

The garden was deserted and silent. But beyond the garden, though one could not say where, there was doubtless a great emotion; for the weak echoes of confused and distant clamours penetrated even into the cell.

Sometimes the noise was extinguished, as though the breeze of the night had wafted them away on its course—sometimes they suddenly swelled like the murmuring on the shore, or like that other murmur raised by agitated crowds of men.

Mahmoud-el-Reis paid no attention to it—the queen remained in her swoon.

Mahmoud, with body bent, and hands joined, kept his eyes fixed in contemplation of her.

At the first movement of the queen, and before she had completely resumed her senses, the Syrian uttered a cry of joy, and a ray of enthusiastic pleasure illuminated his face.

He had placed his pillow under the queen's head, and he now placed his arm under the pillow and gently raised it.

The queen opened her eyes, and cast around her that stupefied look always given by people returning to animation after a fit of fainting.

"I have been dreaming," said she, in a weak, and slow voice; "where art thou, then, my sister Eve?"

"Her voice also," murmured the Syrian, whose eyelids were wet with tears.

That man, with a heart harder than adamant, could weep at the sole remembrance of a woman.

Ingeburge, trembling, looked at him, and put her hands over her eyes, with a gesture of profound horror.

"Oh!" said she, "it is the assassin. My God! then I have not been dreaming!"

Mahmoud continued on his knees.

"Since thou lovest the queen so much," young girl, said he, still softening the musical and touching accents of his voice, "the queen shall be protected. Do not tremble thus—a sight of thee alone has made me thy slave—neither blush, young girl, for the sentiment I feel for thee is not that of love."

Ingeburge's fears were not diminished. The Syrian smiled.

"What fearest thou from me?" resumed the Syrian, "hast thou not been lying there in my hands and defenceless...."

There are some arguments which strike us so just and forcible, that the mind, ever so alarmed, perceives them, and submits at once to their influence.

"It is true," thought the queen.

And besides the voice of the stranger was so changed, and had an accent of such respectful and fraternal tenderness! The queen was but a girl, and perhaps the most unsophisticated of all young girls. She demanded nothing but to believe and to be reassured.

"What, then, has the queen done to you," she stammered, timidly, and half raising her eyes towards the Syrian, "that thou shouldst have charged thyself with executing the cruel orders of the king?"

"I have deceived thee, young girl," replied Mahmoud, without hesitation; "and now that I have seen thy face I would rather die myself than deceive thee again. It was not by the orders of the king that I desired to kill the queen."

Ingeburge crossed her hands upon her bosom and raised her beautiful eyes towards heaven, full of tears; from the bottom of her soul she thanked God for the greatest joy she had ever experienced in her life.

Was it a sovereign balm that Mahmoud had now applied to the wound he had so recently given her!

[We regret to be compelled to give so short an instalment of this story in the present issue.]—Ed. S. R.

(To be Continued.)

Language.—The Brain's livery-servant.

Shop.—The saddle on which Capital rides Labour.

Sun.—The busy, jolly foreman of our workshop, who works from morning till night, and laughs and drinks all the time he is working.

NO MAN'S LAND.

Continued from page 237.

The forest has long been a favourite haunt of gypsies, and the pale blue smoke of their encampments is often seen among its grassy glades. Up one of these went Leverton in search, not for the first time, of the old gypsy grandam of the tribe, who was held in fear and awe by the whole neighbourhood. The tents, with their complement of carts and horses, were pitched in an open space where weird old pollard-oaks, covered with the long grey lichen which waves like hair in the wind, fringed a gravel bank which shut out the wind; a little stream ran below. An iron pot, slung on crossed sticks, hung over a small fire; the old woman, with a red handkerchief tied over her grizzled elf-locks, that protruded from under it, sat and stirred. There was a pleasant savour of savoury meat, which was probably not the case with the stew of the witches whom she resembled; but she looked like a Fate as she lifted up her filmy black eyes on him. "Well, mother, here I am again," said he.

"And what do ye want with me, Ralph Leverton? No good I'll be bound; ye won't get that, with yer years, I'm thinking."

"Nobody can't say as it's bad this time. I want to be married." She looked at him with her piercing eyes, but said nothing. "She'd marry me, I believe, now, but that she's tied herself to that poor crettur Maurice Lovel, and he's dead; I know he's dead," he repeated, vehemently.

"And that's what you want me to incense her wi'," answered the woman, with a sort of savage laugh, and raising herself up with a long stick; "you as makes yer bed on better men's graves. Not bad! However," she added, for it is pleasant to indulge your sharp tongue and your love of gain at once, "pay for yer merchandise, and get gone wi' yer."

A few days after, Rachel had gone on one of her rare expeditions to the little market-town. Her grandfather was ailing, and she was late in setting out; the long June twilight of a close, hot day had set in as she took a short cut across the forest, and she sat down wearily by a sort of ford where the gravel had been washed away from the roots of the fantastic old beech-trees, and bathed her hands and face in the little stream, which made a pleasant ripple among the stones. Presently she heard the dull tread of a horse on the sward in the still evening, and she drew back among the holly-bushes, for it was a lonely place, and she did not want to be seen. A man on a bare-backed horse passed close beside her, and was turning his head over his shoulder, as if to see whether he were followed.

He was so near that, though the light was fast fading, she recognised him as a loose sort of fellow who belonged to the parish, but had no regular work, and made his bread as he could. What was he doing with farmer Baker's horse? which she knew also, because Leverton had been discussing it with her father. Both horse and man, however, disappeared quickly over the hill, and Rachel went on. She made her way back to the road as fast as she could, for she did not like the encounter. As she came, however, to the turn which led up to her grandfather's, the old hag who was always called Queen of the Gypsies, barred the way. She was standing in an open glade, under an arch of green boughs, with her scarlet cloak and a staff in her hand. There is a curious love of stage effect in the race; they are born actors. There seems to be no absolute truth in words for them; they are only used relatively to produce an impression on you.

She began—"I have a word to speak to you, Rachel Russell." Rachel had been brought up in a righteous horror of gypsies, however, and she hurried on, a good deal frightened, and refusing to listen.

"And you're the more fool for your pains, girl; for none but I could tell of the one who is gone, and where he is."

"If ye ha' any news o' Maurice," said the poor girl, trembling, "tell me, in God's name."

"Ah, now you want my news, when you haven't the manners to be civil to them old enough to be your grandmother. Pay me for my tale, then."

"I haven't got no money; and them's my father's things," said poor Rachel, wringing her hands.

"Then give me that shawl off o' your shoulders," said the old woman, fiercely.

Rachel pulled it off and held it out piteously to her.

"I saw a dark place among the holes of the earth, and there were great wheels and fiery furnaces; and as I looked, the young man was struck down by the fierce heat, and torn asunder by the whirl; and there he lay dead."

Poor Rachel walked away, stunned, without a word. She hardly noticed a young man with a peaked hat and a peacock's feather in it, who came up in front of her when he saw the interview was over.

The old hag looked slowly after her. "I've settled her," she muttered, "with a pain in her heart and salt tears in her eyes."

"Why do you hate her, mother?"

"The old clerk has turned us out of the church lane, and done us grief scores o' times," answered she; "and I love to hurt them as hurt us."

That evening, as Leverton was sitting with the old clerk, Rachel rushed breathlessly in. "Why, what's come to yer?" said her grandfather; "and what's come o' yer shawl?" "It were the old gypsy wife as said she had news o' Maurice, and I gived it her for to tell me," and she burst into an hysterical flood of tears as she wrung her hands passionately. Leverton swore a deep oath as he rose angrily at the "rascally old randy quean." He had robbed Rachel of what was more precious to her than many shawls, and yet he was furious at the old woman for thus exacting a double fee for her lie. His rage, like David's was all reserved for the minor offender.

The old clerk grew more infirm. Rachel was the most patient and attentive of nurses, but whenever Leverton was away for a day or two he kept up a whining complaint against her of how 'ill voke behaved to him.' A grievance with some people is the dearest thing they possess, and they regard you with infinite ill-will if you rob them of their property by explaining it away.

The following Sunday Silas got down with great difficulty to the church. An assistant had been appointed, but that great dignitary, a clerk, cannot be removed; he held to his rights, and whenever he was able he hobbled down and read the responses, together with the *remplaçant*, which did not improve the service. When he and Rachel arrived in the churchyard, they found the parliament or talking-place of the village in great agitation about the stealing of farmer Baker's horse. The gypsy encampment was so near, that it was all laid to the door of Geordy Stanley, horsebreaker and horsedealer, grandson of the old queen. The gypsies had so much the best of it in ordinary life, that the whole community seized greedily on any opening for retaliation.

"But I saw Will Snell riding away on the horse, that evening," said Rachel, simply.

She immediately found herself the centre of interest, to her great dismay; she had to tell her story over and over again: they crowded round her. "But could ye say for certain sure it were Will?" said the clerk, sternly.

Rachel was thankful when the bell carried off her tormentors.

The following week, however, poor Geordy was safely lodged in the country gaol. The horse had been found at a great fair, farther down in the west, at which Geordy was present, and though the link between the two was still wanting, 'society' considered him guilty without more ado. A day or two after, a tall gypsy, with a sullen look on her handsome face, appeared suddenly at the door of the clerk's cottage, having carefully watched him go out. Rachel was leaning against the chimney, gazing sadly into the fire, and she shrank back as she saw the red cloak.

"You've no call to fear me, Rachel Russell."