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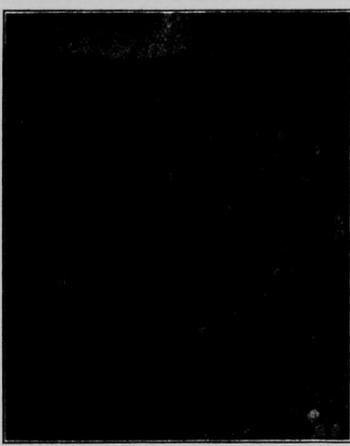
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Pierre's return might be the prelude to some great sorrow."

"God's blessing on Pierre!" said she, "he can only bring joy to this house. Thank the Lord for what He gives and what He takes! He took Pierre, a stripling from his home, and returns him a great man, fit to ride at the King's right hand and to be over his host like Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, over the host of Solomon."

"Grand merci for the comparison, dame!" said the Bourgeois, smiling, as he leaned back in his chair. "But Pierre is a Frenchman, and would prefer commanding a brigade in the army of the Marshal de Saxe to being over the host of King Solomon. But," continued he, gravely, "I am strangely happy to-day, Deborah,"—he was wont to call her Deborah when very earnest,—and I will not anticipate any mischief to mar my happiness. Pshaw! It is only the reaction of over-excited feelings. I am weak in the strength of my joy."

"The still, small voice speaks to us in that way, master, to remind us to place our trust in Heaven, not on earth, where all is transitory and uncertain; for if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all, let him remember the days of darkness, for they are many! We are no strangers to the vanity and shadows of human life, master! Pierre's return is like sunshine breaking through the clouds. God is pleased if we bask in the sunshine when he sends it."

"Right, dame! and so we will! The old walls of Belmont shall ring with rejoicing over the return of their heir and future owner."

The dame looked up delightedly at the remark of the Bourgeois. She knew he had destined Belmont as a residence for Pierre, but the thought suggested in her mind was, perhaps, the same which the Bourgeois had mused upon when he gave expression to a certain anxiety.

"Master," said she, "does Pierre know that the Chevalier Bigot was concerned in the false accusations against you, and that it was he, prompted by the Cardinal and the Princess de Carignan, who enforced the unjust decree of the Court?"

"I think not, Deborah. I never told Pierre that Bigot was ever more than the avocat du Roi in my persecution. It is what troubles me amidst my joy. If Pierre knew that the Intendant had been my false accuser on the part of the Cardinal, his sword would not rest a day in its scabbard without calling Bigot to a bloody account. Indeed, it is all I myself can do to refrain. When I met him for the first time here, in the Palace gate, I knew him again and looked him full in the eyes, and he knew me. He is a bold hound, and glared back at me without shrinking. Had he smiled I should have struck him; but we passed in silence, with a salute as mortal as enemies ever gave each other. It is well, perhaps, I wore not my sword that day, for I felt my passion rising—a thing I abhor. Pierre's young blood would not remain still if he knew the Intendant as I know him. But I dare not tell him! There would be bloodshed at once, Deborah!"

"I fear so, master! I trembled at Bigot in the old land! I tremble at him here, where he is more powerful than before. I saw him passing one day. He stopped to read the inscription of the Golden Dog. His face was the face of a fiend, as he rode hastily away. He knew well how to interpret it."

"Ha! you did not tell me that before, Deborah!" The Bourgeois rose, excitedly. "Bigot read it all, did he? I hope every letter of it was branded on his soul as with red-hot iron!"

"Dear master, that is an unchristian saying, and nothing good can come of it. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord! Our worst enemies are best left in His hands."

The dame was proceeding in a still more moralizing strain, when a noise arose in the street from a crowd of persons, habitants for the most part



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