

your young eyes will be better than those of old Ghiberta; do you recognise me?"

"St. Saven help me! Where do you suppose I should have seen such a face as yours, unless it were among the wretched followers of the Baron des Angles, or in the halter in the crossing of Vie?"

"Your pretty little figure has increased, and your fine skin is less fair; nevertheless I remember you well, young one. Have you, then, quite forgotten Sire Bos de Bénac?"

"Sire Bos, the handsome brave knight, praised and beloved by all the young girls of Bigorre. No, truly; the image of my dear lord lives in my heart as a bright star, and bears no resemblance to you."

"Ah! fiend," said Bos to the demon, "this is certainly one of your tricks."

"I never trouble myself to efface. Men have no need of aid there—made to live but a moment, each step is short."

Michelotte assisted Ghiberta in pouring the Spanish wine from the skins into broad decanters, and placing them on the sideboard. She then put tallow-candles into the high silver candelabras.

"Do the bees of Bénac no longer yield honey, mother Ghiberta?" inquired the knight.

"They still yield it, grace be to God! but tallow will be good enough for this evening's fête; the wax may be kept for the dead."

She proceeded to open the coffers to select linen and quilts.

"You have but one bed to provide for, nurse," cried Bos.

"May a curse light on it," murmured Ghiberta.

"May God bless it," said the knight; nevertheless, only one bed; for my companion here will leave after supper."

"Think you that I am not acquainted with silken curtains and beds of down, and plumed dais!"

"No, no; you know them well; you love to wander around them, and encourage sleep when it is not needed, and too pleasant dreams, treacherous temptations and all that leads to evil."

Then turning to Ghiberta, the knight asked whether the Lady Mathe de Bénac were in great affliction.

"She was afflicted beyond measure," answered Ghiberta, "but she is now become resigned."

"Heaven has inspired her with hopes of my return."

The demon gave a smile of fearful malice. Near midnight the sound of horses was heard in the court; it was the Baron des Angles conducting Mathe to her espousals in the chapel of Bénac.

"Demon," said the knight, "you belong to me for this evening; mount the belfry, and sound the great bell."

The chapel was lighted up; Mathe, kneeling on cushions, as at her first marriage, bent like a plant stricken by the storm. Her mother, Dame Iolande de Baudéan, supported her, as before—but no longer with joy and pride—rather with the grief of a widow mourning over her last hope. A few ladies and waiting-women stood around, with downcast eyes. Followed by his friends, the Baron entered, with sparkling eyes, and a smile of

insolent triumph on his lips, stamping and causing his spurs to clank upon the sepulchral stones, in proud defiance of all Lords of Bénac, dead or living. Dressed in a fine coat of mail, with velvet mantle, and cap shaded by feathers, he placed himself on the right of Mathe. At the farther end of the chapel were his paid retainers, a few trembling vassals of the lordship of Bénac, and near the door were the old dog and falcon of Sire Bos, which had been placed there by order of the Baron, to be witnesses, as it were, of his triumph over all that had belonged to the Crusader. A monk of Escaladieu, stood at the altar in his surplice and stole.

"Monk!" shouted the Baron, arrogantly, "do thy business."

The monk, with fearful and sorrowful mien, advanced, with the ritual in his hand.

"Messire Guillaume, Guillaume, Baron des Angles."

"Add," said the Baron, "Lord of Bénac, Avérac, Aribasfeyte, and other places."

At these words the strong hand of Sire Bos seized his enemy by the throat.

"I will make you swallow your words again, traitor," cried he.

The Baron quailed at the sight of Bos, whom he recognized, though not as a living being. The knight, who held him so tightly as to stop his breath, gave him with the other arm a blow on the head, which felled him—set his foot on him—and pressed him to the ground, as he would crush a worm.

"Friends or enemies," said he, raising his voice, "do you recognize the Lord of Bénac by this act?"

How recognize the proud noble of Bigorre with that yellow skin, those starting tones, that head almost shorn, that dirty and bristling beard, without casque, or cap, or even the smallest hood on that bare skull; and for all clothing a wretched coat of grey stuff, not reaching to the knees; neither boots nor spurs, and the feet only covered by the tattered remains of Turkish slippers? Who could have known the handsome, dark knight of Bigorre?—so much had fatigue and captivity, and the cruelty of the Saracens disfigured him! All remained lost in astonishment. He continued—

"Noble or vassal, is there not one among you who, from chivalry or Christian charity, will acknowledge me?"

The old white greyhound, which had risen at the first sounds of his voice, made his way through the crowd, wagging his tail, and, stopping before the knight, gave a long cry, which seemed to express all the sorrows of absence, and the happiness of again seeing him; then rising on his hind legs, he placed his fore-paws on the chest of the knight, whining affectionately.

"Rollo, my brave dog, thou bearest witness to thy master."

The knight and the dog clung to each other. Then the merlin sprang above the falconer, and, flying over the crowd, alighted on his master's wrist, shaking his bells, and greeting him with quivering wings, joy and tenderness beaming from his eye.

"And thou, also, my fine Sylvan—are there but you two faithful?"