

rived at a point where a pure, limpid brooklet crossed the path—a deep vale, where the sward was free of underbrush and velvety; and here they stopped for dinner.

They picketed their horses, and left them to crop the tender grass, while they sat down upon the margin of the brook and opened their haversacks. The meal progressed, and Girard had taken his last sip of wine, and was in the act of closing his haversack, when he was startled by the sudden appearance of three men, who came upon the scene from the northward. The road our friends were pursuing ran east and west. The foremost man of the three was a Hercules in physical substance, and not ashamed to dress in conformity to his business.

And that dress told him to be a brigand! The velvet breeches, gold corded; the Turkish jacket, slashed with gold; the plentiful bright gold buttons; and the red sash around the loins, with pistols and daggers stuck therein—ah! there was no mistaking the character of the wearer.

Girard had just completed his survey of the man when his ear caught the sound of a light footfall behind him, and as he started to look around, a noose was thrown over his head, and instantly drawn tight around his body, taking the arms within its fold, and binding them fast. In a moment more he was drawn violently back upon the sward, when two of those who had accompanied him from St. Mary—the sportsmen of Auxerre,—leaped upon him, and bound him fast.

Pierre and Robin were both captured as easily as their young master had been, though Robin might have given the ruffians trouble had he seen fit; but he had seen, from the first, that, whatever trouble he might give them, he must be captured in the end, so he had not cared to invite rough usage, and perhaps death, when it could be avoided.

The robbers had planned their attack well, and had not failed in execu-

tion. The four gentlemen at the inn had been on the lookout for prey, and the boy who had ridden away in the morning had brought the note of warning to their chief in his forest lair. Girard now remembered to have read of a notorious brigand chief, one Paul le Diable, as he was called, who had for a long time infested, with his band, the great Forest of Chatillon—some leagues to the north. He was said to have been once a gentleman of title and fortune, whom the world had treated badly, and who, in a fit of madness, had turned his hand against society in this lawless manner.

And Girard did not doubt, as he looked in the face of the powerful chief, that he had been a gentleman. His manners were polished, even now, though far from gentle or kind. He did not speak with the prisoners, but when they had been secured, he spoke a few words with one of the four who had come from St. Mary, and then strode away into the forest, in the direction from which he had come. After he had gone from sight, the leader of those remaining approached the youth, with a polite bow, and:

“Monsieur, you will come with us. Of course you know why we want you; and, considering the need we had of your presence with us, I know you will pardon us for the liberty we have taken. We will go the short distance before us on foot, and our horses will be brought along very safely.”

Girard offered no reply. He would wait until they came to demand his valuables, and then he hoped he might have an opportunity to speak with the chief. They took from him his pistols and dagger,—his arms being pinioned, he could offer no resistance,—and then led him away. He saw that Pierre and Robin were following, and that the horses and pack mules came behind.

Through a blind, tortuous, ragged path, which no unpractised eye could ever have found, for the distance of