

lutes and smiles upon them so graciously; as to leading my men further than that into the quarrel, it is not to be thought of. Men who can get their living by honest labour never mix themselves up in such matters."

"All is for the best," resumed Samson; "maitre Honoré will find the flesh for the scholars, and Tristan the costume. That's the game; for my part I will give the sauce—a thousand Bohemians and rogues, who will each yell loud enough for fear, and who will do something better than that if you give them plenty to drink."

Montruel crossed the purlieus at full gallop. Nearly all the shops were deserted, and there were but few workmen about the facade of the principal entrance to the cathedral of Notre Dame. He tied up his horse and slowly mounted a kind of ladder which led to the workshop of Jean Cadour, the image-cutter.

Several days had passed since that night of adventures—when madame Agnes had dared the outrages that had been heaped upon her at the tavern of the brigands. During these days Amaury had doubtless suffered cruelly; for ten years of furrows and wrinkles seemed added to his forehead. He was pale, and the fever was still burning in his hollow eyes.

When he entered the door of the work-shed, the two black slaves were sitting cross-legged on either side of a stone statue, still unpolished, and which was evidently about to receive the last strokes of the chisel.

The eyes of Amaury sought the master. "Where is Jean Cadour?" he demanded.

The negroes remained mute and immovable. "They do not know him by that name," murmured Amaury; "Where is Mahmoud-el-Reis?"

The negroes rolled the whites of their eyes, but still gave no answer.

Amaury stepped into the middle of the shed, and for the first time remarked the finished image of the Virgin.

"What!" muttered he, "in eight days!"

The idea that there was some witchcraft about the work, presented itself immediately to his mind; but another thought immediately seized him and he recoiled with astonishment.

"It is her," he said to himself; "it is the queen! Is this by chance, or has he really seen her?"

He moved round the statue, to examine it more closely—the eyes of the negroes still remaining immovable.

"Yes! yes!" he repeated, "it is indeed the queen; I cannot be deceived. Has any woman been here?" exclaimed he, turning to the two slaves.

Still no reply.

In his anger he laid his hand on his sword, and the negroes prostrated themselves before him, uttering inarticulate sounds, and opening their mouths that Amaury might see that they had no tongues.

"How shall I now be able to learn, if she has been here, and who is to tell me whether I can count upon this infidel?"

A slight noise was heard opposite the door of entrance. Amaury turned and saw that a curtain that divided the shed had been drawn, and that Mahmoud-el-Reis was standing with his arms crossed upon his breast, before him. The Syrian had laid aside his rich oriental clothing, and donned the dress of a French workman.

"He whom thou callest an infidel," said Mahmoud, "has never betrayed his oath—I hope it may be thus with thee, Amaury Montruel."

Amaury sprang towards him, and seizing him by the arm, demanded eagerly, "Is this a portrait?" pointing to the statue.

Mahmoud nodded by way of affirmation. "The portrait of whom?" demanded Montruel.

Mahmoud extended his arm, and pointed to a sketch upon the boards of the shed, which was half effaced.

"Ah!" said Amaury; "I see—but it is very strange."

The Syrian studied his features with great attention, and said—"Then thou knowest some woman who resembles that sketch?"

And as Amaury made no reply, Mahmoud added, with a certain bitterness in his voice—"It

is not the woman that came here with thee the other day, and that thou callest also a queen."

"No," replied Montruel, "it is not her. "Then," said Mahmoud, "do all you Christians have two wives?"

Amaury curled his lip, and exclaimed, "I do not love that one—I hate her!"

Mahmoud caressed the image, with a tender and melancholy look.

"Dilah!" he murmured.

Then added in a voice so low that Amaury could not hear him—

"Each soul has its sister. The woman who resembles Dilah is without doubt the sister of her soul, and whomsoever she may be I will love her."

CHAPTER VIII.

Mahmoud had dismissed his two slaves with a sign, and was now alone with Montruel.

"In our fraternity," said he, in a slow and solemn voice, "the man who hesitates to give his life, to accomplish the commands of the master, commits a sin; but he among us who risks his life uselessly, even though in accomplishing his master's order, commits a greater sin, so great that the seventh penitence is required to wash it out!"

"Hast thou then not understood me?" interrupted Montruel; "Why, it is to-day! to-day even!"

"I did understand thee," replied the Syrian; "now try to understand me. In the country that I come from they indulge in few vain words. King Phillip Augustus wears steel armour, and is surrounded by well armed and faithful guards. I do not care to attack king Phillip in his steel armour and surrounded by his faithful guards."

Amaury had laid aside his helmet, and was seated, holding his head between his two hands.

"King Phillip Augustus," he repeated, as though trying to fix his thoughts; "The king knows all—the king knows too much; we must no longer trifle with him, and betray him by halves!"

Mahmoud was standing before window of his work-shed, running his eye over the small arm of the Seine, over which hung, like a bizarre fringe, the lace-like roofs, the small towers, and the buttresses of the water arches, but from time to time he turned round and ran his eye over the contours of his new statue.

Mahmoud scarcely listened to what Amaury Montruel had been saying. He was thinking that his task was over; he was thinking that that was the morning of the eighth day, and that the road which was to restore him to happiness was much shortened.

The man who had been speaking to him he regarded only as the instrument that was to facilitate the orders of the master.

Then suddenly he exclaimed, "Salim had steel armour and faithful guards. Salim was as much above thy king as the great sun is above the little stars. Salim, the friend of God—the commander of the faithful. Five hundred black eunuchs, armed with sharp scymetars, were always about him—always preceding him in his progresses, and never sparing the unfortunates who were found in the way of their lord. To look at him only was death—his name alone could make Bagdad and the provinces tremble. Mahommed, the holy and the strong, represented heaven upon earth, master of Alamont and of seven hundred priories, told me it was necessary that I should go to Bagdad and kill Salim, the commander of the faithful. Twelve *sedavi* had already left to accomplish that enterprise—none returned; but left their bones bleaching on the high roads around Bagdad. I knew that, though I was but sixteen years of age, I departed on my errand, with some gold in my girdle; and for the first time the crystal poignard hidden under my clothing. In the streets of Bagdad marble monuments had been erected, to mark the places where those had fallen who had tried to compass the death of Salim, the commander of the faithful. They showed me twelve of them. I visited the palace and marked out with the point of my poignard, where the thirteenth place would be, saying to myself, 'Here I or the kaliph shall fall!'"

Montruel rose; "Of what importance is all that?" exclaimed he; thou hast promised me to kill the queen!"

"And thou promised to free me from the king!"

"Have I refused thee?" began Montruel.

Mahmoud coolly leaned against the window. "If thou hast not refused," said he, "then listen to me, in order to know how I should wish to have the king delivered to me."

To be continued.

NO MAN'S LAND.

THE New Forest is almost the only large district left in England which has not been invaded by the nineteenth century. You may drive or ride for miles over thousands of acres, and find the country in exactly the same state that it was left by the Norman kings; the roads are probably a good deal better, and the poachers use guns instead of bows and arrows; but except in these particulars, the same wide commons stretch bleak and bare, with here and there a withered stump by a sullen, black, boggy pool, succeeded by beautiful knolls where the tall deer, whom the 'Conqueror' loved as if he were their father, enjoy themselves as then, with picturesque oaks and beautiful green hollies dotted about as in a park, from amongst which William Rufus might ride out without any sense of incongruity; while old Perkins, who carried the King's body in a cart to Winchester, lived in just such a mud hovel, dressed in much such a dark 'surplice' (smock frock) and leathern leggings as his descendant who now inhabits the same spot, having neither risen nor fallen in the scale during almost 800 years.

The population is a very lawless one, living, like their ancestors, on woodstealing and poaching; and of all the lawless parts, a district called No Man's Land stands pre-eminent. The old Spartans, I believe, considered, theft was not a fault unless it were found out: No Man's Land thought the same.

Every mud cottage stood separate. In the whole hamlet there were not three dwellings together. The most substantial and prettiest of them all belonged to the parish clerk; it possessed a second story, and was partly built of brick; for Silas Russell was a considerable man in those parts. He lived nearly two miles from the little village church, but as he was the only man in the hamlet at the time of his appointment who could read, there had been no choice in the matter. He was as proud of his rare accomplishment as Beauclerc himself; and as knowledge was power even in No Man's Land, he was greatly considered for it. His house stood on the edge of a little hill sheltered from the north, with an orchard of merries (the little black cherry) about it, and a passion-flower trained over the front, for the climate is almost as mild as Devonshire; while the little garden made a gorgeous show in June, with great red peonies, blue larkspurs, and golden marigolds.

It was Sunday mid-day, and he and his granddaughter were just returning from the 'berriu' of his old wife. He did not speak, and Rachel, always rather afraid of him, dared not begin. At last they reached the door; the empty house-place seemed to strike cold on the old man—the vacant chimney corner where they two had sat opposite each other for so many years, and he spoke out but it was not a sentimental grief. 'Eh, but she were fallen away to nothing; she war a perfec' notamy. "Small heft shall I be to carry to the lictun," says she; and she war that sure. But it were a fine berrin, chile, and a sight of voke, and they all spoke as how she were a terrible good woman.'

And so poor old Lizzie's funeral oration was done.

Rachel Russell was a very pretty girl, of the type common in those parts, small and well-made, with delicate refined features, and what would be called elegance in another class in all her motions and looks. She was an orphan.

Old Russell was exceedingly particular about his grandchild; no one was 'allowed' about the place, and it was so lonely that his task would