

VOL. IX.

THIODOLF THE ICELANDER.

BY BARON DE LA MOTTE FOUQUE.

CHAPTER XXVI.

On a promontory of Southern Sicily there stood a fair and solemn convent. The country all around looked retired and lonely. None there knew whether peace or war prevailed in the world. But whatever news, whether threatening or promising, pierced this deep retirement, was thought of us an important event, and was spoken of, perchance, for fifty years or more, until some new occurrence interposed.

It happened that one day the armed vessels of Thiodolf approached the coast; some of the nuns looked upon themselves as lost, others thought it a solemn trial sent from God, while others again expected something glorious and joyful. Whatever might be the result, the gates of the holy building were opened in humble submission, and the light of colored torches streamed forth from the sacred enclosure. The abbess stood at the door with all her nuns, and they sang, as the wonderful hero drew uear:

"Come ye here with death's decree?
Martyrdom will set us free i
As weary pilgrims do ye come?
Welcome to our humble home t
Come ye but as pious guests ?
Heavenly joy will fill your breasts !"

Thiodolf greeted them by stretching out his left hand, while with the right, in sign of peace, he so threw his lance that it fell to the ground with its point downwards.

"We understand your courteous greeting," said the abbess; " and we thank God that He sends you to us with gentle thoughts. Make known to us what you want from our poor convent."

"Ah, holy dame," answered Thiodolf, simply ; "we ask for nothing; we bring you something instead ; but whether the gift is worthy of thanks, experience must first show. This fair young lady, whose guardian I have become after a somewhat strange fashion, you are to keep with you for a year, or perchance rather longer, as it may happen. If in this time she has found no delight in the cloister-life and in penance, then you may let her go forth again into the world; but in no wise before this gold ring has been brought to you." He held out to the abbess a ring inscribed with Runic characters, so that she might sufficiently consider them, and then said, as he turned to Achmet : " See this ring shall be

CHAPTER XXVII.

In that night when Thiodolf on the African shore had taken dreadful vengeance in Achmet's palace, strange and fearful things had happened at Castel-Franco. Malgherita some weeks before had given birth to a beautiful boy, and the father's curse was not accomplished in her hour of peril, although both she and Pietro enpected tremblingly some threatening apparition. But all care did not vanish from their mind at the first smile of their sweet child. Malgherita recollected well the explicit words of the baron, that she was never to hold a healthy child on her lap till the fearful hidden condition of the curse was fulfilled. And when the nurses held out to her, her smiling darling, she turned away, dreading lest the predicted death could and must reach him in her arms. She had desired that he might be baptized by the name of Tristan, mindful of the sorrowful clouds which even from his birth commands; and His holy will drives me forth to lowered over his young life, and thinking also of the name of her sister Isolde, who was a threatening and troubling star to the poor child, as that fair queen of whom legends tell, was to another Tristan, though in a far other way.

In the night we speak of, Pietro and Malgherita were wandering beneath the orange trees of their castle garden. A soft dew fell from the moon-lit clouds; the balmy leaves and branches where stood Tristan's cradle.

" She within dares," sighed Malgherita, " she dares full thee on her maternal bosom, thou angel iust come down from Heaven ! Stern father, thy cruel curse has debarred me from that joy !" Pietro sighed deeply, and could find no words of comfort. So they walked in silence to and fro, weighed down as by a thunder-cloud in the midst of all the happiness of love. Then was heard a rustling at the gate which opened into the fields, and some one groaned, and knocked as in distress. Malgherita started back trembling, and would not suffer Pietro to open it, thinking that there certainly stood without some hideous spectre. He took her up, therefore, to a side wing of the castle, and then went to look after the nightly guest. But Mulgherita, with frightened curiosity, leaned out of the window, and looked down over the castle wall. The figure of a monk all drawn together cowered without. At sight of him Malgherita shrieked in agony : " O heavens, the messenger of ill ! he it is whom the fearful Monk's Mount to me on the coast of Norway." Not long after, Pietro returned with his quest. He thought to quiet his trembling wife; for it was the same priest Jonas who had married them in Norway. But Malgherita only gathered fresh terror from this; recollecting old Nefolf's mournful descriptions and thoughts of the dead Christian priest, and all the sad forebodings which had hovered around their wedding. The old priest secured, in fact, to bring no joyous tidings .--Pietro, in his first haste, and in the joy he had to see the witness and the promoter of his happy love, had not allowed him to speak a word ; but now the old man began to talk seriously of a dark, numerous, armed array which was coming with hostile intentions against the castle. The knight now doubted whether the old man was not somewhat bewildered in his mind with his strange information, and desired to know how he had brought himself so suddenly into the south. "My children," answered Jonas, " your guardian angel has brought me hither, if only you to the converting of our heathen brethren, are never fast bound to one place. Our superiors call, and we obey. After such a voyage I landed here. I heard, in a remote creek, certain me ?" men speak of falling upon the castle of the Marquis of Castel-Franco with fire and sword .---dear children, either fly with the swiftness of the wind, or defend yourselves strongly. Your enemies are numerous; and I believe that the great baron from Provence himself leads them in person." At these words a maddening terror came over Malguerita. Now she urged her husbaud to knave false to my word and to my honor. These take to flight, now to defend himself; and if he are the best salves which I can apply to thy would leave the room, or only approach the window to summon his vassals, she fell at his feet in convulsive shudderings, and would not let him move from the spot. Then she called eagerly for her child, and again far more eagerly and from the approach of father and mother, lest the the barks, driven by favorable winds, were curse should break forth, and the little Tristan

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Malgherita in his arms, made his way through the soldiers intoxicated with victory, and took find out the other conditions." And forthwith refuge with her in a neighboring wood. Of the infant Tristan not the smallest trace remained.

When the sun rose, the castle of Castel-Franco looked much as the old shepherd before had seen it in his foreboding mind. It lay a huge, desolate heap of runs; a few flashes of flames darted up from it as if in sorrow. Pietro gazed with fixed eyes on the ruined dwelling of his ancestors; Malgherita wept bitterly for her child, and hid her face in her husband's bosom, saving: "Now has fate seized on our very heart's core. Is it not so, Pietro ?"

Then old Jonas, who had faithfully followed them hither, took leave of them with great emotion, and sighed forth, "Wherefore may I not remain by you ? you who so need comfort ? But I must gird myself for what the Most High a far distant, unknown, heathen land."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The ruins of Castel-Franco lay for many days untrodden by human feet, save those of the unhappy Pietro, who sought often amongst them for traces of his lost child, without being able to discover any. It had become certain, from repeated evidence of the peasants, that the baron had not carried away the child with him ; and softly whispered together, and from the castle thus the last sad hope vanished. He sought shone forth like a star the light in the chamber amongst the stones for the remains of Tristan; but as soon as the sun went down, a sudden terror drove him from the ruins.

At length it happened that two mighty men met together there by starlight. The one was Thiodolf the other the great baron. The Icelander, who had first left his ship as night had closed in, could not find out where he was. He had gone up the hill to Castel-Franco, and now wandered bewildered amidst the heaps of stones. "Strange !" he said to himself ; "I can always find my way ; and now instead of reaching a hospitable friendly house; I am come upon demolished walls." At this moment he became aware of the tall figure of the baron, as he sat upon the highest heap of ruins and leant his head on his hand. With unwonted shuder there came over Thiodolf the recollection of the song of the shepherd-boy, which he had heard on the African shore, of the Roman chief Marius on the must mean Isolde and me-other new ones of ruins of old Carthage. Yet but the more firmly he collected himself, went straight to the appa-rition, and asked, "Who art thou, night-wanderer ?" It seemed as if the baron started somewhat at the unexpected greeting ; but soon with his old stern firmness he answed," Who I am, may each man know. I am the father of the sinful Malgherita; and since I have with right and might destroyed this castle, which was hers and her lover's, I may also be allowed to sorrow nightly over these ruins." "Ah! if it is so," cried Thiodolf, "I have not lost my way; but I have been brought here in happy hour for a single combat of vengeance." "Welcome !" said the baron, rising and drawing his broad-sword. "I can wish for nothing better. If only thou, there standing before me in the star-light with thy strange horned belmet, wert the same who stole from me my eldest daughter Isolde !" Then Thiodolf let go the good sword Throngpiercer, and said gently, "I cannot fight with thee. I am of another mind; thou hast the from him; he knelt down before her on the grass, right of it as it regards me." The baron stood in astonishment leaning with give heed to my warning. Let it be enough for you to know that those who, like me, are devoted out, "Whether thou art mad, or possessed by both hands on his sword. At length he cried some spirit of the night, I know not. But thou cents, their unhappy story. As she now related wantest not strength; that can be seen by thy the loss of the child, 'Thiodolf started up, his words and deeds. What wilt thou then with armor rattling fearfully, and cried out: "Ah! "Hearken, thou too stern avenger!" said Thiodolf. "He who takes to him the sword of ing himself quietly again on the grass, he said : ing, he again let fall the unknightly weapon .----Then 1 hastened hither to give warning; and, justice, may well in the end have his own heart "No, it is very well that I knew nothing of it. But this rash threat had been too much for the pierced through with it; and methinks this has It might have come to a wild ending; and now, honorable old warrior and for the surrounding already come to pass in thy case. gherita's head. We can soon rebuild the casile; and if I do not traverse sea and land until I strange purport. Isolde is mixed up with it :--bring home thy eldest daughter, then call me a and, believe me, I shall find her again." wounds; and in sooth I do it from a good heart. "Good fool I" said the baron, sighing. "Recall the curse which rests on Malgherita head ! Who can do that but appeased destiny alone?" "Yet the mailed hand of a brave warrior may anxiously she desired that he might be guarded bridle destiny," answered Thiodolf. after Greece and Constantinople. And imme- has happened; and there is no other means where-from the approach of father and mother, lest the "So!" cried the baron angrily, till his words diately Thiodolf cried out: "Ah! Malgherita, by the blot can be wiped from him and from me echoed fearfully through the desolate ruins. "A my dear child, why are my ships lying with hoistsweeping on over the blue surface. But when be forever lost by Isolde's means. In the midst brave warrior may cause Isolde, that stern clois- ed sails near shore, but to carry thee whether it ready this very moment, so soon as we have reno more could be done, he became gentle and of these terrors other terrors arose. In truth, ter maiden, to glow with love ?--- so that she to pleases thee ?" quiet, and smiled as he looked back at the con- the great baron had already, in his wild wrath, save a hero's life And how much more ! vent, saying, "It is strange! I had always pur-stormed, and as quickly taken, a part of the Oh, leave me deluded man! For before all gratefully, "if this voyage posed if I once came to such a house to set it castle. Flames broke forth from that part, that comes to pass, Malgherita will never bear lose the traces of Isolde." open, that all the maidens might run out if so and a flerce cry of victory resounded through on her bosom a healthy child. Huldibert, the they pleased; and now I myself have brought balls and garden. The men of the castle fled, stern old knight and limner, has said it already." one into it. Marvelously seldom can man know or fell in their blood. It was with difficulty, and He turned away in wrathful despair, and went blue waves, or above on the path of the glitter-how things will come to pass."

"Well, that is something. In time, we shall these. But had I any, I would first take thee he hastened from the hill, in order to find Pietro and Malgherita, in the already dawning light of day.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Under some thick olive branches, of which Pietro had formed a bower or hut, lay Malgherita, in a morning sleep; her knight sat near with a pale and troubled countenance, watching the sweet sleeper after a far different fashion than of eyelids; she sat up, smiling; but immediately a gush of bitter tears streamed over her face, as if to quench that bright light of a joy which no more belonged to her life.

Pietro, deeply moved, pressed her to his heart. "Oh, how far happier were we when thou didst awake in my arms in Iceland !" he exclaimed .---"And yet we then thought ourselves forsaken

and needing help." "In Iceland !" repeated Malgherita, pausing, and checking her tears. " Pietro, I have again held intercourse with Iceland in this morning's dreams. Knowest thou that it seemed to my fancy as if the good people-thou rememberest that the elfin race are so called-were dancing around me, and wished again to tell me riddles. Some swung themselves on the neighboring fruit. trees, and tasted the fruits, and laughed because they were so good, and, with friendly jests, threw down the choicest of their feast to the dancers. Then they nodded lovingly to me, and chanted that they had followed me even from the very far-off Iceland to give me good advice, but there was always a joyful reward for those who served fair women. My heart grew light, and I could not but smile, till the sun-beam fell on my eyes, and I felt again so deeply and bitterly the loss of our dear child."

She began anew to weep ; and Pietro felt his eves moistened, so that he turned away his face to hide his tears. Then Malgherita said : " Dearest, the good people have brought the one com fort ; whether it be nothing but a dename of whe ther it foretells something happy, I know not ;--but I know well that they sang to me, besides the old mysterious verses of the two sisters-which

wherever thou wishest to go; for thou art so very good and delicate, little Malgherita. If a man ask but boldly, especially with the steel tongues of spears and swords, he can find out all the traces in the world, though it be somewhat large and far-spread."

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As now the three, again fellow-travellers, went to the sea, they saw many sad remains of the wild attack of the great baron. Burnt huts, with their blackened beams and stones, were seen among the bushes; pale figures wandered about, amongst whom could be recognized some of the former gay revelers at the feast given on Pietro and Malgherita's arrival. "As I said before," muttered Thiodolf, " it is very well that I did not know many things when last night I met that great proud man on the ruins of Castel-Franco."

Then he blow on his war-horn till the terrified dwellers on the coast trembled violently at the sound. But they were soon aware how little cause for fear they had. The Northmen, who hastened to the sound, were commanded to bring gold, and precious stones, and food out of the ship; and all passed so quickly and so bountifully from the hands of the young chief, that again and again they had to fetch more; and the faces, so lately pale with sorrow, glowed again with joy at riches thus suddenly bestowed, the like of which they had never dreamed of, even in their happiest days.

Some experienced Icclauders seemed about to make a thoughtful representation to their generous leader ; but he looked at them with a glance. refore which they were wont to restrain every word. They therefore gained nothing, but that some shepherds, in their gay impatience, mocked at the grave faces, which made Thiodolf laugh very heartily, and leave the shore in a merry mood."

CHAPTER XXX.

One bright summy day, the voyagers, after crossing many seas, arrived at a blooming island warshadowed by beautiful groves. Malgherita oxed at it with so longing a glance, that Thioolf did not ask what was her wish, but steered at once for the shore, and cast auchor. He then took his beloved guests on the pleasant beach ; and while a tent was being prepared for them, he

given to thee as a token as soon as thou hast brought me news of Uncle Nefiolf and Aunt Gunhilda, and my dear wolf; but not a moment sooner. And now I think I hold thee fast enough; for thou couldst never be so shameless as to forget Laura entirely."

Achinet said some words of protestation to Thiodolf, and some tenderly soothing ones to Laura, which clearly came from his heart; but she seemed to give little heed to them, so completely changed was she since she had looked upon that still convent in its solitude between sea and mountain. It could not be known whether the consciousness of her guilt, solemnly punshing and purifying, had stirred in her heart at the sight of the silent dwelling, or whether she acted from worldly wisdom to gain the good will of her future companions.

Thiodolf appeared to pouder earnestly over this. As the abbess heaped caresses on her beautiful humble novice, he said to himself,---"He who has bought a horse should not rejoice in it till after the first day's journey, and a new ship should first be praised when it has withstood the first storm at sea. But Heaven grant that holy woman may be a prophetess, and I a deluded man." Then he gave many jewels and gold pieces to the abbess, requesting that she would entertain the lady according to her rank, but at the same time watch her carefully .--"For," added he, good-humoredly, " hitherto she has not gone on very well."

He then asked to be conducted round the convent, and inquired how the nuns lived, and what they did in order to serve their God. He listened for a long while very patiently, but at last he struck his spear against the marble floor of the church, so that the maidens trembled, and cried out, " Was Isolde made for that ? Never ! It may do for others, but not, in sooth, for that proud, lofty, princely being. Spread the sails, Icelanders, that we may find her before a mad vow has escaped her lips. For all if she has once taken it, I must myself bid her keep it, and my heart would break in twain !" And with furious haste he flew out of the convent, down to the sea and to his ship, and had no rest till

that were i once there, I might perchance recover from my grief."

"Oh, let us then go forth for it at once," cried Pietro ; " and he sprang up, accustomed to comply with Malgherita's lightest wish. But remembering his present poverty and inability, he sank harm?" back again in indignant grief by the side of his weeping wife.

They sat together a while, sorrowing; when at length a rustling was heard over their heads, and they saw the point of a spear thrust forward, as if to penerate the bushes, and moved impatiently to and fro as if by a powerful hand .---"By heavens I" cried Pietro, " that is a northern spear."

"Yes, truly, best beloved brother !" said a well-known voice ; and dropping his lance among | monstrance-and we have well-nigh nothing more the leaves, Thiodolf sprang through the branches wherewith to buy aught, unless we sell our arms to his two friends. But when he looked in Malgherita's weeping eyes, bright tears broke forth stroked her hands and Pietro's repeating, "O of Asmundur ?" beloved friends, I left you so joyful, and do I find you again broken-hearted !"

Malgherita poured forth the while, in soft acwherefore did I not know that last night on the him, in order to chastise the bold reprover; but ruins of Castel-Franco ?" But immediately seatdear children, it will assuredly yet come to a group of his companions. They all, as if by one Recall, recall the curse which rests on Mal- good one. See! the curse of the great baron movement, laid their hands on their swords, and may be recalled; and I know somewhat of its pressed round Thiodolf with bitter reproaches .----

"Is she, then, not with our father ?" asked what pleased them of reproof and warning. Malgherita. "In heaven's name, where is she ?" "Ay, who knows that ?" answered Thiodolf. 'Hearken, Malgherita, it is a somewhat perplexed story, and time would fail to narrate it. excuse me, but that in my rage I took the branch I'ell me rather how I can now do you service ?"

after Greece and Constantinople. And imme-

" The traces !" said Thiodolf, somewhat vexed. "Trace me out something on the furrows of the felt that there could be no question here of mak-

courteously and kindly. " How, then, are we to obtain all that ?" asked an old Icelander, with a displeased smile .----"We are not to break loose, and rob, and pluu-

der people who have not done us the least "All the gods of Asgard forbid !" cried Thiodolf. " No, you must get from the ships what gold you will need, that you may richly pay there for all that we require."

"We cannot give them the least payment," answered the discontented old man. "We have spent much treasure since we left Iceland, and have gained none. And now your wild prodigality on the Tuscan coasts has entirely squandered the rest-for you would listen to no reand ships."

" That is a very foolish story," said Thiodolf. " How is it possible that the like can befall a son

" It is very possible, indeed," was the answer. if a son of Asmundur shut his ears to all wise counsels, and beseem himself like a thoughtless child."

Then Thiodolf started up in over-hasty anger, and he lifted a broken branch which lay beside then, at once feeling that this gesture was insult-He stood with the glow of shame on his face, his eyes fixed on the ground, and let them all say

But when the storm was somewhat allayed, he said, with gentle voice : "Northmen, I have erred in a fearful way; I know nothing that can of a tree for a battle-ax, though I know well She spoke of her dreams, and of her longing that I ought to have seen better. But the thing has happened; and there is no other means wherethan an honorable single combat. For that am moved that delicate lady far from us. Pietro, "But only," answered she, smiling at him go with her to the ship, and send to us here as gratefully, "if this voyage should make thee many witnesses as thou caust spare without leaving the ship unguarded."

It was done as he commanded ; for each one

Sause he