

THE DEATH OF D'ASSAT.

BY J. J. PROCTER.

The night was come, and the moon looked down
Through the struggling clouds on the sleeping town;
An hour ago, and a noisy throng
Was hustling the roaring streets along;
All day their echoing pulses had stirred
To song, and laughter, and jesting word;
Now they lay in the silvery light
Silent, and empty, and lone, as night.

The last keen bargain was closed, the kiss
Left its last lingering pledge of bliss,
The last good-night, and the last faint prayer,
Had sped through the waves of the closing air,
The great bell up in the belfry tower
Had long ago clanged the midnight hour,
And fainter and fainter the sentinel
Droned out his cuckoo cry, "All's well."

Beyond the walls in the deep'ning shades,
A soldier was pacing the forest glades;
Little he dreamed of feats of arms,
Of foemen near, or of war's alarms,
Yet he thought of her who had sent him to fight
For the cause of his God and his country's right,
And he felt his heart within him burn
As he coupled the names "Elaine" and "Auvergne."

A voice in his ear, and a nervous hand
Plucks from his grasp the half-drawn brand,
"Silence! a motion, a word, a breath
Is the certain signal of instant death!"
Round him from under the gloomy trees
Cluster the foemen like swarming bees,
And the moonbeams shiver awhile, ere they rest
On the blue-black bayonets poised at his breast.

Loud and clear as the bugle's blare,
Sang out th' alarm on the startled air,
"Ho! sentinel on the ramparts, Ho!
Arm, arm Auvergne! 'tis the foe, the foe!"
Tramp of men, and the trumpet's call,
And the watch-fires blazing along the wall,
And the deep-mouthed cannon spoke out, "All's well,
Auvergne is ready,"—so D'Assat fell.