

last demanded the king, "to renounce all these gifts, and accept misfortune?"

"I ask of thee," replied Mahmoud, "what neither the threats of kings, nor the prayers of the people, nor the thunders of the church, have as yet been able to obtain from thee."

Phillip Augustus half rose upon his chair—"Thou comest," said he, "on behalf of Madame Ingeburge," while his eyes suddenly changed their expression, and were full of suspicion and distrust.

There was a shade of disdain in the smile of Mahmoud-el-Reis—the blood rushed to his pale brow and his voice became more animated.

"Oh! not thou dost not know all, king!" said he, with bitterness, "or, indeed, if thou dost know all, God has deprived thee of thy reason; for she who deceives thee, thou lovest; and she who adores thee, thou repellst!"

"I am the master here!" said Phillip drily. Then turning his head and trying to rally, he added—"Madame Ingeburge chooses singular ambassadors."

"Madame Ingeburge," said the Syrian, "weeps and prays;" then suddenly subduing his voice, continued, "yes, she weeps over and prays for thee. It is four days since I introduced myself into that monastery, where thou hadst imprisoned her—it was to assassinate her; for they promised me that I should have the blood of the king for the blood of the queen. But God is great: God placed his hand before me. I saw the image of Dilah, like a beautiful angel spreading her wings, descending and protecting the heart of that saint. And when the armed men entered the abbey, I feared for thee, as I had feared for thy people; I was already the slave of queen Angel. Smile not, O king," said he, "we were just now speaking of my destiny—poor worm of the earth as I am: it is now thy destiny, powerful prince as thou art, that we have to decide this moment. I was afraid, because I knew that queen Angel was an obstacle in thy path, and that it is thy custom to remove all obstacles. I defended the queen against the fury of the people; I wished also to protect her from the interests of thy policy. If I have deceived myself, pardon me, and I shall soon see whether I have been mistaken."

The king preserved a disdainful silence.

"I carried her off in my arms," resumed the Syrian, "in those very arms which she had ordered to be loaded with chains, in order to protect thy life against my poignard. I bore her off, all fainting as she was, into a secure retreat, known only to myself. It is four days ago; and during those four days, I never left her. And if it is necessary to explain to thee, in one word, the secret of my conduct, which defies thy proud reason and the subtleties of that intelligence of which thou, oh king! art so vain—know that that pious queen, thy wife, hath performed a miracle, and that I stand before thee—a Christian!"

The king was still speechless.

To understand the depth of certain emotions it is necessary to connect ourselves with the spirit of the period of which we write, and de-

nude ourselves of the inert indifference in regard to religious matters which characterizes our own day. We must call to mind that the great question in Phillip's day—that question which demolished the walls of cities and which set all Europe against Asia, and caused rivers of blood to flow—was the question between Christ and Mahomet.

We must remember that Phillip Augustus himself had invaded the holy land in Christ's name—and that Mahmoud-el-Reis had come from Syria, across seas and deserts, concealing under his vestments the poignant upon which were engraved the words of Mahomet.

The king rose.

"How, a Christian?" he repeated, "wherefore then dost thou desire to return to thy savage country. Why accomplish what remains of thy impious oath?"

"Because Dilah is still under the shadow of the pure," replied Mahmoud, "and because it is necessary that Dilah also should become a Christian."

The hours of night were passing rapidly away—in the outer silence nothing could be heard but the watch-cry of the sentinels and the distant clocks announcing the progress of time. A leaden sleep still weighed down the eyelids of the page Albret and the two halberdiers. When the rays of the rising sun began to struggle through the casements against the weak light of the land, Phillip Augustus was still standing before Mahmoud-el-Reis. They had drawn near to each other and were conversing in a low voice.

"There are eight of them," said Mahmoud, "and I was the ninth. There was Herbert Melfast, lord of Canterbury, who came to Syria to seek for me, in the name of king John; there was Honoré, the freemason, who follows the orders of the duke de Bourgogne; Jean de Valenciennes, who is in the pay of count Dammartin; there is Steinbach, from the city of Hamburgh, purchased by the emperor Otho; there are the three brothers Guiscard, cursed souls of Beaudouin of Flanders....."

He stopped here.

"And the eighth," demanded Phillip, "does he not come from Denmark?"

"No!" replied Mahmoud, "he comes from France."

"And thou callest him?"—

"Amaury Montruel, lord of Anet!"

"The friend of the king!" said Phillip bitterly, then added mentally, with a singular smile "*the same who led Madame Agnes into la rue de la Calandre, alone! on foot! at eleven o'clock at night.*"

"The bargain is made," he added, rising abruptly and giving his hand to Mahmoud, "thou hast the word of the king of France for it."

"And thou hast the word of Mahmoud-el-Reis," replied the other.

"At midnight," resumed Phillip Augustus, "in the choir of Notre Dame."

"At midnight," repeated Mahmoud, "out of nine of the assassins of the king there will remain but me alive!"

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