

towards Ermyne castle. Two hours of brisk riding brought them to its gate. The Duke, with great courtesy, conducted them into the building and through the different apartments. Last of all, he led them to the chief tower, at the door of which he addressed De Clisson.

"Sir Oliver," said he, "I know of no man this side of the sea, who is a better judge of architecture than yourself. Wherefore, I pray you ascend the stairs and examine the building of the tower. If in your opinion it be well, I am content, and if any thing be amiss, it shall be reformed after your device."

"With right good will," replied De Clisson. "Please go before and I will follow you."

"Nay," said the Duke, "go you up alone, and in the mean time I will talk with the Lord Delaval."

De Clisson, who suspected no treachery, and who might probably feel flattered at the high opinion the Duke expressed of his judgment and taste, ascended the stairs without further parley. When he had arrived above the first stage, armed men who were lying in ambush in a chamber, opened the door, and while some of them descended to secure the door beneath, others followed him, and rudely pushing him into a chamber, fettered him with three bolts of iron.

"In doing thus do you obey the orders of the Duke?" said De Clisson.

"Ay," replied one of the men, with an insulting laugh, "and you will, I doubt not, have time to form, at least, *one* device for the alteration of the tower, before your labours are cut short by the gibbet."

They now withdrew, and locking the door, left the prisoner to his own bitter reflections.

Whatever those who accompanied De Clisson to the castle might think of the Duke's treachery, they neither uttered remonstrance or made the slightest allusion to their late companion's fate. Soon afterwards, in company with the Duke, they mounted their horses and departed, having first drank so deeply of the wine-cup, as, in a great measure, to overcome the uncomfortable feeling of restraint occasioned by the fate of De Clisson. They had not proceeded more than half a dozen miles, when they beheld a page, on a coal-black jennet advancing with a speed that denoted him to be on an errand of no little moment. As he drew near he slackened his pace, and they began to imagine that he wished to hold some conversation with them, but just before he arrived against the foremost horseman, he lightly pressed his spurred heels against the sides of his

jennet, and at the same time pulling his cap over his brow and burying the lower part of his face in the bosom of his doublet, he shot by them with the swiftness of an arrow. Though they called on him to stop, he gave them no heed, and when at last it was decided by the Duke of Brittany to send a servant in pursuit of him, the waving plumes of his cap vanished beneath the brow of a distant hill.

"Let him go," said the Duke, "for by the bright eyes and saucy tongue of the Lady Amira, it can be no mortal that rides at such a rate, but some elfin king, and if we would remain free from the power of his mischievous pranks, it is best that we let him be at liberty to pursue his mad course according to his own humour."

"Elf or mortal, it was a right dainty foot which he pressed against the foam-covered coat of his little Arab steed," said Lord Delaval, "and I would lay a louis d'or against a sou, that the Lady Amira, herself, would find her toes sorely pinched in one of his slippers."

"There's not a page this side the sea," said the Duke, "that can wear the Lady Amira's slippers, which you will be ready to acknowledge when you see her in the halls of Ermyne castle, or, if you are not ready to do so, there are sharper arguments than words, of which we will not be chary."

The page, in the mean time, was drawing towards the castle where De Clisson was a prisoner. The last light of day was fast fading from the west as he drew up beneath the shelter of some birches that drooped over a rivulet. He sprang from his panting steed, and stood a moment as if irresolute.

"If De Clisson has already fallen beneath the dagger of the assassin," he murmured, half audibly, but without finishing the sentence, he pressed his hand against his brow as if there were madness in the thought, while the beatings of his heart might almost have been heard beneath his silken doublet.

There was a calm and placid beauty in the surrounding scene, that seemed to mock the agony of his excited feelings. The moon was up, weaving her web of silvery radiance with the deepening shades of twilight, and tinging with her fairy light the glossy foliage of the birches that shivered at every breath of air. The noisy sounds of the workmen who had toiled during the day on the massive, half-finished structure, which formed the only gloomy object in the scene, were now hushed, and each had retired to the bosom of his family to enjoy his customary season of repose. The