

open and secure country lay before the travellers. Here they halted, for their roads were widely different. When they came to part, the merchant and his wife were loud in thanks and benedictions, and the good burgher would fain have given Pelayo the largest of his sacks of gold; but the young man put it aside with a smile. 'Silver and gold, said he, need I not, but if I have deserved aught at thy hands, give me thy prayers, for the prayers of a good man are above all prices.'

In the mean time the daughter had spoken never a word. At length she raised her eyes, which were filled with tears, and looked timidly at Pelayo, and her bosom throbbed; and after a violent struggle between strong affection and virgin modesty, her heart relieved itself by words.

'Senor,' said she, 'I know that I am unworthy of the notice of so noble a cavalier; but suffer me to place this ring upon a finger of that hand which has so bravely rescued us from death; and when you regard it, you may consider it as a memorial of your own valor, and not of one who is too humble to be remembered by you.'

With these words, she drew a ring from her finger and put it upon the finger of Pelayo; and having done this, she blushed and trembled at her own boldness, and stood as one abashed, with her eyes cast down upon the earth.

Pelayo was moved at the words of the simple maiden, and at the touch of her fair hand, and at her beauty, as she stood thus trembling and in tears before him; but as yet he knew nothing of woman, and his heart was free from the snares of love. 'Amiga,' (friend,) said he, 'I accept thy present, and will wear it in remembrance of thy goodness;' so saying, he kissed her on the cheek.

The damsel was cheered by these words, and hoped that she had awakened some tenderness in his bosom; but it was no such thing, says the grave old chronicler, for his heart was devoted to higher and more sacred matters; yet certain it is, that he always guarded well that ring.

When they parted, Pelayo remained with his huntsmen on a cliff, watching that no evil befel them, until they were far beyond the skirts of the mountain; and the damsel often turned to look at him, until she could no longer discern him, for the distance and the tears that dimmed her eyes.

And for that he had accepted her ring, says the ancient chronicler, she considered herself wedded to him in her heart, and would never marry; nor could she be brought to look with eyes of affection upon any other man; but for the true love which she bore Pelayo, she lived and died a virgin. And she composed a book which treated of love and chivalry, and the temptations of this mortal life; and one part discoursed of celestial matters, and it was called 'The Contemplations of Love;' because at the time she wrote it, she thought of Pelayo, and of his having accepted her jewel and called her by the gentle appellation of 'Amiga.' And often thinking of him in tender sadness, and of her never having beheld him more, she would take the book and would read it as if in his stead; and while she repeated the words of love which it contained, she would endeavor to fancy them uttered by Pelayo, and that he stood before her.

THE KNIGHT OF MALTA.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE KNICKERBOCKER.

SIR: In the course of a tour which I made in Sicily, in the days of my juvenility, I passed some

little time at the ancient city of Catania, at the foot of Mount *Ætna*. Here I became acquainted with the Chevalier L——, an old Knight of Malta. It was not many years after the time that Napoleon had dislodged the knights from their island, and he still wore the insignia of his order. He was not, however, one of those relics of that once chivalrous body, who have been described as 'a few worn-out old men, creeping about certain parts of Europe, with the Maltese cross on their breasts;' on the contrary, though advanced in life, his form was still light and vigorous; he had a pale, thin, intellectual visage, with a high forehead, and a bright, visionary eye. He seemed to take a fancy to me, as I certainly did to him, and we soon became intimate. I visited him occasionally, at his apartments, in the wing of an old palace, looking toward Mount *Ætna*. He was an antiquary, a virtuoso, and a connoisseur. His rooms were decorated with mutilated statues, dug up from Grecian and Roman ruins; old vases, lachrymals, and sepulchral lamps. He had astronomical and chemical instruments, and black-letter books, in various languages. I found that he had dipped a little in chimerical studies, and had a hankering after astrology and alchymy. He affected to believe in dreams and visions, and delighted in the fanciful Rosicrucian doctrines. I cannot persuade myself, however, that he really believed in all these: I rather think he loved to let his imagination carry him away into the boundless fairy land which they unfolded.

In company with the chevalier, I took several excursions on horseback about the environs of Catania, and the picturesque skirts of Mount *Ætna*. One of these led through a village, which had sprung up on the very tract of an ancient eruption, the houses being built of lava. At one time we passed, for some distance, along a narrow lane, between two high dead convent walls. It was a cut-throat-looking place, in a country where assassinations are frequent; and just about midway through it, we observed blood upon the pavement and the walls, as if a murder had actually been committed there.

The chevalier spurred on his horse, until he had extricated himself completely from this suspicious neighborhood. He then observed, that it reminded him of a similar blind alley in Malta, infamous on account of the many assassinations that had taken place there; concerning one of which, he related a long and tragical story, that lasted until we reached Catania. It involved various circumstances of a wild and supernatural character, but which he assured me were handed down in tradition, and generally credited by the old inhabitants of Malta.

As I like to pick up strange stories, and as I was particularly struck with several parts of this, I made a minute of it, on my return to my lodgings. The memorandum was lost, with several others of my travelling papers, and the story had faded from my mind, when recently, in perusing a French memoir, I came suddenly upon it, dressed up, it is true, in a very different manner, but agreeing in the leading facts, and given upon the word of that famous adventurer, the Count Cagliostro.

I have amused myself, during a snowy day in the country, by rendering it roughly into English, for the entertainment of a youthful circle round the Christmas fire. It was well received by my auditors, who, however, are rather easily pleased. One proof of its merits is that it sent some of the youngest of them quaking to their beds, and gave them very fearful dreams. Hoping that it may have the same effect upon your ghost-hunting readers, I offer it, Mr. Editor, for insertion in your Magazine. I would observe, that wherever I have modified the French