

Saracens, and scarcely half recovered from twenty wounds;—swearing, stamping, striking his head and his fists against the massive walls; praying to God and all the saints; calling on Jerusalem, and kissing a blue and silver ribbon, spotted with large dark stains. It was Mathe's love-gift—Mathe's, who before his departure had become his wife. The good knight plucked up fresh courage every morning, as a pious knight should do; but the evening found him crouched on the pavement, sad and despairing, his hands clasped convulsively together, and his eyes unnaturally strained on the damp-stained walls. Inaction was killing him; the cold damp of the prison chilled his heart, and a longing to see his wife consumed him. Suddenly he exclaimed—

"I would rather give myself to the Evil one than remain here any longer!"

The Devil, always at hand and on the watch, appeared. It was not Lucifer, that great archangel, with proud front, blackened with the thunderbolts of heaven, yet beautiful still, even in his guilt; it was one of those wicked inferior spirits, encased in a form, half man, half goat, with a shrill malicious laugh—with horns and hoofs—that vulgar devil, one of Lucifer's satellites, who traffics in souls and makes bargains with misers, usurers, unjust judges, usurpers and other thieves—a demon who has the same offer for the poor wretch who covets a well-filled purse, as for the great man who is tempted by a throne.

"Take your wish, and give me your soul. Command me," said the Devil to the knight.

"Oh, ho!" said Sire Bos, "I should not have suspected that you were my companion here!"

"I am always ready to render a service."

"At what price?"

"Nothing in this life. You may, if you wish it, live to be a hundred years old; afterwards you will belong to me. That is but fair."

"Avaunt!—it is an evil compact."

"Think over it, however," returned the demon. "At this very hour Godfrey de Bouillon flaunts through Jerusalem, and you are absent."

Bos made a gesture of despair.

"The crusaders are embarking for their own country; you will never again see your Castle of Bènac perfumed by the southern breeze from the mountains."

The knight's head sunk on his breast.

"You will rot in the sepulchre which you entered alive."

The hands of the knight were clenched.

"Your lands are ravaged by your old enemy and rival, the Baron des Angles. You cannot chastise him; he will laugh at your misfortunes in your own house."

The knight started to his feet—

"He loves your wife, Mathe; she is beset by his attentions; her heart fails."

"Hast thou yet more to tell me, thou more than devil?"

"If you desire it, I will generously show you Mathe, as a pledge of our bargain."

"Show me Mathe."

Immediately the Castle of Baudéan, where Mathe had remained with her mother, appeared on the damp wall, like a fine picture. There was the room of the afflicted Châtelaine of Bènac—her large bed of green sammete, whose hangings re-

presented the history of Sainte Quettérie, a young maiden martyred at Aire, in Gascony, who carried her head, bright with glory, in her hands. The carpets were of the black bear and red fox of the mountains, into whose thick fur the feet of the attendant maidens sunk without a sound; the coffer of black wood, inlaid with box, containing her wools and needles; the Prie-Dieu in front of a finely carved ivory crucifix; on the right, a bénitier of silver-gilt and enamel; on the left, a reliquary embroidered with the Agnus of Rome; beneath, the presentation to the temple and St. James. Mathe, kneeling on the cushion of the Prie-Dieu, appeared to hold to life but by a thread; her thin, white hands, on which the blue veins might be counted, were raised to heaven, and she prayed:—"My Saviour! and you, Blessed Mary! and you, my lord St. James, patron of my house, deliver my father from all evil!—deliver my brother from all evil!—deliver me from all danger!—and may Bos, my beloved husband, rest in peace!" The false Baron des Angles raised the hangings, and entered the room familiarly, exclaiming—"By our Lady of Bigorre, if you still continue to despise my love, and still refuse to become my wife, you shall no longer be Châtelaine of your possessions, for I will give them up to the fire and the sword, and you shall become my concubine in a dungeon."

Mathe replied with tears—"My lord give me yet fifteen days; if, in that time, I shall receive no news of him after seven years' absence, I shall consider him dead, and will become your lawful wife."

Gradually the picture faded from the wall, and there remained but the damp streaming down.

"To-day is the fifteenth day," said the Devil; "the Baron des Angles is resolved, from mockery and ostentation, to marry your wife, in your castle, in your chapel."

"Make thy bargain!" exclaimed Bos.

"So be it," said the demon; "for you, long life and happiness; for me, your soul!"

"My soul is not mine, it belongs to God."

"Well, then, your heart?"

"My heart is my king's; let us, however agree that victory shall remain with him who can outwit the other."

"So be it," again said the demon, feeling sufficiently secure of his prey.

"Thou must convey me this very evening to my Castle of Bènac."

"In a moment, if you desire it; but I prefer passing a few hours on the way for the pleasure of the journey."

"I invite thee to supper."

"You may spare yourself that demonstration of hospitality."

"Thou art invited to supper after vespers; it is a condition of the treaty; thou must sup after me."

"Before or after," answered the demon; "I am not proud after the manner of men."

"Thou shalt have what I leave; if thou findest anything thou canst bite, I give myself to thee."

"Knight, my teeth are good."

"Demon, I will incur the risk."

The wicked spirit laughed fearfully like the hissing of a serpent, or the creaking of rusty bolts.

"Laugh," said the knight, gravely, "and by the holy mass, I shall not be the one to weep."