

narrow window of the cell, fell upon the bed of the patient.

At intervals a warm ray mixed itself with the dead tints which leadened the skull of the Syrian—around his discoloured lips, something like a bitter smile seemed at times to be playing, under the soft and silky tufts of his black moustache.

The same ray falling upon the broad face of the honest monk deepened its vermilion. His rosary lay coiled around his crossed knees, and his whole aspect betokened a state of beatitude and peaceful sleep.

Suddenly the eyelids of the Syrian, which, up to then, had appeared to be completely soldered, half opened by a slow and nearly imperceptible movement; but you could scarcely recognize the piercing eagle eye of Mahmoud-el-Reis—the furtive look that he cast around him was weak and almost extinguished.

Mahmoud did nothing by halves—the dose of poison that he had taken had not only produced the appearance of sickness, it had rendered him seriously ill.

The most skilful leach in the world that might have been called in to examine him, would have pronounced his life in danger.

It was the first time that Mahmoud had opened his eyes since his arrival at the abbey of Saint-Martin-hors-les-Murs—his swoon had lasted several hours, and at the moment that his senses seemed to be returning, one would have said that he had scarcely a breath of life within him. It was sometime before he could distinguish the objects that surrounded him.

"Am I blind?" thought he, while a vague feeling of fear was depicted on his features, "or is it dark night?"

He tried to raise his hand to pass it over his eyes, but it remained paralyzed by his side.

"The dose was too strong," thought he again. He however, made no attempt to call for aid. Some more minutes passed, when his sight began by degrees to improve, and he felt that his limbs were slowly returning to life.

All at once he perceived the rubicund face of the monk resting on his pillow. Mahmoud was no longer thinking of his own condition—the thought of his task had returned to him; he made an effort to sit up and place his face near to that of the good monk.

In this position he examined him long and attentively, he knit his brows, shook his head and murmured—

"I shall be able to make nothing of him, for he has no passions."

Scarcely had his intelligence returned than he found himself possessed of its full strength—he was able, at one glance, to discover the soul of the monk through its thick covering, and he came to the conclusion that his mind was weaker than his body, and he allowed him to vegetate in his apathetic sleep.

Mahmoud turned on his pillow and closed his eyes—the exertion that he had made had exhausted him. Great drops of perspiration broke out upon his forehead, and he quickly fell asleep, overwhelmed with fatigue.

The good monk, on the contrary, woke up having been disturbed by some confused noises in his dream, stood upon his legs and made a great sign of the cross, muttering to himself—

"Lord Jesus! hath not the dead man moved?" His trembling hand vainly sought his rosary which had slipped upon the floor.

His teeth chattered and the shades of evening seemed to him full of phantoms. He had not time, however, to die of fright, for he heard the noise of voices and steps in the adjoining gallery.

The door of the cell opened, and prior Anselm made his appearance with a veiled woman.

"This is fatigue enough for to-day, my brother," said the prior. "Go and seek the repose that you have earned."

The monk, instead of obeying, immediately continued his search for his rosary.

"Go!" repeated the prior.

"Have I?" stammered the poor monk, "committed any sin of idleness, my father? I have been overcome in spite of myself in the midst of my orisons; and it appeared to me, on my waking, that the deceased had moved."

"The deceased!" exclaimed, in one voice, the prior and the veiled woman.

At the same time the prior seized Mahmoud's wrist and felt his pulse.

"Go! my brother," said he for the third time, "and sin no more."

The monk having found his rosary, now took his departure.

"Is he dead?" asked the veiled woman, with anxiety, timidly approaching the couch.

"His pulse beats feebly," replied the old man, "but there is still life."

They were alone—they could hear the sounds of the monk's steps dying away in the distant corridors.

Prior Anselm took the hand of the veiled woman and led her to the only seat in the cell.

"Yes! my well-beloved daughter," said he as if resuming an interrupted conversation, "the king appeared in answer to the citation of our Church, and I assisted for our lord the abbot, who was absent at the first sitting of the council. The king bore himself like a Christian."

"May God be with him," said the veiled woman in a voice trembling with emotion.

"The council have as yet decided nothing," continued the old man; "but it is easy to be seen that the decision will be in your favour. You will have justice done you, my dear child; you will be queen of France."

Ingeburge raised her veil, showing that her beautiful face was bathed in tears.

"Queen of France," murmured she, "say rather the wife of the king; I do not desire a place on the throne, but to be by the side of Phillip Augustus."

The prior smiled while contemplating the depth of that love, which no outrage could kill, or even weaken.

"Remember, my daughter, that you have solicited the favor of attending on our poor patients. It is eight days since I promised my consent. I have neglected my promise till this evening, when, on entering the convent, I learnt that a patient had knocked at our doors and demanded admission, in the name of the king."

"In the name of the king!" repeated Ingeburge.

"And I said to myself," continued the prior, "this shall be the first patient confided to the care of the queen."

CHAPTER II.

Mahmoud's cell was now plunged into complete obscurity. The eye, accustomed to darkness, could only just distinguish a white from kneeling on a prie-dieu.

A weak sigh came from the bed of the patient, and before queen Ingeburge had time to leave her praying position, Mahmoud raised his voice and said—

"Am I alone?"

He thought he was dreaming, when, instead of the voice of the old monk, he heard the sweetest and most melodious voice he had ever heard in his whole life.

He thought he was dreaming when that charming voice, out of the darkness, replied to him—

"You are not alone, my brother. There is some one watching over you, and praying for you."

Mahmoud felt as though some beneficent emotion was suddenly warming his breast.

"If I was a thousand leagues from here," thought he, "in the blooming and odorous forests, where roses spring up from the dry beds of the torrent, I should say that I had heard the voice of Dilah!"

He rose this time without effort; for his sleep had driven away the fever.

His eyes made vain efforts to pierce the darkness which separated him from that angelic voice.

"Where are you?" asked he.

There was no reply, but he could hear the noise of the flint striking against the steel, one or two sparks only were emitted, for it was evidently a novice with unpractised hands, who was trying to strike a light.

"Give it me," said Mahmoud, "my breast

burns. I am thirsty—and I think I should be relieved if I could see a little light."

What he desired was to see his unknown companion; for he was among those who cannot distract themselves long from their object, and he had told Amaury that morning, that if there were men about the queen he would ask a day, but if only a woman, he would ask but an hour.

Mussulmen know the tradition of our mother Eve—of the apple and the serpent—and they are still more severe in their judgments on women than we are.

Mahmoud held out his hand in the dark, a light step glided over the floor of the cell, and a small soft hand touched the fingers of the Syrian.

Mahmoud wished to press the small hand between his own, but it quickly escaped him, and he retained only the flint and steel. Some minutes after the lamp was lighted: and Mahmoud beheld a woman clothed in white, her face hidden by a veil, but showing a young and graceful figure.

Through her veil Ingeburge could perceive that the supposed dead man, had suddenly become a galvanized corpse, and was fixing upon her his black eyes, which sparkled like diamonds.

She was frightened, and yet something at first attracted her towards that strange man, so different from those she had seen each day since her arrival in France, and also from those she remembered to have seen in her dear country in the North.

She took a phial from the table and poured its contents into a cup which stood near the patient's pillow.

He refused the drink with an air of impatience.

"Water," said he, "some pure cold water."

"This is a remedy," said the queen.

Mahmoud continued to regard her with ardent eyes; the returning fever giving them additional brightness.

"How long is it," said Mahmoud "since the Christian maidens have adopted the custom of eastern slaves, in hiding their faces?"

"Drink, my brother," said Ingeburge, instead of replying to his question.

Mahmoud put forth his hand, but it fell again by his side.

To be continued.

NO MAN'S LAND.

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CHAPTER II.

That evening Maurice's father began upon him about the 'powney'; she was 'growing too old for the bavin trade; and ye mid get me another in no time, Maurice, if ye were the boy ye was, and had a mind to't. There's a stag of prime, to be found most nights now by the Squab-hollow, and I'd acome round with the powney for to carry on him whnom.'

Perugino makes his arch-tempter in the Vatican fresco a very reverend old man. His was a shrewder guess at human nature than the usual form given to that worthy; there is certainly no more dangerous or subtle one; and Maurice, stung in the morning by Leverton's gibe, and under the sort of fascination which makes a man of another class spend the day in the wet reeds after a wild duck, or pay 1,000*l.* a-year to stalk the red deer in the Highlands, consented to go. For a fortnight after, however, there was a great down-pour of rain, and the nights were dark; moreover, Maurice was not anxious to go while he thought Leverton was on the alert. At last, one night the moon was full, the rain had ceased, and the clouds were high, but they went drifting across the heavens with a strong wind in the upper sky. It was a gusty, wild-looking night—great fleecy masses of enormous size careering along, and making the moon as murky at times as if there were none, though the lower sky and the earth were very still. Maurice did not start from home; the keepers might be upon his trail, so he walked at sunset across the forest by the high road, and as soon as night fell, beat towards the haunt of the stag which he had