

mon, where he put foot to the ground, left an ineffaceable mark, which may still be viewed without danger, provided one previously makes the sign of the cross. The evening breeze whistled through the branches of the apple and walnut trees. A small path, scarcely traced on the side of the redoubt, showed how few were those who now frequented the castle. In the entrance court the thistle and nettle grew in luxuriant wildness, the melissa threw out its aromatic tufts from the walls, the houseleek blossomed in the crevices of the threshold, large cobwebs hung over the stable-doors, and the open kennels were noiseless. The good knight's heart sank at the remembrance of former days, when friends, retainers, coursers and falcons, had assembled so joyously in those courts. A tear, the first since the death of his mother, dimmed his eyes, and he turned aside to hide it from the demon; but that malicious spirit had seen it as it rose from the heart, and, with flattering tone, said:

"Fair sir, joy and life will return here; gay hunters, brave knights, minstrels with their harps, and bright maidens, will come to welcome you, and celebrate your fame. Do you desire pages, esquires, like a prince? or Arab coursers, more docile and accomplished than those of the Soudan, with Moorish slave, prostrate before you to lead them? Will you have Eastern beauties to dance and sing before you when you are weary? or will you be honoured as a bishop or mitred abbé? Would you be content to raise the envy of the Count of Bigorre, your Seigneur? or will you depose him, and take his rank?"

Without reply the knight hastily mounted the steps of the entrance. The heavy knocker, in his angry hand, struck the door with violence, and resounded, echoing, from the towers. A long silence succeeded, and Sire Bos was again raising the knocker, when hasty and heavy footsteps were heard; and the aged face of Nurse Ghiberta appeared at the grating, with distended eyes and mouth.

"Ah! mother Ghiberta, have you forgotten Sire Bos de Bénac?"

"Unlucky wight!" answered she, "do you dare to joke with the sorrows of this place? Be gone and may you never again have occasion for laughter."

"Alas!" said the knight, "am I, then, but a phantom, with the devil by my side? Oh! nurse, nurse, has age deprived you of sight, that you cannot recognise your old master—he whom you have nursed in your arms and nourished at your bosom?"

"No, no! How could Sire Bos, my handsome foster-child, be so thin and haggard? Where are his armour and war-steed? Where are his people? Would he have returned on foot like a penitent, and almost naked, like the basest serf?"

Bos replied with a sigh: "All my companions are slain, mother; all are passed from life unto death! By the will of God, I alone return."

Ghiberta raised her hands in horror. "All slain! Thou liest! Certes thou liest, false pilgrim, in the hope of a night's lodging."

"By the bones of the ten thousand virgins, by all the relics of the Theban legion! thou shalt learn who I am."

The Devil who had taken the appearance of a chorister of a cathedral, now said:

"Dame Ghiberta we come on the part of the Baron des Angles—open the door."

"Ah! where, then, was the use of deceiving me? are you not, at last, masters here? Wherefore stir up the shreds of a poor vassal's heart in order to discover there the cherished remembrance of her lord? Will you impute it to me as a crime that I am faithful to his memory? Ah! I see how it is! My son Bos, my dear son, has been engaged with the accursed infidels, and will never return to take vengeance of his enemies."

The good Bigorraise wiped her aged eyes, drew aside the bolts, turned the key, and removed the iron bars which secured the double doors, murmuring to herself as she did so:

"Oh! many's the time I have thus opened the door when the young Baron came in after curfew, in order that the Chatelaine, his honoured mother, should not suspect anything."

The knight and the devil entered. A boy left in the château, because seven years back he was too young to follow his seigneur, aided Michelotte to light a fire in the great hall where the wide chimney-piece rested on two gigantic lions of the yellow marble of Campan, whose frightful claws, teeth, and mane were curiosities much celebrated in the province. The fire burnt brightly, throwing a high and clear flame, which detached the swallows nests in the chimney, and dislodged the bats suspended therein. It lighted up the large bearskins hanging from the beams, with stag's horns—the slender heads of the izaris surmounted by their pretty black horns—the tusks of the wild boar—eagles and vultures, with outstretched wings;—along the wodd-work were also suspended boar-spears and nets, cornets and trumpets, all rusty and covered with dust. Messire Bos gazed sorrowfully on these noble signs of past sports.

"Gougat," said he to the varlet, "are there still bears in the mountains?"

"More than men."

The wily demon approaching said:

"Fair sir, by daybreak to-morrow you will possess the finest pointers from Spain, the best greyhounds of England—a pack of hounds with never-fading scent, untiring in pursuit, whose deep baying shall be heard beyond the mountains. Your huntsmen's horns shall waken even the dead lords in their vaults, and you will follow the chase on a steed that shall exceed the stag in speed, or on a strong hackney which fears not the wild boar. Your falconers will present you with milk-white gerfalcons from Italy, and merlins whose eyes defy the sun, and who will strike down an eagle with wings measuring twenty feet across."

The Sire de Bénac listened with open eyes, distended nostrils, and impatient foot to the flattering words of the demon; then said coolly:

"The time for such amusements and luxuries is not yet come."

Continuing the tour of the hall, he came opposite the distaff of his mother, placed with its spindles on a small stand.

"Oh! my mother," said he mentally, "you who lived and died devoutly, aid me now."

Michelotte came in. Seven years had only developed, not destroyed her youthful charms; tall, strong, fresh, and plump, she was a good specimen of a Bigorraise.

"Michelotte," said the knight, "let us see if