

He could hear that she was murmuring prayers for her brother's welfare and for her own sins, but not a word of pardon or pity for the murderer. No matter. Perhaps, when she saw his worn and contrite looks, she would also pray for his forgiveness; and he softly touched her upon the shoulder, and murmured, "Alice de Bracy."

She turned with a start, and, recognizing him, sprang to her feet, uttering a shrill cry of terror. Then, as her first flush of fear abated, all the scorn and contemptuous hatred of a wronged and insulted woman kindled in her eyes.

"Alice de Bracy," he tremblingly stammered again.

"Touch me not with your foul hands, Sir Hugh Martelle!" she cried. "The hands which are yet red with my brother's blood! Have you come up thus softly behind to murder me also with a coward blow?"

"But hear me, Alice," he muttered, and he knelt upon the pavement before her.

"Go! Speak not to me! Coward! Murderer!" she cried. "Help!"

There was no help near, apparently; for it had grown darker now, and the cathedral seemed deserted. Hugh Martelle noticed this with a smile of satisfaction, and he fondly imagined that, if he could only detain her for a moment, he could reason her into a more complacent mood. He grasped her by the robe, still kneeling; but, at that instant, he was struck down with a weighty blow upon his forehead, and fell senseless.

"Shall I finish him as he lies?" asked the robber, who, having come down from the roof, had loitered into the transept.

"Nay, let him lie and await the judgment of God," she sobbed, her terror giving way to tears. "And you?"

"I, fair lady? In truth, I am only a poor highwayman, and am here shut up because I have tried to rob a burgher. I am not fit to speak with such as you, glad as I am to have been able to succour you."

"You shall be pardoned to-morrow for this service," she said. "I will myself speak to the King in your behalf. Now lead me to the door."

Gallantly the robber, first stopping to bestow a trifling kick upon the form of the prostrate man, led her to the cathedral porch. There, having obtained new promises of pardon upon the following day, he once more took his seat near the chancel-rail, while the senseless noble still lay prostrate upon the tomb of his victim.

For an hour after, Hugh Martelle lay with his head touching the cold stone. Then he awoke from his torpor, and partly raised himself, feeling half ready to blaspheme against Heaven that it had not let him die where he lay. After a moment he stood up, and dragged himself to the seat by the altar-rail, and there threw himself down. He felt a strange weakness, and the thought crossed his mind that it might be the premonition of death, at last. But he did not care. The life of the past day had been one of too much torture for human endurance, and he now felt willing to die. Laying back his head, he sank into a soft, dreamy reverie, in which the actual present and the visionary past united in forming pleasant images.

At last, in those waking visions, he saw a face which sent a thrill of mingled emotions to his very heart. It was again before him as he had first beheld it in its lowly window. He saw the raven hair clustering about the neck; he saw those dark eyes beaming upon him with all the inexpressible depth of woman's love; he almost felt the soft arms winding in trustfulness about his neck—and, starting with the impulse of that long-forgotten emotion, he awoke into full consciousness, with her name trembling upon his lips.

"Louise?" he muttered.

"I am here," was answered, in a gentle tone; and a form, which had been kneeling over him, now softly placed its arms upon his shoulder. It was she—Louise—once more returned. She had been where she had listened to the conversation of the artist-students, and she had heard his actions so terribly commented upon, such revilings heaped upon his head, that, at last, in spite of all her stern resolves, her soul had been moved to pity, and all her once-cherished love had returned.

"Louise?" he again muttered, unable to comprehend how, after the contempt which she had heaped upon him, she should now return, so full of all a woman's best and noblest affections.

"It is I," she said. "I will not leave you again, dear Hugh. I have come to stay by you to the last. Oh, Hugh! forgive me now for all the wrong and cruel things that I have said."

"Forgive?" he whispered.

"I was wrong, dear Hugh. You were in suffering; and I, instead of lifting you up again, as was my duty, strove only to crush you. I could not have been myself then, Hugh. Forgive it all."

He listened vacantly, and then the full appreciation of her love came like a flood upon him. He could not speak; but, bending down his head, he let the hot tears well forth. She, with choking sobs, knelt down beside him, again bound up his wound, and also tied her handkerchief upon an ugly gash which the robber's bony fist had made upon his temple. Then she took out a flask of wine and applied it to his lips. The taste acted like magic upon his fevered soul, and, before many minutes, he felt new life within him.

"Oh! if he could now escape, no longer would he have a thought of afterward deserting her. He would be content to dwell with her for ever in that other land of which he had spoken, and would gladly leave to others all the pomp of courts: for he had found, at last, the value of a heart, which, ill-used as it had been, had ever remained worth more than all the glitter and glory of worldly power and distinction."

"And why should I not yet escape?" he whispered. But she gloomily shook her head.

"They will not aid me now, Hugh."

In her compassion for his feelings, she did not tell why it was that her student-friends would no longer assist her plans; but he perceived it all, and upon that topic spoke no more.

"I see. And yet, Louise, you have done one thing you promised; you have brought me a sword."

"That have I, indeed," she said, taking the sword from beneath the folds of her dress, where she had concealed it, and handing it to him. "But yet, of what avail, indeed, can be one sword?"

"It will avail, at least, to die with, as a man should die," he murmured, drawing his hand along the edge, and a pleasant smile, as of some inner comfort and resolution, came into his face. "Listen, Louise. You see that there is now

no escape for me. Is it not better, therefore, that I should give up my poor life like a true-born knight, rather than like a rat caught in a cage, and so starved to death?"

"What mean you, Hugh?" she cried, dimly perceiving his meaning.

"You will know anon, Louise. Only promise me that you will stay here in peace and quiet, and not, with unavailing entreaties or resistance, fetter the little manhood which now I feel. And you will forgive all the wrong I have done you?"

"There is nothing to forgive, dear Hugh," she faintly whispered.

"There is much, much, indeed," he said. "But let that pass. Pray, too, to Heaven for me, that I may be there forgiven, also. And now, one kiss for farewell."

Sobbing, she put her arms about his neck; while the robber, at a little distance off, looked on curiously, but without attempting interruption. Long her head lay upon his shoulder, and her tears fell thick and fast, as the first dim consciousness of his intention stole more distinctly upon her. But yet, with a certain wild impulse of heroism, she forbore to urge him against his purpose. If, by one action, he could redeem himself, should she dare to restrain him?

At last he lifted her head from his shoulder, pressed one parting kiss upon her lips, and tottered to his feet. Leaving her, half fainting, against the rail, he slowly crept toward the open door, the bright sword naked in his hand. Behind him, at a few paces' distance, softly crept the robber, curious to mark the result. So the two advanced, and, at length, Hugh Martelle stood near the entrance and looked forth.

The moon was behind a cloud, and all was dark, except where a few of the larger stars gave forth an uncertain light. At a little distance off could be seen the great square which the palaces bounded, now alive with men carrying torches, and the palace windows glowing with a thousand lamps. It was a festive night. Loud music rang upon the night air, and chariots and chairs continually drew up to the broad portico, bringing new guests. But opposite the cathedral, the houses clustered together in a black, indistinguishable mass, except where, here and there, the shop-lights sent a feeble gleam across the street. Few persons could be seen; only, at stated distances, the relentless men-at-arms, with naked swords in hand, silently watching the cathedral door, so that none should escape unquestioned.

For a moment, the doomed man stood just within the entrance and gazed out. For that moment, perhaps, his soul shrank within him, as he saw that he was recognized by the pursuers, and that at once every blade was pointed toward him, in readiness to drink his blood. Then, with a single glance behind, and his lips moving in a muttered prayer, he stepped outside, and the fierce work began. A short-lived work indeed; for what can any man, weak and worn with wounds and hunger, do against numbers who are strong and active? As he bared his breast to meet the storm, he struck down with desperation the first and the second who ventured forward; but it was, after all, a feeble resistance that he could make—fighting with no hope of victory, but with the single purpose to atone, by a brave, manly ending, for the foul blight upon his name.

"And it was well done, indeed, caitiff though he may be," muttered the robber to himself, as, after gazing for a moment from the doorway upon the lifeless, bleeding body that lay in the street, with the dark crowd of avengers pressing about it, he strolled leisurely inward and up the broad nave to where, against the chancel-rail, reclined the half-senseless form of the young girl.

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THE GOLDEN LION OF GRANPERE.

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

CHAPTER XIII.

On the next morning, Michel Voss and his son met in the kitchen, and found Marie already there. "Well, my girl," said Michel, as he patted Marie's shoulder, and kissed her forehead, "You've been up getting a rare breakfast for these fellows, I see." Marie smiled, and made some good-humoured reply. No one could have told by her face that there was anything amiss with her. "It's the last favour of the kind he'll ever have at your hands," continued Michel, "and yet he doesn't seem to be grateful." George stood with his back to the kitchen fire, and did not say a word. It was impossible to him even to appear to be pleasant, when such things were being said. Marie was a better hypocrite, and though she said little, was able to look as though she could sympathise with her uncle's pleasant mirth. The two men had soon eaten their breakfast and were gone, and then Marie was left alone with her thoughts. Would George say anything to his father of what had passed upstairs on the previous evening?

The two men started, and when they were alone together, and as long as Michel abstained from talking about Marie and her prospects, George was able to converse freely with his father. When they left the house the morning was just dawning, and the air was fresh and sharp. "We shall soon have the frost here now," said Michel, "and then there will be no more grass for the cattle."

"I suppose they can have them out on the low lands till the end of November. They always used."

"Yes; they can have them out; but having them out and having food for them are different things. The people here have so much stock now, that directly the growth is checked by the frost, the land becomes almost bare. They forget the old saying, 'Half stocking, whole profits; whole stocking, half profits.' And then, too, I think the winters are earlier here than they used to be. They'll have to go back to the Swiss plan, I fancy, and carry the food to the cattle in their houses. It may be old-fashioned, as they say; but I doubt whether the fodder does not go further so." Then as they began to ascend the mountain, he got on to the subject of his own business and George's prospects. "The dues to the Commune are so heavy," he said, "that in fact there is little or nothing to be made out of the timber. It looks like a business, because many men are employed, it's a kind of thing that spreads itself, and bears looking at. But it leaves nothing behind."

"It's not quite so bad as that, I hope," said George.

"Upon my word then it is not much better, my boy. When

you've charged yourself with interest on the money spent on the mills, there is not much to boast about. You're bound to replant every yard you strip, and yet the Commune expects as high a rent as when there was no planting to be done at all. They couldn't get it, only that men like myself have their money in the mills, and can't well get out of the trade."

"I don't think you'd like to give it up, father."

"Well, no. It gives me exercise and something to do. The women manage most of it down at the house; but there must be a change when Marie has gone. I have hardly looked it in the face yet, but I know there must be a change. She has grown up among it, till she has it all at her fingers' ends. I tell you what, George, she is a girl in a hundred;—a girl in a hundred. She is going to marry a rich man, and so it don't much signify; but if she married a poor man, she would be as good as a fortune to him. She'd make a fortune for any man. That's my belief. There is nothing she doesn't know, and nothing she doesn't understand."

Why did his father tell him all this? George thought of the day on which his father had, as he was accustomed to say to himself, turned him out of the house because he wanted to marry this girl who was "as good as a fortune" to any man. Had he then been imprudent in allowing himself to love such a girl? Could there be any good reason why his father should have wished that a "fortune" in every way so desirable should go out of the family? "She'll have nothing to do of that sort if she goes to Basle," said George, moodily.

"That is more than you can say," replied his father. "A woman married to a man of business can always find her share in it if she pleases. And with such a one as Adrian Urmand her side of the house will not be the least considerable."

"I suppose he is little better than a fool," said George.

"A fool! He is not a fool at all. If you were to see him buying, you would not call him a fool. He is very far from a fool."

"It may be so. I do not know much of him myself."

"You should not be so prone to think men fools till you find them so; especially those who are to be so near to yourself. No;—he's not a fool by any means. But he will know that he has got a clever wife, and he will not be ashamed to make use of her."

George was unwilling to contradict his father at the present moment, as he had all but made up his mind to tell the whole story about himself and Marie before he returned to the house. He had not the slightest idea that by doing so he would be able to soften his father's heart. He was sure, on the contrary, that were he to do so, he and his father would go back to the hotel as enemies. But he was quite resolved that the story should be told sooner or later,—should be told before the day fixed for the wedding. If it was to be told by himself, what occasion could be so fitting as the present? But, if it were to be done on this morning, it would be unwise to harass his father by any small previous contradictions.

They were now up among the scattered, prostrate logs, and had again taken up the question of the business of wood-cutting.

"No, George; it would never have done for you; not as a mainstay. I thought of giving it up to you once, but I knew that it would make a poor man of you."

"I wish you had," said George, who was unable to repress the feeling of his heart.

"Why do you say that? What a fool you must be if you think it! There is nothing you may not do where you are, and you have got it all into your own hands, with little or no outlay. The rent is nothing; and the business is there ready made for you. In your position, if you find the hotel is not enough, there is nothing you cannot take up."

They had now seated themselves on the trunk of a pine tree, and Michel Voss, having drawn a pipe from his pocket and filled it, was lighting it as he sat upon the wood.

"No, my boy," he continued, "you'll have a better life of it than your father, I don't doubt. After all, the towns are better than the country. There is more to be seen and more to be learned. I don't complain. The Lord has been very good to me. I've had enough of everything, and have been able to keep my head up. But I feel a little sad when I look forward. You and Marie will be both gone; and your step-mother's friend, M. le Curé Gondin, does not make much society for me. I sometimes think, when I am smoking a pipe up here all alone, that this is the best of it all. It will be when Marie has gone."

If his father thus thought of it, why had he sent his son away? Had it not already been within his power to keep both of them there together under his roof-tree? He had insisted on dividing them, and dismissing them from Granpere, one in one direction and the other in another;—and then he complained of being alone! Surely his father was altogether unreasonable.

"And now one can't even get tobacco that is worth smoking," continued Michel, in a melancholy tone. "There used to be good tobacco, but I don't know where it has all gone."

"I can send you over a little prime tobacco from Colmar, father."

"I wish you would, George. This is foul stuff. But I sometimes think I'll give it up. What's the use of it? A man sits and smokes, and nothing comes of it. It don't feed him, nor clothe him, and it leaves nothing behind—except a stink."

"You're a little down in the mouth, father; or you wouldn't talk of giving up smoking."

"I am down in the mouth—terribly down in the mouth. Till it was all settled, I did not know how much I should feel Marie's going. Of course it had to be, but it make an old man of me. There will be nothing left. Of course there's your step-mother—as good a woman as ever lived—and the children; but Marie was somehow the soul of us all. Give us another light, George. I'm blessed if I can keep the fire in the pipe at all."

And this, thought George, is in truth the state of my father's mind! There are three of us concerned who are all equally dear to each other, my father, myself, and Marie Bromar. There is not one of them who doesn't feel that the presence of the others is necessary to his happiness. Here is my father declaring that the world will no longer have any savour for him because I am away in one place, and Marie is to be away in another. There is not the slightest real reason on earth why we should have been separated. Yet he, he alone, has done it; and we—we are to break our hearts over it! Or rather he has not done it. He is about to do it. The sacrifice is not yet made, and yet it must be made, be-