closer chain. Their young imaginations loved to invoke the fearful and terrible traditions of their native country, sometimes tracing out the marks of fairy feet upon the mossy hollows, sometimes searching for the traces of the bloody rites in the ominous-looking clefts in the altars. It was there, in short, that the two children had experienced the first palpitations of a common danger, and the first delights of an interchange of dreams and fancies. All these recollections now crowded into Hervé's mind. Exhausted with fatigue, yet unable to sleep, he was reclining upon the stone table in the attitude of a statue upon a tombstone, looking far back into his youthful years, when he suddenly started up, for in the midst of the

rocks the white form of a woman appeared gliding noiselessly from one stone to another, and moving towards him. Hervé rose, putting his hand to his brow with the terrified feeling of a man who doubts his reason; but the white vision had already touched him—it was Bellah.

“You! you here at this hour! You, my sister!” exclaimed he, seizing her hand.

Mademoiselle de Kergant withdrew her hand.

“Can Colonel Hervé grant me a few minutes’ interview?” said she, in a constrained voice.

Hervé, recalled to the realities of the present moment, bowed and took off his hat. Then, seeing that Bellah’s anxious eyes sought to penetrate the darkness around her—

“Mademoiselle de Kergant may speak without fear,” said he, “my men are all asleep yonder, beside those fires.”

She leaned her hand upon the rock near which Hervé was standing, and seemed to reflect for a moment.

“Sir,” said she at last, “your government has broken, by a fresh crime, the treaties which bind us to it.”

“I was not aware of it, mademoiselle,” said Hervé.

“I repeat it,” returned Mademoiselle de Kergant. Hervé bowed.

“Sir,” she continued, “have you conceived such an idea of your duty as to deem yourself engaged by the ties of honour to a perjured government? Are you resolved to bear your share of the blame of the most odious crimes which it may please your republic to commit?”

“Mademoiselle de Kergant,” answered Hervé, “must permit me to reject the responsibility with which she would charge me. I answer only for myself; but for myself I can answer. I do not serve men,

I serve principles. I deplore the madness which is caused by these principles: I would fain restrain it. I pity the martyrs made by them: I would gladly save them. But in spite of the blood and ruin with which these principles are darkened, they remain pure, and they remain worthy of the fidelity which I have sworn to them. As for this fresh crime, Mademoiselle de Kergant must permit me, before I condemn it, to have it confirmed by an impartial witness. It pains me to be compelled to use such language to a woman, but I am driven to it."

"Do you doubt my word, sir?" said Bellah, with an accent of the bitterest disdain.

"Yes! I do doubt your word!" exclaimed Hervé, in a deeper burst of passion; "I doubt your word! I doubt even your voice! I doubt your icy lips, and the strange words they speak! Who are you? What do you want with me? What is your errand here? Who sent you? Here! to this spot above all others! To choose *this* spot, that you might quite overwhelm me! By heaven! it is very bold—it is cruel beyond the thought of man! Leave me!"

At the sudden outburst of this storm, the young girl's resolution seemed to give way, and in a low humble voice, like a chidden child's, she answered:

"You need say no more, Hervé; I am going."

But instead of moving away, she bent over the stone altar, and pressed both her hands on her heart to still its beating.

"Bellah," said Hervé, gently, "pardon me; but you have filled up the measure of my suffering. I entreat you to go. You leave behind you a man who is incapable of bearing another pang; his cup is full. Your task is over: adieu!"

"Oh! not yet; not so, Hervé! I came, I hoped—yes, I hoped in this spot at least to be protected by sweet reflections. But what may not the two long years which divide us from them have been to you!"

"They have been such," interrupted Hervé, "that I would give them, and all which are yet to come, for one hour of the time which went before them."

"Oh! a thousand thanks to heaven, if it is so! That time can return, Hervé. You can again enter that family which belongs to us both—again find a father, sisters—again find us all, my brother! You can! Will you?"

"If I could only hope that it were one day possible," said the young man, shaking his head sorrowfully.

"That day is come," said Bellah, quickly. "Listen, Hervé: the war is about to commence again. I could tell you, I could convince you, that our cause will triumph; but that I know you do not heed. This cause is the cause of your fathers, of the unhappy, of heaven! You have deceived yourself, Hervé; but now your eyes are open—they must be open. Oh! how we shall love you, Hervé. It is our cherished dream—we all long for it. My father has already his ambitious designs for you. He is determined that justice shall be done to your talents, to your courage; and this justice you shall have, doubt it not. If you want proofs, Hervé, take this."

As she spoke, she drew a paper from her bosom, which she placed in the young man's hand; but, throwing it at his feet, he exclaimed—

"The justice that I should deserve would be the contempt of my friends, of my enemies, and your contempt likewise, Bellah."

"Mine! you deceive yourself! I can never despise the man who nobly acknowledges that he has done wrong."

"Yet you would be the first to do so, Bellah, and you would be right. Not a word more of this, I entreat you!"

"Oh, heaven! and if I were to tell you, Hervé, that you cannot return among the republicans, that death awaits you there!"—

"That is a thought familiar to my profession. Each moment of my life makes me more resigned to die."

"Yes!" answered the young girl, in a tone of strong conviction; "you are ready to die as a soldier, but an execution, an ignominious death, a traitor's grave—say, are you prepared for that?"

"A traitor's death?" repeated Hervé: "that is impossible."

"You will be accused—you will, indeed. Oh! do not disbelieve it."

"But for what act of treason? May I not even know that?"

"Alas! were my own father's life implicated as yours now is, I could not tell you."

"So be it! My judges then will inform me."

"Hervé, your heart has become hard among these men of blood! You sacrifice your life without reflecting that it does not belong to yourself alone. Poor Andrée!"

"If any misfortune were to overtake me," said Hervé, turning away his head, "I know the heart I leave near hers."

Bellah placed her hand on the young man's arm, with an impetuous movement.

"And me?" she said.

Bellah's despairing gesture, her low and confused accent, gave such an expression to her words that Hervé was touched to the depths of his heart. With a trembling grasp he took the hand which Mademoiselle de Kergant gave him, and looking at her passionately, as she stood before him, her eyes cast to the ground, and her bosom heaving—

"Bellah!" said he, "I love you ardently. My life, for these last two years, has not numbered a single minute on which the trace of this love has not been impressed. All else has been but a vain attempt to escape this thought; but, whether I deceive

myself or not, I can see no honour for me out of the path of duty I have chosen, and I cannot live dishonoured even with you—above all, with you.”

As he finished speaking, Mademoiselle de Kergant's head sank upon her breast.

“And I have nothing more that I can say to him,” she murmured; “nothing! Hervé,” continued she, in a broken voice, “I feel that your resolution is irrevocable: and is this then our last, our eternal farewell; and is it here, too, that we must part? We shall never behold each other more! All is over! All is over! May heaven forgive me that I spoke for myself! I have mixed up with my task the feelings of a woman's wretched heart! I thought to do well! Unhappy girl! because nothing in the world could have cost me so much. I thought to do well, and shame alone—”

“Bellah! dear Bellah! you rend my heart! Farewell!”

“Farewell, then,” cried she, collecting all her courage. “Farewell! man without a heart to remember—without a soul—without pity. My duty shall make me as implacable as yourself. Farewell!”

And she hastened away, but with so light a tread that her departure, like her arrival, seemed only the silent vision of a dream.

The moment she had disappeared along one of the paths which wound down the side of the knoll, Pelven was hastening to the edge of the plateau, to snatch the last moments of a happiness which he was about to part with for ever, when he thought he heard the accents of a man's voice mingling with that of Bellah. The idea that Mademoiselle de Kergant had had an accomplice in her attempt, and that there had been a diplomatic arrangement in it, darted across Hervé's mind with a painful emotion. Taking a more direct way, he descended a few steps with precaution, and perceived at Bellah's side a man of an ele-

gant figure, elastic step, and energetic and youthful gestures. Mademoiselle de Kergant seemed, from time to time, to be interrupting by short objections the animated speech of her companion, which now rose to the most sonorous modulations, now sank to a tone of the most intimate confidence. When they reached the foot of the mount, Hervé, thanks to his intimate knowledge of the country, was able to follow them across the fields without being discovered. He endeavoured to recall to his mind the graceful figure of the unknown, and the peculiar tones of his voice, in order if possible to identify a man he already hated—but all in vain.

When they were about a hundred yards from the chateau, the unknown stopped suddenly, pronounced a few vehement words, and abruptly seized the arm and hand of Mademoiselle de Kergant. Hervé, with a muttered exclamation of rage, sprang from the hedge where he was concealed, and was rushing towards the spot where they stood, when an unexpected incident arrested his steps. Mademoiselle de Kergant had disengaged her arm, and took in her turn the hand of her bold cavalier, pressing her lips upon it and bending almost to the ground; then she hastened on towards the castle, slowly followed by the individual so extraordinarily favoured.

Hervé, now abandoning all concealment, and governed only by an irresistible passion, advanced rapidly.

"Hollo! sir! stop if you please!" he exclaimed, in a very distinct though low voice.

The unknown turned. "Who goes there?" said he; "who calls me?"

"It is I, sir; be so kind as to wait for a few seconds," said the young colonel, quickening his steps.

"That infernal officer again!" muttered the unknown. And shrugging his shoulders with vexation,

he hastened on with a step so quick that Hervé, unable to follow him into the enclosure of the chateau, was obliged to give up all hope of any more satisfactory interview.

"No," said the young man, as he retraced his steps to the mount; "never did the wildest dreams conjure up such frightful images! Bellah, the proud, the haughty, on her knees before a man—receiving, nay, giving a caress—and that, when her lips were still burning with the confession of love made to another! At least, heaven be thanked, I am now free!" and the young man's hand convulsively searched in his breast for the white feather, that now hateful token of a happier moment, and crushing it with violence, he scattered it in the air.

After this hasty movement, Colonel Hervé approached the half-extinguished fires of the bivouac, and lay down a few steps from Francis. The exhaustion of this day of fatigue and anxiety ended by overpowering the agitation of his mind, and the punctual Bruidoux was compelled at the first dawn of day to awaken him out of a profound slumber, and the troop set out on their homeward march. A few moments after the party had left the mount, Andrée arrived out of breath on the summit, glanced across the plateau, and seeing it deserted, gave a piercing cry of grief; then sinking to the ground, she sobbed for some time, her head buried in her hands.

CHAPTER VII.

"The republic, madam, cannot lose him, however careless she may be in preserving him."—VOITURE'S LETTERS.

THE chief division of the republican army was then quartered at Vitré, on the limits of the departments of the Ile and Vilaine, and of Mayenne. The general-in-chief occupied a habitation of an humble appearance, between Rennes and Vitré, something between a manor-house and a farm, and which had no other claim to receive such a guest but its retired and solitary position. We beg our reader to transport himself to the court-yard of this dwelling, informing him, at the same time, that four days have elapsed since the last mentioned scenes of our story took place.

It was one o'clock. In the centre of the plot of ground enclosed by walls which extended before the principal front of the building, groups of soldiers, dressed in various uniforms, were conversing or amusing themselves with a kind of freedom mingled with reserve which betrayed that their superior's eye was upon them. The most active were employed in furbishing their weapons and horses' bits in the sun, the most thoughtful were stretched on the ground in various and often totally opposite attitudes, some appearing to follow the course of the clouds in their varying combinations, others to devote themselves to botanical investigations. One characteristic

in this picture was presented by two grenadiers with grizzled moustaches, who, having placed a long plank across the fallen trunk of a tree, were see-sawing in the gravest silence, as if the safety of the whole brigade depended upon this important business being carried on. A young officer who was crossing the court-yard at that moment with papers in his hand, directed his steps towards this group.

"Well, Mayençais," said he, "has not Colonel Pelven returned yet?"

"Not yet," answered Mayençais, who was then at the highest pitch of ascension.

"Is there no news of him?"

"None," said Mayençais, majestically descending to the bottom of the abyss.

"Take care you don't get a fall, old porcupine," returned the young man, a little offended at the laconic style with which he was answered, and, pushing the fragile mechanism of Mayençais's game with his foot, the board yielded to this impulsions, turned round of itself, and then glided down upon the grass with its occupiers, to the great amusement of the spectators.

While the two old campaigners were employing all their faculties with the most imperturbable gravity in replacing their plaything on its point of equilibrium, the sentinel stationed on the outside of a large wicket-gate which gave access to the country, challenged, and was answered by a rude abrupt voice. The sentinel presented arms, and immediately afterwards five horsemen, their dresses in disorder, and stained with flakes of foam, entered noisily into the court. Four of them wore the uniform of the republican hussars, the fifth, who had entered the first, appeared not to belong to the army; he wore no other distinctive signs but a tri-coloured plume and sash. The sudden silence which succeeded to the tumult of military recreation in the court of the manor-house, and the sort of timidity with which the name of the new

corner was whispered, showed that to the greatest number of those present he was an old acquaintance, and an acquaintance who was beheld with more respect than pleasure. It must be confessed, that the individual who received the equivocal homage of this reception, justified it completely, in addition to any other claims which he might have had, by the ascetic severity of his features, and the peculiar and implacable expression of his eyes.

Throwing his horse's bridle to a soldier, he rapidly crossed the space between the gate and the manor-house, ascended the interior stair-case, and quickly reached an ante-chamber, before which two sentinels were mounting guard. Pushing away with a gesture of extreme pre-occupation one of the soldiers who, although giving him the military salute, yet seemed to hesitate whether he should admit him, he opened a double door, advanced into the adjoining apartment, and seemed to have discovered at last what he had been seeking with so much haste and so little ceremony.

He found himself in the presence of a man of a tall elegant figure, his features glowing with masculine beauty united to the brilliancy of youth. This personage wore a military dress, embroidered on the facings and collar with gold oak leaves; a tri-coloured sash and a sabre were lying before him on the corner of a table. He rose at this sudden interruption, then seating himself again with a rather haughty nonchalance:—

"You treat me as a friend, citizen representative," said he, dryly.

"It is a bad habit which I have acquired, citizen general. But if it is needful, I offer an apology. I offer an apology, I say, not being willing to invoke upon so slight an occasion the unlimited powers with which the Convention and the interests of the Republic have armed me."

"Your powers! the Republic!" interrupted the young general with impetuosity. "There is only one republic in the world; and that is the masked republic of Venice, which has ever conferred powers similar to those which you arrogate to yourself! I must remind you, citizen commissary, that there is a limit beyond which the most legitimate superintendence exceeds its objects and changes its nature!"

"Have you come to this?" said the representative, in a slow hollow voice. "Explain yourself, citizen: if you only intend to put a personal affront on me, I am not one of those who can be deterred from performing their duty to the public by insult; but if you pretend to place limits to the power of the Convention, say so. If the insult and the menace, I repeat, are addressed to the Convention, speak out; it is well that I should be aware of it before I speak another word."

The contracted brow of the general, and the spasmodic movement of his lips, showed that it was not without a painful effort that he endured the yoke laid upon his victorious neck by the heavy hand of the conventionalist. At last he rose, and answered with a constrained smile:—

"I should prefer, I confess, like the charcoal-burner, to be master in my own house. However, if an involuntary, perhaps excusable feeling, has caused me to fail in the respect which I owe to the Convention, and to all those invested with its sovereign power, I entreat your pardon. You seem to have had a long journey, citizen; do you bring me any orders?"

"No; but news."

"And of what kind?"

"I should say good, if I were to judge from my own feelings of satisfaction, for they confirm all my predictions; they justify all my warnings, so neglected and despised. You have great talents, citizen general;

but you are young. Periods of revolution are not times for chivalrous illusion. Civic crowns are not woven by the hands of women. Your mind is great, I repeat it, but it is too open to the deceitful flattery of popularity. He who puts his hand to the work of the revolution must be content to find his name abhorred, so that his work be good. You would not listen to me; you would treat when you should have fought, heal when you should have amputated. I told you then that all your conciliatory speeches, all your concessions, and all your favours, were only seeds of ingratitude and treason. Now I inform you that the crop is ripe."

"You mean, I presume," said the young general, who had succeeded with difficulty in restraining his impatience during the tirade of the gloomy republican, "you mean that the pacification is broken?"

"Openly and audaciously."

"And am I accused of this infraction, citizen representative? Dare they lay the blame upon the system of moderation and humanity which I have introduced into this unhappy war? Have I been seconded? Have I been even obeyed? Was it by my commands that, in spite of the treaties, the *ci-devant* counts of Tristan and Geslin were assassinated? Did I order the head of Bois-Hardy to be carried about the country, to bear witness to the consequences which were to follow my words of peace? These crimes, in spite of all my endeavours, remain unpunished. These brigands, as we call them, have nevertheless red blood in their veins, and now they prove it! So the Chouans are up in arms, you say?"

"The country is in a flame, from Lower Maine to the extremity of Brittany. Plu-oigner is in the hands of the brigands. They have surprised one of our corvettes in the port of Vannes; Duhesme has been beaten at Plelan; Humbert at Camors. Our magazines at Pont-du-Buis in Finisterre are captured; our

cantonments throughout the Morbihan taken and destroyed."

"Is that all?" asked the general, who affected to hear this recital of disasters with as much indifference as the representative had pleasure in making it.

"No, it is not all! A Bourbon is at the head of the rebels."

"What do you say?—that is impossible!" exclaimed the young republican chief, instantly changing the careless air under which he had till then concealed his wounded pride. "That would indeed be terrible!" added he, in a lower voice.

"It is certain: Duhesme and Humbert saw him: Humbert even spoke to him during the fight. They say it is the *ci-devant* Count d'Artois, a brother of Capet's."

"The Count d'Artois! impossible!" repeated the general, whose animated gestures betrayed the agitation of his mind. "A moment ago, just before you entered, I had been informed of the arrival of his aide-de-camp, the *ci-devant* Marquis de la Riviere, at Charette's quarters; but of the prince's arrival, nothing—he had not left England. And by what means—where—and at what fatal moment did he put his foot in Brittany?"

"It is precisely upon this head, citizen general, that I desire your advice. The strict guard maintained upon all points of the coast, renders it impossible to explain the appearance of the *ci-devant* prince except on the most painful suppositions. The word 'treason' has been pronounced."

The general, abandoning his thoughtful attitude, drew himself up with vivacity, and, exchanging a glance of fire with the hard cold look of the conventionalist, he repeated in a voice trembling with emotion:—

"The word 'treason' has been pronounced?—against whom?"

"You wilfully mistake the meaning of my words, citizen general; no one thinks of suspecting you."

"And why should they not?" answered the young man bitterly. "Ought I not to have been prepared for such an accusation from the day on which I attempted to make this war less unworthy of a civilized age and people? I was to fight," continued he, walking hastily up and down the room, "to fight—to uproot—to destroy! Have I then an army or a fortified place before me? No! I have a people. Hurl them into the ocean if you can, and pass the ploughshare over half France! As for me, I will not attempt such atrocious madness. If that is treason, let it be so. You may suspect me, you may denounce me—I care not! I am weary of this war of savages, in which I shall some day or other perish ignominiously behind a hedge, like a robber chief. Let them take this sword from me—I consent to it—I demand it. Let them send me back to begin my career again on fair fields of battle, where the wounded are not massacred, where the dead are not mutilated!"

"You are losing your temper, citizen general, and nevertheless you will have need of it to hear what I have still to acquaint you with. I told you there was no suspicion against you; I repeat it: but you are reproached with giving your confidence with too great facility, with lavishing your friendship upon those who are suspected. I speak of one of your officers; of him to whom you grant the largest share of your confidence; of the *ci-devant* Count de Pelven."

"Colonel Pelven, citizen representative, has made more sacrifices for the Republic than either you or I have. In leaving him for these two years in the humble rank which he occupies, a crying injustice has been done him, and one which I shall not fail to repair."

"You must be speedy then, unless you wish to be forestalled by the Bourbon, who, if he is not ungrate-

ful, owes a high reward to the pure patriot who hastened to receive him at his landing, and who has escorted him to the very centre of his army of brigands."

"Have you any proofs of what you affirm, citizen commissary?"

"Here," said the conventionalist, taking a letter from his portfolio, "here is what one of our agents in England writes me word. You will judge yourself if these informations, coupled with the facts with which you are already acquainted, do not afford sufficient proof. This letter, unfortunately, did not arrive until ten days after the catastrophe had taken place which it was intended to avert. Listen:—

"The English frigate, *Loyalty*, is preparing to land a Bourbon in Brittany, said to be the Duke d'Enghien, Conde's son, or the Count d'Artois: the latter is the most probable. He travels disguised as a woman in the suite of the daughter and sister of the *ci-devant* Kergant, who have obtained leave of residence through the influence of the *ci-devant* Pelven, a republican officer high in the confidence of the general-in-chief. They reckon upon Pelven's connivance to protect the landing, which will take place some day next decade, on the south coast of Finisterre. The whole of the west, Normandy included this time, only waits for the appearance of this chief, so often promised in vain, to rise in a body."

The general remained as if transfixed with surprise, while this letter was being read.

"Is it not true? is it not as plain as day?" added the representative, showing him the letter.

The young man read it over hastily himself, a sort of sob escaped from his breast; then sinking down upon the sofa, he remained for some time, his brow shaded with his hand, absorbed in painful thought.

The single witness of this anguish was not one

from whom sympathy could be expected for any human weakness, however generous the cause of that weakness might be; a secret feeling of triumph, on the contrary, might have been detected in the doubtful look with which he observed the distress of the young republican general.

"That which will surprise you," resumed he, "is the degree of audacity of your former friend. Instead of wisely remaining with him whom he has served so well, I am assured that he is returning to you, to complete by a system of spying what he has so well begun by treachery."

"Spy! Pelven!" murmured the general, as if the union of those two words was an inexplicable enigma.

"Above all, citizen general," continued the conventionalist, "justice must be done."

The general delayed replying for some instants; then at last raising his head, as if he had been meditating deeply—

"It is well," said he, "citizen representative of the people. Justice will be done."

"I am going to wait for the return of this Pelven; you will give me a sufficient escort to enable me to conduct him to Rennes, where I will interrogate him before my colleagues. After that, he will be condemned by the revolutionary tribunal."

"I tell you, citizen, justice shall be done; you understand me."

"Not in the least," answered the representative, with great surprise. "Am I to understand that you refuse to deliver up this great culprit to the vengeance of the nation?"

"I hold sufficient power myself from the nation to be able both to serve and to avenge it! I have no need to ask assistance from any one."

The general spoke in such a calm, decided manner, that he at last succeeded in disturbing the *sang-froid* of the conventionalist.

"Young man!" exclaimed he, with violence, "I have borne much from you, much more than my disposition and my duty might have led you to expect; but this passes all measure, and all patience! Do you forget who I am? do you forget that I have only to open this window, and speak two words, to have your epaulettes torn from your shoulders by your own grenadiers?"

"Try," said the general, who having once taken his resolution, appeared pleased with his novel and dangerous independence.

"This is stark madness!" muttered the representative, quite capable in fact of viewing as an act devoid of all reason such a defiance flung at his terrible power.

"It is merely," continued the general, in the same perfectly calm tone, "it is merely an experiment that I am making. There is one too many of us, citizen, in the confidence of the nation. I desire to know which of the two it is. The occasion presents itself, and I seize it. Since this war, universal and terrible, has burst out afresh, I shall not attempt to extinguish it if this chain of iron with which you bind me is not first taken off—if I am again to have every movement controlled by an insulting inspection, my designs suspected by fanaticism, my plans opposed by ignorance."

"Is it so?" returned the conventionalist. "Well, then, woe to you, or if not—if not, woe to the Republic!"

"The Republic!" answered the young man, his lofty brow lighted up with enthusiasm, "the Republic is my parent! I owe her everything, I love her passionately—I have proved it, and by the will of heaven, I will prove it again. But my Republic is not your Republic. The image which is enthroned in my heart is not that which you have reared side by side with the scaffold in our terrified towns!

I would I could, at the cost of my life, tear from history the page of mourning, the page of blood, which you have attached to that sacred name. Future generations will not forgive you for rendering that great name of Republic fatal in the recollection of the world. Let me finish; you have nothing to teach me; I know with what arguments you are accustomed to support your fearful opinions. I do not pretend to dispute with you: but only question my soldiers, ask them if they needed the sinister reports with which you have filled the country to teach them to conquer? And as for our enemies in the interior, before your cruelties had centupled their number, the renown of our victories would have sufficed to bring them to submission. Inhumanity is not strength, hatred is not justice, the Republic is not terror. I have confessed my faith under the axe of your all-powerful friends, I have been the inhabitant of their dungeons; but if I only quitted those dungeons to submit to the tyranny of the lowest among them, let those doors be re-opened! Now depart, denounce me if you will; the committee shall judge between us: but trust me, citizen, make no imprudent trial of your strength; you can understand that my patience, like yours, is at an end, and no one with impunity shall tempt my army to mutiny under my eyes. Farewell!"

During this impetuous outbreak of a storm which had been long gathering, and was with difficulty restrained in the breast of the young general-in-chief, the face of the conventionalist became gradually purple, and then almost immediately of a livid paleness. His trembling lips seemed as if they were unable to express the passion which raged in his breast. He could only answer the menacing farewell of his rival by a muttered ejaculation, and hastily quitted the room with a gesture of implacable resentment.

But the time was already past when a signal from

such a hand was able to bring glory and power, as well as worth and beauty, to the axe of the executioner; and in the scale of the Committee of Public Safety the talents and services of the conqueror of Wissembourg would now have more weight than the fierce puritanism and the barbarous virtues of this survivor of Thermidor.

CHAPTER VIII.

*" Cette gloire était due aux mânes d'un tel homme,
D'emporter avec eux la liberté de Rome."—CINNA.*

FREED from the presence of the conventionalist, the general remained for some minutes in the same place, his head bent, and his gaze fixed on the ground. Then, with the gesture of one who abandons himself resolutely to the consequences of an irrevocable action, and who passes to another set of ideas, he rose and approached a window which looked upon the court. It would appear that he did not perceive what he sought, for he began to walk impatiently across the room, stopping from time to time at the window, or before a clock placed on a console. At intervals the thoughts which agitated his breast escaped involuntarily from his lips.

"What a deception!" he murmured. "Such are men! a rude lesson, and an unexpected one! His dupe—that is the word—his tool, for so long a time, so confidingly. And what misery he has caused!—how much blood! An insult to me!—a public crime! Ah! miserable wretch!"

The noise of a sharp knock at the door interrupted the general. On permission being given to enter, the door opened, and the distinguished-looking, high-bred figure of Colonel Hervé de Pelven appeared before him.

The general slowly approached him whom an hour before he had called his friend, and fixed his eyes on his face with a singular expression of curiosity, as if he was endeavouring to discover in those well known

features some secret sign, some hideous trace, till then unperceived. Abruptly ending his examination by an expressive shrug of the shoulders, he half seated himself upon the corner of the table, where his sabre was lying, still examining Hervé's countenance with a searching look.

"Where is Francis?" said he, at last.

This question was not sufficient to arouse Pelven from the state of mute astonishment into which he had been thrown by the inexplicable reception of the general-in-chief.

"I ask you, where is Francis?" repeated Hoche, raising his voice; "what have you done with him?"

"General," said the young colonel, "Francis is below in the court-yard. We arrived together."

"Ah! Well, tell me, Monsieur de Pelven, you have succeeded as you could have wished, have you not?"

"Yes, general," answered Hervé dryly, his pride by degrees becoming offended at this treatment and this language, so different from the familiar cordiality with which he had been accustomed to be received.

"That is fortunate for you, as well as for me, sir."

"I am grieved that I cannot understand you, general."

"Ha! Tell me, does the Chouan seed sprout in the country?"

"Everything, citizen general, that I have seen, is threatening, and announces a speedy rising. We even thought we heard cannon yesterday and last night."

"Really! you have made a dangerous campaign, and one which shall not go without its due reward, if there is still any justice left in the world; but I must first, I suppose, compliment you on your marvellous talent in the line which you have had the good taste to select. I must confess, Monsieur de Pelven, that never did a mask of infamy resemble so well the countenance of an honest man."

A deep flush rose to the cheeks and brow of the young colonel at these words, but this was the only mark of emotion which his command over himself did not enable him entirely to repress.

"I have not failed to perceive from the first," said he, "that I am looked upon here as a criminal, I had been foretold it; but I thought I might have expected from General Hoche that the accusation would have preceded the insult."

Although, when on the point of being unmasked, hypocrisy finds at times, in the moment of peril, looks and tone of truthfulness, Hervé's countenance and the firmness of his voice shook, in some degree, the general's conviction of his guilt; but, before he could reply, his attention was attracted by the trampling of horses in the court-yard, followed by a confused sound of voices. A few seconds afterwards Lieutenant Francis entered with an anxious look, bearing a packet of letters.

"Pardon me, general," said he, "these are despatches just arrived by two dragoons from Humbert's and Duhesme's divisions. It seems the fire is getting hot down yonder."

Hoche laid his hand affectionately on the young lieutenant's shoulder, and then opened the despatches hastily, and began to read them, often interrupting himself with angry exclamations; till, suddenly throwing them violently on the floor, and addressing Francis in a tone which betrayed his ill-restrained fury:—

"My boy," said he, "you are about to take an important step in the experience of life. Here is M. de Pelven, our mutual friend; look at him well, and remember for the rest of your days that under this mask, which bore the outward stamp of loyalty, was concealed the soul of a spy and a traitor."

"They lied who told you so, general," said Hervé, calmly; while the young lieutenant uttered a cry of surprise and incredulity.

"I doubted till conviction flashed into my mind," replied Hoche; "but it was an unpardonable piece of negligence, Monsieur de Pelven, when you knew that we too have our spies, to leave behind you such a damning proof as this."

And he placed before the eyes of the two officers a crumpled piece of paper spotted with mud, on which was written these words:—

"Safe Conduct to the Count Hervé de Pelven, Marechal de Camp in the royal catholic army.

"Signed. CHARETTE."

Hervé looked at the young lieutenant, and murmured the name of "Bellah."

"This safe conduct," continued the general, "was found by one of our secret agents on the mount of Kergant, where I am informed you passed a night. I have other proofs, but this is sufficient. I must ask you now, sir, whether you have anything to say to save your life, for I warn you it is in great danger. Give up your sword, if you please."

Hervé unbuckled his sabre, and handed it to Francis, who received it with a trembling hand.

"General," said the young colonel, "before heaven and on my honour, I am not guilty. I yield to appearances against which I can only oppose my word. This safe-conduct is authentic, but I never accepted it. I may add also that these men, who are represented as my friends, attempted my life a few days ago."

"Did they wound you?" asked Hoche, eagerly. "Can you show me the trace of the wound?"

"There is none, unfortunately."

"But, general," cried Francis, "I was there, I saw it: they knocked the colonel down."

"With kind precaution, as it seems," said the general, who had re-assumed an ominous air of calmness. "Enough, Francis. You, M. de Pelven, are not a child, and you well know what is likely to be

the conclusion of such an affair. Do you wish that all shall be concluded between us two, or shall I call a council."

"I wish for no other judge but yourself, general."

"Certainly you could have none who has been more partial to you. You have strangely deceived me, Pelven—cruelly, I may say. After all there is a kind of grandeur in the part you have played, but it is not the grandeur that I should have sought. Assuredly, sir," continued he, the tones of his voice becoming softer and almost mournful in their character, "I was far from imagining that our relations of esteem and friendship should end thus. It is not without the deepest grief—"

The general, interrupted by the sobs which poor Francis had no longer power to restrain, stopped abruptly. He opened the door, and calling one of the soldiers who was mounting guard in the ante-chamber—

"Citizen Pelven," said he, "is your prisoner; you shall answer for him. Lieutenant Francis, wait for me in the adjoining apartment."

The young lieutenant cast a supplicating look at his protector, but an imperious sign was the only answer he received, and he took refuge in the apartment pointed out to him with despairing haste.

"Monsieur Pelven," the general then said, "it was the wish of some that you should be taken to prison, and from thence you well know where. I thought that, in spite of all that has happened, you would like better to die the death of a soldier."

"I thank you, general," said Hervé.

"You have a quarter of an hour before you, sir."

Hoche turned away abruptly as he finished speaking, and closing the door behind him, rejoined Francis in the ante-chamber. Here an old non-commissioned officer was on duty, his hand respectfully raised to his foraging cap: the general called him.

“Take fifteen grenadiers,” said he, “to the field on the left of the farm; let them load their muskets and wait for the man whom I shall send to them for execution.”

Then leading his young aide-de-camp away by the arm, he conducted him to a room which opened on the other side of the stair-case.

It may have been observed with surprise that there had not been sufficient explanation between the judge and the accused to make the latter acquainted with the nature and extent of the crime with which he was charged; but, on the one hand, the general believed that he could inform Pelven of nothing new on that head, and on the other, Pelven had only seen in what happened the necessary consequence of the manœuvres which had had for their object the attaching him to the royalist cause, and exposing him to the suspicions of his own party. These were more than sufficient, in those times, to justify a capital punishment. And thus both the predictions of Mademoiselle de Kergant on the Rocky Mount, and all the vague apprehensions which the incidents of his unhappy expedition had raised in the mind of the unfortunate officer, were but too well verified.

Hervé, left alone in charge of the sentinel, endeavoured to conquer those instinctive terrors—that whirl of ideas and feelings—which overcome every human being upon the near and foreseen approach of dissolution. In spite of himself, his eye remained fixed upon the hands of the clock, and something like the breath of another world seemed to pass over his face and cover it as with a mist. Passing his hand across his brow, the young man rapidly paced the room, then stopped and drew a long breath, as if he felt himself conqueror in the awful struggle he had undergone. He then sat down, and wrote a few hasty lines to his sister. Ten minutes passed and he was still plunged in all the bitterness of their last farewell, when a

slight noise made him turn his head towards the door, and he met the eye of Hoche.

"Pardon me, sir, if I disturb you," said the general, still keeping his eyes attentively fixed upon the young man; "but in the state in which things now are, it must be indifferent to you whether you tell me, and I am anxious to know, the precise name of the Bourbon who landed under the disguise of a woman, in the company of your relations, and under your good guidance."

At this question, such perfect bewilderment clouded Hervé's usually so penetrating eyes, such sincere astonishment was expressed by his half-open lips, that the general could not repress a faint smile.

"I was sure of it, general! I would have bet my head on it twenty times over! Down with Jacobins and informers!" cried Francis, springing madly into the room.

"Get you gone!" said Hoche, with an impatience which the young aide-de-camp did not think it needful to obey. "It seems, Monsieur Pelven," continued the general, "that you did not think I was so well informed?"

"He is as innocent as a child, general," repeated Francis, with increasing delight.

"Really, general," stammered out Hervé, "I do not in the least know—I understand nothing whatever of what you are saying."

A more open, cheerful smile passed over the fine features of the young general-in-chief.

"Long live the Republic!" cried Francis, throwing himself on Hervé's neck in a fit of affectionate enthusiasm.

"You see, colonel," said Hoche, "that Mr. Francis has already restored you to his esteem. But you will excuse me if I am not quite so prompt. In my eyes you are still guilty, at least of extreme imprudence. The truth is, that, thanks to you, we have a Bourbon

on our shoulders. I need not enumerate the misfortunes which such an event brings with it; but how am I to understand that the events which took place on your journey did not awaken your suspicions more seriously?"

One point suddenly made clear in a plot of which we have been the dupe, is often sufficient to show us all the mysteries thereof; so Hervé's memory recalled instantaneously all the equivocal circumstances of his campaign, the extreme reserve of the Scotchwoman, the scenes in the Chateau de la Groac'h, Bellah's language and strange perseverance on the Rocky Mount, and, lastly, the mysterious character of the individual who had followed Mademoiselle de Kergant in her nocturnal excursion. This last recollection struck the deepest pang into the young man's wounded heart.

"General," said he, "I have been most shamefully tricked and deceived. My sister is a child, who thought she was taking a part in an excellent jest. As for the others—" Colonel Pelven completed the sentence by a slow and prolonged movement of his head, which indicated bitter resentment.

The general had moved to the window, and remained there for some moments, his eyes fixed upon empty space, and his brows contracted, as if a prey to painful irresolution. Then turning suddenly round—

"Suppose," said he, "that I were to take upon myself to restore you to liberty, what use would you make of it? for I cannot think of employing you in the service, at least for the present. Come, what would you do?"

"I should go straight to the Chouans, straight to the prince's quarters, since a prince there is."

"Are you mad?"

"I should resume my name and title," continued the young man, with warmth, "for I have need of the privileges they give me to be able to say to the hero of the farce which has been played at my expense:

‘ Sir, or my lord, I care not which, here is a gentleman like yourself, who demands satisfaction for the peril to which you have exposed not his life alone, but his honour, by your disloyal action.’

“ And his love as well,” added the general, with friendly animation. “ By my faith, Hervé, if this is a folly, it pleases me. I am not born a gentleman; far from it, as you know; but I dare swear I should have become one in the time when to be so required only the taste for adventures, and a few grains of audacity in the heart. Nevertheless, this project is absolutely unreasonable, and I can say nothing in its favour, but that I should do exactly the same in your place. But whatever may happen, you will leave companions behind you who will attack the rascal, whether it be to liberate or to revenge you. Is not that so, Francis?”

“ I shall go with him,” said Francis, “ to see the court ladies.”

“ You will wait for me, sir. Pelven, take your sword again; but I counsel you to lay aside your uniform. You must also provide yourself with this unhappy safe-conduct, or otherwise you would never be able to make your way to these gentlemen, who are in force and under arms in all the country round. And stay,” continued the general, hastily writing a few words upon a small piece of paper, “ hide that in the lining of your clothes, so that you may be as well prepared with respect to the republicans.”

“ General, your goodness overwhelms me.”

“ I wish you to forget that wretched quarter of an hour, Pelven. Go now, and may heaven protect you! I hope you part with me without rancour.”

Hervé took the hand in his which the general offered him, and pressed it warmly.

“ Adieu, general!” said he; “ I am about to purchase the right to see you again, and to continue to serve you.”

“ Not me, Pelven ; never me, but France and the Republic: the strong, generous, patient Republic.”

“ That is what I mean,” said Hervá. He then bowed with affectionate politeness, and left the room, accompanied by Francis. A few moments afterwards, Pelven and the young lieutenant were galloping in the direction of Rennes. After riding a couple of leagues, Herve was to take a cross road, to avoid the town, which might prove dangerous to him. There the two young friends separated, about two hours before sunset: one to return to the general-in-chief, the other to encounter all the new dangers which he was impelled to run, against all the counsels of prudence, by the fiery feelings both of an insulted man and of a jealous lover.

CHAPTER IX.

"Bois ton sang, Beaumanoir; ta soif se passera."—OLD BALLAD.

THE next day, at the same late hour, Colonel Pelven, in a military undress, was riding along the road leading from Plélan to Ploermel, and endeavouring to quicken the speed of his horse, so as to reach the latter town before the storm, which was threatening, should burst forth. A dark cloud, extending as far as the horizon, was sinking lower and lower upon the tops of the tall trees, which were standing perfectly motionless. At intervals the dusty road was spotted with large drops of rain. All round, in the fields, reigned that anxious silence, that solemn calm, with which the whole of nature seems to prepare itself for the approach of danger. Suddenly a flash of lightning burst open the masses of dark cloud, an awful thunder-clap shook the ground, and a deluge of hail and rain poured down upon the earth, darkening the air as if with a thick fog. The traveller's horse, dazzled by the lightning, and blinded by the rain, plunged, stopped short, then darted forward, galloping with such impetuosity that his master in vain strove to rein him in.

Pelven had ended by giving himself up without further resistance, and not without a kind of agreeable sensation, to this furious ride through the raging elements, when, at a sharp turning of the road, he was almost unseated by the shock of twenty or thirty horsemen, who met him and passed like a whirlwind, opening their ranks to let him through. Hervé had

barely time to observe that they were republican dragoons, and to ask what was the cause of their desperate haste; but the pace at which he was still going, and the fearful roar of the tempest prevented him from hearing their answer. He only saw one of the soldiers turn round and make a gesture with his hand, as if to entreat him not to continue his journey. Half a league farther on, Pelven perceived another troop of horsemen who were riding with the same appearance of haste and disorder. The young colonel, who had at last succeeded in making himself master of his horse, placed himself across the road and made signs to the fugitives, for the troopers had not at all the appearance of advancing against the enemy, to halt and speak to him. The living torrent of men and horses did not attempt to strive against the feeble obstacle opposed to it. It divided itself silently into two currents, which, leaving Hervé perfect master of his position, immediately united again behind him.

"Rascals!" cried the indignant young man; and spurring his horse after the retreating column, and seizing a dragoon by his belt, he exclaimed, with a burst of anger, which the forlorn visage of his captive soon changed into a great desire to laugh—

"Where are you going to so fast, fellow?"

"To Plelan, *mon officier*—to the first republican cantonment."

"Are you pursued?"

"I know nothing about it, *mon officier*. They told us at Ploermel that the Chouans were coming. I don't believe it; but I followed my comrades."

"And what the devil corps do you belong to?"

"We belong to Humbert's division, which ought to be now at Quimper; but we were cut off from our brigade in the rout."

"How? rout, you villain!"

"Yes! on my life, *mon officier*, so it is! I advise you not to take a stroll for your amusement beyond

Ploermel. There is a bit of country there as hot as the tropics. Everything you touch stings."

"And who commands the Chouans?"

"Ah! he's a good one, and is not afraid of pricking his finger; yet with all that as pretty to look at as a girl."

"But who is he, you blockhead?"

"Who? why the *ci-devant* prince, their deity, their idol, I warrant you! They say it was an officer of ours who helped him to land. My best thanks to him."

"Tell me," said Hervé, sharply, "where were we beaten?"

"At Plu-oigner, and then farther up at Camors: but no disgrace to the flag, *mon officier*; recruits joined them from all parts. At Camors, where there is a wooded defile, our general made us dismount to fire; we dodged from tree to tree for twelve hours, even though their prince was with them. I had the luck to get a good look at him quite at my ease. 'Hallo, general!' cried he to Citizen Humbert, from behind his tree, where he was quietly eating a bit on his thumb till the ball began again, 'Hallo, general!' said he, seeing that both sides had agreed that the fire should cease for a quarter of an hour, to pay a visit to the canteens——"

"Well, to come to the point, what did he say?" asked Hervé, shaking his cloak, which was streaming with rain.

"'Hallo, general!' said he, 'without compliment you have got the best grenadiers and dragoons, &c. that ever I saw in my life.' 'I can say as much for you, unknown sir,' answered Citizen Humbert; 'you have got gallant fellows as well, and you are not the worst among them yourself!'"

"Well said on both sides," said Hervé, gravely; "but where is the white army now?"

"Ah! where is it? that's the question!" returned

the dragoon. "Only conceive, *mon officier*, that everything has disappeared—infantry, cavalry, the cannon they took from us, munitions, everything is swallowed up in the earth, neither to be seen nor heard of. The country looks as quiet as a lamb, especially as there is not a creature to be seen; but it sounds hollow under foot, as if one was marching over a cellar. Won't you come back with us, *mon officier*?"

"No!" said Hervé. "Here friend, here is something to warm you." The dragoon, raising one hand to his casque, took with the other the rarity which Pelven presented to him in the shape of a piece of silver, and went off at full gallop. Half-an-hour afterwards the young colonel alighted at the door of an humble inn, whose modest front appeared by the road-side a musket-shot from Ploermel, embellished with the traditionary bush.

Entrusting his steed to a little fellow in sabots, who looked at him with an air of distrustful timidity, Pelven entered the inn kitchen, where three peasants, seated inside a vast chimney, were talking in a low voice with every appearance of the most eager animation. They rose immediately as if out of respect, and ceased speaking; then, approaching the door by a series of well calculated movements, whilst Hervé was putting a few indifferent questions to his hostess, they disappeared one after the other, casting upon the republic uniform a look that was anything but friendly. The hostess, a woman of about forty, strongly built, and fresh-coloured, had not at first seemed to look upon the honourable customer whom fortune and the storm had sent her, with a favourable eye; but struck by the young man's good looks, and by the politeness with which he expressed himself, she allowed the lines of her circumspect visage to relax by degrees to a smile, and replied that assuredly she would do her best to make the young gentleman—she

meant worthy citizen—not regret that he had entered her house.

While she was getting supper ready, Hervé seated himself upon one of the benches which lined the chimney-nook, and as he was drying his boots and his cloak before a cheerful fire of blazing faggots, he made inquiries as to what was most talked of in the country; to which the discreet matron replied that nothing very new was talked of, or worth repeating; that every one knew, besides, what was best to speak of and what to be silent upon; that too long scratching is bad, and too long talking is to be blamed; that, as for herself, everybody knew that she had been always more inclined to sew up her mouth than to let her tongue wag. Taking care not to dispute this point, which nevertheless might have been disputed, Hervé begged she would look upon him as only a mere traveller, who was far from wishing to worm her secrets out of her; that all he wished to know was, whether there was any chance of the royalist troops coming to Ploermel. If the hostess was to be believed, there were no such beings in existence, and the republican horsemen whom he had met had doubtless been frightened at their own shadows, which the young colonel had no difficulty in believing, having often seen the best soldiers a prey to these inexplicable panics. While he was supping, Hervé attempted to renew the conversation with his prudent hostess; he began by complimenting her upon her culinary talents, and upon the cleanliness of the utensils, after which he conceived himself to be on a sufficiently good footing in her regard to be able to venture to ask for a few more explicit details upon the state of the country, and the chance he should have of travelling in safety. The hostess responded, that, thank heaven! she was not in the habit of poisoning people who eat at her table, and that if the young gentleman—she meant to say

citizen officer—chose to sleep at her house, he would see that the sheets were as clean as the table-cloth and dishes, in which she did not speak the exact truth, as poor Hervé discovered a little later to his cost. The good woman added, that, as for the state of the country beyond Ploermel, not having put her foot into it for the last twelve years, she could say nothing about it with certainty, except that many things might have happened there of which she was ignorant; but, the young gentleman—she intended to say the noble officer—could not fail to know exactly what to think of it if he continued his journey, which she advised him not to do; not that she meant to say that she had any reason for trying to dissuade him.

Hervé was obliged to be satisfied with this information, of which we have only given the reader the substance; he then rose from table, and perceiving that it was now quite dark, he told the landlady he was going to take a walk through the town, and that he desired his room might be ready against his return. He returned in about an hour afterwards, carrying under his arm a tolerably large bundle wrapped up in serge. He paid his bill, saying that he meant to leave the next day very early, and retired to his bedroom, of which the hostess minutely recounted all the charms, leaving to experience the task of informing him of everything else.

The next day, as the bright sun of a smiling June morning made the liquid diamonds which the storm had scattered the preceding night sparkle upon every leaf, a solitary traveller was riding slowly along the road which runs to the west of Ploermel. He was a man in the spring-tide of life: a broad-brimmed hat partially concealed features of uncommon refinement, and which formed perhaps too striking a contrast with the rough woollen stuff, the coarse linen shirt, and the heavy gaiters which composed the rest

of his costume. He carried in his hand, instead of a riding-whip, a heavy holly stick with a leathern thong; and, in short, the whole exterior of the horse-man, save a few details which a peculiarly suspicious observer alone might have remarked, was that of a country horse-dealer on a tour of business.

As he was leaving Ploermel, the horse-dealer met a few peasant girls who were carrying milk to the town, and who turned round, after having returned his salutation, to examine him with an air of simple astonishment; but, after he had crossed an open plain, celebrated in the heroic traditions of the country, he did not meet a living being; the small number of habitations which he saw were shut up, and as silent as if the plague had closed their doors. This strange solitude, in the midst of a country which bore everywhere the traces of the hand of man, caused the traveller to experience something of that melancholy and solemn impression which is felt in wandering through a church-yard. A little alarm must have been mixed with this feeling, for, from time to time, the young man rose in his stirrups in order to look into the fields over the tufts of reeds with their yellow flowers which grew upon the tops of the ditches; yet though he more than once thought he saw human figures stealing along among the distant brushwood, he had always been convinced that his eye had been deceived by the illusions of fancy.

His surprise increased, and his heart experienced a still severer pang when, upon entering a small town seated on the banks of a river, he found it likewise deserted. The houses were untouched; but there was no trace of smoke rising from the chimneys, no faces in the windows, no movement in the interior of the dwellings. No sound met the traveller's ear but the loud echo of his horse's iron-shod hoofs upon the ill-paved streets. He asked himself what could have become of the sick, the

aged, the children; and he thought with a shudder upon the terrible force of those convictions, or of those prejudices, which had commanded and obtained so great, so unanimous a sacrifice. He looked with painful curiosity through the yawning doors at all these deserted hearths, upon these silent shops and yards, the child's empty cradle standing opposite the grandmother's untenanted arm-chair and idle spinning-wheel—all the sweet signs of domestic peace abandoned, all the traces of a happy home destroyed. It seemed to him as if he must be labouring under some fearful dream, or as if he were traversing one of those cities upon which death has fallen in the midst of life, and from which, after the course of centuries, their shroud of ashes has been raised.

The horseman made haste to quit the deserted town, and crossed the bridge, upon one of the parapets of which was a stone cross—that last symbol of hope which consoles us amidst the greatest sufferings. He only alighted when the towers of an ancient castle, whose picturesque appearance would doubtless in better days have claimed his admiration, were lost to his view. Loosening his horse's bridle, he left him to graze at liberty on the fresh long grass which lined the edge of the road, under a grove of shady oaks; then, sitting down beside a stream which ran along the margin of the little wood, the young horse-dealer took some provisions out of his haversack and began a repast which he often interrupted to listen to the confused sounds which broke the solitude. Half an hour afterwards he mounted, and glancing alternately at the roads which crossed each other at the spot, he remained a few seconds as if uncertain which direction he should take. But at last he turned his horse's head down the road leading southwards.

About two leagues farther on, the traveller perceived on his right the ruins of a burnt-down village, and remarking a thick cloud of smoke which rose from

a neighbouring field, he rode up to it, in spite of the obstinate resistance of his horse, and pushing aside with the end of his stick the branches of a hedge of thorn intertwined with flowers, he saw, beneath a heap of half-burnt straw, a hideous pile of corpses of men and horses. With an exclamation of horror and disgust, he hastened away from the fatal spot and continued his journey.

But the hours were flying past; the sun was high in the heavens, and the heat was becoming oppressive. Upon leaving these hideous traces of the presence of man, the traveller at first pursued his journey with more caution, even stopping at times to listen; but around him the silence was only disturbed by the vague rustling of plants and hum of insects on the bare and arid downs, or at times by dreary croakings from a neighbouring marsh. Becoming accustomed by degrees to the almost fantastic singularity of this prolonged solitude in the midst of a civilized country, he ceased to think of it, and fell into a profound reverie; when just as he reached the top of a long and steep ascent, a noise like the breaking of boughs awakened him suddenly from his abstraction, and attracted his eyes towards a group of tall beeches which grew upon the height, and which he had just passed. Seeing nothing suspicious under these trees, nor in the mass of verdure formed by their thick branches, he quietly resumed his march; but after proceeding about a dozen steps, an almost involuntary impulse having again made him turn round his head, he perceived a rather startling sight. Peering through the foliage was the face of a man, with one eye closed and the other shining with ferocious brilliancy, while, beneath, the barrel of a musket projected between two branches with fearful precision.

"Hallo! my lad," cried the horseman, "do you shoot Vendéans then in these parts?"

"Oh, ho! that's quite another thing," said the man

of the beech tree, raising his piece a little and half opening his eye: "but, if you please, what o'clock is it?"

This question, simple as it may appear, seemed not a little to embarrass our adventurous horse-dealer: he was evidently challenged for a pass-word which he could not give, and this belief was changed into a sad certainty, when, after his momentary hesitation, he saw the eye of his interrogator close again, and the musket resume its horizontal position.

"You are about to do a mischief, my lad," said he then, with that cool intrepidity which the extremity of danger gives to a courageous spirit, "and a mischief which you will repent of both in this life and the next. I come from Anjou: how on earth should I have your pass-word? Come!" continued he in an authoritative tone, "get down, and I'll show you a pass which is well worth yours." As he spoke he drew from his pocket a piece of paper, which he displayed in an imperious manner.

The mysterious inhabitant of the beech tree accepted this invitation with alacrity moderated by prudence. He disengaged himself from the thicket of foliage amidst which he was crouching, and, displaying to the traveller the costume of a Breton peasant prepared for war, he slid down to the foot of the tree; then, having again cocked his musket, which he had thrown over his shoulder while making his descent, he approached the horseman, and cautiously took the paper which the other held out towards him. After reading with attention, and apparently not without some difficulty, the few lines traced upon it, the expression of savage distrust which had till then darkened his features gave way instantly to a kind of joyous grimace; he winked his eye in a knowing manner as he returned the paper to the horse-dealer, took off his hat, and said, bending his knees as fast as they could go, several times—

"M. Charette, is well, I hope, my master?"

"As well as possible, my good fellow. You took me for a spy of the 'Blues,' did you not?"

"Good faith, yes!"

"And what were you doing on your tree, eh!"

The peasant shook his head; a cunning smile expanded his mouth from ear to ear, and he answered in a low voice—

"Hark ye! I am watching for them."

"But the 'Blues' are far from this, my lad; I left them at Vitré, the day before yesterday."

"They're gone from there, my master, and they're coming here as fast as they can. Those, down yonder," and the peasant stretched his hand towards the north, "learnt that yesterday, and they flitted in the night. But where may the gentleman be going to, if it is not impertinent to ask? to Vannes?"

"No, to Plu-oigner; I fancy I shall find the chiefs there, to whom I am bringing a message from the general."

"What chiefs?"

"Well—*him*;" answered the horse-dealer, laying one hand affectionately on the Chouan's shoulder.

"Fleur-de-Lys?"

"Exactly."

"Ah! yes, that is very likely; why you are turning your back on him!"

"Is Fleur-de-Lys at Kergant, then?" asked the traveller, hastily withdrawing his hand.

"To be sure, and M. George as well, and all our gentlemen; sometimes one, sometimes another."

"Then I must go back again. I was told that you occupied Plu-oigner."

"Yes, at first we did, but that's changed, and it is much better as it is," said the peasant, knitting his brow with an air of intelligence. "They'll tell you all about it down yonder."

"And you are satisfied with Fleur-de-Lys, my good fellow?"

“Holy Virgin!” said the Breton, waving his hat over his head with a movement of artless enthusiasm, “are we satisfied? He’s an angel of heaven! You’ll see him, my master: he is just like the St. George over the chief altar in our parish church. And how brave he is! The balls of the ‘Blues’ can’t touch him. He gathers them in his hand as if they were flowers from the hedge. He has got his great black horse too, which eats powder as others do oats. When the ‘Blues’ see him coming, ‘White upon Black,’ as they say, they cry out, ‘Here’s the devil coming!’ because they call all the saints so. And then to see them run! Fifty of them passed by yesterday morning, and” added the peasant, with a fierce smile, “there are seven or eight of them resting in Marie Brech’s field, about a league from this. The gentleman smelled the cooking as he passed, I dare say!”

The traveller shuddered at the question, his eyes flashed fire, and his fingers grasped the handle of his stick convulsively. These equivocal signs did not escape the Chouan, and, retreating a few steps, he fixed a suspicious look upon the traveller’s troubled countenance.

“You grieve me, my friend,” resumed the latter hastily. “I should like to have been there to say a few more words to those rascals; you cannot conceive what pleasure I should have had in wielding a sabre for the good cause.”

“Is it so, my master? Well, you will have that pleasure in a short time where you are going,” answered the peasant, laughing.

“That’s what I am reckoning on, my friend; and I hope we shall soon see each other again. Well, good evening! for I shall not get on very fast with a tired horse, and I wish to reach Kergant in good time.”

“Ah, marry! you won’t get there before night, and even for that you must go across the country. After you come to Marie Brech’s field you will find

a narrow lane to your left, and then you have only to go straight forward."

"Thank you, my lad; I shall remember your face without fail."

"But stay," returned the Chouan, breaking off a twig from the beech tree; "put this strip of green in your hat, for there are more muskets on the road than you will be able to see."

The horse-dealer followed this prudent recommendation, thanked his dangerous friend once more, and began again to descend the hill upon the top of which he had met this adventure, which fortunately had not ended as it had promised. At the corner of the field which served as a grave for the unhappy dragoons, he found, as the man had said, a narrow lane, deeply buried between two hedges, and so well fitted for an ambuscade that he would have hesitated to enter it, had not the twig of beech appeared to him security sufficient against any assault of this nature. The remainder of his journey was marked by no event worthy of notice: he passed through two or three ruined and deserted villages, and frequently he heard, in the thickets which lined the road, movements and murmuring voices which gave him a little anxiety in spite of the protecting sign which waved in his hat, while twice he found it expedient to return a friendly salute to some peasants, who appeared to devote themselves to agricultural pursuits with an industry from which they reaped little fruit; but beyond the difficulties of an execrable road, no obstacle hindered the progress of his journey. Nevertheless, twilight was giving way to night when the horseman entered the long avenue of ancient trees which led to the manor-house of Kergant.

About half way up, he alighted, and fastened his horse to the post of a gate leading to a meadow. He then got over the gate, crossed the meadow, and after having leaped a hedge, with the weak points of which

he appeared to be perfectly familiar, he found himself in a large garden which lay parallel with the left wing of the chateau. Several windows brilliantly lighted up cast a bright reflection upon the narrow paths, bounded by an edging of box, which wound among the flower beds. Here the young man stopped and appeared to hesitate for a moment; but soon resumed his walk, taking care to keep out of the bright rays of light. His pace, however, was slow and uncertain, and he appeared to be going on without any fixed object. His eyes seemed to penetrate the darkness, and to discover at almost every step some object—a tree, a bench, the pedestal of a statue, or the base of some gigantic vase—from which they could not afterwards withdraw themselves without difficulty. He went up to them, he touched them, and then covered his eyes with his hand. Each nook seemed to recall some bygone scene that smiled upon him like a long absent friend.

A rapid slope led him through a labyrinth of pleached walks to a part of the garden called the wood, in which nature had been left almost to her original wild luxuriance. From time to time, however, openings in the dark clumps of fir-trees allowed the tremulous light of a starry sky to fall upon the turf. This retreat was enlivened by the murmur of a rivulet, which, falling from cascade to cascade, was lost to view amidst the tall grass and reeds of a marsh at the extremity of the wood. The young man had for some minutes been following one of the paths which wound along under an archway of foliage, and had just crossed a little bridge thrown across the brook, when a sound of voices reached his ear, so distinct and so near, that the speakers could not have been more than a few feet from him. He stopped abruptly, then bending towards the copse, he perceived on a circular bank of grass, in front of which the path ended, the graceful outline of a female form wrapped up in a

hooded cloak. Close by, leaning against a tree, was a man of slight figure, who bent a little forward to speak to her.

"This is unreasonable and ungrateful," said the unknown, in a voice of the most caressing softness; "you know how my life is occupied, and in what way. I have great and fearful duties; if I were to neglect them you would be the first to reproach me, or you are very much changed. How can I help being a little absent sometimes, with such subjects to think of?"

"Yes," interrupted the young woman, in a voice smothered either by prudence or emotion, "yes, but for all that, you must not deceive me. You do not know, you cannot know, what I suffer when this idea crosses my thoughts, and all that then passes through my mind——"

"Come," returned the unknown, "these are miserable trifles indeed. You have no cause for apprehension; I do not recognise your intrepid heart, your courageous soul, when you thus allow yourself to be overcome by such puerile presentiments!"

"You will recognise my former self if you ever deceive me, *Fleur-de-Lys*!"

"With all my heart! That is why I love you, my proud darling—why I love you so tenderly!"

These words, and the tone in which they were spoken, seemed to restore the confidence of the young woman a little. She allowed her hand to be taken by him she called *Fleur-de-Lys*, and began to address him with a passionate vivacity, but in so low a voice that she could only be heard by him to whom she spoke. Suddenly, at a movement she heard in the copse, she rose hurriedly, and seizing her companion's arm, she murmured in a voice made harsh by terror—

"My father!"

At the same instant, a new sound struck upon

their attentive ears—the sharp click made by the lock of some fire-arm. The young female could not restrain a fresh gesture of alarm, she covered her face with her clasped hands and scarcely breathed.

After a few seconds of anxious expectation—

“Come, dear child,” said Fleur-de-Lys, “it is nothing; the woods at night are full of these inexplicable sounds.” And as he spoke, he and his companion returned up the winding path.

As soon as they had crossed the little bridge over the rivulet, the stranger whom accident had made a witness of this mysterious scene, emerged from the hiding-place he had found behind the trunk of a gigantic fir-tree, and uncocking a pistol which he held in his hand—

“It is not my sister,” said he; “it is she—I must wait!”

. CHAPTER X.

"Quick! a chair and a cover. To the health of the commander!"—*MOLIERE.—LE FESTIN DE PIERRE.*

ON the same evening about twenty guests were assembled around a sumptuous supper-table, in the dining-hall of the Chateau de Kergant, a vast apartment wainscoted with oak to the ceiling. Mdemoiselle Andrée de Pelven, looking more distinguished for grace than majesty, was seated on the right of the Marquis de Kergant, while the canoness, on the left of her brother, displayed more majesty than grace. Mademoiselle Bellah de Kergant, dignified and smiling like a young queen, was seated at the centre of the table opposite the marquis, glancing with a discreet watchfulness over the circle of guests, and profiting by her observations from time to time to give orders in a low voice to the lackeys in crimson liveries who pressed behind her.

To have lackeys at all, not to speak of their crimson livery, would seem to be an extraordinary, if not a ridiculous proceeding, in the midst of a raging civil war; but the canoness Eleanore was one of those who deemed it fitting to support her rank to the last; and she had severely reproached the queen for those breaches of etiquette which, according to her, had been the principal cause of the French revolution. She professed the greatest admiration for those Roman senators who waited for their enemies seated on their chairs of ivory; and the crimson liveries of her lackeys, obstinately maintained out of her private purse,

appeared to her to form a kind of honourable pendant to this noble action of the days of old. M. de Kergant, although he plainly perceived all the puerility of this vain display, still consented to it with a good grace, on account of a certain grandeur of soul which it evinced, and which he was fully capable of sharing. The same decorum, and the same care, might be perceived in all the rest of the service. The table, splendidly lighted, was covered with plate and valuable china, and was served with that extreme abundance which was then, as now, peculiar to the provinces.

Although the marquis and his sister had succeeded in flattering themselves, and in cheating their misfortunes, by this splendour borrowed from better days, their success was limited to the decorations of the repast: the guests could not assist the illusion. More than one among them wore the common peasant's dress, and hands hardened by exposure and toil were making use of the armorial plate. The marquis called them heroes, and he was right in so doing, although a few years before he would hardly have acknowledged them to be men; but he had seen their blood flow, and learned by experience that it was as red as his own. This revolution, which the old noble fought against with so much desperation, had yet planted its foot upon his domestic hearth; he treated it nobly at his family table, and had enthroned there the greatest of its benefits, that only true social equality which is not a chimera of fanatics or a base dream of envy—namely, that which seats side by side at the same honourable banquet, all the virtuous, all the talented, and all the courageous. We must not omit to mention the plebeian head-dress of Alix, the forester's daughter, which shone at one end of the table, and gave a charming grace to all these violent contrasts.

M. de Kergant, of a generous spirit when passion did not obscure his better nature, had recompensed

by this favour the devotion which the young girl had shown to her companions in exile. The punctilious canoness could not conceal from herself the fatal blow which such a mixture of costumes and manners gave to her purely classical traditions; she felt to the bottom of her heart the want of harmony between them and her crimson-liveried lackeys, but she consoled herself as best she might with the good done to the "cause," by thus flattering the peasant chiefs.

Accident afforded me a few years ago the advantage of making the acquaintance of one of the few survivors of the great Chouannerie. From his youthful spirit of adventure, as it seemed to me, more than from any very strong conviction, he had taken an active part in the intrigues, as well as in the wars of royalist Brittany; he had indeed found so much pleasure in it, that he was, I believe, quite ready to begin again when he fortunately died the next spring. This brave old man, who had killed many a stout fellow in his day, often astonished me by relating with what appetite he had eaten his meals, and with what tranquillity he had followed the daily routine of life in the midst of the fatal events and gloomy apprehensions of civil war. "When danger," said he, "dogs us from morning till night, it quickly loses its power over us." He added that in his mind Damocles must have been a sorry coward not to have become accustomed to such a simple thing as a sword hanging over his head. He could understand that it might be rather annoying the first day, but he protested that, as for him, he should not have lost a mouthful the second; and that the sword would have had its pains for nothing. He went even farther: he declared himself capable, although threatened by any species of danger, provided it lasted long enough, of sustaining for any length of time the most trifling and frivolous topic of discourse. To support this affirmation he related to us several wonderful *tour de force*, which

I am sorry not to be able to interweave into this history; but the kindness of the old partisan enables me at least to make the reader acquainted with the sort of conversation which filled up the brief intervals of a bloody drama, and served to enliven a supper given by Chouans, in the interval between two of those combats in which no quarter was given or received, and only eight days before the affair of Quiberon.

"Upon my word, this is positively a wedding supper, my dear host, and for a royal wedding, too," said a young man, laughingly, who occupied the post of honour next to Mademoiselle de Kergant, and whose every word was received with the most extraordinary respect. "I suspect that you have granted an asylum in your chateau to all the illustrious cooks whom the Revolution has turned out of place, and this supper has every appearance of being the result of the combined talents of those worthy gentlemen. In any case such a supper in my poor opinion is better worth having than a long poem of gratitude; the more so as the shortest poems have always seemed to me the best. Ah! Mademoiselle de Kergant frowns! I have been so unfortunate as to utter some heresy."

"You have utterly disgraced yourself in Mademoiselle Bellah's eyes, my lord duke," said a young abbe, with a keen eye and rather rakish look, who was seated near the canoness.

"My daughter, my lord," added M. de Kergant, "has the conceit of loving poetry passionately."

"Well," returned the individual who was addressed as the duke, "I said nothing against poetry, I only spoke of poems."

"But, sir," said Bellah, smiling, "what do you mean by the word poem?"

"By a poem, mademoiselle, I mean—I mean such as the *Henriade*, which I have never read, but which I know is very dull."

"Besides the author must have been a brute," observed the canoness. "I have never read his *Henriade* either, but they say Joan of Arc is most shamefully treated in it."

"I am enchanted to be so instructed, madame," answered the young duke, "and I shall add this grievance to those which I already entertained against that epic. As for poetry, I have the happiness to share the passionate love with which it inspires Mademoiselle de Kergant; but I am far from honouring indiscriminately with this title all lines written of an equal length. According to my mind, a man is not a poet because he calls things by their wrong names, and because he measures syllables with more or less ability according to a settled rhythm. Simplicity, nature, good faith, which are the characteristics of the poetry I speak of, belong only to the earliest ages of nations, as to the earliest years of man. The imaginations, the feelings, the dreams of a child are poetry. A young man who loves is also a poet; but under pain of being thought affected and ridiculous, poems of feeling and expression must be abandoned after the first half of life is passed, for they then cease to be sincere and touching. You have treasures of true poetry, mademoiselle, in your old Breton ballads. Ah! I am enchanted to see that your brow is smoothed—you pardon me, do you not? Well, gentlemen, I may perhaps be offending some unknown bard here, but that is my opinion. A dawning civilisation is poetical, for a child cries, laughs, sings before it speaks. A people in ripe age, and, with still more reason, a worn-out people, is only poetical by art. It is like a greybeard playing on a guitar. An 'Art of Poetry' in a nation signifies that the era of poetry is passed; so that since Boileau, and I would willingly include him too amongst the rejected, I do not know of one poet who has appeared in France.

If you know of one, even if

it be yourself, I am ready to do him homage, on satisfactory proof being given of his ability, you understand."

The individual to whom the young duke addressed these words was a man about fifty years of age, tall, thin, of sallow complexion, and carefully powdered. He was seated next Andrée, to whom he appeared to be recounting, with the most serious air in the world, the most amusing things, if they were to be judged of by the young lady's peals of laughter.

"Your theory, my lord duke," said he, gravely, "wounds me, I confess, in my dearest affections. You refuse the title of poet to a man who was my friend, and whose pen, I am convinced, was cut by Apollo himself. He knew, besides, how to introduce an element into poetry which does not in general figure there, much to its detriment I believe—namely utility."

"And the name of this lofty genius?" asked the duke.

"His name, my lord, is written in Parnassus I doubt not, as it is in my heart; but I confess with regret that his contemporaries had not the curiosity to pierce the veil under which he loved to shroud his muse."

"Let us hear his verses, then."

The cavalier meditated for a moment, passed his hand across his brow, and then resumed: "Fortunately, I remember a few of them. This great man, gentlemen, was not only my friend, he was also the friend of mankind. He delighted to give them wholesome advice while he charmed them by his talent. He spoke thus:—

"Aux gens que pas à pas conduit vers le tombeau

La phthisie ou la fièvre lente,

Je conseille le lait de chèvre ou de chameau,

Où estai de jument, comme chose excellente."

The assembled guests could not hear this brilliant stanza without tokens of the greatest amusement; Andrée, especially, applauded with both hands, with all the wild delight of a child.

"Another, chevalier! another, I entreat you," exclaimed she.

"Willingly, mademoiselle," replied the imperturbable chevalier. "It was my friend, likewise, who said so wittily of the goose, considered in the light of human food.—

'L' oie est un animal stupide,
Qui doit être sans cesse en un séjour humide;
Il la faut abreuver; l'axiome est certain :
Vive, elle veut de l'eau; morte elle veut du vin.'

It was my friend, also, gentlemen, who revealed to the world a certain number of new truths, after the manner of the following:—

'Laver les mains est une propreté
Qui contribue à la santé.'

When the excessive admiration which could not fail to be excited by such specimens of genius was a little subsided—

"Faith! gentlemen," said M. de Kergant, "these are certainly rather powerful truisms, but I think I prefer even them to the madrigals, impromptus, and all those washy pastorals, with which we were inundated twenty years ago by a crowd of young good-for-nothings."

"Gently! brother," interrupted the canoness; "those poetasters of whom you speak were, I confess, impertinents who should have been whipped in the market-place, but they had a vast deal of wit. You yourself did not always feel such disdain for this class of productions as you profess to-day. I am

sorry to remind you publicly of some verses which were composed in the year 1775, by a certain marquis whose name I will not reveal. Here they are," added the canoness, giving her mouth a pinched-in, babyish expression—"To a lady, with a dog on her lap."

"Sister!" exclaimed the marquis.

"My dear brother, I name nobody," answered the canoness.

"TO A LADY WITH A DOG ON HER LAP.

"Grace a vous, cruelle beauté,
Malgré leur peu de ressemblance,
Nous voyons la fidélité
Sur les genoux de l'inconstance."

"Ah! my dear sir!" said Bellah, directing a charming glance of tender reproach, mingled with filial respect, towards her father.

"Well! but upon my word, that is really very pretty, marquis," said the brilliant young man who appeared to be the king of the feast. "I can understand, besides, why the canoness should defend a species of literature which has produced the graceful rondeau which I am going to repeat to you, and which I believe was written for herself:—

'TO A LADY WHO ASKED FOR A RONDEAU.

'On n'en fait plus, ma chère Eléonore,'

That is your name, I believe, madam?

'On ne fait plus de ces jolis rondeaux
Dont la cadence agréable et sonore,
Droit au refrain marchait à pas égaux.

Dans ce siècle plus sage, ou plus froid que les autres,
Il faudrait que nos cœurs fussent toujours émus,
Par des yeux aussi vifs, aussi beaux que les vôtres :
On n'en fait plus!

Les complimens sont le fard du poète:
 J'en ai fait mille, ils étaient superflus;
 Mais dès l'instant où l'on vous les répète,
 On n'en fait plus!" "

"Can any one deny that that is adorable!" exclaimed the canoness; "and these, my lord:—

'TO EGLE.

'Vous accusez l'Amour, l'Amour en rit tout bas;
 Car, en le décriant, vous augmentez sa gloire.
 Quand vous niez ce dieu, vous nous forcez d'y croire,
 Et vous le faites naître en disant qu'il n'est pas.'"

"That is very well written, doubtless," said the young abbé; "but I think I can remember something still more lively. Judge for yourself, madam:

'A ce bouquet charmant que pour toi l'on a fait,
 Je vois, gentille Eglé, qu'aujourd' hui c'est ta fête."
 'Non,' me répondit-elle avec un air honnête,
 'C'est moi qui l'ai cucilli pour orner mon corset.
 C'est donc' lui dis-je alors, la fête du bouquet!'" "

"Ah, heavens!" cried the duke, with a burst of affected enthusiasm, "how exquisite! Truly, ladies, it is as if one were reclining on a bed of roses."

"For my part," said M. de Kergant, "I wish the authors of such things were fed upon pomade!"

"But, my good host, when a person has written a quatrain 'upon a lady with a dog on her lap,' it comes with an ill grace—"

"Excuse me, my lord," said the old marquis, laughing, "but I must inform you of the history of this quatrain. I wrote it, certainly—"

"Oh, ho!" said the duke, "we have caught you, then!"

"But it was a challenge; my word was pledged: I must either have written it—or died."

"Indeed, marquis! did you value life so much, then, in those days?"

M. de Kergant was about to answer in the same light tone, when he saw his daughter rise suddenly and remain standing and immovable, her cheeks pale and her eyes rivetted with a look of stupor upon the side of the hall in which the entrance-door was situated. Half the guests had their eyes fixed on the same spot, with an air of extreme surprise, and even of alarm. M. de Kergant turned round hastily and perceived Colonel Hervé standing near the door, in his republican uniform, his head bare, and without his sword. The marquis rose: Andrée uttered a cry.

"Monsieur le Marquis," said Pelven, coming forward, his frank handsome countenance a little pale from fatigue and emotion, "I have come to demand your hospitality. For reasons which you can easily comprehend, there is no safety for me now in the republican ranks. Warned in time of the fate which awaited me, I thought there would be more folly than courage in not withdrawing myself from it. Since I am proscribed, I come among the proscribed. If I have reckoned too much, sir, upon your former friendship, I will drag elsewhere an unhappy existence which the terrible party to which I had devoted it has cast from them."

The guests listened with a mournful silence to these words of the young officer. All eyes were fixed upon the marquis, whose features had lost their transient expression of cheerful good humour, and assumed their accustomed character of noble severity.

"Monsieur de Pelven," said he, making a step towards his unexpected guest; but instead of continuing his sentence with the solemnity with which he had begun it, he suddenly seized the young man's hand, and pressing him to his heart, "Hervé," cried

he in a broken voice, "my son, my child—you are welcome!"

This reception, which Hervé had not hoped for, touched him to the heart. As he received the warm embrace of the old man, he felt at the same time an icy shudder pass through his veins. The thought of the double part which he was playing for the first time in his life, flashed across his mind like a pang of remorse, and while he stammered out a few words of gratitude and devotion, a brighter colour rose to his bronzed cheeks; but his eye having suddenly encountered the flashing glance of the personage seated near *Mademoiselle de Kergant*, he instantly recovered all his firmness and resolution. The guests replied by a joyous acclamation, accompanied with a noisy knocking of their glasses on the table: one only, he who in spite of his youth appeared to be the first among them, contented himself with bowing his head with grave politeness.

Hervé, at the marquis's invitation, now took his place next *Andrée*, who received him with transports of joy, mingled with tears. *Mademoiselle de Kergant*, more reserved and more penetrating, had not given the companion of her childhood any other token of welcome than a cold, melancholy smile; and the glances which she covertly cast upon him seemed clouded with a feeling of doubt and anxiety.

An embarrassed silence succeeded by degrees to the tumultuous movement which had been caused by the arrival of the young republican. *Mademoiselle de Kergant's* remarkable neighbour alone preserved his air of superior ease, while he endeavoured, with a solicitude marked by good taste, to re-animate the conversation, which the presence of the execrated revolutionary uniform seemed to have arrested upon the lips of those present. The tone of his voice, sonorous, and at the same time melodious as a trumpet with a silver sound, struck Hervé as if he recollected to have

heard it before. The young colonel no longer doubted that he was in the presence of that mysterious chief, the enemy and the rival whom he had come to seek—of that royalist hero, who, in so short a space, had raised his warlike reputation to such a height.

Hervé studied him with sombre curiosity. He was a man of the smallest size which is compatible with manly beauty and grace, and might be about five-and-twenty or thirty; his broad and lofty forehead was shaded by masses of black hair, his mouth was chiselled with a delicacy a little too effeminate perhaps, but this feature, possessing a charm scarcely worthy of a man, was redeemed by the pride of the lofty brow, by the bold lines of an aquiline nose with slightly distended nostrils, and above all, by the almost insupportable splendour of his eyes. Pelven thought he could discern in the physiognomy of the unknown some of the characteristic features of an illustrious family; but he was indebted to his patrician education for information too precise and too detailed respecting all the members of the House of Bourbon, not to be instantly convinced that none of the names attributed to him by the popular voice belonged of right to the young chief before him.

But whosoever he might be, his attitude and deportment were truly royal. None appeared to contest his right to act as a prince, and he exercised this right with an assurance tempered with the most exquisite politeness. His words ran like a flame round the circle of guests—rapid, affable, entrancing—finding access alike to the rudest as well as to the most cultivated minds, while he suited his pleasantries or his praise to the tastes and habits of each with a surprising flexibility of tone and language. Every power of fascination, as every prestige of victory, seemed the attribute of this being so richly endowed by nature, in whom the most fascinating grace was united to the imperious attraction of force, and who addressed soldiers and

women with equal eloquence. Nevertheless this rich medal could not fail to have its reverse. A scrutinising observer would have been startled by the splendour of so many resources and qualities, lavished, as it were, without reserve, and leaving room to doubt whether any thing remained behind. It seemed more natural to accept this young man for a master than to take him for a friend.

Hervé could not help starting when he heard himself addressed by the object of his anxious scrutiny, to whom we shall in future give his surname of Fleur-de-Lys.

"Monsieur de Pelven," said he, filling his glass, "allow me to drink to the happy accident which has procured us the advantage, so deservedly appreciated, of seeing you amongst us."

"Sir," answered Hervé, forcing a smile, "I am very much deceived if it is not you yourself who must be thanked for my presence, provided, indeed, there is any cause for gratitude."

"On my word, count," answered Fleur-de-Lys, in an affectionate tone of voice, "either I deceive myself very much, or you cannot quite forgive me for the liberty I took in disposing of your services without your knowledge."

"Faith, sir!" said Hervé, gaily, "I confess that I bear a certain blow still imprinted on my memory."

"Ah! thank heaven, that is not upon my conscience! George, my friend, I beg you will answer for your own deeds. I will not have your massive fist thrust between M. de Pelven and me. Here is the knocker-down, my dear count!" added the young man, pointing out to Hervé a person in the dress of a peasant with square shoulders and a bullet head; whose loose cravat displayed the throat of a Hercules; "you will forgive George, I am sure, when you have seen how he stands fire."

"Excuse me, Monsieur le Comte," said George,

with a hoarse laugh, "but all our lives were at stake, and, besides, a blow with the fist does not entail any dishonour."

"I did not say it had dishonoured me," replied Hervé, "but it hurt me rather. I suppose, Mr. George, that you were one of those ladies who were washing their clothes on that eventful night in the Valley of the Groac'h? May I be so indiscreet as to ask the motive of that masquerade—certainly a most harmless one?"

"Ah, don't speak of it!" said Fleur-de-Lys; "these Bretons are so brave that they carry their courage to the height of madness. They chose to receive me with this drollery, which gave us all the greatest embarrassment."

"And may I ask, Mr. George," pursued Hervé, "by virtue of what enchantment you were able to stand our fire with impunity?"

"Ah, sir," answered George, "my fellows are so cool, do you see! I have accustomed them to rush up to the mouths of the pieces, throwing themselves down flat, from time to time, to escape the shot. You can judge for yourself with what precision they perform this manœuvre."

As the intrepid partisan finished speaking, Mademoiselle de Kergant rose from table, taking the hand which Fleur-de-Lys offered to her, and the whole company followed them to an adjoining drawing-room, which was adorned by several portraits. Hervé upon once more seeing these grave ancestral faces, the honoured witnesses of his childish sports, the domestic protectors of those peaceful years, could not help having vividly recalled to his mind the sorrows and agitations of the present hour. While the guests dispersed in groups through the drawing-room, and gave themselves up to that cheerful conversation which is promoted by a good repast, he retired to the deep embrasure of a window; but he had hardly

reached it when he saw Bellah approaching with a smiling absent air, addressing a word here and there, as she passed, to the people near her; then, changing her tone and voice when she was quite close to him, she said quickly, and in a low voice—

“Hervé, what have you come here for?”

“Heaven is my witness,” answered the young man, “that I would sooner have endured the most ignominious death than have done so, could I have had the slightest suspicion of what I was to see and hear!”

“Is this a riddle, Monsieur de Pelven?” asked Bellah, with that quiet hauteur which formed one of her peculiar charms.

“An hour ago I was in the pine grove, Bellah.”

“In the pine grove?” repeated Mademoiselle de Kergant, answering Hervé’s accusing glance with a look of the most perfect innocence. Her father’s voice calling her interrupted this explanation, and the young girl, making a slight gesture of impatience, raised her beautiful eyes to heaven, and moved away with a thoughtful air.

When we are astonished at the facility with which a clever man allows himself to be deceived by the woman he loves, we forget the natural inclination of the human heart to hope. The mind of the unhappy man is full of illusions, he is the willing accomplice in the arts by which he is enveloped: it is our own weak hands which retain the veil by which we are blinded. A single word, a gesture of surprise, had been sufficient to combat and to half conquer in Hervé’s mind proofs which, a moment before, had seemed indisputable. He remembered the proud and innocent mind of his adopted sister, he saw the pure light again beaming in her eyes, he forgot that perfection of hypocrisy which can clothe a wicked brow with false seeming, and he almost reproached himself for having, upon vague suspicions only, outraged a

being worthy of his respect. Still, the scene in the pine grove had certainly taken place.

Just as this recollection had plunged Hervé into fresh anxiety, a woman passed before the curtain which half concealed him from view, and raising his head he saw the pale energetic countenance of Alix. However improbable the idea which this sight suddenly awakened in the young man's mind, he did not fail to welcome it as a support both for his doubts and for his hopes; but upon again observing the animated group of which Bellah and Fleur-de-Lys formed the centre, Hervé could not help being convinced that if the young royalist hero, had not yet all those claims upon his hatred which he had imagined, was neglecting no means to deserve them.

It was plain that the presence of Bellah acted like a powerful stimulus on him, and that he was exerting himself to fascinate her. It was to her that he directed every word; for her he displayed all the treasures of his mind, while he surrounded her with all the prestige of his rank, as if in a magic circle. Bellah was evidently under the charm of the fascination, whatever might be the depth of the impression. Hervé could even read a sort of passionate admiration in the eyes of the young girl, which immediately brought back all his suspicions and his anger. Reminding himself of the true object of his journey to Kergant, he blamed himself for not having already abandoned his borrowed part, and for having kept on the mask longer than was necessary. He approached his formidable rival, and seizing an opportunity when he had just ceased speaking:

"Sir," said he, "may I be permitted a moment's conversation with you before I unite myself for ever to a cause which you so well represent? I am certainly not in a condition to set a price upon my services, but my position amongst you needs to be clearly defined, for your satisfaction as well as for my

own—I may add for the sake of my honour. I think I am not mistaken, sir, in attributing to you all that authority which enables you to pronounce without any appeal upon all that concerns me.”

During these words, the piercing eyes of the young royalist had not ceased to study the countenance of the speaker attentively: a smile of singular meaning played on his lips as he replied—

“I am quite at your service, Monsieur de Pelven, and you are only forestalling my own wishes. The evening is fine, I think. Would a turn in the garden be agreeable to you? We can converse there at our ease?”

Hervé bowed.

“But, my dear host,” exclaimed Fleur-de-Lys, addressing the Marquis de Kergant, “are we to treat M. de Pelven like a prisoner? I observe he has no sword. This to a brave soldier like him, is a most unmerited mortification, and shall not be prolonged a moment longer, if you have any regard to my request.”

“You remind me, my lord duke,” said the marquis, “that the fitting moment is now arrived for me to restore to Hervé a part of his inheritance of which I have till now defrauded him.”

As he spoke, the marquis approached a console table, and taking from it a sword which was lying on a velvet cushion, he presented it to Hervé.

“My dear son,” said he, “this is yours; your father’s sword can be wielded by a loyal hand alone. I deliver it to you in the sure confidence that it will never be turned against either our holy cross or our holy fleurs-de-lys.”

At these words the young duke smiled again.

“I will answer for M. de Pelven!” said he, “that this confidence is well placed, and that it is given at the right moment,” added he, in a lower voice, turning on his heel and moving towards the door. Pelven

buckled on his sword, thanking M. de Kergant with that somewhat cold reserve which had marked his conduct towards the old nobleman since his arrival, and which the latter attributed to the natural embarrassment caused by this forced return. He then followed Fleur-de-Lys out of the room.

The two young men passed through a vestibule hung with ancient coats of armour, crossed the bridge thrown over the moat, and soon found themselves in the garden of the chateau. By a tacit agreement they continued to walk on rapidly, as if they could not find a spot sufficiently solitary for the explanation that was about to take place, of the importance of which each seemed to be perfectly aware. As they were approaching the pine grove, they heard a noise of hasty steps behind them; they stopped, and an instant afterwards Mademoiselle de Kergant overtook them.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," said she, in a breathless voice, "Monsieur Hervé, I must speak with you."

Hervé could not repress a gesture of extreme vexation.

"I must entreat you to excuse me, mademoiselle," said he; "you heard the request which I made to the—— to the duke; he has granted it, and he would have a right to accuse me of discourtesy were I to delay——"

"The duke," interrupted Bellah, with vivacity, "is too courteous himself not to yield to me his turn of audience."

"Assuredly," said Fleur-de-Lys, in a constrained voice, which was unusual to him: "Mademoiselle de Kergant may reckon on my absolute submission to her slightest wishes. But M. de Pelven would do me injustice if he thought he was the only one aggrieved by this delay."

Bowing low after he had spoken, the young chief quitted the spot, and disappeared in the thickest part of the wood.

Mademoiselle de Kergant retraced her steps for a short distance, till she was certain of being heard by him alone whom she addressed.

"Hervé," said she then, stopping and laying her hand on his arm, "this shall not be—this cannot be!"

"What do you mean?" said Hervé, "you certainly mistake my intentions."

"No more than he did; but it shall not be—no, even were I compelled to fetch my father and tell him all. Hervé, do not reduce me to this terrible extremity, I implore you!"

"This extremity is very useless, since a word from you will be sufficient to deprive me of all wish, of all reasonable pretext, for carrying this affair any further. But listen to me carefully: if you refuse to say this word you will deliver me with your own hands to certain death, for you know your father. Bellah! the woman whom I saw near this an hour ago with that young man—that woman, who was she? speak!"

Mademoiselle de Kergant trembled; she leaned against the pedestal of a statue, and remained for some time with her head bowed, without answering, while her breathing was oppressed and painful. At last she spoke without raising her eyes—

"That woman," said she, in a stifled voice, "was myself."

"You—you! powers of heaven!" exclaimed Hervé, starting back with a kind of horror. "Then," he resumed, after a short silence, "yes, I will have this confession from your lips—then he is your lover?"

Bellah, whose attitude was one of utter despair, hid her face in both her hands, and murmured in a voice scarcely audible, "yes, my lover."

"It is well," said Hervé; "adieu!"

"Where are you going?" returned Mademoiselle de Kergant, seizing Hervé's hand with a gesture of distraction, "what will become of you?—what do you want?—what am I to say to my father?"

“Tell him that I came here as a spy; load me with the vilest epithets—I care not; your words can no longer dishonour any one. Farewell!”

As he concluded, Hervé gently shook off the hand which was laid upon his, and moved away with a quick step, while the distracted girl fell on her knees before the pedestal, her hair falling loose over her shoulders, her heart heaving with sobs—the image of a suppliant at an ancient altar.

CHAPTER XI.

Vous m'êtes, en dormant, un peu triste apparu :
J'ai craint qu'il ne fut vrai ; je suis vite accouru.

LA FONTAINE.—LES DEUX AMIS.

PELVEN sprang over a gap in the hedge which separated the garden from the neighbouring meadow, and again entered the dark avenue by the gate to which his horse was still fastened. The poor animal, forgotten among so many more engrossing events, gave a feeble neigh as he recognised his master's step, and stretched out his wearied neck to implore a caress. There is not a man who has not experienced at some time in the progress of life, one of those painful moments marked by treason and ingratitude, when a token of attachment from the humblest of creatures pierces to the heart, and renders the sense of desolation still more poignant. When the heart is full, little is needed to make it overflow, and Hervé, murmuring some confused words, stroked the old companion of his perils and his battles; then seating himself on the neighbouring bank, he allowed a tear to trickle slowly down his cheek.

After some minutes abandoned to bitter meditation, the young man rose, and drew himself up with energy, as if to oppose a firm front to fate. There is this advantage at least in the certainty of misfortune, that it takes away all pretext for those alternations of hope and fear which enervate the

soul. On whichever side Hervé turned his thoughts he met only pain, obstacles, and a sort of impossibility of any longer dragging on his existence. The future as well as the past seemed to yawn beneath his feet: the dreams of a life of lofty activity, of good service done, of glory acquired—all the noble consolations which can beguile one into oblivion of vanished happiness, and which are the only refuge for a wounded heart—all this was denied him. Against all his expectations, his rash enterprise had saved neither his love nor his honour, and it had left him his life. Alone, and in the enemy's country, what hope had he now of being able to regain by some brilliant action the esteem of his party? Whither could he go—equally suspected by both sides, a traitor in the eyes of all? Under what tent or what hut should he shelter his head, devoted to vengeance as he was by both camps, even for one single night?"

Lost in these torturing reflections, the young man had reached the farthest extremity of the avenue, when his ear was suddenly struck by the measured tread of a military detachment. Before he could put himself on his guard, he was surrounded by a hedge of bayonets, and felt the point of a sabre at his heart.

"Yield, whoever you may be," cried an imperious voice.

"Francis!" exclaimed Pelven.

"Hervé!" answered the young lieutenant, lowering his sabre and seizing his friend's hand—"Hervé! heaven be praised! I never hoped to see you again alive."

"Francis!" repeated Hervé, in the greatest surprise, "what does all this mean? Where do you come from? How were you able to reach this? Who have you with you?"

"It is us," exclaimed a hoarse voice, "the fearless Colibri and I, who are come to seek our colonel or death; and all on account of the moral effect."

"Ah! my old Bruidoux!" said Hervé, "you do not believe then that I was a traitor?"

"Why, colonel, were not we all taken in by that serpent of a Scotchwoman? Colibri was the only one, and he has a wonderful nose for his age, who—"

"But in the name of heaven, Francis!" interrupted Hervé, "how could you follow me so quickly and be able to reach this place? Where is the army—where is the general?"

"A little farther off than I could wish, colonel. But, first of all, tell me how far you have proceeded in your adventure? Have you obtained admittance into the chateau?"

"I have, and I have found all whom I sought. In everything else I have failed completely and cruelly. Do not ask me more; but tell me all that has passed since I left you."

Francis, leading the colonel a little aside, then informed him that, on the night following his departure, the republican army had changed its quarters: that the main body was already at Ploermel, while three battalions, among which was Hervé's own, had even pushed a reconnoitering party as far as the deserted little town through which Pelven had passed in the morning. The rumour ran that the forces of the "Whites" were concentrated a little more towards the north, at Pontivy.

The general, anxious on Hervé's account, had recommended Francis to do everything that could be done, without being guilty of too great imprudence, for the safety of their mutual friend, when the opportunity should present itself. Francis, finding himself only three short leagues from Kergant, had resolved to push on there by a night march: he had taken with him about sixty men, among whom had been included, at their especial request, all those who had figured as the emigrants' escort; and, traversing a country which appeared completely abandoned, and moreover protected

by the darkness, the little troop had encountered no obstacle. After giving these details, Francis asked the young colonel whether there was a numerous garrison in the chateau, and if they were not running the risk of being surrounded? Hervé answered that he had seen no trace of a garrison either in the chateau or in its neighbourhood; that about a dozen royalist officers had been supping there very quietly, and that they did not seem to have a suspicion of the approach of the republican army. He added some particulars with regard to Fleur-de-Lys, whose true name he did not believe would justify the apprehensions of the general-in-chief.

"And what do you mean to do now?" continued Hervé.

"Well, really, colonel, if things are as you describe them to be, I think we have no other choice than to lay our hand on this covey of rebels. The capture of Fleur-de-Lys alone is worth a victory."

"That is impossible!" said Hervé, quickly.

"Impossible!—why? On the contrary, nothing is more easy, if I may judge from the information which you yourself have just given me. If I don't deceive myself, we should be failing in our duty if we neglected to profit by this occasion."

"Do you pretend to teach me my duty, sir?" exclaimed Pelven.

"Colonel Hervé!" said the young lieutenant, in a tone of pained surprise.

"Well!—yes—yes—I am wrong, I am wrong a thousand times—it is too true," returned Hervé, whose agitation was excessive; "our duty here is in truth evident, incontestable; but how can I lend myself to this act of violence, no doubt stained with blood; and against whom—against my father's friend, the protector of my childhood! Must I go and seize upon the old man in his own house, in that house in which he has treated me so long like a son? It is impossible.

Francis! And the women—must I arrest them also? And the young man himself, whoever he may be, is it for me to deliver him up? No! I repeat it; it is odious, impossible, and at the peril of my head I will neither do it, nor suffer it to be done.”

“I hope, colonel,” said Francis, “to be able to induce you to contemplate with less repugnance the necessity under which we find ourselves placed. The general foresaw that such a difficulty might present itself if I met you at Kergant, and his instructions are calculated to meet your scruples. He has commanded me, in the first place, to arrest no woman. As for M. de Kergant, since his name has not as yet been openly compromised in the hostile acts which have violated the treaties, the general leaves him free to cross over to England. You see that if we do make use of the signal advantage which fortune presents to us, far from really injuring M. de Kergant we prevent him from completing his own ruin; for this desperate war may at any hour annihilate both himself and all who belong to him.”

Hervé gave a sign of assent.

“And as for Fleur-de-Lys,” resumed Francis, “he is not a Bourbon, you say?”

“I am convinced he is not.”

“In that case, whoever he may be, he will be treated in the same way as any other prisoner that we may make; and the general engages to look upon these as if they had surrendered voluntarily: they will be merely detained till the end of the war.”

“I cannot but believe you, Francis,” said Hervé; “and that being so, I must wish you success, were it only for the sake of those I loved so well. Go, then, and do as you have said; but in the situation in which I am placed I have no right to command your men, even if I wished it. Do your duty, I repeat it; as for me, whether by so doing I perform mine or not, I will not go with you.”

Francis, though evidently annoyed at this resolution, feared that any fresh objections might appear to be dictated by a suspicion unworthy of him; and without adding a word, he ordered his soldiers to fall into their ranks. But Hervé suddenly changed his mind: it struck him that by refusing to take his part in the drama which was at hand, he was obeying a feeling of weakness rather than of honour. His presence might at least soften the effects of a catastrophe which had now become inevitable; his age and his rank would inspire a confidence which might be refused to the young lieutenant, and perhaps it might rest with him to prevent some bloody scene which would lay waste this almost parental home—his sister's asylum. Communicating these reflections to Francis, Hervé declared that he would accompany him, but that he should leave him the command of the enterprise, confining himself merely to being a spectator.

The little troop then resumed its march, and only halted when they reached the side gate which marked the middle of the avenue. Thanks to the friendly confidence of Pelven, the young lieutenant had long carried in his head an exact plan of Kergant. He ordered Bruidoux to cross the meadow with twenty grenadiers, to scale the garden hedge at the breach, and to occupy the entrance to the chateau on that side. The time-worn building, surrounded by moats, had no means of communication with the exterior except the two bridges which occupied the place of the old draw-bridge, and gave access, one to the garden, the other to the court-yard. Every means of escape was thus closed to the marquis and his guests. During this time, Pelven had unsaddled and unbridled his horse, and left him at liberty in the field.

Thus reduced to about fifty men, the republican column continued to advance with precaution towards the chateau, endeavouring to deaden as much as possible the noise of their footsteps. At intervals, the

name of Fleur-de-Lys was whispered in the ranks, but the two young officers did not exchange a word. They were both dejected and melancholy: the duties of a soldier require the dazzling glare of danger to soften their repulsive features. Hervé especially felt, with a kind of surprise, that he had not yet exhausted all the anguish of which his heart was capable. The horrors of civil war, and the painful combinations which it produces, had never yet appeared to him in such a mournful light; it was in vain that he called up all the powers of his reason to subdue his rebellious feelings, that he invoked the testimony of his conscience and his loyalty. When he perceived the turrets of the old manor-house, when he entered the precincts of the court-yard, he could not repress a groan, and seized his friend's arm with a convulsive movement.

“This is a terrible moment, Francis!” said he.

The young lieutenant pressed his hand in silence, and ordered his men to quicken their pace.

So complete was the security in which the inhabitants of the chateau were wrapped, that the detachment crossed the bridge unperceived. The door was open; about a dozen steps led up from the entrance to the vestibule. Francis, leaving the half of his force in the court-yard, quickly mounted the stairs, accompanied by Pelven and followed by the remaining soldiers.

Two or three servants who were loitering there, struck with dismay at this sudden invasion, did not even attempt resistance. Francis, having assured himself that Bruidoux was in possession of the post assigned to him, recommended him to use no violence, but to allow no one to pass out; then, escorted by a few soldiers, he entered the apartments leading to the drawing-room, which, as he had seen from the outside, were still brilliantly illuminated. The young lieutenant, actuated by a feeling unnecessary to ex-

plain, took all his measures without addressing a single word to Hervé, who walked by his side like a shadow. In the great hall where the supper had taken place, they met the forester Kado, who at the sight of the bayonets remained like one petrified, his mouth open and utterly mute.

"Kado," said Hervé, breaking the mournful silence which he had hitherto maintained, and speaking in a low voice, "no noise, no useless struggle. They are masters of the chateau!"

"Heavens!" murmured Kado, "is it possible, M. Hervé! can it be you, you, who—"

"Silence! and unite your efforts with mine to prevent greater misfortunes. Every one's life is safe. Who is in there?" and Hervé pointed to the neighbouring saloon.

"All the ladies, the poor ladies, and M. le Marquis."

"The rest?"

"They are all gone—except M. George and—heavens!—is it possible, M. Hervé?"

"And Fleur-de-Lys?" asked Hervé.

The forester wrung his hands in despair.

"If the lieutenant will permit," Hervé resumed, "Kado might precede us, in order that we may terrify those unhappy women less."

"Enter, Kado," answered Francis.

Kado seemed to hesitate, then upon an expressive sign from Hervé, he opened the door of the saloon. But he stopped at the threshold, his eyes wandering over the group of women, as if he could find no words wherewith to address them. At last, in the tone of a judge pronouncing sentence of death—

"The Blues!" said he.

This word was answered by a feeble cry of terror, which pierced through Hervé's heart: it was Andrée's plaintive voice. The other women repressed all outward expression of the horror which blanched their

countenances. Fleur-de-Lys and George, who were in fact the only guests still present, plunged their hands into their breasts, while M. de Kergant snatching up his sabre from a corner of the chimney-piece, sprang forward; but the door was already blocked up by a rampart of soldiers, and the two republican officers with sheathed sabres and bare heads, entered the saloon.

"Gentlemen," said Francis, "the chateau is surrounded. You are my prisoners."

A moment's silence followed this declaration. Andrée, when she perceived her brother, stretched out her arms to him with an agonized expression, then her pallid features drooped upon her shoulder, and the innocent victim sank gently down, like a flower whose stalk has been severed by the scythe. Hervé sprang forward to support her; but Bellah was before him, and with the help of Alix she placed the inanimate form of her adopted sister upon a seat: she then approached a window, which she half opened.

Pelven turned towards the marquis.

"This misfortune, sir," he said "is not my work. I could neither foresee it nor prevent it. I cannot hope that you will do justice to the feeling which has strengthened me to face the bitter trials which I anticipate. I only think it right to say that I have no command here, no power but that of entreaty. I implore you, sir, not to aggravate the blow which threatens you, by a useless resistance. Rely upon the word of this young officer, who enjoys the full confidence of the commander-in-chief."

"And who shall answer to me for your honour—you, who answer to me for his?" said the marquis.

"Speak, Francis," resumed Hervé, "but respect those who have no power to reply to an insult."

Pelven then retired a little on one side, and stood immovable, leaning against the wall, as if determined to take no further part in whatever might happen.

"Gentlemen," said Francis in his turn, after having signed to the soldiers to leave the saloon, "I should have hesitated to take this mission upon me, had not the generosity of the commander-in-chief lightened its burden. These are the conditions which he has permitted me to offer to you."

The young lieutenant then informed the royalist chiefs, who did not hear the intelligence without some signs of surprise, of the consideration with which he had been recommended to treat the women, and the moderation which Hoche intended to use towards all his prisoners.

"Nevertheless, gentlemen," added Francis, "I must warn you that our general has not sufficient power to dispose as he pleases of any member of the late royal family; whether this reservation concerns any among you, you yourselves only know."

Francis having ceased to speak, the marquis held a short conference in an under tone with his two guests, and Fleur-de-Lys then answered the republican officer.

"No magnanimous action performed by your noble general, sir, can appear incredible to us. His word, we know, is as good as his bond. Unfortunately, we also know that there is a power above him which can force him, however bound by his word, to yield up his captives. Now this is a risk which these gentlemen and I are decided not to run. Kado, give us your help!"

The forester, yielding to this appeal, passed over to his master's side.

"Am I to understand, sir," asked Francis, "that you entertain the mad design—"

"Of defending ourselves? Yes, sir. The struggle is unequal we know, but soldiers generally fight ill when deprived of their chiefs."

As he spoke, Fleur-de-Lys calmly placed his naked sword under his left arm, and drew from his

breast a pistol, which he cocked. His three companions followed his example. At this threatening movement, Mademoiselle de Kergant and the forester's daughter fell upon their knees beside the chair on which lay the still fainting Andrée. Francis made a step backward, seizing one of the pistols in his belt; a shade of anxiety passed over his features, and he threw a hasty glance at Hervé; but he, still leaning against the wall, his arms crossed upon his breast, preserved his calm and apparently indifferent attitude.

The grenadiers, who were in the adjoining hall, attracted by the sound of fire-arms, again thronged the entrances.

"Stand on one side, lieutenant," cried one of the soldiers; "you will hinder our fire."

"Gentlemen!" said Francis, in an altered voice, "I conjure you again, if you have any humanity, any feeling of pity for these unhappy women—"

"George!" interrupted Fleur-de-Lys, with terrible vivacity, "you will answer that gentleman." Then turning abruptly towards Hervé, "Colonel Pelven," continued he, "take care of yourself, in heaven's name!"

Hervé shook his head quietly but did not move. Fleur-de-Lys stepped back a few paces; a strange smile curled his lips, showing his small white teeth, and giving an almost ferocious expression to his countenance, he raised his pistol with determination, but his hand sank suddenly as if struck with palsy, and the weapon fell upon the floor. A sound, inexplicable at this dreadful moment—the sound of a peal of laughter, loud, prolonged—simultaneously stayed every hand and froze every heart.

"It is my sister!" said M. de Kergant, in a low voice, breaking the profound silence which had succeeded to the previous tumult.

All eyes anxiously followed the direction pointed

out by the trembling hand of the old man. The canoness, standing in the embrasure of the window which had been opened to give air to Andrée, appeared to be looking out fixedly; she continued to laugh, but her laughter was at times interrupted by sobs. Suddenly she turned round, and advancing towards her brother with a quick disturbed step—

“Why don't you laugh?” said she; “you are all very strange. Have you never seen a wedding before? As soon as the violins come we shall dance: they won't be long, for the bridegroom has set out; it is not far off, and he is young. These gentlemen are invited, I suppose—relations, doubtless. Our relationships in Brittany are extensive. I will tell the king. John, place chairs. Gentlemen, I did not mean to offend you. A lovely night. I think it would be pleasanter dancing in the open air, and then there is no air here. Air—yes. I do not know what is the matter? Oh heavens!”

The voice of the old lady was lost in a fearful rattle; her head fell back, she uttered a piercing cry, and fell senseless into her brother's arms.

As if paralysed by the cruel scene, republicans and royalists followed all its details with eyes full of pity, forgetting both the attack and the defence. Even George's energetic countenance wore marks of irresolution and dismay. Fleur-de-Lys exchanged a few rapid words with the rough partisan, then, shrugging his shoulders with a resigned air, he advanced towards Francis—

“Here are my arms, sir,” said he. “There has been grief enough for one night. We are ready to follow you. M. de Kergant will agree with me, I am certain.”

The marquis, turning his head a little round, gave a sign of approbation. Francis expressed with politeness the sorrow he felt at having been the cause of this family misfortune: it grieved him

deeply, he said, to be compelled to increase them still more by tearing M. de Kergant away from such sacred duties; but he could not defer his departure a moment longer without failing in his duty. He announced, at the same time, that none but Fleur-de-Lys, George, and the marquis, need accompany him; that the other inhabitants of the chateau were free to remain there, but that they would be prisoners for a few hours, since the bridges over the moat must be broken after the departure of the detachment, to prevent the alarm being given in the country. The young lieutenant ordered his soldiers immediately to proceed to break down the bridge leading into the garden.

During these explanations the canoness had been restored to consciousness; but the strange and incoherent answers which she gave to her brother's anxious inquiries testified that her brain was still disordered. The very gentleness of her insanity gave some cause to fear that it would be lasting. In another part of the saloon Andrée was hanging round Hervé's neck, and, leaning her head against the young man's breast, she gave free course to her silent grief.

Perceiving that Fleur-de-Lys and George were already in the next room, M. de Kergant turned hastily towards Francis—

"Shall I be permitted to see my family, sir?"

"I have no doubt of it."

"Then," said the marquis, "no farewells;" and he left the saloon.

Pelven, without uttering a single word, lifted Andrée in his arms and laid her upon the sofa near which Bellah was standing. Before he left the room he fixed his eyes upon Mademoiselle de Kergant, pointing as he did so to the half fainting form of his sister, and then rejoined Francis, who had assembled all his men in the vestibule.

Kado would not abandon his master, and followed

the detachment out of the chateau with the three other prisoners. While the soldiers were throwing the planks which formed the bridge into the moat, Francis asked Fleur-de-Lys to give him his word that he would not attempt an escape. Fleur-de-Lys answered, laughing, that on the contrary he would give him his word to use every opportunity he could to effect it.

"So much the worse then, sir," returned Francis; "for you will compel me to use a strict surveillance over you."

A double file of grenadiers immediately formed around the captives, and by way of additional precaution, each prisoner was placed under the special guard of a soldier, who received the most rigorous instructions respecting him. After these arrangements had been made, the signal for departure was given, and the column moved down the avenue.

Lieutenant Francis, a little vain in his secret heart of the success of this expedition, and relieved of the greater part of the anxiety it had caused him, led the march with a joyous step, breathing the fresh night air with pleasure, and slashing the shrubbery as he went along with his sabre. Hervé, wrapped in his cloak, walked by his side in a more reflective mood. In about half an hour they reached the banks of a stream which ran from west to east, on the left of the road which the detachment was pursuing.

"If I am not mistaken, colonel," said Francis, breaking a silence of which he began to be weary, "this river is the same which crosses the village where our battalions of the advanced guard are quartered. You must have all this country at your finger ends?"

Hervé replied that his conjecture was right, and that the road which bordered the river led them direct to the little town through which he had himself

passed in the morning; adding, that it was very true that the recollections of his childhood brought before him every minute detail of the country.

"It seems to me," said Francis, "that you might now resume the command."

"No, that I will not, my dear Francis; you acquit yourself of it too well. You have conducted the whole affair most capitally."

"Upon my word, colonel, chance has been my best friend, much more than—— Well, thank heaven, all has ended as happily as possible!"

"I wish it may," said Pelven.

"How? Have you remarked anything suspicious?"

"What do you think, Francis, of the old lady's sudden fit of madness?"

"Do you think it was acted?" exclaimed Francis.

"Perhaps it was half acted, half real—women have that wonderful gift; but till we have reached the end of our journey in safety, I shall fear lest that incident may have been the signal for some mysterious warning being given——" Hervé interrupted himself upon seeing a flickering light passing over the leaves of the trees which lined the road.

"What light is that?" said Francis, going up to the soldiers.

"Nothing, lieutenant," answered Bruidoux; "the prisoners are merely lighting their pipes."

Francis was satisfied with this explanation of the occurrence, and concluded that George and Kado, who were still enclosed in the ranks of the escort, had merely wished to solace themselves with the innocent amusement of smoking. In the thick darkness these two glowing points threw an intermittent light over the group of captives.

The young lieutenant now rejoined Pelven. The road which the column had been painfully climbing for the last few minutes, wound, as it ascended, round the foot of an amphitheatre of hills clothed with trees

and brushwood, whilst on the opposite side it was bounded by the now steep banks of the river.

"I am sorry," said Francis, looking round him anxiously, "that I did not follow the other bank of the stream as I did in coming, although it would have lengthened the way. This defile looks very ugly, and that hill to the right is as black as Erebus; besides, I don't know whether it is a humming in my ears, or whether it is the murmur of the river, or the sough of the wind, but don't you hear a kind of rustling in the thicket?"

"Cause the prisoners to cease smoking," said Hervé quickly.

Francis turned to give the order; but before he had taken a step a triple report lighted up the road and surrounding hills with a sudden flash, while at the same moment a loud shout rose from the heights which commanded the defile. Three of the men who guarded the prisoners had fallen; George stretched the fourth upon the ground with a blow from his fist, and with his head lowered like a furious bull dashed down the side of the hill, breaking the hedge of grenadiers and opening the way for his companions, who disappeared after him in the obscurity of the brushwood. A fresh tempest of cries now burst forth from the hill, but were instantly silenced, while a few shots fired at random by the republicans took no effect on their opponents. The theatre of this unexpected attack had been well chosen. It was the highest spot of the defile. A little farther on, the way was barred by a black moving mass which had rushed down the bank like a torrent, while the hollow murmur which resounded from the hills, like the noise of a stormy sea, betrayed that they were still occupied by a considerable force. The republicans felt that they were lost if they made a single step backwards in the face of this double line of enemies, and Hervé's first idea was to march forward and force his way with

the bayonet through the living barrier which blocked up the road; but he reflected that before he could reach them he should have lost two-thirds of his men under the downward fire from the hills, and the order was not given.

On the side opposite the woods, the road, which at this place stretched out in a half-circle forming a sort of promontory, was bounded by a rocky cliff which rose precipitously to the height of about thirty feet from the bed of the river. On this little cape a few thick trees and a copse of thorny bushes added their dark shade to that of the night. It was in the depth of this impenetrable shadow that the grenadiers, in the first moment of surprise, had sought a refuge for their disordered ranks. Here with their backs to the precipice, and huddled like cattle upon this little spot of ground, they waited in silence for their invisible enemy.

"Lieutenant Francis," said Hervé, loud enough to be heard by all the soldiers, "I now resume the command."

"That's all right," murmured Bruidoux; "I am delighted to hear it. Not that I wish to affront the lieutenant, who is the making of a capital man; but here, or never, *mille bombes!* we need a full-grown one."

Hervé now ordered the soldiers to form into three ranks, facing the slope; then approaching the precipice, at the bottom of which the river was foaming, he examined with extraordinary attention the steep descent of the precipice, after which he returned and placed himself beside Francis, in the flank of the detachment.

"To be drowned or shot, is not that the choice?" asked Francis, laconically.

"Silence! Hark!" answered Hervé.

Fleur-de-Lys's clarion voice was heard ringing from the thicket.

"Colonel Pelven," said he, "you can hear me, can you not?"

"Yes, sir," answered Hervé, advancing to an exposed position on the road, in front of his little troop.

"You are surrounded, sir," continued Fleur-de-Lys. "With the forces which I command I can cut you off to the last man, without the loss of a single one on our side, and I shall certainly do so, if you compel me. We are well aware of your bravery, and your attachment to your duty, but duty is limited by impossibility; so yield yourselves prisoners."

"In my peculiar position, sir," answered Hervé, "I cannot give you an answer without consulting with my lieutenant. Will you give me time to do so?"

"Certainly, sir," said Fleur-de-Lys; "we are in no hurry."

Hervé then rejoined the young lieutenant, and dragging him hastily to the edge of the escarpment—

"Pay attention to what I say," said he—the soldiers meantime listening in the most profound silence—"we must make these fellows a return for their pleasantry about the *lavandières*. To save both our honour and our lives we only require to accomplish what I have done myself twenty times over in this very spot as a boyish bravado. and thanks to the darkness and to the shade of these trees, all our movements here are concealed from the enemy. You see this fissure in the rocks; for two-thirds of the descent it forms a kind of rude staircase, with a balustrade of the roots of trees; after that, you will find only a perpendicular descent as smooth as a board; but let yourselves slip boldly down, you will drop upon a narrow tongue of sand which extends along the foot of the cliff. Then enter the river straight before you, and cross it: there is a ford, and the water will not reach higher than your knees, or to

your waist if the river is full. Let every one keep his ranks till his turn comes. The serjeant will see to it that no man begins to descend till the one before him is out of sight. As for me, I shall treat with them as long as I can, to gain time. Be cool, my lads. The lieutenant will show you the way. Hold fast by the roots, Francis."

Francis attempted to speak, but Hervé imposed obedience by a gesture, and a moment afterwards the young lieutenant had disappeared over the side of the precipice. One of the soldiers instantly followed. This strange manœuvre, and this sudden prospect of deliverance, inspired the grenadiers with fresh spirits, while Bruidoux, kneeling on the edge of the rock, accompanied each departure with a burlesque adieu—

"A happy journey to you! Don't forget all manner of kind things to your friends, my youngster! Don't let her forget me, my boy! Don't you stare about on the journey, you fellow! Take care you don't soil your new coat, citizen! Shall you write to us when you get there—eh, Colibri?"

Although this singular plan required but a few minutes to explain and put in action, Hervé feared to excite suspicion by a longer delay; and desiring Bruidoux to inform him as soon as the front rank alone should be left, he returned and placed himself in the middle of the road.

"Sir," said he, raising his voice, "this is all I can propose: I will surrender at discretion on condition that my lieutenant and his soldiers shall have liberty to rejoin their corps unmolested."

"You cannot be serious, colonel," said Fleur-de-Lys. "When the whole is in our hands, we cannot be satisfied with a part, however important or precious that part may be."

"I thank you for your civility, sir," said Hervé, who asked nothing better than to prolong the parley;

"I thank you, as far as I am concerned; but if you are too exacting you will not have such a cheap bargain of us as you seem to hope. It is never wise to drive an enemy to despair, however weak he may appear."

"I repeat, sir," answered Fleur-de-Lys, in a more abrupt and menacing voice, "that this is no child's play. Have you nothing more to say?"

"What conditions would you give us, supposing we were to surrender?"

"Your lives; provided you pledge yourselves to serve under the king's banner."

"I wish your king may get us," muttered Bruildoux, who now came up and touched Hervé's arm. "There is only the front rank left, colonel."

"Let them prepare to answer the enemy's fire," said Hervé; then retiring a few steps—"Monsieur Fleur-de-Lys," he resumed, "that would entail dishonour on us, and we refuse to surrender."

"Ho! *les gars!*" cried Fleur-de-Lys instantly, in a voice of thunder—"Fire! upon the esplanade!"

The hill was at once lighted up with a girdle of flame, and a loud report re-echoed through the valley. By the momentary light thus afforded, the Chouans perceived the front line of the republicans with their muskets raised to their shoulders in the act of firing, and they did not suspect the disappearance of the others. Pelven had foreseen this terrible consequence; but reckoning on the uncertain aim which must be taken in the dark, and upon the dispersion of his men among the trees, he had preferred running this risk to allowing the enemy to learn too soon the secret of his escape. Only three grenadiers fell.

"Fire! my lads!" exclaimed Hervé, "and then save yourselves."

The republican party returned the fire, and immediately ran to the edge of the cliff with a readiness

which, under the circumstances, may easily be conceived. Bruidoux insisted on not leaving his colonel, but he received an imperious order to follow his comrades.

Hervé, left alone in the midst of a darkness rendered still denser by the clouds of smoke, turned towards the bank, and raising his voice, exclaimed—

“Gentlemen royalists, my lieutenant and I will yield without conditions.”

“Cry, *Vive le Roi!*” answered Fleur-de-Lys.

“Cry, I entreat you, for you are a brave fellow after all!”

Hervé threw a hasty glance behind him, but fancying he still saw two or three shadows on the top of the rock, the intrepid young man faced the enemy again—

“To save the rest of my men—” said he.

“Cry *Vive le Roi!*” repeated Fleur-de-Lys. “You will not? Well then, Fire!” and a fresh report resounded through the rocks. Pelven heard the ominous shower of lead whistling round him, but the bullets respected that generous breast. The flash, however, had betrayed to the Chouans that the esplanade was deserted.

“What is this?” exclaimed Fleur-de-Lys, loudly.

“By all the saints, they have escaped us!”

“Yes, sir, and *Vive la Republique!*” shouted Pelven; then waving his sword in all the maddening excitement of danger and triumph, he sprang down the side of the abyss which had previously swallowed up his companions. Before he reached the bottom several shots were fired above his head, and splinters of rock flew around him on all sides, but he dropped safe and sound upon the sandy strip which bordered the river. A few minutes afterwards a noisy and joyous acclamation from the opposite bank informed the Chouans, who were grouped in a dense mass on the crest of the cliff, that Colonel Hervé was in safety amongst his men.

Before Pelven even put his foot on the shore, Francis had thrown himself upon his neck, and the two young men embraced each other with the warmest affection. After a momentary pause of expectation, the little republican troop was satisfied that the "Whites," frightened at the difficulty of the passage, had given up the pursuit, and they started off across the fields at a rapid pace.

CHAPTER XII.

"MY FATHER.—Truly, Trim, I am highly satisfied with you.
DOCTOR SLOP.—And I likewise."—STERN.

THE civil wars of the West had often disconcerted the most clever and experienced military commanders; on the royalist side they were conducted by raw captains, who, day by day, invented tactics without precedent, suited to the different localities, to the inequalities of the country, and to the peculiar genius of their soldiers—thus supplying the want of experience by invention, and of method by audacity. The republican army, after its forced march to Ploermel, had remained there inactive and anxious, its arm raised over a desert, while several reconnoitering parties made in the environs had been attended with no result. Two or three battalions had overrun the country in the direction of the coast for several leagues; but they had found every place either deserted or tranquil, and no appearance confirmed the rumour which now began to gain ground, that a body of royalists was about to land under the protection of English cannon. The number, the movements, and even the position of the insurgent forces were the subjects of vague and contradictory reports, which threw the general-in-chief into a strange state of perplexity. Men of great military genius never take the command in these undisciplined wars but with repugnance, just as an adept in fencing never likes to cross his blade with a resolute novice

whose unforeseen daring puts to nought all the combinations of art.

Since the bold and sudden blow which the Breton insurgents had struck, as if to celebrate with brilliancy the arrival of their new captain, and to give him the opportunity to win his sword of command, they had not again shown themselves in the field, till the time when, as we have seen, they had all assembled to deliver Fleur-de-Lys and his companions.

A republican brigade despatched in pursuit of them at dawn of day, had only seen about twenty peasants at work in their fields, or seated on the thresholds of their cottages. These good people revealed in confidence to the soldiers that they thought they had heard the noise of musketry about one o'clock in the morning, and they begged them therefore to be on their guard. The officers had some difficulty in preventing these honest folks being ill-treated. The party proceeded about two leagues further to the north, and beyond Kergant, which was found without inhabitants; and some of the cavalry, who had galloped as far as Pontivy, reported that the "Whites" had not been there, so the brigade after this useless march returned to Ploermel.

Amongst the singular rumours of the town, that which the general had at first heard with the most incredulity, declared that the vast forest of La Nouée, which stretches for five leagues to the north-west of Ploermel, on the borders of Morbihan, was the refuge of the royalist army. Such retreats had more than once during the late campaigns afforded shelter to the broken ranks of the Breton and Vendean troops; but it was hard to conceive that a victorious army, master of the whole country, could have deliberately thrown itself into the depths of a forest—of all its conquests thus keeping possession only of the most insignificant, if not of the most dangerous position.

But when the expeditions that had scoured the interior and the coast-line of the country, returned without success, the general, yielding to the public clamour, however unreasonable it appeared, proceeded himself with a strong detachment to reconnoitre the approaches to the suspected forest. Contrary to all his expectations, what he saw left no doubt in his mind as to the enemy being there. All the roads in the direction of La Nouée were cut up by recent traces of the passage of a large force, while the marks of wheels and the foot-prints of animals had ploughed up the soil and levelled the fences all round the forest; in addition to which the ground was strewn over with fragments of clothing, broken furniture, and shattered waggons. The general halted upon a height, and fixed his thoughtful glance upon the sombre mass of wood to which all these indications pointed. He fancied he heard a distant murmur proceed from it, like the hum of some huge hive. Two companies were ordered to advance to the outskirts of the forest, but they were repulsed by a sharp fire. The enemy were there without doubt, and did not appear particularly anxious to conceal that fact, provided only that their designs should remain impenetrable. They left the trap open and visible, but concealed the springs; they did not refuse to fight, but they chose to do so at their own time, after their own fashion, and on the field that suited them best.

The general-in-chief returned to his quarters; the knowledge he had acquired had only increased his anxiety, for the object of this unheard-of manœuvre escaped all his conjectures; while the information which he received from the interior or from the towns on the coast, as well as from the representatives who scoured the country, gave him no light upon this head. Treachery helped him no better: traitors had always been scarce among the Bretons, and they now became still more so, since the fortune of war seemed to

have gone over to their side. A few spies, indeed, ventured into the mysterious forest, but none returned.

The general could not submit, without too manifest disadvantage, to the conditions which the enemy offered him, and he hesitated before that unknown danger which is always the most formidable.

Four days elapsed in this state of indecision: the republican army had extended its line over a space of three leagues, from Ploermel to the river of which we have more than once spoken, and the little town which guarded its passage. One more topographical detail is indispensable to enable the reader to understand the events which we have still to relate: and it is necessary for this purpose to attend to the relative position of the three points between which the interest, if interest there is, of the facts which will almost complete our tale, is divided. We beg him then to bear in mind that Ploermel on the east and Kergant on the west, form two points of an almost equilateral triangle, of which the forest of La Nouée is the apex towards the north.

The axe of the woodcutters had not at that time cut out of the southern side of the forest that large slice which at the present day diminishes its extent, and detracts from its majesty. The tall waving woods then stretched over all that land, now stripped of its trees, and in which the hum of industry has replaced the silence of solitude.

It was towards this part of the forest that on the evening of the 22nd of June, two persons of the most miserable aspect were making their way. One of them was a beggar whose progress was impeded by his age and infirmities. He was guided and supported by a young girl, whose figure might have been thought singular for a woman, but fatigue and misery perhaps had altered its fair proportions. This unhappy creature had wrapped over her ragged petticoat the remains of a hooded cloak, which

partly concealed features rendered repulsive by their heavy and, at the same time, cunning expression. The old man, in the complicated arrangement of his rags, presented the sordid and picturesque type of the ancient beggar, a race which now-a-days is vanishing like so many others; while a kind of coquetry, derived from the "Court of Miracles," had skilfully arranged upon his person a number of rags without any positive form or colour. One of his legs seemed to be paralysed at the knee, and was supported on a wooden crutch bound with iron, while to add to his miseries, or to complete the effect, the honest man was blind. The sun, already inclining to the horizon, bordered with a golden fringe the dark masses of a stormy sky, and the shadows of the old oaks were thrown long down the glades, when this unfortunate couple stopped at the entrance of a path which led straight into the forest. In spite of the shade afforded by the trees and the late hour of the day, the heat was stifling; no breeze stirred the leaves, and at distant intervals a prolonged roll of thunder was heard, while flocks of crows flew from tree to tree uttering cries of alarm.

"I have been a little in the naval line in my day," said the ragged old man, "and I can tell you, my pretty maiden, that we shall have a heavy storm to-night."

The pretty maiden, who was decidedly the least attractive person of her sex, made no answer; her eyes, which were fixed on the forest, seemed to measure its depths with an air of painful abstraction. The old beggar pulled his companion by the skirt of her cloak, and making her sit down by his side on a bank covered with moss, he spoke to her in a low voice for some minutes, seeming sometimes to scold her severely, and at others to favour her with paternal exhortations and instructions. After this conference, the old man rose resolutely and entered the

forest, limping as he went, and leaning on his conductor's arm.

They had not gone fifty yards when three men fell down upon them suddenly, like ripe fruit, from the neighbouring trees, while at the same moment, a dozen individuals armed with muskets issued from the under-wood and surrounded the adventurous couple. The ambuscading party could easily be recognised for Breton insurgents by their long locks and their jackets of hairy goat-skin.

"Who are you, and where are you going to?" said he who seemed the chief.

"My child!" said the blind man, "there are no 'Blues' here, are there?"

"No, father," replied the tall girl in the hood, in a trembling nasal whine. "They are all honest men. You may speak out. Is it not so, gentlemen?"

"Let him speak," said the Chouan; "we are listening."

"Are you sure you are not taken in, child?" said the beggar; "the servants of heaven and the king don't in general speak so roughly to the poor man."

"The times are bad, my honest fellow," said the Chouan, "and the devil is cunning."

"Yes, my son, and distrust is in fashion now. Let me touch your clothes, I beg, to make sure, for my poor eyes have long ceased to look on this world." The old man felt the Chouan's breast with his hand. "The heart and the cross," continued he; "that's well. *Vive le Roi!* my children. Where is Fleur-de-Lys?—whom may St. Ives and all the saints defend! Where is he? I must speak with him."

"Fleur-de-Lys has no time to lose with you, my venerable."

"And he won't lose any with me, my good fellow, I assure you. Lead me to him; I have travelled a long way with my poor little maiden, who is still shaking with fever, and I should like to rest extremely;

but the king's service before all. We shall soon have his august reign again, my children! On my life, they may bury me then as soon as they please!"

"You chatter too much, father," said the companion of the old fanatic, in a vexed and impatient tone; "you know we were told there was no time to be lost."

"Yes, in verity, good maiden, you are right. Where is Fleur-de-Lys? I have something for him—something which has passed under the very noses of the 'Blues.'"

The old man began to laugh, and plunging his hand into the labyrinth of his rags, drew out a packet of letters carefully sealed, the envelope marked in one corner with a peculiar sign in the form of a cross studded with fleurs-de-lys. The chief of the horde of Chouans hesitated no longer, and telling the two adventurers to follow him, he led the way into the defiles of the forest.

They were soon stopped by a barrier of felled trees, behind which was encamped a band of about a hundred men. They were allowed to pass this post upon the pass-word being given by their conductor. A little farther on a fresh barricade had to be penetrated, the forest appearing to be defended in every direction by fortifications of this nature, some of them even surrounded by ditches. In every open spot numerous bodies of insurgents were bivouacking; the greater number with no other military costume than the Breton peasants' vest, crossed scarf-wise with bands of serge which served as bandoliers. Almost all of them were shod with heavy wooden shoes filled with straw. Women and children mingled with the soldiers and did the cooking for the bivouacs, moving round the fires which were crackling on the ground.

The whole forest seemed converted into a rude town. Here and there groups of armed peasants were lying on the grass amidst flocks of sheep or goats, oxen

bellowed in the glades, while a confused murmur of voices, the clash of arms and noise of footsteps, rose incessantly from under its leafy arcades, now swelling to a hoarse roar, and again sinking to a low hum. Had it not been for the costumes and the European character of the vegetation, one might have imagined it an oasis of the desert filled with some wandering warrior tribe.

After an half-hour's march, delayed by these frequent obstacles, the guide informed the old beggar that they were almost at the end of their painful journey; and as he spoke he quitted the thicket, in which he said it was now not safe to take one single step farther, and entered an alley about six or seven feet wide, above which the branches, bent down and interwoven, formed a kind of ceiling. Under this archway the twilight could scarcely penetrate, and the silence which reigned in this privileged part of the forest rendered the sudden darkness still more striking. The blind man felt his companion's hand tremble.

"What is the matter?" said he, in a low voice, while their guide preceded them at some distance. "What kind of moral force is this you are exhibiting?"

"Serjeant," answered the girl in the same tone, "I am troubled, and at times my heart fails me."

"That is a queer kind of moral force," answered the old man; "come, hold firm, and march straight forward, my boy! Picture to yourself that this odious wood is, as one may say, the *ci-devant* Temple of Glory."

"Of glory, serjeant?"

"And of memory, too, my friend. Would you like your name to figure in history in letters of gold, or merely of tin-foil, that is the question?"

"In tin-foil, serjeant."

"How? the devil! in tin foil! What is the creature thinking of? Hallo! what is this machine here? A cannon, on my word! What an infernal forest! No

pawnbroker's shop—" The honest man muttered the rest of the sentence between his teeth.

The guide now stopped, and in a subdued voice began questioning two sentinels who were posted at the end of this strange avenue, while the last fading rays of daylight allowed our adventurers to perceive a number of low huts and tents arranged symmetrically in a large circular space. Some of these huts appeared more solid and of an older date than the others, and doubtless marked the site of one of those celebrated places of refuge which the Chouans had made for themselves from the earliest period of their insurrection. Several covered ways, similar to that along which the adventurers had advanced, terminated in this glade, which was surrounded on all sides by an impenetrable thicket, a few paces behind which lay a strong line of ditches and barricades. This camp seemed to hold the same place in the forest as the donjon-keep in the fortresses of the middle ages; all the materials for a desperate struggle and obstinate defence were collected here. The order and quiet which were here religiously observed, announced the presence of the more important chiefs and of a picked body of men; and, in fact, among the soldiers lying scattered on the grass, or talking in a low voice on the threshold of their cabins, the greatest number wore the green coat and red waistcoat which was the uniform of the royalist chasseurs—that remarkable body of men which, organised under the protection of the treaties, numbered in its ranks almost all the heroes of the former wars.

After the guide and his two companions had penetrated into the enclosure, and while they were passing in front of the camp, the fires had been lighted in the huts and now cast a flickering gleam on the scattered multitude that filled the glade: strong, fierce-looking faces came half out of the obscurity and were then suddenly plunged back into it like fading phan-

toms. The guide halted about the middle of the camp, before one of the oldest huts, around which was posted a numerous body of men. He entered alone; but a few minutes afterwards he returned for the blind old man and his miserable companion, and introduced them into the presence of Fleur-de-Lys.

The young chief, who was standing behind a table, was conversing with George, while two men in an ecclesiastical dress were writing at one corner, and small groups of officers were scattered about in the space between the table and the door. All conversation was suspended upon the entrance of the beggar. His daughter led him forward in front of the chief, and then retired a few steps backwards, making several awkward curtseys. The honest man, carrying his bundle of letters in his hand, his head bent and his body inclined in an attitude of respectful humility, appeared to wait before speaking till he was spoken to. Fleur-de-Lys turned the light of a lamp upon the mysterious messenger, while his penetrating glance examined him minutely from head to foot.

"Where do you come from," said he, "and who sends you?"

"Is that really you, Fleur-de-Lys?" asked the old man.

"It is."

"What misery it is to be blind!" returned the beggar, slowly shaking his head: "it would be a refreshing sight for an old soldier to see your face, Fleur-de-Lys."

"Have you served, then, my old fellow?"

"I was at Fontenoy, general: it was there I got my knee broken. King Louis XV. was there too: he made himself a bed for the night upon English colours, and I remember he said that a king of France ought to be friends with that banner only when it was under his feet. I hope the company will excuse me

if I give offence, but it's the truth that on a field of battle, if we are to do well, we ought to have the English opposite us and not side by side."

At these recollections of royalty thus called up by the old man, all those present uncovered their heads and bowed, looking at Fleur-de-Lys. A bright colour rose to the young chieftain's face.

"Well, gentlemen," said he, smiling, "I have here an unexpected auxiliary. The blood of the vanquished of Cressy and Agincourt still beats in every Frenchman's heart, you see. But where do you come from, my old comrade?"

"I come from Normandy, general. M. de Frotté had me carried in a cart to Fougères, and I have crossed the enemy's lines to bring you this packet."

"So you are a Norman, then?" said Fleur-de-Lys. "From what part of Normandy?"

"From the neighbourhood of Coutances, general."

"Ah!" said Fleur-de-Lys, glancing at the tall girl in the hood, "from Coutances?" and he proceeded to ask the beggar some questions about his companion, in Norman *patois*, which were answered in the same language to his satisfaction. "Come, gentlemen," said he laughing, while he opened the despatch, "this is at least genuine Norman." After glancing through the letters, he picked up the envelope which he had thrown on the floor, and attentively examined the broken seal; then his piercing eyes were again fixed upon the blind man for a moment with an uneasy expression, but the tranquil and venerable appearance of the honest fellow seemed to dissipate the cloud of suspicion which had darkened the young captain's brow. He seated himself at the table.

"My good old man," said he "you will be obliged to set off again to-night. The fatigue is great for you, but I will take care that you do not lose your labour. At the inn called the 'Flowering Apple-tree,'

half-a-league from Plélan, you will meet an agent of M. de Frotté's, who will spare you going the rest of the way. If you love the king, let yourself be cut to pieces rather than give up the note which I am going to confide to your care."

As he spoke, Fleur-de-Lys wrote a few hasty lines; and when he had folded and sealed his letter he handed it across the table to the worthy man, who, without being told, put out his hand to take it.

"Ah! you can see, then, my friend?" exclaimed Fleur-de-Lys, snatching back his hand. "*Hola! les gars du Roi!* treason! seize the spy and his daughter!"

At the sound of Fleur-de-Lys's exclamation, a dozen soldiers rushed into the cabin, but the officers had already mastered the pretended blind man and the woman, after a desperate resistance, which had been terminated by the help of George's terrible arm. The beggar's wooden leg, his grey beard, and the red locks of his daughter had all come off in the struggle.

"Your name, comrade," said Fleur-de-Lys, addressing himself to the elder of the two prisoners.

"Bruidoux, serjeant of grenadiers in the battalion of the Fearless."

"You are acquainted with the laws of war, and you know the fate you must expect. Have you anything to say?"

"For myself, nothing. For this lad, I wish to say that I persuaded him, almost in spite of himself, to take part in this expedition, and that if you spare his life you will make it easy for me to die. That's all."

"Impossible, comrade. But nevertheless we might come to a good understanding. Will you enter the king's service?"

"I would as soon enter the Pope's," said Bruidoux, gravely.

"And you, young man?" said Fleur-de-Lys, approaching the other prisoner.

This question was followed by an interval of silence, during which Bruidoux's face was contracted by degrees into an expression of the most extreme anguish.

"The serjeant is my superior officer, sir," murmured the young captive at last, in a feeble voice; "he has spoken for us both."

At these words the features of the old serjeant relaxed with a sudden emotion, and a tear fell upon his bronzed cheek.

"It is a pity," said Fleur-de-Lys; "I love brave hearts. Remember that I do not ask you to betray your country. We serve France, as you do, only in a better fashion. Come; I will give you an hour to think of it, for I am sorry for you. Benedicite," added the young man, turning to one of the chasseurs, "take them to the empty cabin at the other end of the camp; let them be bound and kept strictly guarded. If they have not changed their minds within the hour you will have them shot. You need come for no further orders upon the subject. Besides, I shall not be in camp at that time."

Benedicite, an old Chouan of sour aspect, placed the prisoners in the midst of a party of chasseurs, and left the hut. The news of the bold attempt of the two republican spies had spread through the camp, and the soldiers crowded round them with a curiosity more respectful than insulting in its character, for such an act of daring was calculated to please these equally adventurous and intrepid spirits, for whom all the art of war was briefly expressed in two words—daring and cunning.

The captives were placed in a hut which was situated at a little distance from the others, at the extremity of the camp, and was supported against a gigantic oak. This hovel had no windows, but sufficient air penetrated through the ill-joined planks of a roughly-made door. Benedicite left the two

republicans stretched on their backs in the middle of the cabin, their arms and legs confined with strong bonds; then, returning a few minutes afterwards, and placing a small lamp in a corner—

"That is your clock," said he; "when you see it about to expire, your hour will have passed."

And with this ominous warning the Chouan left them.

"This, my boy," said Bruidoux, after having meditated for a moment, "is not precisely a rose-coloured adventure, and the rascals have tied the cords quite into my flesh, into the bargain. I did not choose to complain, on account of my dignity as a citizen, but I am afraid they have not treated you in a more friendly fashion, my poor Colibri."

"No, serjeant," said Colibri; "but what does that matter now."

"I understand what you mean," returned Bruidoux, in a voice somewhat changed. "Hem! hem! I cannot surely have caught a cold? Don't imagine however for a moment, Colibri, that your serjeant's heart beats one jot quicker than usual. This is how it stands, my boy; I feel a moral force which is secretly stifling me, and upon your account moreover. It was I—yes it was I, devil take me, who got you into this scrape! I thought I was doing right; on my word, I thought I was doing right, Colibri, and for your interest. Having always had a friendship for you, I thought I should make your fortune at one blow, and place you high in the opinion of your officers and in the estimation of your comrades. It was a good idea, I still maintain; it was an excellent idea—the idea of a friend and of a father; but, nevertheless, it is an idea which troubles me at this time, and you must tell me, Colibri, you must absolutely tell me, my boy, if—if—come, out with the word—if you forgive me. Yes, or no?"

"I forgive you with all my heart, serjeant," an-

answered Colibri; "I know it was all meant for my good, though it has not quite turned out as you expected."

"You are a brave fellow," said Bruidoux, whose voice had now become quite hoarse. Then after a short silence, he resumed in a firmer tone: "yes, you are a brave fellow, Colibri; and since you refused the offers of the *ci-devant* prince and the federalists, you may boast that you possess my esteem, though I do not see in what it can help you much for the future."

"Is there no hope, then, serjeant?" asked Colibri.

"Hem! hem! my boy—I ask your pardon; there is always hope, the learned say, till the body has fallen to dust. But to maintain that our position is a brilliant one—no, no! It is certain that the enemy has gained a considerable advantage over us, an advantage which seems decisive, too; for I should not like to deceive you in a moment such as this—a moment when every one, according to my way of thinking, is at liberty to make such reflexions as suit his disposition."

A fresh silence succeeded this involved though sufficiently clear explanation of the serjeant's feelings. Suddenly a flash of lightning gleamed through the hut, almost extinguishing the feeble light of the lamp, and a few seconds afterwards a dreadful peal of thunder resounded through the air, announcing that the storm which had been threatening all the evening, was now about to burst upon the forest.

"In the farm-house, at my father's," said Colibri, "I have passed many a night out of bed in such weather as this. The fire from heaven soon sets a barn alight, serjeant; so, while the storm lasted, my father used to stride up and down the room, but the good woman, my mother, said her prayers in the corner of the hearth, and that was the great thing that comforted my father."

"Doubtless, my boy," said Bruidoux; "and what were the prayers that the good woman your mother used to say upon those occasions?"

"They were prayers to God, serjeant; to the God whom we loved in former times."

"But do you know them by heart, Colibri?"

"I think so, serjeant; yes, I think I can remember them."

"Because, do you see, my boy—Ah! *mille bombes!* I thought that one had blinded me for good and all. And now, only listen to the artillery. Ah! its getting warm up there. Well, Colibri, if the Republic has been to blame in anything, according to my mind, it has been in insulting Him who is now thundering over our heads; for there are some occasions in life when all the rights of men and citizens are but a poor consolation for us feeble creatures. As for myself, Colibri, if I never wilfully injured a woman or child, or even a dog, I did not act thus so much out of regard to my getting on in my profession, as that I might not by so doing offend Him whom I spoke of; therefore, if you have any scrap of a prayer in your memory, and if it is any satisfaction to you to say it, say it boldly."

"It would be a great satisfaction to me, serjeant," said Colibri.

"And," pursued Bruidoux, "if you wish to prove categorically to your ancient friend that you bear no grudge against him, you will even say them aloud, considering that upon this head I consider you to be my superior."

The serjeant ceased speaking, and Colibri closed his eyes and seemed plunged in meditation.

"Serjeant," said he, after a pause, "this is what the good woman used to say—"

But he stopped abruptly, for the door creaked upon its rusty hinges, and the prisoners were no longer alone; though, in the painful attitude to which their

bonds confined them, they could not see who it was who thus came to disturb their last moments.

"The lamp is not yet burnt out," said Bruidoux, dryly; "it is wrong to cheat an enemy in misfortune."

"Speak lower, serjeant," said a manly voice in a smothered tone.

"I know that voice," muttered the serjeant; "who are you, friend?"

"Kado!"

"Ah! the father of the young citizen with the top? Are you come to save us, old fellow?"

"Not so loud; the door is wide open, and the sentinel does nothing but pass and repass before the threshold."

At this moment, the soldier on guard stopped at the door.

"The prisoners asked me to help them to ease their position a little," said Kado.

"You may do so," said the soldier, and he resumed his walk.

Kado knelt down and leaned over the captives, letting a knife, whose sharp blade glittered in the rays of the lamp, slip down his sleeve; then with two cuts he severed the cords that bound the legs and wrists of the serjeant.

"For your life don't stir!" said he.

Then turning to Colibri, he freed him from his bonds with the same dexterity and promptitude. This operation concluded, the forester rose and, facing the attentive prisoners, began to address them, now with measured gravity, then more hastily, modifying the sound of his voice and the matter of his discourse according as the noise of the sentinel's steps sounded nearer or farther off.

"You have only a short half-hour longer—The king is a good master—You must not dream of escaping from the camp across these lines of senti-

nels; besides, you would certainly fall in with one of the posts in the forest—You would serve with good comrades—This is your only chance of safety: in ten minutes when the storm will be at its height, and the wood shaking with the thunders from heaven, then rise; your limbs will be unstiffened by that time—Yes; Fleur-de-Lys promises each of you an officer's commission—I will leave you my knife here, under the straw; make use of it to cut a hole in the thatch above your heads where the trunk of the oak passes through, and then climb upon the roof by the opening—The cause of the king is the cause of heaven: it is certain to triumph—The branches of the oak stretch as far as the neighbouring thicket; the thicket is full of traps; you would certainly perish if you enter it—There is no disgrace in turning back into the right road—But the lowest and largest branch of the oak is woven into the branches that cover the nearest alley, follow that branch to the arch, and then drag yourselves along it upon your knees—I am sorry for you, it is a sad end for gallant men—When the arch comes to an end drop down; you will find the little fellow whom you saved from being shot—Farewell, then, if you will have it so!”

“What have they made up their minds to do?” asked the sentinel, looking into the cabin.

“To die,” answered Kado. “Let us leave them alone. Good night, comrade.”

“Here comes the rain,” said the soldier; “I shall take shelter inside the hut till their hour arrives.”

“As you will,” said Kado; “still if you were in their position you would not like to be hindered from talking freely with a friend.”

The soldier yielded to this objection with an air of ill humour, and left the hut along with the forester. As soon as the door was closed after them, Bruidoux gave a huge sigh which was echoed by Colibri.

“Well, my lad,” said the old serjeant, “this is a

very unexpected incident. What do you think of it?"

"Extremely unexpected, serjeant."

"There is a most excellent proverb, Colibri, my friend, which says that there is no bush so little that it does not cast a shade. Who would ever have imagined, nevertheless, that the day would come when that youth with the top would shelter me—me, Bruidoux? Nobody would have imagined it possible, not even you, Colibri, although from this day forth I shall take delight in attributing to you every good quality both of head and heart."

"But, serjeant," asked Colibri, "did you understand a single word of the complicated plan of the citizen Chouan?"

"I understand it from head to foot, my son, and I will employ the few tedious minutes which the stiffness of our ancles will oblige us still to pass in this enclosure, in explaining it to you."

While Serjeant Bruidoux was calmly expounding to his subaltern the plan of escape which had been proposed to their coolness and daring, the flashes of lightning became more frequent and more dazzling: the storm was evidently increasing. The deep, yet distant murmur of the tempest was now changed into deafening peals and claps of thunder, to which was added the pattering of a deluge of rain upon the leaves, while the door of the hovel shook and rattled in the blasts of wind, and the rain poured through in streams on all sides. Suddenly a clap of thunder, louder than any of the others, echoed through the air, and seemed to destroy the last barrier against the free course of the elements, while a furious whirlwind made the enormous oak, against which one of the cabin walls was supported, tremble to its very roots.

"Now is our time, lad," said Bruidoux, rising resolutely. Then seizing the forester's knife, and standing on tip-toe, he plunged it into the mossy

thatch, which he dragged down from the trunk of the tree; then, lifted from the ground by Colibri, to whom the anxiety of the moment lent superhuman force, he enlarged the opening with his hands. The wind rushed violently into the hut by this new entrance and extinguished the lamp.

“Courage, my boy,” said Bruidoux; “I won’t desert you.”

And fixing his hands firmly upon the edge of the roof, he dragged himself out. As soon as he stood upon the thatch, from which the rain was streaming on every side, he grasped the oak with one arm, and with the other assisted his companion to mount to his side.

“Here’s the tree,” said Bruidoux in a low voice, “but I don’t see the bough; can you find it?”

Colibri made no answer. Confused by the darkness, blinded by the hurricane, and panting with eagerness, they felt all over the rough trunk of the oak with trembling hands, but in vain.

“A thousand millions!” said the serjeant, “there is no more a bough here than in my eye, and the extinguished lamp will betray us!” As he spoke, a forked gleam of lightning shot across the dark vault of heaven, and showed the fugitives the bough they sought; it shot out from the trunk of the tree two or three feet below them, and stretched out its long slender arm horizontally.

“Follow me!” said Bruidoux; “hold fast by my rags, and creep along astride upon the branch till we get to the end of it.”

The serjeant, closely followed by Colibri, had already bestridden the arm of the tree, which according to the forester’s directions, was to serve as a bridge to enable them to reach the leafy roof of the neighbouring alley. The branch bent under their weight, but, supported at its weakest end by the interwindings of the arch, it did not give way.

They had hardly begun their aerial journey when the cry "To arms!" was heard behind them.

"Be firm, my lad! keep up your heart," whispered Bruidoux.

A few seconds more, and the fugitives had reached the leafy covering of branches suspended like a canopy over the avenue leading to the camp. They dragged themselves upon their knees along this living trellis-work till a noise of voices and of hasty steps, which appeared coming towards them, arrested their progress. A band of armed men with blazing torches ran down the glade under their feet. As soon as the torch-light had disappeared, they hastily and silently continued their journey. Suddenly a low groan escaped from Colibri. The serjeant turned:—

"What is the matter, lad?" asked he.

"My foot has slipped through the branches, serjeant; my leg's gone after it, and I can't pull it out."

"Ah, you're a droll dog! This is just the fitting time for a good joke! Come, give a lusty pull."

"It is impossible, serjeant; I can follow you no farther—but save yourself. I won't be the cause—"

"Don't insult your superior officer! Stay a moment, and I'll come and help you."

"All is lost, serjeant," returned Colibri, approaching his mouth to Bruidoux's ear, and speaking in an almost inaudible voice; "some one has caught hold of my leg."

Bruidoux seized the young man's hand without answering. A fearful interval of suspense succeeded, then a low soft voice murmured below, "Is that you, Mr. Serjeant?"

"Thank heaven, it is the little lad with the top!" exclaimed Bruidoux, drawing a long breath. "Yes, it is us, my darling. I hope everybody at home is well? Only wait two quarters of a second and we shall be with you."

While he spoke the old serjeant had succeeded in disengaging Colibri's leg; then springing down into the thicket, he entered the path, and pressed the forester's son to his heart.

The little boy then hastened to guide the fugitives through the thickest labyrinth of underwood, and brought them in safety to the border of the forest. Bruidoux did not part from him without another embrace, and without promising to return him his top on the first opportunity.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Sa présence en ces lieux m'est toujours redoutable,
* * * * *
Il est puissant; il m'aime, et vient pour m'épouser."

CORNEILLE.

WHILE the republican captives were thus effecting their escape with a good fortune which seldom fails to accompany the brave, a young officer of the royal and catholic army was crossing the forest alone, in the direction of its western boundary. He walked quickly along under the torrents of rain which fell from the tempest-tossed trees, indifferent to the violence of the storm, and merely shaking his cloak from time to time with an absent air, when it became saturated with wet. The sentinels whom he met at short intervals all gave him a military salute, after a few words exchanged in a low voice. As he was passing an important post he was recognised by the light of a bivouac fire, and immediately surrounded by a respectful crowd, who mingled their enthusiastic hurrahs with the thousand noises of the hurricane. The women and children of the proscribed insurgents, startled from their sleep, rose hastily from their miserable shelters, repeating the name of Fleur-de-Lys with simple admiration. They hastened up from every side; they pressed around the young chief, some of them struggling to touch his hands or his clothes; while his presence appeared to affect them like that of some being superior to man. Similar ovations

more than once delayed the progress of the royalist general through the different divisions of the forest.

Here seems the fitting place to partially unveil this young leader, thus surrounded by a popularity almost bordering upon adoration. He had first appeared in Vendée at the end of the great wars, though he did not then bear the same name as he bears in this tale. The course of events having thrown him into the Lower Maine, and still later into the North of Brittany, he had there reunited the scattered elements of the Chouannerie. He was the first who had made the Chouans leave their defensive positions, and had led them to the open plain of the battle-field. An astonishing good fortune accompanied his arms, and had not betrayed him on one single field. Long before he became their leader, the Breton insurgents had felt the commanding influence of his peculiar renown.

It was not alone his military qualities, his fiery activity, regulated and governed by an unalterable coolness and determination, nor the rare union of temerity and calculation that directed all his movements, which had rendered him celebrated, but something mysterious in his person and destiny completed the power of his fascination over the simple and ardent imaginations of his followers. His beauty, his well-chosen language, his liberality, which always left him without any private possessions beyond his war-horse—all the prestige of power and grace which shed a halo over his youthful head, were so many brilliant characteristics out of which superstition and the love of the marvellous had formed an almost supernatural being. He displayed an almost incredible degree of bravery, charging the enemy with his sheathed sabre, and chanting in the midst of the hottest fire war-hymns which he had himself composed.

The *gars* believed him to be invulnerable. The other chiefs and the noblesse, although less sensible of these dazzling qualities, could not but acknow-

ledge the talent for that species of war which he was carrying on with which the daring partizan seemed to be endowed; but they yielded still more to the prestige of an illustrious resemblance imprinted on that valiant brow—and this resemblance was no deception. Behind the cloud of obscurity which shrouded the origin of this extraordinary being, lay concealed a woman's shame—a monarch's crime. The nobles of the west had in some sort legitimatized by their attentions the young man's claims to the peculiar respect of the royalist insurgents, for they had displayed this fragment of royalty in the eyes of their simple soldiery, as if to conceal from them the distressing absence of those who had a more legitimate title to their homage.

But the skill of the young chieftain in making use of every circumstance which might extend his empire, his absolute assumption of authority, and the ever increasing degree in which he merged all things in himself, had at last disquieted even those who had encouraged the worship of which he was now the object. The renown of his successes, the splendour of his popularity, had even reached the ears of the emigrant princes. So powerful a servant was displeasing in their eyes, and the Count de Puisaye wrote him a congratulatory letter from England, calculated to make him feel his dependance.

Such was the state of affairs when negotiations were first opened with the Republic; in these the fortunate adventurer refused to take any share, although the intrigues which had been carried on for some time left him all at once isolated and without any means of prolonging his resistance. Closely pursued by the "Blues" he was forced to abandon Brittany, and sought refuge on board a fishing-boat which put in to receive him on a wild deserted beach not far from St. Brieux. A small body of Chouans assisted his escape. Before he left the shore he broke off a golden

fleur-de-lys which ornamented the hilt of his sword, and gave it to his faithful friends. The banished hero's name was soon changed, in the popular legends of the country, to the name of this relic, and in more than one parish, to please the enthusiasm of the parishioners, an especial prayer for Fleur-de-Lys was added to those which were offered up for the king.

No sooner were his secret enemies freed from his presence than they began to regret his departure. When they were about to resume the war they found the old Chouan bands quite ready for action, but as much scattered and disorganized as at the period of the first rising; and none among the leaders felt equal to the task of re-uniting that force which they had so imprudently broken when in Fleur-de-Lys's hands. That young chief was then in England, where he had been brilliantly received by all the body of emigrants. One of the exiled princes, who was there at the same time, gave him a most distinguished reception, intimating that he might one day again require his services. It was even reported that Fleur-de-Lys received at that period a title which recalled the scene of his first deeds of arms, and which was borrowed from the memory of the legitimatized family of Louis XIV., although no positive declaration accompanied this covert allusion to the equivocal rights of the young duke.

A few weeks afterwards the English ministry determined to throw a body of emigrants into Brittany, and one of the uncles of the young captive king was selected to command this adventurous body. It is well known with how much ardour the presence of this personage had been at all times solicited by the Vendean chiefs, and what bitterness and discouragement, often not very measured in its expression, the most famous defenders of the royalist cause felt as they were perpetually disappointed in their most legitimate hopes!

The expedition was soon ready. It was intended to set all the insurgent masses in Brittany in movement, in order to clear the country of the republican forces, and to insure the safe landing of the flotilla. Fleur-de-Lys seemed best calculated for this task, and he accepted it. His name, which had grown still greater during his absence, soon drew to his standard every peasant capable of bearing arms, and in a couple of days he found himself at the head of an army. The sort of semi-official authority which he had received, gave him a new and incontestable claim to superiority in the eyes of the chiefs, and, as we have seen, he was able to accomplish the mission with which he had been charged in one short campaign; but the English fleet failed to execute its part, and appear on the coast at the time appointed. Fresh instructions were sent to Fleur-de-Lys, which he obeyed by modifying his original plans and retiring into the interior. But this delay, which was not unattended with some slight suspicion of treachery, had deeply wounded the impetuous young general: he fancied himself sacrificed without remorse, in return for his devotion; his open hatred for the English became more violent, and he loudly declared his strenuous opposition to every measure in which they should be concerned.

Some indiscreet words which had escaped him in his resentment awakened the distrust of those around him. Part of the chiefs remained sincerely attached to him, but the others, in their secret hearts, bore his yoke with impatience; they were jealous of the homage which he received from the adoration of a whole province, and they inveighed bitterly, in private, against that kind of personal fatalism which is inspired in the favourites of fortune by a course of invariable success, and from which dreams of ambition often take their rise. We shall soon learn whether these jealous apprehensions were, or were not, without foundation.

Fleur-de-Lys having reached the borders of the forest, found a strong party of cavalry encamped there—the only force of this description which the royalist army could boast of in its numbers; and even these were very imperfectly equipped, half of the horsemen, like the greater number of the volunteers in the forest, being shod with *sabots* only, above which they bound straps of leather round their legs to serve as boots. The young chief here mounted a horse and galloped off alone in the direction of Kergant.

The forest of La Nouée had served as an asylum for the marquis and all his family, during the day succeeding the surprise of the chateau by Francis; but receiving information on that same day that the republicans, having first occupied and then abandoned Kergant, had retreated to their head-quarters, the marquis, wishing to spare his family as long as possible the horrors of a proscribed life, determined to re-enter his paternal home. Fleur-de-Lys engaged to ensure them against a second surprise by the watchfulness of his spies; and, besides, the secret plan of the Chouans was of such a nature that this precarious position could last only for a very short time. The family, therefore, had resumed all the old habits of the chateau, and thus sought to delude themselves into the belief that they were living in the security of former times. But this deceptive calm blinded no one; painful anxiety was evinced in the words and still more in the silence of all. Bellah had sunk into a state of distressing langour, and Andrée herself smiled no more, except in her dreams.

Upon the evening of which we are speaking, the members of the family had separated, as usual, about ten o'clock. Bellah retired to her own room, where she remained standing with one hand supported by an arm-chair, her head bent and her eyes fixed upon vacancy; she seemed to be listening with melancholy interest to the sounds of the storm without, and to

the gloomy echoes with which it filled the corridors of the old chateau. The beautiful features of the young girl were much changed; but even her paleness, and the dark line beneath her eyes, only gave her that sole charm of her sex which she had wanted—the charm of weakness. At last, quitting her thoughtful attitude, she seated herself before a small table, over which was placed an elegant bookcase of carved ebony; from this she took a large volume bound in velvet and fastened with a clasp, but gently putting it on one side, without opening it, and shaking her head with an expression of doubt and sorrow, as one who yields to a wish although he thinks it wrong to do so, she seized a sheet of paper and began to write with feverish eagerness:—

“Hervé, my brother, I fear I shall never see you more. Your contempt—your most unjust contempt, heaven knows!—has given me a death-blow. You would hardly know me again, dear brother. All about me think that it is only the effects of fatigue and emotion: I allow them to think so, but I feel that I am dying. I fancy it must be my heart that is affected, for sometimes it beats so quickly that I can scarcely breathe; then it stops, and I fancy the end is come. I feel crushed and broken, and my mind, too, sometimes wanders. It seems as if each gust of wind bent me to the earth—as if I were some feeble plant, and that each blast took away a little of the life that remains. If I am mistaken—if I am fated to live—you will never see these lines, so I need not trouble you more with my feelings.

“Hervé, my whole life has been devoted to duty; to obey its commands I voluntarily allowed disgrace to approach me; but I ask that my grave at least may be pure in the eyes of all, especially in yours. When I am no more it can hurt no one. Dear brother, if you weep for me, the thought that you will do so is

very sweet to me in my present enfeebled state. There cannot be much harm in this weakness which urges me to write to you, for my conscience scarcely reproaches me, and it is still my old conscience of former days. You remember, Hervé, you used to say my conscience was like a sensitive plant, and even more morbidly sensitive. Where are those times? Alas! Alas!

“When my own lips confessed my disgrace, you could not help believing me—you could not help it—but why so quickly, so easily, Hervé? In that home which was so long the home of both, in which my heart was unfolded before your eyes, should one word have been sufficient to efface all those recollections which ought to have defended me! Ah! I could not have believed you had I heard a confession of baseness and shame escape from your lips! and you—you did not doubt or even hesitate! Has one word, one calumny, so much power over your mind, that it can outweigh all the testimony of a lifetime? For I spoke a falsehood then—I must confess it. I shall not attempt to excuse myself for this untruth, Hervé: the faults which are urged by a mistaken sense of duty are raised almost to the level of virtues; and yet it cannot be right, or why, why do I suffer such misery? and you too, Hervé, I am sure, are not happy.

“I must explain all, since you no longer understand me. I have remained faithful, devotedly faithful, to those feelings and ideas with which our infancy was nourished: I believe in the king as I believe in heaven. This double faith alone supports my conscience; beyond that I see only darkness and trouble, in the midst of which it would be impossible for me to live. Indifference is a word whose meaning I cannot understand. I bless heaven that my belief has been preserved entire to the end, for I feel that for me there would be no torments comparable to those I should

have felt had I doubted for a single instant. A lively faith in times like these entails duties which, I confess, Hervé, are beyond a woman's strength. How often I have envied our darling Andrée! Her duties are measured by her weakness: she loves you, she is happy, and she can sleep. Alas! why was I not created like her for that enchanting domestic peace—for that easy yoke of one's home? Heaven willed it otherwise.

"It lay with me to prevent the ruin to our cause which I felt must follow from a meeting between you and that young man. I thought myself bound to prevent it at any cost to myself.

"There is no life which should be more precious to all who love their king than that of Fleur-de-Lys. Their king, Hervé! That is a word the magic power of which you have now ceased to feel as we do, and you will scarcely comprehend how that word can explain the greatest sacrifices. You look with disdain, too, upon our prejudices, our idolatry; that is to say, Hervé, on our worship of the most beautiful recollections of our country and of our families; on our fidelity to the tombs and altars of our fathers, to all that is most illustrious and most touching in the past, to all that speaks of virtue to a Christian soul, and of glory to a Frenchman's heart, to all that is included for us, as you once knew, in that mysterious, that sacred emblem, the royal crown. You say a new world is dawning on us when all these things shall have passed to the realm of shadows; if this world you speak of is to be, in truth I am not fitted for it. Like the pagan maiden of old, I must expire upon the threshold of that temple in which I utter my last prayer.

"I was so far from being guilty, Hervé, that at first I could not even understand of what you were speaking. It is strange that you would believe me so easily! I was determined to save that young man's life—it was my duty. But I must not, while I justify

myself, allow your suspicions to be turned upon another. Alix, whom you know, has since then made me a confession which has explained your mistake. She came to request that I would speak to her father in favour of one of our young officers whom she wishes to marry—the son of M. de Monryon's gamekeeper. She confessed to me that she had met him in the grove during that fatal evening, and that she feared being surprised by her father. The man she loves has a *nom de guerre*, which perhaps assisted in so strangely deceiving you: he is called Fleur-de-Genet.

“This, I think, is all that I had to say, and I feel more happy now it is said. When you read this, dear Hervé, I shall have ceased to live, which is a thought that frees me from many scruples. If I am so anxious that my memory should be dear to you, it is because I deserve that it should be so, Hervé; of that be certain. I have had many painful struggles on your account. We are masters of our words and actions, but we are not of our hearts. Could you really believe me guilty? I was, I confess, determined to be from henceforth nothing more to you than a stranger; for neither passion nor suffering—and I prove it now—should ever have forced me to act contrary to my conscience. Since our interview on the Rocky Mount you had reason to believe that I was—that I could be in future—nothing more to you than a bygone memory; but that I could turn the feelings of my heart towards another, that I could profane the grave of my buried affections, enshrined in the depths of my heart—that I could give my blighted, my widowed hand to another!—Oh! heavens—!”

As Bellah wrote this last word, she raised her tearful eyes to heaven as if in mute appeal, when the door opened and Fleur-de-Lys entered. Mademoiselle de Kergant rose, trembling. The young

man had stopped near the door, his head inclined in a respectful attitude.

"Monsieur le Duc," said she, with a somewhat haughty gravity, "my father is still, I believe, in the saloon."

"I entreat you to excuse me, mademoiselle," said Fleur-de-Lys. "It is to you alone that I must speak. You can readily believe that no trifling matter could have led me to do that which might offend you. I am on the point of taking an important resolution, and I must consult you without delay."

Mademoiselle de Kergant examined Fleur-de-Lys's face with an anxious look, but could only read in it an expression of extreme perplexity. Falling back in her chair, overcome by an agitation which was betrayed by the palpitation of her heart—

"Speak, sir," said she.

Fleur-de-Lys meditated for an instant, then approaching the attentive girl—

"You—you, at least," he said, "I am certain, will do me justice. You know whether I have not devoted myself entirely to the task which duty imposed upon me."

"I know," interrupted Bellah, "that you have shown yourself worthy of your descent."

"The patience, the self-denial of man has nevertheless its limits," resumed the young officer: "woe to those who forget that devotion, and who cause it to waver even in the most faithful hearts."

"These are strange words! What can you be contemplating?"

"If I have not yet learned to be a traitor, Bellah, it is not from want of having received lessons. You know already, at least in part, what has passed; but nothing must now remain hidden from you. I was commissioned to disperse or to destroy every force which could present an obstacle to that landing which

has been promised us so long. A few days after my arrival I executed my task. The shore, the whole country was free; we were masters of the coast; we stretched out our hands to our friends and allies, but they came not; they left us threatened by one of the most formidable armies, commanded by the best general, of the Republic."

"But you had been warned in time; you had received fresh orders?"

"Yes; after waiting for three days in vain. I cannot describe to you my anguish during those long hours of uncertainty and abandonment; my anguish, not for myself, you can easily believe, but for so many brave fellows who had trusted to my word, and whom I had led on to be butchered without gaining any object. Orders arrived at last. The fleet had been detained by causes which were not explained. They asked for a week longer: till then we were to keep the advantages we had gained, occupy the enemy or beat him. What an enemy and what resources we had, you know! Such orders are easily given and their meaning easy to be understood. Whatever the issue might be, they were rid either of their enemy or of an adherent still more hateful. Bellah, I obeyed!"

"Your duty and your honour commanded that you should do so," said the young girl, with dignity.

"I am doubtful of that," returned Fleur-de-Lys. "To sacrifice so many generous hearts—I speak of my soldiers—for a selfish cause, in truth I know not whether religion and honour command it should be done! Yet I obeyed. They ordered me to die. I prepared for death. I threw myself into this forest, and entrenched myself for a desperate contest; there is no doubt but that it must be our tomb should the enemy determine to attack us, but if so they will not themselves return uninjured. The attack has not yet taken place, and our affairs are now in this state:—The English flotilla is to appear off the

promontory of Quiberon the day after to-morrow. If the republicans hear of its approach they will hasten towards the coast—thither I can follow them, and a battle will be the result; but if they continue ignorant of it, as I believe they will, I shall try and turn their position to-morrow night, and reach the point of debarkation before them by a forced march.”

“This is in truth an important moment,” said Bellah, in an altered voice. “Why do you delay informing my father?”

A slight cloud of embarrassment darkened Fleur-de-Lys’s handsome features.

“Because I am not sure,” answered he, in a peculiar tone, “I am not sure whether, instead of following either of those plans, I shall not this very night abandon the forest and retreat towards the north with all my Chouans.”

It could not escape Mademoiselle de Kergant that such a manœuvre would ruin at one blow all the most precious hopes of the royalists; for it would deprive the expedition of the emigrants of all support in the country, and abandon them as a prey to the republican army. Bellah’s mind refused to believe such a catastrophe possible.

“Pardon me, duke,” she murmured, “I listened to you attentively, but I am not very well—I cannot surely have understood you aright.”

“You have understood me perfectly.”

Bellah rose slowly from her seat, and looking at the young man with the deepest astonishment—

“It is impossible!” she faltered; “betray your brothers in arms! betray the prince—a prince of the blood—the king’s brother!”

“The prince!” said Fleur-de-Lys, with a smile of the bitterest disdain, “the prince is not coming.”

“That is false!” cried Mademoiselle de Kergant; “who dares to say so? Who dares to say that a Bourbon will break his word and desert his standard?”

"Himself," said the young man, laying an open letter upon the table. It contained but one single line. Bellah cast her eyes over it, and her face was instantly suffused with blushes. If history has not flattered the chivalric personage whose conduct at this period struck all loyal hearts with despair, he would have felt no reproach more keenly than this blush.

"England has compelled him to remain," she murmured.

"Compelled! one of *his* name compelled! If England denied him her men-of-war, was there not one single fishing-boat to be found in which to save Cæsar's honour? He is not coming, and as for the others I can warn them in time and prevent their landing; so that I shall betray no one but England, which I shall glory in doing."

"But," answered Bellah with enthusiastic energy, "what matters the absence of an individual—what the commission of a fault which we may find after all excusable? Is the crown less pure, the cause less sacred, that you will abandon it? What do you intend doing? What are your projects? For whom shall you fight? In whose name? What bond will unite your soldiers? Not one of our brave Bretons will follow you!"

"They will all follow me," said the young man impressively. "Do you think the only interest that inspires them is the interest of the king—of that king who is an ally of the English, of the Saxons, as they call their ancient enemies—of that king who is always absent, who is so prodigal of their blood, so careful of his own? No, Bellah! they will be grateful to me for severing them from an execrated alliance, they will follow me to a man in the name of their religion, their liberty, their beloved country. This is the cause they serve, the cause to which it is grand, it is holy, to dedicate one's life—the true French cause! Mere

names are nothing. Your mind is too exalted not to understand me, Bellah."

"All that I do understand," said Mademoiselle de Kergant, fixing her severe glance upon the ardent countenance of the young chief, "is that you too intend serving the Revolution after your own fashion, if not for your own profit. You are powerful, Fleur-de-Lys; your success, your influence, are such that I have always thought that heaven had selected you for the task; but beware least your strength should be withdrawn in the same hour that you break your faith."

"May not heaven have reserved me for some higher destiny than eternally to serve ungrateful friends!" exclaimed the young man.

"But supposing that your fatal power, Fleur-de-Lys, is sufficient to blind simple minds like those of your soldiers to your fault, to your crime—do you hope to deceive our faithful noblesse?"

"Some of them, I know, restrained by narrow prejudices, will abandon me. Others, however, I am satisfied, will march as willingly under the banner of France as under the banner of a king who teaches them to forget her. I am not the only one, Bellah, whose faith has been shaken by this fresh breach of promise. I will show you the proofs if you desire it. Believe me, I have not contemplated such a design without some chance of success."

"What design? What success, in the name of heaven? for this passes my understanding and my reason!"

"I am summoned, Bellah, to another field of honour and of danger. The credit of my name, the support of my troops, is invoked to re-animate the great Vendean wars. Other provinces are ready; federalism is awakening over the whole of France, and offers us her hand; the king at least, and all the enemies of the Republic, will be with us. The time when our insurrection conquered a capital, when one

single victory would have been sufficient to open the road to Paris and to stifle a Republic—stronger then than it is now—that time may return. Our country is not like the race of kings, jealous of those who serve her. Her gratitude would be ensured to her liberators. These are noble hopes, and a man need not be vile to allow himself to be seduced by them. If they force us to run into dangers, they at least are noble dangers, and their objects worthy of a man!"

Mademoiselle de Kergant had listened with a kind of terror to this language of a mind stung by injustice and excited by ambition.

"I understand you now," said she: "pride misleads you, Fleur-de-Lys; you will destroy yourself; but what is fearful to think of, you will also destroy us all. You are about to bring ruin on our cause for ever. I can see it coming," she added, clasping her hands with a despairing gesture; "I am warned of it, and yet I can do nothing to prevent it."

"You can do everything, Bellah," said Fleur-de-Lys, in a low abrupt voice, laying his hand softly on the young girl's arm.

She looked at him without answering.

"Yes," resumed he, "there is no sacrifice which I would not joyfully make—no bitterness, no insult, that I would not welcome, were I your husband!"

"My husband!" cried Bellah, flinging herself back in her chair as if an abyss had suddenly yawned beneath her feet.

"Ever since I have known you, Bellah, all my glory, all my good fortune, has been precious to me only because it has brought me nearer to you. Your love would have been everything to me, but you refused to give it me, and in despair I endeavoured to forget you. I must either become a great man or a great criminal. The passions which devour my heart are terrible, but you cannot understand them, and therefore will not excuse them."

Mademoiselle de Kergant crossed her hands upon her breast as he finished speaking, in an attitude of calm despair, and her pale lips half opened:—

“The king!” murmured she softly. At this magical word a sudden expression of suffering and then of triumph illuminated her features: she rose and approached Fleur-de-Lys, and stretching out her hand, said with the utmost sweetness—

“If this poor hand is of so much weight in the balance of the highest destinies, I shall be proud to give it.”

The young chief seemed confounded and almost embarrassed at so prompt an answer and so easy a victory.

“Is it possible?” murmured he. “Did I then deceive myself? You do not love him—you can love me! But your duty alone has spoken—you are sacrificing yourself.”

“Do I appear as if I am?” said Bellah, with the same calm serenity. “Do not believe it. My heart, perhaps, may not be capable of those deep feelings which you might expect from another; but it is sufficient that I can be yours without compulsion. Time will do the rest.”

“Bellah, dare I believe you? Such unlooked-for happiness! Oh, from what a burden do you release me! from what mental anguish! How can I ever repay you?”

“Serve the king, Fleur-de-Lys.”

“I will serve him, I will die for him, and I shall die with gratitude if I die your husband! Bellah, it is cruel to press you more, and at this moment. I entreat you to forgive me. I love you more than you can conceive. Your promise is sincere. Say, you do not hope to escape from your engagement. You will feel indignant at the suspicion—you do not reckon upon the probable chances of a murderous war—”

“You and my father may dispose of my hand as you please, and when you please.”

"What! supposing your father would consent, then the priest who to-morrow night will bless our arms before we set forth—before the battle perhaps—might bless our union! Dare I hope this, Bellah?"

"The time is short," said Bellah, whose voice became weaker and weaker; "but you must speak to my father. I will consent to all that you may agree upon. Go now, Fleur-de-Lys; I am not very strong this evening, and this has taken me by surprise."

The young man bent his knee to the ground, took Mademoiselle de Kergant's hand, pressed it to his lips, and then left the room with another low inclination. Just as he reached the end of the long passage which traversed that wing of the chateau, he turned suddenly round, fancying that he heard a step behind him; but no sound struck upon his attentive ear, and concluding that it could have been nothing but the echo of his own footsteps under the arched roof which had caused his illusion, he began to descend the stairs. But his ear had not deceived him: he was followed by a woman—an irritated and vindictive woman—who emerged from the darkness when he disappeared, and descended after him the stairs which led to the vestibule of the chateau. While he was making his way to the marquis's apartment, she reached the court-yard, and vanished in the obscurity of the avenue.

A few moments afterwards a piercing and prolonged cry, which seemed to proceed from Bellah's apartment, awoke Andrée, whose room was next to that of her adopted sister: she rose hastily and ran in. Bellah, cold as death, was stretched upon the floor. The room was soon filled with all the inhabitants of the chateau, and while M. de Kergant, assisted by the canoness, was endeavouring to restore his daughter to life, Andrée perceived lying upon the table the letter which the entrance of Fleur-de-Lys had caused her to break off so abruptly. She hastily read the first

few lines, anxious to discover the cause of her sister's sudden illness, then she crumpled it up and hid it in her dress.

That same night a young woman, mounted upon a horse covered with foam, appeared before the republican advanced posts, and demanded to be led into the presence of the general-in-chief. The preceding evening the head-quarters had been shifted to the little town situated upon the river, three leagues from Kergant, and so often mentioned in this story. The general, upon the first words spoken by the young woman, sent for Colonel Pelven, and after a conference of half-an-hour the mysterious horsewoman returned by the same way that she had come.

The first dawn of day was breaking, and Pelven was still closeted with the general-in-chief, when a sort of half-idiot peasant was brought before them, who had more than once served as a messenger between the young colonel and his sister, and who handed Hervé a packet sealed with great care. It contained a few lines from Andrée, enclosing Bellah's letter.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Allons, c'est à moi seule à me rendre justice,
Que de cris de douleur le temple retentisse."

RACINE.

M. DE KERGANT was one of those worthy men whose actions are wholly influenced by their simple feelings of right and wrong, from whose upright hearts the troubled waters of passion never well forth. Therefore such people are called uninteresting; but there is no dark spot on their consciences; their simple good sense, and the eternal laws of morality, keep alive in them a pure light which no breeze from the world can ever cause to waver. They are called narrow-minded: but their private life is always irreproachable, and their public life, especially at those critical times when all the landmarks of the human mind are abruptly altered, may be subject to error but never to crime. Though they may be disdained by some, yet their intimate friendship is generally prized, because it is unvarying—because in it men find no cause for suspicion and feel secure from hypocrisy. In the presence of such men one may for a time take off the mask and breathe freely. Such characters are as transparent as they are solid: they cannot deceive, but they are easily deceived. So that Fleur-de-Lys, involving the delicate subject of his conversation in his accustomed subtleties of language, found no difficulty in persuading the loyal old man to over-

look all the hurry of his marriage, which besides was not wholly unexpected.

M. de Kergant adored his daughter; but, as ignorant as a child of all the secret movements of the heart, and of the complicated enigmas of passion, he had never for a moment suspected that the silent indifference with which Bellah condemned her brother's conduct could conceal any deeper feeling. Many appearances had confirmed him in his mistake. His paternal anxiety had been first excited upon finding in the letters which he received from his daughter when in England, the expressions of a romantic enthusiasm for the brilliant chief of the Breton Chouannerie. He had since perceived the expression of the same feeling in Bellah's eyes when in the presence of the young duke. He who was the object of these ingenuous demonstrations was rendered far more uneasy than happy by them; he discerned better the true character of the power which he exercised over the mind of the devoted royalist girl. But these delicate shades of feeling escaped the less penetrating understanding of M. de Kergant, who doubted not but that his daughter's heart had been completely captivated by so much beauty, courage, and success.

In his deep affection for his only child, the marquis had endeavoured to bring his mind to consent to an alliance in which he believed Bellah would find happiness, and he succeeded without much trouble, since he himself had not altogether escaped the fascinations of the young chieftain. He had always energetically defended him against the reproaches and suspicions of his rivals, and by perpetually covering him with the shield of his own loyalty, he had at last given him an almost filial place in his heart. In his eyes the stain of an unfortunate descent was almost obliterated by the brilliant services which he had rendered to his king, and by the honours which had

been conferred on him. Even had it been a sacrifice for the old noble to merge the name of his ancient family in this renown of yesterday, that very sacrifice was calculated to gratify his feelings. He looked on it as a fresh pledge given to a sacred cause, and a bond which must stifle all fatal distrust and draw the ranks of the nobility closer around the popular hero.

Such were the secret feelings of M. de Kergant, so that the confession which Fleur-de-Lys now made to him, and his assurance that he had gained Bellah's consent to this hasty marriage, was graciously, nay almost joyfully received; it removed some doubts which had been lately weighing on the father's mind, and furnished a probable explanation of the sufferings which his daughter had evidently been enduring for the last few days, while at the same time it pointed out their cure. The nervous attack which had so suddenly seized Bellah only confirmed the marquis in his opinion, and removed his last scruples. While sitting alone by the bed side of his sick daughter, he interpreted her silence—the silence of despair—as a modest confession of her happiness, and mistook for tokens of love those bitter tears which his cruel though well meant consolations wrung from the poor girl's eyes.

M. de Kergant took measures that very night in order to remove any objections which the priest might have made to celebrating such hurried nuptials. The dispensations were easily obtained, for many proscribed priests had taken refuge among the victorious bands of Fleur-de-Lys, and one of them was of high rank in the church. It was this dignitary who had promised to celebrate a solemn mass in the chapel of Kergant for the success of the expedition at the moment of the departure of the royalist army, and he now consented to unite the young general and Mademoiselle de Kergant at the same period. Bellah

was informed of all these arrangements in the morning, when she awoke out of the profound torpor which had succeeded to the violent attack of the preceding night.

She rose, knelt in prayer to heaven, and then descended into the park, where she took a long and solitary walk. She was surprised to feel stronger than she had done the evening before, though her thoughts were still troubled and tumultuous: when suddenly remembering her unfinished letter, she hastened home, but could find no trace of it in her apartment. She instantly sought Andrée, and asked her if she had not seen it, but Andrée declared resolutely that she did not know what she meant, and she affirmed this in so decided a tone, that Bellah dared not question her farther. Mademoiselle de Pelven, in common with the other inhabitants of the chateau, had heard of the intended marriage. After what she had read in the letter, she could not doubt but that Bellah was again obeying the imperious commands of a most painful duty, and she felt in her heart nothing but respect and pity for her unhappy friend; but if she had displayed her real feelings, she must have confessed her little act of perfidy, so that Andrée was obliged to wear for the whole day the manner and appearance suited to the sister of an injured man.

To sensitive minds the abyss of grief is fathomless; however deeply they may be plunged into it, they can descend still lower and meet with still more bitter pangs. As long as life remains, however deeply they may be wounded, they are still capable of keener suffering. Mademoiselle de Kergant felt this, when to all her other anguish was added the thought that some indifferent person, some servant perhaps, had read this outpouring of her heart, this first letter of love, this legacy of her soul, this flower from her tomb. If some more friendly hand should obtain possession of this letter, Bellah

had reason to fear that her secret would be disclosed, and that she would not be allowed to complete her sacrifice ; thus she saw herself in fancy the innocent cause of the irreparable misfortunes which might ensue from the despair of her betrothed. She passed the long hours of the day in these anxious thoughts, but, as nothing happened, she persuaded herself at last that the letter had either been mislaid in the confusion which had followed her fainting fit, or that the canoness had found it, and had thought fit to keep her secret.

Fleur-de-Lys appeared at the chateau for a few moments in the course of the morning, and then returned to the forest, where the preparations for the departure of the army detained him till the evening. As M. de Kergant was to join the expedition, he determined to leave his daughter and sister in the chateau, and confide the care of their safety to Kado. In any other circumstances the faithful forester would have resigned himself with difficulty to a charge which separated him from his master, and left himself in a place of safety ; but all his scruples yielded to the anxiety which he felt on account of his daughter's altered health. Alix, for some time back, had lost that fire of youth and that proud energy which gave such a remarkable expression to her countenance. Like Bellah, she seemed to have been touched with an icy hand. But on the morning of the day of which we are speaking, she was too weak to leave her bed, and Bellah went to visit her. In spite of the difference of their condition, the habits of their early years, the trials of a period of disaster, their exile, and the dangers they had shared had united the two young girls with a bond of the closest attachment. In Bellah's ardent soul this feeling was increased by the admiration which she felt for Alix's romantic beauty ; she traced in her features a resemblance to the fabulous queens of the Armorican

legends, so that she had taken great pains to preserve the grave and somewhat shy Breton girl from every trace of servitude; while Alix in her turn, endowed if possible with a still more ardent mind than her young mistress—inasmuch as it was more concentrated—carried away by her gratitude, and vanquished by the influence of a superior mind, had felt her hereditary devotion for the noble companion of her childhood increase almost to a pitch of fanaticism.

When Mademoiselle de Kergant entered, Alix raised herself a little on her bed, and a troubled smile passed across her countenance, whose look of deathly pallor was increased by a dark blue circle underneath the eyes.

“Good heavens!” said Bellah, taking the hand of the unhappy girl, “are you suffering much?”

“Yes, mademoiselle, much,” said Alix.

“Perhaps I am the cause. I have not yet spoken to your father about your engagement. Forgive me—my mind has been so disturbed. Besides, you yourself wished me to wait for a few days. But I will speak to him now, and will endeavour to procure leave for Fleur-de-Genet to remain behind, if it is that which weighs upon your mind.”

“No! no! many, many thanks,” interrupted the forester’s daughter, hastily; “my father would never forgive him if he staid. Besides it is not that—I am ill. And so you are going to be married, mademoiselle?”

“To night,”

“You love him?” said Alix, after a pause.

“Yes.”

Alix’s large eyes, appearing still larger from the fever which animated them, flashed at these words with a dark fire, but gradually softened as they rested upon Bellah’s sorrowful countenance. With a sudden movement she forced Mademoiselle de Kergant to bend over her, and, throwing her arms round her waist,

she began to sob violently, Bellah did not attempt to repress this outburst of tenderness; a sympathetic feeling made her tears likewise overflow. Seated on the edge of the bed, she remained for some time without speaking, and the tears of the two young girls mingled together, while Alix from time to time dried the moistened cheek of her beloved rival with the long floating tresses of her own hair. In a short time Kado entered, and interrupted the silent interview between these two suffering beings, who thus unwittingly consoled each other. Bellah pressed Alix's hand, and left the room after speaking a few kind words to the forester.

M. de Kergant, compelled by his military duties, had passed the afternoon in the forest in conference with the other chiefs, and did not return to the chateau till the first shades of night were darkening over the country. He looked extremely happy. Everything seemed to favour Fleur-de-Lys's design. The spies, who maintained a kind of perpetual telegraph between the forest and the republican lines, had seen the fires lighted in the enemy's camp, and had heard the tattoo beaten; the army of the "Blues" maintained its defensive attitude, and appeared to be preparing to pass the night without any suspicion of what was going on in the forest, thus leaving the field open for the manœuvre which had been arranged to take place that night.

The royalist forces, leaving the forest of La Nouée on the western side, were to turn the enemy's flank, reach Locminé, and from thence descending to the coast, unite with the regiment of emigrants which the English flotilla was to land on the ensuing day. The success of this movement, which was planned in concert with the measures of the Vendean generals, must be decisive in favour of the king's cause in the west of France. At least such was M. de Kergant's hope. Resting against the balustrade of an open

window, the old gentleman spoke with enthusiasm of the happier future which he thought he foresaw, while the family, increased by the addition of a few friends, were assembled in the saloon, and listened to him in silence. Bellah, leaning upon the balcony beside her father, was gazing listlessly into the starry heavens, when she suddenly started, and laying her hand on the marquis's arm—

“Listen!” said she.

Everybody hastened to the window and listened attentively. In the stillness of the night a deep murmur was heard across the distant country, like the sound of a stormy sea rising with the tide over a pebbly shore. It was the army of the Chouans in full march. Fleur-de-Lys at this moment galloped into the court-yard, followed by a small group of officers.

Near Kergant the royalist band divided into two columns, which continued to march in parallel lines at a short distance from each other: the one division following a road which ran behind the park and the adjoining meadows, while the other passed in front of the chateau. Fleur-de-Lys's authority had been successful in lending discipline to this dangerous march, and in taming the irregular habits of his *gars* for this important movement. Women, children, old men—all those who could not fight—had remained in the forest or had sought refuge in the neighbouring village. For nearly two hours a dark compact mass defiled through the court-yard and avenue of the chateau, without disorder, and without any noise but that inseparable from the movement of a great multitude. At intervals, however, the panes of glass were shaken in their leaden frames, when the heavy tumbrels and the massive wheels of the ammunition waggons rolled over the pavement of the court-yard.

From time to time the *gars*, recognising Fleur-de-Lys, who was standing at one of the open and illuminated windows of the chateau, raised their weapons and

waved their hats in the air. These silent demonstrations had a singular and striking character. The young general, with the small body of officers especially devoted to his person, intended to rejoin the head of the columns immediately after the celebration of his marriage.

It was eleven o'clock: Mademoiselle de Kergant, who had disappeared from the saloon upon the entrance of the young chief, now returned leaning upon her father's arm. She was dressed in white, simply and without any ornament, yet still not without that elegance which a woman, in spite of herself, seeks to maintain even in the preparations for her execution. The company immediately passed into the adjoining hall, where the marquis's family and guests were assembled for the last time round his table. The repast was a melancholy one. The full dress of the ladies, the splendour of the lights, and the festive appearance which the old canoness had striven to throw around this betrothal festival, were all insufficient to overcome the feeling of approaching danger and the prospect of a speedy separation. Andrée, thoughtful and silent, from time to time shuddered convulsively. Bellah preserved her usual dignified appearance; but her extreme paleness, her wandering glance, and the contraction which marred the regular arch of her brows, betrayed the internal struggle of her soul. Fleur-de-Lys alone appeared insensible to the apprehensions of the others, and gave himself wholly up to the enjoyment of his triumph. His radiant brow, his animating words, began to dissipate the cloud and raise the sinking spirits of the party; when suddenly a shade darkened the fine features of the young captain, and a sentence which he had begun remained unfinished. The door opened and Alix appeared: she approached the table slowly and silently. M. de Kergant went up to her and gently blamed her for her imprudence, but Alix answered in a scarcely audible voice that she was

better, and that as she felt able she was determined to be present at her young mistress's marriage.

M. de Kergant, touched by this mark of attachment, insisted no farther, and the forester's daughter took her seat near Andrée; but her wretched countenance, her sombre costume, her trembling step, and her unexpected appearance, had again closed every heart and every lip, as if she had been a presage of approaching evil. Fleur-de-Lys himself seemed anxious: his conversation became broken and abrupt, and upon seeing that he was observed, he slightly blushed. All conversation at length entirely ceased, and the repast was concluded in an icy silence as the chapel bell sounded the hour of midnight, announcing that the priest was at the altar, and was waiting for the betrothed.

The chapel of Kergant, a building of the most simple gothic style of architecture, rose on the left of the chateau on a slight eminence a few feet higher than the pavement of the court-yard. This mound was almost circular. On the side which looked towards the open country it was bounded by a wall of perpendicular rock which plunged into a ravine, and which seemed to form a continuation of the boundary wall of the chateau. Towards the court it descended in grassy slopes, intersected here and there by low walls of masonry. A flight of about a dozen steps led from the court-yard to the grass-plot, which stretched before the chapel porch as if it were a portion of the village church-yard. Between this hillock and the moat of the chateau was an open space communicating with the country, and which had served as a passage for the royalist bands. On the left a farm-yard adjoined the chapel, while the other sides of the elongated space which formed the court-yard of the chateau, were enclosed by stables and other out-buildings.

The movement and tumult of the march had ceased;

about three hundred men alone remained as a body-guard for the chief. Half of this troop occupied the avenue with small detachments posted at regular distances, the rest surrounded the steps leading to the chapel in a motionless semicircle. By the soft clear light of a starry night the uniform of the royal chasseurs might be distinguished. They opened their ranks to the silent procession which issued from the chateau, and gave a military salute as they passed. A few moments afterwards, as the sound of the little bell within announced that the ceremony had begun, the soldiers, uncovering their heads, knelt down, their hands clasped, and their muskets lying on the ground by their sides.

A few wax candles lent a feeble light to the interior of the chapel, leaving part of the company enveloped in shade. Fleur-de-Lys and Bellah were kneeling before the little balustrade which surrounded the steps of the altar, while the priest, an old gray-headed man, stretched his hand, upon which was the episcopal ring, over the heads of the betrothed; the Marquis de Kergant was kneeling upon a large slab covered with armorial bearings, a few feet behind his daughter, with his sister by his side. Andrée stood near them: a strange expression of anger and impatience sat on her features, in place of that air of childish grace which was usual to them. A little farther back, Alix was standing, leaning upon Kado's arm, her eyes fixed, her features strained, as if she were listening for some expected sound. A group of royalist officers and the marquis's servants filled up the dark nave of the little church.

The irrevocable moment of the union had arrived; already the priest had put the usual solemn questions. Bellah raised her face, paler than the snowy veil which fell around it, and directing one look of entreaty to heaven, she stretched out her trembling hand for the ring that was to fetter her for life; but the bride-

groom, instead of placing it there, allowed the symbolical circle to fall upon the steps of the altar—his name had been called outside the church in a most mournful tone. He rose. One common feeling of anxiety and terror was expressed upon every countenance. After a short interval, the same distant and plaintive voice repeated the name of Fleur-de-Lys, and then the trampling of a horse became audible.

The young man rushed out of the chapel, followed by the crowd, and strode hastily over the space which lay between the porch and the steps. A horse bathed in foam was panting at the bottom, while the soldiers were assisting the rider to dismount, who appeared to sustain himself with difficulty; his face and breast were stained with blood. On being told that Fleur-de-Lys was before him, he looked at him for an instant with an awful fixedness, murmured the word, "Betrayed!" and fell stone dead at the feet of his chief.

At the same moment, as if to confirm the words of the unfortunate man, a dull heavy sound was heard in the distance. Fleur-de-Lys raised his arm to impose silence, while some of the soldiers threw themselves on the ground, and laid their ears close to the earth. The same noise, like the echo of a subterranean storm was again heard and was repeated more than once.

"It is cannon," said Fleur-de-Lys; "the army is attacked! Order our horses forward!"

While this order was being hastily obeyed, the priest, stooping over the body of the unfortunate messenger, strove in vain to discover some trace of life. The soldiers, plunged in a gloomy surprise, surrounded this melancholy group, while the inhabitants of the chateau crowded in disorder at the top of the steps that led up the bank, and some of the women were weeping.

"My men," said Fleur-de-Lys, in a loud voice,

“we hear the guns of the ‘Blues,’ but we hear our own as well. Our companions are fighting! they call for us! In less than half an hour we shall be in their ranks. In the name of heaven and of the king let us march! The roads are open, follow—”

Fleur-de-Lys was interrupted by a noise which seemed to spread up the whole length of the avenue. The cry, “To arms! The ‘Blues’ are upon us!” was repeated one after the other by all the sentinels, and then a sharp fire of musketry was suddenly heard close at hand. The young general’s foot was already in the stirrup; he withdrew it hastily, and drawing his sword—“*A moi! les gars!*” he exclaimed, and dashed down the avenue. Every one who could bear arms sprang after him. The priest was the only man remaining in the vast enclosure of the courtyard.

“We will go and pray, my daughters,” said he, moving towards the chapel with a trembling step.

Mademoiselle de Kergant and Alix followed the old man to the foot of the altar, and prostrated themselves at his side; the other women, incapable of raising their thoughts to heaven at such a moment, remained outside on the grass-plot and under the archway of the porch, expressing their terror in low broken sentences. Several of the windows of the chateau were open and blazing with light. The abandoned horses, neighing at the smell of powder, galloped wildly up and down the court-yard, which was partially illuminated by the reflection from the windows, and by the bright light of the stars.

But the rattling of musketry, mingled with groans and other confused noises, became each moment louder and nearer. At intervals the deep roar of the cannon thundered in the distance, overpowering all other sounds. Suddenly the fire slackened, rare and isolated shots alone seemed to indicate that the struggle was continued; then the tramp of hurried steps

was heard, and the entrance to the avenue was blocked up by a band of Chouans in disorder. The women who were scattered in groups near the chapel uttered piercing cries. Bellah ran to join them. A discharge, the light from which flashed through the leaves, made the windows of the chapel shake: the enemy was at hand.

Fleur-de-Lys's troop, already reduced by one half, returned the fire, and dispersing about the court-yard, began to reload their pieces. Bellah, perceiving among them her father's tall figure and grey locks, pushed through the crowd of wailing women with a gesture of despair, and opened a way for herself to the head of the steps; but there she stopped, struck with a new sight; for the close and regular ranks of the republican soldiers were seen issuing from the avenue, and a young man on horseback, bareheaded, and waving his sabre, galloped upon the flank of the column. By the flashes of the musketry Bellah recognised Hervé.

"Yield! yield!" cried the young colonel; "yield in the name of heaven! We are masters of the chateau!"

As he spoke a shower of balls, issuing from every window of the building, stretched about twenty Chouans on the earth. Those who remained appeared for a moment uncertain and hesitating.

"Yield!" reiterated the republican officer; "the chateau is ours!"

"To the chapel!" answered Fleur-de-Lys's trumpet voice; "to the chapel! Heaven and the king! Heaven and the king! *A moi! les gars!*"

Hervé sprang from his horse, and placing himself at the head of his men, gave them his orders rapidly, adding a few touching words recommending to their humanity the innocent creatures who were already shut up in the chapel.

"Make your mind easy, colonel," said a grave, manly voice; "we know that your jewel of a sister is

there; that is enough for us, and we will put our gloves on."

"Don't waste any more time in firing," said Hervé, hastily; "use the bayonet alone, and forward!"

Saying these words, and crossing the court-yard diagonally, he threw himself into the open space which lay between the avenue and the chapel bank, followed by a party of grenadiers at a rapid pace; the rest of the troop followed more slowly, keeping their ranks.

The royalist chasseurs had already scaled the bank, while some of their number entered the chapel, roughly pushing back into it the women, who were frantic with terror. They then posted themselves at every window, at every opening, and even in the little open tower which rose above the roof, while others occupied the grass-plot even to the edge of the slope. Fleur-de-Lys was among the latter, and placed himself between the porch and the steps, his sword in the one hand, in the other a pistol. The Marquis de Kergant and Kado, their faces black with powder, were at the chieftain's side, with their muskets charged. The panting abrupt voice of Fleur-de-Lys alone broke at intervals the melancholy silence which reigned upon the lawn and in the chapel.

The detachment commanded by Hervé was advancing rapidly towards the hillock, and Fleur-de-Lys raised his sword. Two successive volleys, given with that fearful precision which distinguished the Breton fire, strewed the pavement with republican corpses; but Hervé's foot was already upon the lowest step of the ascent.

"*A moi ! les Mayennais !*" cried he, and as he spoke his grenadiers rushed up the slope, and advanced from every side on the space lying before the chapel.

The *gars* opposed to the furious impetuosity of their assailants the energy of a desperate resistance. A terrible struggle ensued hand to hand, for on both

sides the firing was over. No sound was heard but the sound of steel striking against steel, the heavy crash of the but-ends of the muskets, and a confused murmur of stifled groans and curses; while groups of men, engaged in mortal struggle, rolled pell-mell to the foot of the hillock.

While this raging combat was at the hottest, a red light was suddenly reflected in the glass of the arched windows over the porch. In a few seconds it increased rapidly, and lighted up the whole court-yard with an ominous glare. Some pieces of burning wadding having fallen at the foot of the buildings which were opposite the chapel, had set fire to the heaps of dried straw, and the fire had communicated to the interior. Showers of sparks were flying through the air, while dense clouds of smoke, mingled with flames, were already issuing from the windows of the barns and were bursting through the thatched roofs.

The combat, over which the increasing conflagration shed a brilliant light, was continued with still greater violence: blows were now given with a more prompt and certain hand. The wounded and the dead, piled at the foot of the bank, served as ladders to enable fresh detachments of republicans to scale the slope, while the Chouans were reinforced from the chapel, and thus an equality was preserved between the foes. Hervé, who was wounded in the face, and twice repulsed to the foot of the steps, had at last reached the centre of the lawn, forcing his way with his sabre; here he found himself face to face with Fleur-de-Lys, who, invulnerable as ever, was standing with his foot upon a heap of dying men, his long hair flying wild, and waving his bloody sword. The two young men gave a cry as they recognised each other, their swords crossed, but that of Fleur-de-Lys was broken at the first shock. At this fatal moment the white form of a woman appeared at one of the chapel windows.

"Hervé!" cried she in a piercing voice, heard even

above the din of the combat; "Hervé! they are killing my father!"

Hervé's arm remained suspended, his eyes turned instantly from his disarmed enemy, and he perceived the Marquis de Kergant a few paces off, with his back against the wall, and surrounded by a menacing circle of grenadiers.

"My men! Bruidoux!" shouted Hervé, rushing towards the group, "spare the old man!"

As he spoke a pistol shot was heard behind him, and he fell to the ground with a faint groan. Fleur-de-Lys, who had been instigated to this base action more by hatred than courage, then threw away his pistol and picked up the sword of the wounded man, but Serjeant Bruidoux had seen the murderous act, and hastily took aim at the young chief.

"Coward!" cried he, and firing, the ball pierced the breast of Fleur-de-Lys.

None of the details of this scene, which passed in less time than it has taken to relate it, had escaped the republican soldiers who remained below. The officer upon whom the command of the detachment now devolved, raised his voice: "Down from the bank!" cried he; "down from the bank, all!"

The grenadiers obeyed, and sprang down upon the pavement in much disorder, while a discharge of musketry swept the grass-plot clear of every living object.

"To the assault!" cried the officer. "Let us revenge our colonel!"

The whole troop then rushed up the esplanade after him, but in spite of the most intrepid efforts, they were compelled to fall back from the effects of the shot fired from the barricaded porch and the downward discharge from the windows and the belfry. The soldiers, obeying a fresh commander, then scattered themselves about the court-yard, where the heat of the conflagration was becoming almost insupportable; some knelt at the foot of the hillock protected by the slope,

and fired into the belfry; others posted themselves here and there behind pieces of furniture, horse-troughs and carts, which were dragged out of the burning sheds, and, thus entrenched, they were able to keep up their fire with less danger, and with a success which was proved by the gradually slackening efforts of their adversaries.

Suddenly a *gars* of gigantic stature emerged from the porch, and advanced alone upon the grass-plot. Bruidoux, who was kneeling at the foot of the slope, rose hastily.

"Comrades," shouted he, with all the power of his lungs, "don't fire! it is the old forester—the one who saved my life! Yield yourself, brave fellow! yield yourself!"

It was in truth Kado: he did not seem to hear the serjeant's voice, but profiting by the momentary truce which was afforded him by the astonished republicans, he disengaged from the heap of corpses two bloody forms—those of Hervé and Fleur-de-Lys—and raising them on his shoulders he again re-entered the chapel with his double burden.

"Yield!" cried Bruidoux, loudly; "yield! the flames have caught the belfry! the chapel is on fire!"

No voice replied: the chairs and forms which barricaded the entrance of the porch were pushed outside, and the massive door of the little church was closed with a crash.

The fearful intelligence which Bruidoux had communicated to the forester was but too true. A few fragments from the burning embers of the outhouses had alighted upon the dry thatch of the barn contiguous to the chapel, and tongues of flame were already stretching up and twisting round the belfry. Two or three Chouans appeared suspended in the wood-work in the midst of the smoke, and were re-loading their pieces, while shots still came at intervals from the lower windows of the chapel.

Bruidoux approached the officer who had taken Hervé's place. "Captain," said he, "are you going to do nothing for these unhappy creatures?"

The officer, whose brow was violently contracted, clenched his hands upon the hilt of his sabre, the point of which was deep in the earth, and contemplated with a sombre eye the progress of the conflagration. "What do you wish me to do?" said he: "you see they still keep on firing. My duty forbids me to sacrifice a single man uselessly. Look at the faces of those fellows up there: they will never yield."

"I'll speak to them," answered Bruidoux. "Only allow me to promise them their lives."

"Promise anything," said the officer, turning away his head; "it is too dreadful."

Bruidoux rushed up the bank and sprang upon the esplanade; two balls pierced his clothes, but he held on his course and gained the shelter of the porch. Then battering the door with the but-end of his musket—

"Life for all!" he cried. "Kado! ladies! will you have life, liberty, everything—we promise everything, only come out!"

The honest serjeant spoke in vain; either the noise of the conflagration prevented his voice being heard, or the crimes which had stained this bloody war made the Chouans doubt his good faith. He persisted nevertheless in the devoted mission which he had taken upon himself, until his comrades' cries warned him that the roof of the chapel was about to fall in and would cut off his retreat.

Meanwhile, in the interior of the chapel, the pavement was covered with the heaps of corpses; every instant fresh victims fell from the windows or rolled down the steps of the little staircase which led to the belfry. The roof was pierced by large cracks through which issued clouds of thick, black smoke, forming a heavy canopy, which was rent asunder at intervals by sheets of flame. The old priest lay lifeless

upon the altar; the canoness and one of the maid-servants of the chateau lay dead at his side, while the other female domestics were lamenting and wringing their hands. Bellah and Alix, their hair loose and dishevelled, were upon their knees giving assistance to Andrée who had fainted from fear, and, from time to time, turning terrified and anxious looks upon Hervé and Fleur-de-Lys, who were supported side by side against the marble altar.

At the foot of the altar-steps, the forester, assisted by a young *gars*, the only one except himself who had remained unwounded, had succeeded in removing a pile of dead bodies from a slab, carved with coats of arms, which seemed to mark the entrance to some family vault; then with the help of one of the iron bars of the balustrade, they tore up some of the pavement round the stone, and lifting the heavy mass of granite with some trouble, they leaned it against the altar, supporting it by degrees as it rose with fragments of weapons and furniture. By slow degrees one of the ends was raised two feet above the earth, and the opening disclosed the topmost steps of a staircase which descended into the vault. Two bars of iron, firmly fixed upon the first step of this flight, sustained the stone at the two corners. The young *gars* who had assisted Kado then seized his musket and returned to the window, but fell almost immediately, pierced to the heart.

As soon as the entrance of the crypt appeared practicable, a crowd of women besieged it with frantic eagerness. Kado, earnestly representing to them that he alone would not have strength enough to raise the stone again, which was threatened with danger by the violence of their movements, and that thus all chance of escape would be cut off, forced them to stoop down one after the other, and disappear in the darkness beneath. Then hastening towards the altar, the forester raised with one arm the drooping and inanimate

form of Andréé, dragged along the despairing Bel-lah with the other, and returned to the half-opened entrance—

"No, no! not me!—Hervé!" murmured the young girl, trying to disengage herself from the powerful grasp which urged her on.

"Make your mind easy, mademoiselle," answered Kado. "I promise you to save him; but go down, go down, or I will answer for nothing."

Mademoiselle de Kergant obeyed. Kado descended after her carrying Hervé's sister. He re-appeared in a few minutes, but by this time the chapel was filled with a thick smoke.

"Alix, my child!" cried the forester. "Oh, heavens! this light dazzles me, this smoke blinds me—where are you?"

"Here, father," said Alix, "close to you."

"Good, my child, good! What a night! good heavens! but can you see in this dreadful gloom? Where is the chief? He must be saved first. I will save our young master afterwards, if heaven permits it. Where is he? Where is Fleur-de-Lys?"

"This is he, father," answered the girl.

The forester raised the motionless body which Alix pointed out to him, and entered the yawning crypt with precaution.

"Come, Alix," cried he, "come! You must not wait a moment longer. Follow me! You are following me, are you not?"

"Yes, my father," replied Alix, raising herself. But instead of following him, she approached the wounded man who was still lying at the foot of the the altar, and leaning over him—

"Fleur-de-Lys," she said, "I told you that if you ever betrayed me, you would learn to know me. Do you know me now?"

A sigh escaped from the lips of the wounded man.

"What base treachery!" resumed the young girl, whose words came hissing between her teeth; "what treachery and what barbarity! By what cruel bonds was I not bound to you! Ah! you knew well that I would suffer everything, everything—rather than reveal to my father the shame of his child—rather than wound the heart of my innocent rival—and I said nothing. Poor Bellah! I have been the cause of deep grief to her, but the most bitter I kept to myself! She has never blushed for your infamy. She may weep for you, but she does not know you!"

During these words, Fleur-de-Lys's countenance wore an expression of intense suffering. He appeared to collect with difficulty his expiring strength. His lips half opened—

"Listen to me!" murmured he, "listen: I never loved but you. Pride—ambition—were too strong for me—but, before heaven, I never loved but you! Alix, take my hand—you are my wife!"

"Unhappy that I am!" cried she; "he is deceiving me even now, but I love him! I will save him!"

As she spoke she twisted her arms round the body of the young chief, and struggled towards the entrance of the vault.

Her father was standing there, looking at her with a terrible glance. Alix staggered back, her knees failed her, and her burden rolled at her feet.

"Father," cried she, raising her hands in anguish, "let me die, but save him!"

"Neither you nor him," said the forester in a hollow voice—"dishonour has never entered that vault!"

He turned as he spoke, and, spurning with his his foot the bars of iron, they gave way, and the sepulchral stone fell heavily.

"Let us pray to heaven, now," said the old man in a solemn voice. "Pray for him if you love him."

A piercing shriek from Alix was his only answer. It was the last. Torrents of flame poured into the

chapel—a dreadful crash was heard—thick showers of sparks issued from the beams which were breaking on every side, and the roof gave way at once, entombing in its burning mass both the living and the dead.

One hour had been sufficient for the work of destruction. When the pale light of dawn mingled with the expiring flames of the conflagration, it shone in all that enclosure of smoking ruins only upon a solitude covered with human bodies.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE vault which had given shelter to all that now remained of the family and household of Kergant, extended in a circular form in the interior of the little mound upon which the chapel had stood, and was arched over with strong masses of masonry abutting on one side on walls of living rock. The damp soil was covered here and there with funereal stones; while a few fissures in the rock alone admitted a scanty supply of air into the thick atmosphere of the crypt.

Thus, when the granite stone which closed the only exit, had fallen back into its former position, no light broke in upon the gloomy shadows of this horrible place. The heavy crash of the falling roof, which shook the vault beneath, informed the unhappy captives that the secret of their retreat must now remain unknown to any living being, and that their tomb was, as it were, sealed above their heads.

Mademoiselle de Kergant alone preserved sufficient presence of mind to feel all the horror of this last blow. The other women, mute, and as if struck with idiocy, were sobbing in one corner, but Bellah sprang up the staircase, and endeavoured with convulsive energy to push back the stone. The strength of several men would have been insufficient for the task, and Bellah slowly descended again, pressing her burning brow between her hands, and, feeling her way, she regained the place where she had left Andrée

stretched upon the ground, with her head against the wall.

"May heaven spare you the pangs of awakening, poor innocent!" said she, kneeling down beside her.

As she spoke, a moan issued from the lips of the wounded man who was lying near Andrée, and whom Bellah had heard Kado name as Fleur-de-Lys.

"Do you suffer much, sir?" said she, bending over him.

"Is it you, Bellah?" murmured the wounded man.

Mademoiselle de Kergant gave a piercing shriek, which sounded as if it came from the depths of a mother's heart. "Hervé! my Hervé!" cried she, and her hand rapidly passed over the bleeding breast and forehead of the young man, but with so light a touch, that to Hervé it seemed like the fluttering of a bird's wings.

After a few seconds employed in fervent prayer, mingled with a pang of remorse that she could even for a moment have forgotten her dead father, Bellah resumed more quickly—

"It is you, then, Hervé, you! and we are united again at last! But at what a time, and in what a place! You do not know——"

"I do know," interrupted Hervé; "I was in great pain, but I did not lose my consciousness. I know where we are; only I—I dare not ask you—my sister! my darling little Andrée——"

"She is here—she lives; she has fainted again, but she is not hurt! Here she is close to you."

"Alas! ought I to feel grateful for this? Would it not be better for her——Tell me, Bellah—you are brave—the stone is closed again, is not it—and all are dead above?"

"All are dead unless by a miracle," said Bellah.

"Then; no one knows that we are here?"

"No one, I believe."

“In the name of heaven! do not let Andrée know that, dear Bellah, till—till the end.”

“Hush, Hervé! hush; she is coming to herself; she will hear you.”

Andrée was slowly recovering her senses; she stretched out her arms, and turned upon her couch of stone like a child awakening in its cradle. Mademoiselle de Kergant, bending over her, spoke to her in the most caressing tones. The poor little thing at first murmured a few unconnected words, and then the terrible truth dispersing the clouds that still lunged over her mind—

“Where am I?” cried she.

Bellah, covering her with kisses, told her she was in safety, and placed Hervé's hand in hers. She then informed her of what it was impossible to conceal from her—their irreparable losses and all those events which had forced them to take refuge in the vault; but she assured her that when all was quiet they would no doubt be delivered from their prison. These assurances, joined to the presence of her brother whom she had never expected to see again, calmed Andrée's agitation, and a few rays of light which penetrated into the vault by the fissure in the rock and the interstices of the masonry, also contributed to quiet her mind.

The two girls uniting their strength, assisted Hervé into a position which might render his wound less painful. Fleur-de-Lys's ball had broken his shoulder-blade, and the agony of every movement forced faint groans from his lips in spite of himself. While he strove to conceal these involuntary expressions of suffering by his tranquil, nay, almost cheerful language, Andrée, joining in his pious fraud, strove on her side to entertain him with her innocent prattle, though it was mingled with silent tears.

Bellah left them from time to time, and approached the peasant women who were huddled against the

rock, now lamenting loudly, now sinking into a state of dull apathy. The power of resistance to great misfortunes is not measured by the strength of the body but by the force of the soul. Bellah, whose delicate constitution had been rendered still more enfeebled by many weeks of suffering, had found new life in this extremity of misfortune under which her companions with stronger bodies but weaker minds, had completely given way. Mademoiselle de Kergant, addressing these unfortunate creatures in turn, called them by their names, pressed their hands, reminded them of their faith, and of the God who would not fail them in their hour of distress, and succeeded at last in inspiring them with some feelings of resignation. This noble girl returned many times to the afflicted group in the course of each hour, while they, weeping bitterly, kissed her hands and held her fast by the skirts of her dress, imploring her not to leave them. They seemed to look upon her as the angel of charity.

Hervé's wound gradually became less painful, for he had lost much blood, which had helped to lower the fever; and Andrée, happy in seeing him suffer less, and trusting implicitly to the modified account she had received of the disaster, was fast recovering her accustomed vivacity, unsuspecting that all the hopes of her youth were entombed in the narrow limits of that funeral vault. She was only irritating by her innocent dreams their bitter anguish, and Mademoiselle de Kergant endeavoured to moderate hopes which must shortly be so cruelly undeceived, and reminded her gently of all the bloodshed and mourning above their heads.

"Bellah," interrupted Hervé, "you must forgive me for the share I have had in the blows under which you are suffering? I expect this forgiveness from your goodness—your justice."

"How can I accuse you, Hervé?" answered she, "when I look at that wound which you received in attempting to save my poor father?"

"Tell him that you love him still; that would be better worth hearing," said Mademoiselle de Pelven.

"Oh! do not, dearest Andrée——!" interrupted Bellah.

"What harm could there be?" persisted Andrée, with emotion, through which might still be discerned her usual childish thoughtlessness. "Our misfortunes are fearful, I know: I feel that as much as you do; but why should we, on that account, reject the consolation which heaven has granted to two poor orphans? All has been directed from above; and I bless Providence, while weeping for those who are gone, that you were not permitted to become the prey of that bad man—of that wretched Fleur-de-Lys. For you were about to sacrifice yourself: Hervé shall know that. Besides, it is of no use now attempting to conceal your real feelings. Do you remember your letter—your famous letter? Well, I took it, and I sent it to him—to Hervé: and, I doubt not he knows it by heart by this time."

Mademoiselle de Kergant seemed at first quite confounded by this revelation, and began to falter a few reproachful words; but the trembling hand of the wounded man having met hers, she was silent, her head was bent as if with shame, and tears once more bedewed her face. Andrée moved a little farther off, leaving the lovers to their silent communion, the delight of which was alloyed by greater bitterness than she dreamt of.

While Andrée was trying to enlarge one of the fissures in the wall, to pass the time away, she felt one of the stones, which projected a little, shake beneath her touch, and she easily pulled it out. A brighter light was immediately diffused through the dungeon, and Andrée called to her sister with a cry of joy. The removal of the stone had left an opening in the wall, at the height of the spring of the arch, through which a hand could easily be passed. This

hole became smaller and smaller as it penetrated through the thickness of the masonry by an irregular fissure to the outer air, and according to all appearances opened upon one of the sloping walls which in some places supported the terrace. Bellah strove in vain to enlarge this opening. The weight of the arch, while it had displaced some of these enormous stones, had only consolidated them more firmly together; and the sole advantage which the captives derived from this discovery, was being able to breathe a less stifling atmosphere, and to distinguish through a loop-hole two or three inches wide, and several feet in thickness, a small portion of the pavement of the court-yard and the shadows of the trees thrown upon the grass.

This distant vision of the exterior world of life, of liberty, and of sunshine, gave Mademoiselle de Kergant a most painful feeling. Andrée, on the contrary, was confirmed in the hope of a speedy deliverance by this prospect, confined though it was, and indeed believed it to be already more than half effected. She returned from time to time to feast her eyes upon the little portion of pavement which was visible through the crevice, and watched with agitated impatience for the appearance of their deliverers.

Bellah, profiting by one of those moments when Andrée was absorbed in this vain contemplation, asked Hervé in a low voice whether he thought it possible that their cries could be heard outside, through this opening, of which she described the form and the dimensions. Hervé replied that he did not think it was possible, on account of the depth of the masonry, and the irregularities of the interstice, which would break and stifle the sound of the voice.

"In any case," added he, "the sounds which might reach the open air would be too uncertain to fix the attention of an indifferent observer, and if any

one should come to search for the corpse of a relation or a friend, he would certainly do so amongst the ruins of the chapel; thus we should hear the echo of his steps over our heads, and it would then be time enough to try this last resource. Till then our cries would only increase the horror of this place without being of any use, and Andréo and the others could no longer deceive themselves as to the probability of their escape. Oh, Bellah! with what joy would I give all of life that I still possess could it spare you and them all the agony which I see before us!"

"But, I have been thinking, Hervé—all is not yet lost. They may come, they certainly will come, to bury the unfortunate—"

Bellah's voice died upon her lips at the thought.

After a pause Hervé resumed—

"Bellah, I cannot consent to deceive you, and you would not wish me to do so. They will doubtless come, but not for two or three days, and perhaps longer. Terror is spread through the country. I have often seen fields of slaughter like this abandoned for a longer period than that. And even if they do come, how should they know the secret of this vault? Would you then have strength sufficient to cry out? and would that cry be heard? It is very doubtful; it is not probable."

"Then, do you mean," said Bellah, "that we must quite despair, Hervé? Speak without fear, for you judge rightly of my courage."

"We have one hope," answered Hervé, "one only hope—Francis. His duty attached him to the general's suite. If he has survived the battle which was fought last night, I doubt not but that he—I do not know what he could do—but it seems to me that I should save him if I was in his place and he here. Poor Francis!"

So the long hours passed away. Day was beginning to fade, and the crypt by degrees resumed its former

gloomy obscurity. Andrée had stolen back to her brother's side. She began to suspect that she had been deceived, and she spoke no more; large tears trickled down her cheeks; and when the last rays of daylight died away, she could no longer contain the expression of her anguish. Words of despair, mingled with heavy sighs, escaped from her lips, and Bellah held her long in her arms without being able to calm her. Even Hervé, upon whom the fever had returned with double force as the evening advanced, had great difficulty in preserving the mastery over his reason.

In another part of the vault, the poor servants presented a still more miserable spectacle. Night had destroyed all the last remains of hope which had till then supported them, and when the first pangs of hunger gave them a fearful presentiment of the doom that was awaiting them, they were suddenly roused from their torpor with all the furious energy of their rude instincts. They rushed up and down the vault as if they were insane, knocking the walls with their heads, and uttering savage cries. These transports had something coarse and repulsive in them which completely subdued the sensitive mind of Andrée; she ceased sobbing, and soon sank into a state of profound torpor, like the sleep of childhood or of death. The other prisoners, yielding at last to the pious consolations which their young mistress ceased not to urge on them, and overcome also by exhaustion, relapsed by degrees into silence and apparent insensibility.

We shall pass rapidly over the succeeding hours. Mademoiselle de Kergant spent them for the most part in prayer. Hervé, no longer able to resist the burning fever by which he was consumed, allowed strange unconnected words to escape at times from his lips, while his hot hands sought the cool walls of their dungeon. Bellah did not attempt to arouse him from this state of delirium, which at least enabled him to forget his misery; and towards morning, she

Bellah at first fancied that the wounded man was the dupe of his feverish illusions; but listening attentively, she also distinctly heard the noise of steps overhead. She instantly rose, and feeling for the staircase, mounted the steps, and struck repeated blows with her hand upon the slab that blocked up the entrance. Some gleams of daylight had by this time again penetrated into the crypt.

"No, no! not there," said Hervé. "It is impossible that they should hear you! To the opening in the wall, dear Bellah, and call—call with all your strength!"

Bellah hastily descended the stairs, and approaching her lips to the sort of loophole which they had accidentally discovered the evening before, she gave several piercing cries, then stopped, holding her breath that she might hear better.

"Oh heavens!" murmured she, after a few minutes, "I hear nothing more, Hervé—they have left the chapel!"

Hervé gave no answer.

"If we could all cry out at once," resumed the brave girl, perhaps—"And as she spoke she ran to her companions in misfortune, and endeavoured to rouse them from their stupor, entreating them to join their voices to hers. Andrée alone appeared to understand what was going on; she half rose upon her knees, but immediately fell back again. With a gesture of despair, Bellah returned to the opening in the wall and gazed through it.

"I see them!" cried she—"I see them!"

"Who are they? Do you know them?" said Hervé.

"Yes; it is the young officer!"

"Francis?"

"With the serjeant and two more—they are moving away, but slowly and sorrowfully."

"One more cry, Bellah, if you are able—in the name of heaven!"

Bellah repeated her cries at short intervals.

"Well—well? are they coming back?" asked Hervé, in a choking voice.

"No! no! I cannot see them now! They have already passed that part of the court-yard which I can see. But they are here again—they are coming back—they are at the head of the avenue!—they are going! Help! help! Francis! Francis!"

Bellah had exhausted all her strength in this last despairing cry. Hervé questioned her again: she answered in an almost inaudible voice—

"They have stopped—they turn round. I think—yes, I think they must have heard me. They seem to be consulting. Ah! misery! they are going—they are gone!"

These last words had hardly passed Bellah's lips, when she tottered and fell to the ground, enveloped in the folds of her white dress.

Hervé was now seized with a fresh fit of delirium, which was rendered still more distressing by intervals of reason; by a strange illusion the most delightful images passed before his eyes, and were immediately banished again by the fearful reality. He fancied that he again heard steps overhead, and the dull and continuous sound of men at work; then all these noises were lost in the vague murmurs that echoed in his ears. Suddenly he thought he must be dreaming again—the bright sunshine entered the crypt in floods—human figures appeared at the head of the steps peering anxiously down.

"Pelven!" cried a youthful voice from above, almost speechless with emotion.

"Francis! help, my Francis!" exclaimed Hervé.

* * * * *

The old manor-house had been preserved by the thickness of its walls from the fury of the conflagration, and an hour after the scene which we have attempted to describe, Colonel Hervé was resting on the large antique bed in which he had slept the calm sleep of his early years. In the embrasure of a window an old surgeon in uniform was replacing in a case the fearful-looking instruments of his profession. A personage whose appearance was at once grave and burlesque, and whose striped trousers were concealed as far as the knee by an apron of white cloth, was supporting the wounded man's head with one hand, and with the other was raising a spoonful of broth to his lips.

"By my faith, colonel," said this singular-looking sick-nurse, "you must have been gifted with a devilish deal of moral force in that catacomb."

"Yes, my old Bruidoux; the night was indeed a dreadful one. How is my sister?"

"She is visibly flourishing, colonel. Everybody in general in this house appears to enjoy the thoughts of a good dinner. There is only that poor little fellow, Kado's son, who still weighs upon my mind. Thereupon, colonel, I have an idea; I wish to adopt the child. He deserves it; for in the first place he is an orphan; secondly, he saved my life in the forest; thirdly, he has just saved yours. If we had not met him in the avenue, and if he had not put our noses upon the scent of the cavern, there is no manner of doubt but we were marching off for good and all. I have therefore determined to be as good as a father to him. Colibri, on the other hand, offers to be a mother, for which office he is quite competent by reason of the gentleness of his character."

Francis entered at this moment.

“Colonel,” said he, “Mademoiselle Bellah is quite well since I have assured her that the doctor has answered for your recovery.”

“I will answer for nothing,” interrupted the old surgeon, roughly, “if you don’t manage to be a little more silent. To the right, march! You have talked enough!”

The serjeant and Francis left the room on tiptoe, and Hervé soon fell into a profound slumber.

THE END.

