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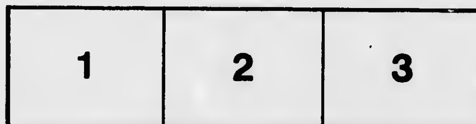

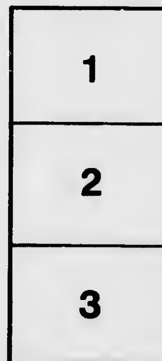

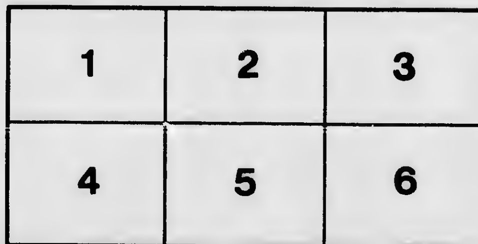

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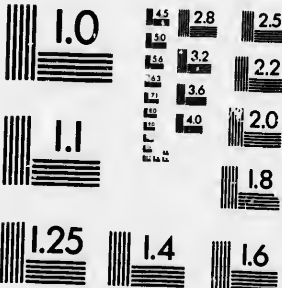

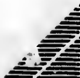

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THE

TWO WIVES OF THE KING.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF PAUL FÉVAL.

Montreal:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY JOHN LOVELL,
FOR SALE AT THE BOOKSTORES.
1868.

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THE TWO WIVES OF THE KING.

CHAPTER I.

On the first day of March of the year 1202, towards seven o'clock in the evening, two travellers, who seemed harassed and fatigued, descended the abrupt hill, at the foot of which lay grouped the confused set of buildings, which formed the Lazaretto of St. Lazarus. From the Lazaretto to the wall of the city was reckoned a half league, if not more, and our two travellers, whose clothing was all covered with dust, had been on foot since sunrise.

One of them, the youngest, was much to be pitied, being a graceful and delicate child, who appeared to be scarcely fifteen years of age. He wore the costume of a cavalier, but his soft voice and graceful figure seemed to denote that he was but a page. The darkness of the night rendered it impossible to distinguish his features, which were further concealed by the beautiful tresses of his fair hair.

The other traveller, on the contrary, was tall and robust. His limbs admirably knit, though not deficient in grace, were more remarkable for their vigour. In spite of the obscurity, one could see that he bore upon his shoulder a wallet at the end of a staff. There were no arms in his girdle; a sort of white leather apron descended to his knee, and upon that appeared a triangle of bright copper, which, in short, was a mason's trowel.

Some lights were visible at the narrow windows of the Lazaretto, and the youngest of our travellers, believing himself at the end of his journey, gave a long sigh of relief.

"Eric, my poor Eric," said he, "I do not believe that I could have taken another step!" seating himself at the same time on one of the steps of the door, which led to the Lazaretto. Eric also stopped, but shook his head with an air of tender commiseration.

"Thou art then very tired, Eve," said he.

Our beautiful child with the fair hair was called Eve. You would not have had to wait the reply of Eve, to recognize that it was a young girl who spoke—her soft voice would have convinced you of that, and Eve replied—

"I dared not tell thee how much I suffered, my good brother, for thou wouldst have desired to have carried me again, and thou hast already too great a burden, in thy heavy stone hammer; but the flints in the road have torn my feet, and I repeat that I could not have gone another step."

"Then," replied Eric, approaching suddenly to take the young girl in his arms, "I must carry thee, my dear Eve, for we are not at the end of our journey."

The fair head of Eve fell upon her breast, "Oh, my God, my God!" murmured she, "shall we then never arrive there?" and when Eric wished to take her, she escaped from his hands.

"No, no!" said she, while making an effort to run, "we have been walking since the break of day, and thou must also be very tired, my brother."

Eric wished to protest; but in running after his companion, he tottered himself over the rough parts of the road. Eric was young and strong, and his day's task must, indeed, have been long, thus to have exhausted his vigour; and besides, as Eve had truly said, more than once on the road, Eric had carried her like a child, whenever she wept—discouraged by the sight of her poor little bleeding feet.

They had come from a great distance, Eric and his sister Eve—a very, very great distance!

The path which led from the Lazaretto of St. Lazarus to the gate of St. Denis, wound about through the tall forest, before reaching the marshes, at this period already cleared as far as the Rue de Paradis. At one turn of the road Eric perceived, all at once, a great number of lights spread over the plain, and gave vent to a loud cry of joy.

"A last effort, my sister," said he; "for see here is Paris—Paris, the object of all our journeyings."

Eve looked at those luminous dots, twinkling in the night, and with her hands crossed upon her breast and her voice trembling with tears, repeated—

"Paris! Paris! where our Queen should be, our well beloved angel! Paris, where she is unhappy. Paris, where she is a prisoner!"

"God will help us!" said Eric, rising to the full height of his tall figure. "Had not God been with us, we should have perished ten times over from the perils of the land and of the sea." Eve, with her eyes fixed in the direction of Paris, knelt down upon the grass, moistened by the dews of the evening, and offered a fervent prayer to heaven. When she rose, she found she had

recovered a little strength, and leaning upon the arm of Eric, they resumed their road, scarcely daring to exchange a word, for fear of wasting the breath now so necessary to carry them through. From the few words, however, that did escape them, it could be gathered that they came from the North country,—that they had crossed the Baltic sea in a Danish vessel, and had landed at the north of the Elbe. From thence they had directed their steps towards Paris—passing on foot through Batavia, Belgium, and France. Their resources were of the most modest description; for they spoke of all sorts of privations that they had borne on the road.

As to the motive which had led them to undertake that long and painful journey, one could only guess it from their conversation. It is only in the dramas of the high school, where you will find the *dramatis personæ* mutually explaining, with minute care, matters with which each are marvellously well acquainted beforehand: this intuitiveness is the effort of art—our hero and heroine were children of nature.

All that is permitted us to infer from the few words that were exchanged between Eric and his sister is, that they were pursuing the accomplishment of a mysterious mission, full of peril, and that they worked with a rare courage, but that their humble strength bore no proportion to the greatness of their task.

They had now passed the stream of Menilmontant, which courses round the northern boundary of Paris, and empties itself into the Seine, behind la Ville-Evêque. They were walking in the midst of cultivated grounds, having on their left the high walls of the Abbey St. Martin; night was coming on, and the roads were completely deserted. All at once they heard the sound of horses' feet, in the direction of the Lazaretto. Eric pressed the arm of his sister.

"The prophecy!" whispered Eric.

Eve trembled. They both stopped and gained the hedge which bordered the road. The horsemen approached. The moon, which was now rising dull and red behind the towers of the Abbey of St. Martin des Champs, enabled Eric and his sister to distinguish the profiles of the new-comers. There were two, the one wearing knight's armour, the other had upon his shaved head the turban of a Saracen.

There was but one thought in the head of poor Eve.

The Prophecy! the Prophecy!

We shall know presently what that prophecy was. The Knight said to the Saracen—

"Well, then, comrade, so you have come to Paris to kill a man?"

"Yes, my lord, to kill a man."

"And might we learn the name of that man?"

"You cannot learn it, my lord."

"Not by begging hard?"

"That would be useless."

"Nor by fighting hard for it?"

"That would be dangerous!"

"Possibly. Thou hast, indeed, the air of a bold fellow, my man—and, besides, should I kill thee that would be a miserable way of getting at thy secret."

"And if I should kill thee, my lord," added the Infidel frankly; "thou would'st be none the wiser."

"True," said the knight, laughing.

There was then a pause. The Christian and the Saracen had now passed the place where Eric and his sister were sheltered;—the latter followed the horsemen, keeping close to the hedge.

"Comrade," resumed the knight, "this is a strange adventure; for I also am going to Paris, but to kill a woman!"

Eric and his sister trembled to the marrow of their bones.

"The prophecy!" whispered both at once.

The Saracen seemed to take the thing as a matter of course, for he replied, yawning—

"Ah! thou art going to kill a woman; my lord," he added, however, "is it thy wife?"

"No," replied the chevalier.

Another pause. After some seconds the knight resumed—

"Is your man easy to kill?"

"The most difficult man to kill in the whole kingdom, my lord."

"It must then be the king?"

"I have told you that you cannot know his name. And your woman?"

"She is also the most difficult woman to kill in the whole kingdom."

"That must then be the queen?"

The knight then burst into laughter.

Eric was obliged to put his hand over the mouth of Eve, to prevent her crying out.

The moon had now risen over the towers of the Abbey, and the knight availed himself of the opportunity to examine better his strange companion.

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed he, "it is, then, with the blows of a hammer that thou desirest to kill thy man."

"The way signifies nothing, my lord," replied the Infidel, who bore the scrutiny of the knight with a grave courtesy.

In short, the Saracen carried, like our friend Eric, a trowel by his side, and a heavy stone-cutter's hammer over his shoulder.

"What does that mean?" asked the Christian. "You miscreants have secrets of your own."

"It is the simplest thing in the world, my lord," said the Infidel; "one cannot always kill, when one would."

"To whom tellest thou that?" interrupted the knight, smiling.

"Ah," said the Saracen, "it must then be a long time since thou did'st any work, my lord?"

"A very long time."

"For my part, I have scented a man seven years, and have tracked him over six thousand leagues."

"Pish! and hast thou killed him?"

"The first day of the eighth year, my lord, yes—I say then it is necessary to wait thy opportunity—live to wait, and eat to live: this hammer is my bread-winner."

"Thou art, then, not a man of arms?"

"I am a mason, my lord."

"And how callest thou thyself?"

"Mahmoud el Reis."

"Ah, well, Mahmoud el Reis, I believe that thou art a precious rogue;—perhaps one had better enter into a compact with the evil one than with thee; but——"

"But," interposed the Saracen, always grave and cool, "you have not the evil one at hand, my lord."

"Exactly, since thy man and my woman are two souls, bearing the highest crests in the kingdom, let us league together."

"I am very willing."

"I will help thee with thy man, and thou shalt give me a shoulder with my woman."

"Agreed."

"Where art thou to be found?"

"At the portals of Notre Dame, where I cut stones after the manner of the Saracen."

"Good; thou shalt hear from me. *Au revoir.*"

The knight was about to use his spurs, when the Saracen, without ceremony, retained him by seizing the bridle of his horse.

"Thou hast forgotten to tell me thy name, my lord," said he.

The knight appeared to hesitate a moment but he recovered himself, and replied,

"I am Amaury Montruel, Lord of Anet, and the friend of the king."

"Friend of the king?" repeated the Saracen; "and one may find thee—?"

"At the tower of the Louvre."

Mahmoud released the bridle and bowed; Montruel left at a gallop.

"Friend of the king!" repeated Mahmoud again.

Then Eric and his sister saw him bear over the neck of his horse, who neighed slightly, bounded off and disappeared with incredible swiftness.

"Mahmoud el Reis—Amaury Montruel! Forget not these two names, Eve," said Eric.

CHAPTER II.

Not far from the shores of the Gulf of Bothnia, and beyond the city of Upsal, there was an immense forest, consecrated to the worship of the god Thor. In the forest lived the prophetess Mila, who commanded the winds and the tempests. Nobody had been able to find out the place of Mila's abode; but whoever required her services, had to betake themselves to the edge of the forest precisely at mid-day, and there sound a horn seven times. Seven days after, at midnight, if the same person went to the same spot, Mila would be there to meet him. Old men said that in their youth, Mila was more than one hundred years old.

When a voice from on high had ordered Eric and Eve to leave France, they went to interrogate Mila. Eric and Eve were children of the peasant Atho, a vassal, holding directly from Canute, King of the Danes; and though Christians, they were still under the influence of the superstitions of the north.

One day at noon Eric sounded the horn seven times on the borders of the dreaded forest, and seven days after, at the hour of midnight, Eve and himself stood trembling on the same spot.

Mila was at the rendezvous. She was a woman taller than any man of war, her floating grey locks fell over her lank shoulders, her eyes shone in the darkness from the depth of their cavernous orbits.

"If you wish to leave," said she, "depart!" before they had put a question to her; "the road will remain open to you for one year; you will suffer hunger and cold; but you will arrive at the end of your journey."

"And shall we be saved?" demanded Eve.

"Thinkest thou to be stronger than fate?" muttered the prophetess. Then she added,

"Listen to me. When you approach the walls of the great city, the first person that you meet on horseback, and talking of death, will be the enemy of her that is dear to you, her enemy, and her misfortune. The second person that you shall meet will be Destiny. Withdraw."

Eric and Eve wished to ask more; but an invincible and resistless force bore them away from the forest.

The journey lasted a year. The first person that they met on horseback, under the walls of Paris, spoke of death.

The journey lasted a year, because the peasant Atho was poor; though he was the king's vassal, and his wife had nourished at her own breast the daughter of the queen. The children of Atho did not carry much money. In order to subsist, Eric had been obliged to work, with his trowel and hammer, through all the towns where they had passed. The prophecy had been proved true on two points out of the three. There remained to be solved the third. Before entering Paris the children of the peasant were going to encounter "Destiny."

When Mahmoud el Reis disappeared in the darkness, Eric and Eve resumed their way.

"It was of *her* that they spoke," said Eve, "my heart tells it me."

"Yes, yes," replied Eric. "I trembled to the marrow of my bones. It was of *her* that they spoke."

He hurried on. Eve no longer felt the pain of her poor little wounded feet; besides the object was so near! They heard already the voice of the sentinels, who kept watch in the turrets of the Porte aux Peintres. But Paris, like every paradise, (and according to our roguish old uncles, Paris is at least the paradise of woman,) has always been difficult of access. The sentries of those distant times were not less disagreeable than the green-coated gentry, fathers of families, who at the present day have the care of our barriers. It is even possible that they were still more disagreeable; indeed, if the modern green-coats imprudently put their dirty hands into the boxes of your carriage, when they are out of temper, still they allow you to pass on without beating you like a dog. The soldiers of that day, on the contrary, whold beat you like a dog, and not allow you to enter afterwards.

The soldiers who guarded the Porte aux Peintres told our two travellers to go to the Porte de Nicholas Hudron. On their arrival there they found it closed; the soldiers who kept it cried out to Eric,

"Friend, go to the Porte Montmartre!"

They retraced their steps, and gained the Porte Montmartre—it was closed.

"Hola," cried some one from the high ram-

parts, "do you not know that at this hour the only entrance is by the Porte Coquillière?"

Half-way from Porte Coquillière, they heard a clock strike; it was Porte Coquillière, closing in its turn. And you may believe that these precautions were not useless, at a time when the night was the property of thieves; however, through the wicket of Porte Coquillière a sergeant cried out to them,

"Beware of approaching here; go and see if they will allow you to enter by Porte St. Honoré, which is left open to-night for the passage of the king."

"My good master," demanded Eric, "can you direct us, after passing Porte St. Honoré?"

"There is the river, where they ought to drown all such rascals as you!"

Eric and his sister resumed their journey; it was a sad welcome to the City of Paris.

"My brother," said Eve, "shall we seek hospitality at some monastery?"

Eric was angry. "I know not," said he, "whether hospitality is practised about here, my sister; but in our wild forests I have never walked so long without finding an asylum."

They were passing along close to the city walls. "Keep off in the open roads," cried a man of arms, whose round was on the ramparts above them; and they heard the dry thrum of the stringing of an arbalist. Eric seized the arm of his sister and drew her towards the open fields. Eve was now quite exhausted, and she sunk down upon the tilled ground; but as every minute was now precious, Eric picked her up and carried her in his arms. After a quarter of an hour's slow and painful walking Eric met with a road bordered by two rows of young elms. This was the Royal Avenue which led to the Tower of the Louvre, at the Porte St. Honoré. At the moment when Eric was entering this road, two cavaliers passed—a lord and his page.

"Hola!" cried Eric, emboldened by his distress, —"if you are Christians have pity on us."

Eric had forgotten the prophecy; but Eve remembered it—for a woman parts with such souvenirs only with death. By the clear light of the moon, she looked full upon the features of the unknown cavalier who had reined up at the voice of Eric.

"Destiny! Destiny!" thought she—

"Destiny," since the young stranger thus named him, was a knight of a noble mien, clothed with great simplicity; and had it not been for the remarkable beauty of his steed, one would have taken him for a poor gentleman—and yet there was something imperious and bold in his bearing, which protested energetically against the poverty of his livery. His page bore no colours. The gentleman was still young, and Eve found him handsome. He turned towards Eric, who still bore his cherished burden, and said to him—

"Is that young boy wounded, my master?"

He spoke of Eve who wore, as we have said, man's clothing.

"My lord," replied Eric, "the poor child has neither been touched by iron or by fire, but fatigue has killed him. We have come from such a long distance, and the archers refused us an entrance into Paris, where we might have found a bed and nourishment."

"Fatigue wounds as badly as iron or fire, I know that," murmured the unknown. Then he added, turning to his page—

"Albret, dismount my son; thou hast good legs, and the way is not long from here to the Hotel de Nesle."

So far "Destiny" showed himself propitious. The page obeyed immediately and complaisantly assisted Eric to place the pretended young boy upon the saddle.

"He is very light," said the page. Then added, addressing him, "mount thee, also, if thou wishest, friend, my horse can carry three at need, and another still—like the celebrated horse of the four sons, Aymon."

Eric replied, "I am a man, and will walk, to testify my gratitude and my respect to the noble lord who has furnished us with assistance."

"As thou wilt, friend," said the page—and he took the lead.

The gentleman approached his horse to the side of the traveller. "Thy companion seems very young," said he, "to undertake such a journey."

"True, my lord," said Eric, "but you know necessity has no law."

Eve lowered her head, for she saw that the gentleman was watching her—while she had no necessity to turn her eyes upon him—for she had so thoroughly scanned him at their first meeting that the features of the unknown were engraved upon her memory. She found a strange majesty in his grave and sonorous voice. Poor Eve was thinking of the prophecy of Mila.

Albret, the page, who was walking in advance, said to himself, "Never have I seen a young boy so light as that."

"It is necessity, then, that has brought thee to Paris?" enquired the gentleman.

"Yes, my lord."

"And from what country comest thou?"

Eric did not seem disposed to tell the truth on this question, for he answered without hesitating—

"My lord, we come from the city of Cologne, upon the Rhine, where they have skilful workers in stone.

The gentleman turned his eyes, which had remained fixed upon Eve, towards Eric. Eve breathed more freely.

"I had not remarked," said he "that thou carried the hammer and trowel. Art thou a Freemason?"

"Yes, my lord, I received the Accolade at Aix-la-Chapelle from the hands of Master Cornelius Hausser, the first and the last."

"And thou art sure of finding occupation at Paris?"

"Occupation?" repeated Eric, with a singular inflexion of voice; "Oh, yes, my lord," and his eyes drooped under the piercing look of the gentleman.

"I mean occupation as a stone-cutter," said the latter.

Eric hesitated. "May God reward you, my lord," replied he at last, "for the charitable interest you have taken in a poor man. I know a little of master Christian the Dane, who fol-

lowed queen Ingeburge, when she came over to marry the king of Paris. But Christian may have no great credit, now that the poor queen is in disgrace."

"Ah, ah!" said the gentleman, with an air of constraint, "then they know down there that the queen is in disgrace?"

"We also know my lord, that the king has given her place to Madame Agnes, daughter of Berthond de Meran, the Bohemian."

"Daughter of Berthoud, Duke of Meranie," corrected dryly, the gentleman.

"I will call that woman according to the good pleasure of my lord," said Eric; "for excepting Christian the Dane, I know not a living soul in the great city of Paris."

"And thou wishest to engage thyself among the artisans that King Pillip Augustus employs upon the monuments of his capital. Is it not so, my friend?"

"That would be my dearest wish."

"But thy young companion is not strong enough to handle the hammer?"

"Oh, said Eric," blushing lightly, "my young brother mixes the mortar and carries the sand."

"What, with such hands as these?" interrupted the unknown. Eve hid her hands under her cassock. The gentleman smiled.

"Friend," said he, afterwards brusquely, "there is the city gate, and now we separate. How do they call thee?"

"They call me Eric, my lord."

"That is a northern name," said the unknown, with a slight frown.

"My father, who settled on the River Rhine, came from Norway, my lord."

"And thy young brother?"

Eric was not prepared for this simple question, and was opening his mouth to repeat the name of his sister Eve,—when the young girl, anticipating him, replied in her soft and gentle voice—

"I am called little Adam, noble lord!"

They arrived at the Porte St. Honoré, which was wide open; twelve archers, six on each side, were drawn up under the gateway. The captain of the gate stood, hat in hand, upon the threshold of the guard-house. The gentleman passed and saluted, with his hand, while the soldiers received him with military honours.

Eric and his sister exchanged a look of astonishment. They could not understand how it was that they were not turned out, and saluted still as rogues and vagabonds. The gate closed heavily behind them. The gentleman, who had passed through first, now turned round.

"Little Adam," said he, addressing Eve, when they had got about fifty steps from the gate, "I make thee a present of this little purse, in which are twelve écus in gold, in order that thou mayest remember me." Eve dismounted, and the page took the bridle of the horse. Eve, confused and happy, received the purse with respect; nor did she withdraw her forehead, when the gentleman, bending graciously over his saddle planted there the kiss of a friend.

"As to thee, Eric," resumed he, "to-morrow morning thou wilt go and seek Maurice de Sully, bishop of Paris, and beg him for the love he bears me to employ thee on the works of his cathedral."

"On the works at Notre Dame?" exclaimed Eric," that is what I desire more than anything in the world!"

"Indeed? Ah, well, *mon maitre*, then everything goes right. *Au revoir*, little Adam; I wish thee happiness. He was leaving, when Eric called to him—

"My lord, my lord! in whose name am I to present myself to my lord the Bishop of Paris?"

In his turn the unknown now appeared to hesitate an instant, then he replied with a smile, "In the name of his gossip, Dieudonné."

He turned the angle of a street which ascended towards St. Eustache, and disappeared, followed by Albret, his page,—who said to himself, "Never saw I lad with skin so white and eye so soft!"

CHAPTER III.

Eric and his sister stood alone, in the middle of the street St. Honoré; Eve holding in her hand the purse which the unknown lord had generously given her.

The rue St. Honoré was one of the largest and most beautiful in the whole city; but we are constrained to acknowledge that that is not saying much. Every one knows that at that period, and for a long time after, the houses of Paris did not present their fronts to the public highway. Each house projected over the street the shadow of its narrow gable end, pierced with small windows and guarded with iron bars; for the first requirement of a house at that day was, that it might serve at need for a fortress to its dwellers. These gable-ends had no windows in the basement, and there were none of those brilliant shops which, in our day, light up our streets better than the public lamps. The ordinary buying and selling took place in shops grouped together as at a fair, and were kept open only till sunset.

The taverns, as much frequented then as to-day, had their dark entrances at the bottom of long and tortuous alleys. Public society as well as the family circle was concentrated far from the street, which was left exclusively for malefactors. In those dark nights of ancient Paris, the hungry thieves laid wait for the rare passengers whose necessities compelled him to be out late, but scarcely earned their bread at it. A prudent bourgeois would rather have leaped from the top to the bottom of the ramparts than be perambulating those dark haunts at night. The gentlemen of that day were always preceded by torch-bearers, and servants with drawn swords. It was a sorry trade that of the robber; but their ranks were always overcrowded.

In the midst of that silent obscurity, disturbed only by the roar of the orgies going on down the aforesaid alleys, Eric and Eve felt more lost than in the open fields, or in the plantations of the Louvre. They knew not which way to move. The street lay before them dark and tortuous. In the distance they could perceive some trembling light smoking under some one of the votive offerings which, down to a very late day, were to be found stuck up in our highways.

Eve, frightened, pressed against her brother, to whom the darkness seemed full of threatening phantoms. Indeed they were both so frightened that they thought not of the prophecy.

Ah! had some thief, up to his trade, appeared at that moment, how cheap he might have obtained that purse of gold, though Eric had his iron hammer over his shoulder, and a brave heart in his breast? The darkness oppressed and paralyzed him; the dark perspective of the rue St. Honoré appeared to him unfathomable, and he had no longer the courage to take a step forward or backward. At that moment a slow and grave melody fell upon the ears of our two travellers. It was a chorus of men singing in the German language. Eric listened, and the blood seemed to warm in his veins, as if he had suddenly in his distress heard the sound of some well-beloved voice. The chorus approached, and they could distinguish these words:

"It is a great distance from sea to sea.

"Where does that bird go to, which remains on the shores of the Rhine only three months in the summer?

"We build high towers that the swallows may nestle therein."

Eve fell into the arms of her brother, and her joyous emotion brought tears into her eyes.

The chorus continued:

"Lisa! Lisa! daughter of our master! Lisa, child of our old man.

"Where is the hammer? The husband of Lisa should be the strongest of us.

"Since she is the fairest of the fair.

"When the swallows return, the copper vane shall be turning on the finished tower."

A light now appeared at the end of the street, while the measured step of a troop of men kept time with their song.

The song continued:

"Master, master, thy daughter has borne a son, and thou art happy, and the sons of thy daughter shall be called after thee.

"The shining trowel is the sword of the Artisan—we will all attend at the baptism.

"Are not the bells in our towers already rusty for want of ringing?"

The street was now full of men, who advanced, hand in hand, carrying lances without points, but ornamented with flowers. As they stopped before a paved doorway, Eric took his sister by the hand, and approached them, joining in the chant.

"The swallow is come. His nest is in the tower. Master, alas! the bells ring.

"Thee and thy daughter must die, we shall all die; but the tower shall live.

"And after a thousand years, it will still be the house of the swallows."

The man who walked in advance of the troop struck his lance against the pavement of the street.

"Who art thou, comrade?" exclaimed he, addressing Eric.

"I am of the hammer and trowel," replied the young man.

"Knowest thou any of us?"

"I am one of you."

"By what title?"

"By the title of free companion."

The chief of the troop was a little in advance of his comrades, who had stopped, and were listening.

"Approach," said he to Eric, "and let thy hand speak to my hand!"

Their hands touched and they exchanged that mysterious sign which has ever been the passport of the Brotherhood of Freemasonry.

"Oh, ho!" said the chief of the band, turning towards his troop, "our friend is a cousin of Solomon. I have recognized from his finger ends the accent of Cologne; open your ranks, my pretty fellows, and hail the arrival of a brother!"

"Brother!" cried the choristers,—"welcome, since thou bringest thy stone to the temple!"

"But he is not alone," said a voice in the crowd.

"Who is this?" said the chief, pointing to Eve.

Eric took his sister by the hand. "Woman," said he, "is an easy prey to the evil-disposed; but I am now at the end of my wanderings, and I do not distrust my brothers. This girl is my sister."

"The sister of our brother is our sister," said the chief gravely, "enter both of you with us."

The sticks rattled again upon the door, which was opened, and an instant after the street was silent and deserted. From the threshold of a neighbouring doorway a mis-shaped object, like a bundle of rags, began to move, and from a dirty cowl of coarse stuff, which denoted a vagabond monk, there proceeded a whistle. A similar whistle answered from the other end of the street, and another bundle of rags put itself in motion. I have already said that the trade of a robber had gone to the Evil One in those times, in consequence of the keen competition.

"Ezekiel!" said the first bundle of tatters.

"Trefouilloux!" replied the second heap of rags.

"They were both close to me," said Trefouilloux! in a bitter tone of regret. "I was about to plant my knife between the shoulders of the tallest one—— the little one was but a woman."

"Ah!" said Ezekiel, in a melancholy tone, "we have no luck."

Trefouilloux took his forehead in both hands under the soiled debris of his cowl.

"And yet they say that king Phillip governs his kingdom well," groaned he, "to allow such idlers to run the streets after the *couvre-feu* has sounded!"

"That's a great scandal," sighed Ezekiel, "it is horrible!"

Trefouilloux thrust his cutlass into the twisted rag that served him for a girdle, and our two unfortunates resumed their way. Alas! all the rest of the night nobody passed; and they had to tighten their waists next morning for want of a breakfast. But in our days I can affirm that the night thieves breakfast on good beefsteak, and chickens' legs, *en papillotes*. Why? because we have now a well-ordered police, so they say; and because a good police gives confidence—and because speculators base their action on confidence. We pray that those speculators, who work by day—will be pleased to remark that we make a distinction between them and the night thieves.

Freemasonry was a beautiful institution in the days when it shed over our soil the marvels of those illustrious temples, left for our admiration in the three last centuries of the middle ages. Notre Dame was the commencement of that splendid and Christian art; then followed the Cathedral at Cologne; then Strasburg; and lastly, Westminster—that glorious jewel of London.

Other arts remained in their infancy. The masons alone—we desire not to encroach on the title of architects—the masons alone conveyed in their inspiration the simple mystery of the Christian idea; reaching at one bound the utmost limits of the grand and beautiful, and studding Europe all over with *chefs-d'œuvre*.

They went forth the disciplined instruments of a will, one and hidden; the labour of their life was but a cipher in the unheard of amount of labour that the age expended. Often they knitted but one mesh of that gigantic tissue. Very rarely, at least, those who saw the laying of the first stone of the edifice, lived to witness the celebration of its opening.

But what signifies that? Their task was fulfilled. They had lived to work and sing; they had fought in the army of peaceful soldiers. True, their name died with them; but were they not named collectively—Westminster, or Notre Dame of Paris?

These vast associations bore the stamp of a Northern origin. The Ghildes had for a long time overrun Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and even Hungary. The St. Vehme succeeded to the dispersed Ghildes, and had its free judges, from the Danube to the Loire. Freemasonry came only third in these old and illustrious institutions, though our modern adepts pretend to trace its origin up to the sons of King David. However that may be, we repeat that Freemasonry was a serious and strong institution. It protected the weak, and honoured the strong, and flourished because it was wise and just.

The place into which Eric and his sister were introduced was a broad and long hall, forming the whole basement of the house. All around the apartment might be read sentences framed in circles of oak leaves. Here and there hung masonic trophies. Upon a raised platform stood an iron tripod, surmounted by a level which balanced itself from the arch.

The *fête* which had gathered the Freemasons of Paris together was intended for the solemn reception of a new adept. When the candidate entered, Eric and Eve were both struck with the same thought; they had seen that man somewhere before. He was a young man of slender but nervous form; his long, pale face had a singular expression of intelligence—his black eyes shone like two carbuncles, under the deeply arched eyebrows. He walked with a light, quick step towards the tripod, where he seated himself. On being asked his name, he replied, "Jean Cador."

The sound of his voice was sufficient at once to restore him to the memory of our two travellers. Eric pressed tightly the arm of Eve.

Either that man lied at that moment, or he had lied two hours before, under the walls of the Abbey St. Martin, for he had then said to Amaury Montruel, Lord of Anet, and friend of the King,

"My name is Mahmoud el Reis."

CHAPTER IV.

The Chevalier Dieudonné, the "Destiny" of Mila's prophecy, on leaving our two travellers, whom he had so generously taken under his protection, ascended, as we have already said, one of the narrow and unpaved alleys which opened to the left of the rue St. Honoré and led towards St. Eustache. In that narrow alley there would certainly be found at least one Ezekiel, and one Trefouilloux, if not many more. But these good people seldom attacked well-armed and well-mounted knights. Hunger weakened them and made them timid; it was only one or two centuries later, that increased security made provisions more plentiful in the Court of Miracles. After a few minutes ride the Chevalier Dieudonné, and his handsome page, Albret, stopped before a massive sculptured door, which served as an entrance to a building as large as the Louvre, where the king lived.

This building, isolated and surrounded by high trees, occupied nearly the same spot as the present market *des Prouvaires*. It was called the Hotel de Nesle, and belonged to Jean II, Lord of Nesle, and Chatelaine of Bruges. Eudes III, Duke of Burgogne, one of the most powerful vassals of the King of France, was also at this moment residing there, as the guest of its master. Eudes de Bourgogne was not what one could properly call a rebel; he fought for the king during war, but during peace he gave him that unceasing opposition, which renders the comparison of the great vassals of the middle age to the great bourgeois of our own times perfectly intelligible. The comparison is, perhaps, not very flattering to the great vassals of the Middle Ages; but we must say what we think. The Duc de Bourgogne kept up an intercourse with Pope Innocent III, pretended to rule Phillip Augustus, as if that prince had been the monarch only of a dozen people. Burgogne had also an understanding with Beaudoin of Flanders, and John Sans Terre also counted a little upon Eudes de Bourgogne.

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That the reader may be better enabled to follow our tale, it is indispensable that we relate in a few words the circumstances in which France and her king found themselves at this juncture.

Phillip Augustus was not a prince free from defects, nor can we pretend to conceal that he was the prime cause of all the embarrassments which marked his long and brilliant reign. Phillip Augustus was at the period we are speaking of about thirty-five or thirty-six years of age, and had occupied the throne since his fifteenth year. He was the sixth king in descent from Hugh Capet. The opening of his reign was stormy but glorious. He subjugated Burgundy and Flanders, and annihilated the pretensions of King Henry of England, father of Richard Cœur de Lion and John.

History accuses Henry of having abused the confidence of the Young Alice of France, sister

of Phillip Augustus, who had been confided to his care by King Louis, as the affianced wife of Henry's eldest son, Henry of the Short Cloak. If the accusation is true, Phillip must be reproached with never having punished that infamous outrage. Richard Cœur de Lion would not accept that part of the heritage of his brother, which enjoined his marriage with Alice. This, however, did not prevent Phillip Augustus, at that time quite young, from forming an intimate friendship with Richard, his vassal—a friendship attended with strange vicissitudes—but qualified by historians as chivalrous.

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Phillip Augustus and Richard Cœur de Lion went together to the Crusades. In that land of adventures the king of England completely eclipsed the king of France. He was more handsome, more brilliant, and more dazzling—stronger if not braver; and they say that Phillip Augustus was therefore jealous of his friend and vassal, and to such a degree as to cause him a dangerous illness. It is certain that Richard, skillful in the use of arms and daring to folly, excited universal admiration. He was the hero of the Crusades. Romancers adopted him for their own, though the Crusades had no result.

Indeed that was the fate of all Richard's undertakings. Phillip returned to France. Richard, who wished also to recover his estates, was made prisoner on reaching Austria; and here happened an event which we would fain efface from the history of Phillip Augustus. Nothing could justify the king of France in becoming a traitor. He did do so, however; and his negotiations with John Sans Terre to share the spoils of his royal prisoner, are well known.

It is said, also, that when the celebrated Troubadour, Blondel, replied with this guitar to the song which he heard Richard, his king, singing from his dark tower, and when *"Une fièvre brûlante"* had succeeded in sending to sleep his gaolers, and delivering his master, Phillip wrote to John, "Take care, the devil is unchained!"

But we should distrust all that is found in the dictionaries; the special mission of these dictionnaries being to mystify those for whose use they are fabricated. But, in fact, John did take care. He betrayed Phillip as he had betrayed Richard, and opened up an interminable war between the two rivals.

Phillip, in his early youth, had married Isabelle d'Artois, niece of the Count of Flanders, who descended in a direct line from Charlemagne. After a long widowhood, wishing to raise up enemies against England, he demanded, about the year 1187, the hand of the princess Ingeburge or Angelburge of Denmark. Ingeburge was adorably beautiful, and much in advance of her times, in the qualities of her mind. But her brother, Canute, was averse to arming against England, which so vexed Phillip, that he conceived an insurmountable aversion for Ingeburge; and during his marriage ceremony he was observed to tremble and pale, as if he had been under the influence of witchcraft.

Some time after he repudiated Ingeburge who adored him, to marry the famous Agnes de Meranie, daughter of an adventurer from the Tyrol, who had assumed the title of Duke. This divorce, followed by a second marriage, the legality of which was more than doubtful, was the source of all the fracas which embarrassed the grand reign of Phillip. Ingeburge protested—retired into a convent, and the Pope issued his thunders.

As to La belle Agnes, she conducted herself like a woman who desired to give future ages an idea that she had played the chief rôle in a tragedy. She performed the part of Queen Berenice, she intrigued, she flattered, and amazed the world with her tale of love.

Incomplete as are the details left us by contemporary writers, it is impossible to hesitate a moment in estimating the character of these two women, Ingeburge and Agnes. They were both beautiful; but Ingeburge was as superior to her rival as the sun is superior to the stars. It is true, that poor Queen Ingeburge had her unloveable name against her. But Phillip Augustus had adorned the daughter of the Bohemian Berthoud—whose proper name was Marie—with the name of Agnes; could he not have done as much for Ingeburge? Besides the frightful name "Ingeburge" was due to French pronunciation. In the days when she was a happy young girl, the princess of Denmark was called Angelberge, and those who loved her called her Angel—nothing could be sweeter or more charming than that.

After the affair of the divorce, and the contested marriage, the reign of Phillip Augustus became lost in inextricable difficulties—useless battles, sieges and entangled negotiations. Skillful diplomatist as he was, Phillip expended years in vain efforts to free himself from this state of things. Agnes de Meranie was, however, the veritable scourge of France.

One day, in the midst of one of those exhausting struggles that Phillip had to sustain against the seditions with which Europe constantly beset his throne, they brought him word that Richard Cœur de Lion was dead. The arrow of a soldier had passed through his breast at the siege of Chaluz. Phillip spoke not a word, but retired to his chamber, remaining there twelve hours with his head between his hands, and refusing all nourishment. During this long meditation was he thinking of the ardent friendship which had united his youth to that of Richard? Was he recalling the strange proofs of friendship and devotion that he had received from the son of Henry Plantagenet—fond caresses followed by mad attacks? Or was he thinking that the future was relieved from a terrible obstacle?

After the death of Richard, Phillip missed that spur which was constantly urging him on to audacious enterprises. We cannot say that he was lulled to sleep in the arms of Agnes—for their romance of love was at best but a rhyme in verses of six feet—but he plunged into his war with the Holy See as into an agreeable pastime, till the death of young Duke Arthur de Bretagne, assassinated by John Sans Terre, aroused him.

Arthur was the husband of Marie of France, daughter of Phillip Augustus and Isabelle. Phillip was, however, now thoroughly roused; and see what his awakening revealed to him.

John Sans Terre was master of Anjou, Aquitaine, and Little Bretagne, while Beaudoin of Flanders had extended his domination over nearly the whole of the northern part of his kingdom.

Othon IV., King of the Romans, and nephew of John Plantagenet, was pressing on the eastern frontier while the Pope threatened the south. Canute, King of Denmark, was said to be arming a powerful fleet to avenge the gross outrage inflicted on his sister, Ingeburge.

It was certainly not Berthoud of Istria *soi-disant* Duc de Meranie, who could aid his royal son-in-law in this difficult crisis. The internal condition of Phillip's kingdom was not much more favourable. The finances—impaired by the continual wars—by the armaments destined for the Crusaders—and by the great architectural undertakings that Phillip had begun—threatened ruin. Nor was Paris tranquil; the quarrels between the students and the bourgeois had just begun, and blood was flowing in the streets.

Lastly, a strange and mysterious rumour, full of terrible menace, began to spread itself; it was told with bated breath at Paris, and through the whole kingdom, that the princes leagued against Phillip would not only attack him in the field, but that within the military league, another league had been formed to assassinate him, and into this league they said that besides John Sans Terre, Beaudoin, Othon, and Canute VI., Saladin himself had entered.

They pronounced the name of the Old Man of the Mountain—a name as dreaded as that of Satan himself. Who had put the poignard of that terrible Ishmaelite, successor of Hassan-Ben-Sebbah? Who was it that had spread the hatred of Phillip's name unto the gorges of the mountains of Liban? Was it Saladin? Was it Beaudoin, then Master of Constantinople? Was it Othon, the emperor? Or was it John Sans Terre? But since we have entered upon the gossip of the thirteenth century we must tell the whole.

Queen Ingeburge was despised, outraged, and a prisoner; and there were not wanting some who insinuated that Queen Ingeburge had sent an emissary to the "Old Man of the Mountain" with a promise of five hundred thousand golden crowns; and whether this is true or false, it is not less certain that Phillip was menaced on all sides. Still these menaces would have been vain, and these embarrassments would have counted for nothing, with that great mind, had it not been paralyzed by another very grave evil.

Innocent III. had launched the lightnings of the church against Phillip, on the occasion of his marriage with the Bohemian; Phillip Augustus was anathematized! excommunicated! Now the plague was as nothing compared to this frightful punishment, which could bruise the life of a king as surely as that of the poorest vassal.

Reason stands aghast before the prodigious power of that moral arm, by means of which the sceptre of St. Peter humbled so many crowned heads. Under the weight of the anathema, there was no pride that could not be brought low. Resistance was impossible, and there was nothing for it but to acknowledge yourself conquered and to make the *amende honorable*, with naked feet and uncovered head, before the church doors. For if you were obstinate, and kept up a senseless struggle, an immediate void was produced around you. Subjects and servants flew from you in affright; the evil was contagious—the anathema preceded you, and for you there was no longer neither friendship, devotion or love. Cupidity itself, that liveliest of all human passions, ceded to the terror inspired by the anathema. Excommunicated, and you could not find a dealer who would weigh you out your bread or fill you a cup to drink. The leper could find a refuge in the compassion of his fellow-man; but compassion to one excommunicated was a crime!

We remember the history of King Robert, who, after having been struck with the lightning of the church, kept two servants; and the trait is worthy of being cited—for it proves that the two servants were faithful, and that the King had that in him which commanded love. But the two servants of King Robert served him with gauntlets of steel, which they purified afterwards by fire, and instead of eating the debris of the King's table, they threw it out to the passing dogs.

It would be idle to deny the utility of that omnipotent rein which set some bounds to the caprices and brutality of our semi-barbarous kings; without the thunder of the church all the thrones of the middle ages would have toppled down—but like all violent remedies, it was a dangerous remedy. The first effect of the major excommunication was to relieve the people of the obedience they owed to their legitimate chief. The Popes were the fomenters of revolt—the Popes, therefore, were the fathers of the revolution.

We have in our time seen a Sovereign Pontiff driven from his States, and travelling sorrowfully on the road to exile. At this very day is not Pius IX. suffering from all the troubles excited formerly in Europe by his predecessors? At the period when the son of God said; "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," Cæsar rendered not to God the things which were God's; consequently, the Vicar of Jesus Christ judged revolutionarily — went against the letter and against the spirit of the gospel. By crying aloud from the height of the Vatican, "To obey is a crime," the Popes unwisely dug the abyss on the edge of which their throne totters to-day. They committed the greatest of all social crimes. For the spontaneous revolt of a people has for itself a thousand arguments, which the heart often accepts, though reason may combat them. But an excitation to revolt can never have either pretext or excuse. The people weigh themselves against their king, and take precedence of him—the people have rights against a king who prevaricates—since the rights which a king possesses are bestowed upon him by the people. Then, in striking, the people strictly speaking invoke a right, if the most absolute of human rights can be exaggerated to cover the crime of parricide. But beyond these two symmetrical rights, there exists, politically speaking, none other. Whoever lights the impious torch of civil war, between a king and his people, is a malefactor.

To those who held the Papacy in profound respect and admiration, not only from a Christian point of view, but still from a social and civilizing point of view, it belongs above all to regret the spots on her history. Let others flatter, and gathering up the fagot of historical lies, call

them the *Crimes of the Popes*—but for our part we feel that we have told them their true crime and their only crime. The absolute and divine authority which they exercised by their spiritual right they allowed to be filtered through their temporal interest—they usurped and invaded the rights of others—and, like all intelligence become blind and stumbling as soon as they entered upon the false road—they struck at the guilty kings over the shoulders of their innocent people.

Behold the direct and certain result of those excommunications, which applied political chastisement to private crimes, and that result was not reached by *ricochets*—No. The Pope, in excommunicating the king, simply put the whole kingdom under interdict, and in such a way that the consolations of religion were pitilessly refused to a whole people for life or death.

If excommunication had struck the king only as a man, one might safely affirm that the lightnings of the church would almost always have struck justly, and especially in the case which now occupies us. Phillip of France, as a Christian, deserved punishment for that double marriage which gave to Agnes the Bohemian, the place of the beautiful and pious Ingeburge. But Innocent III. had published a special Bull, which relieved all the subjects of King Phillip from their sworn allegiance. He had said to all the vassals of the crown, in so many words, Revolt!

It now required all Phillip's strength to conjure the tempest which pressed upon him from all quarters. He was paralyzed by the thunders of Rome!

At the moment when the Chevalier Dieudonné and his page drew up before the great door of the Hotel de Nesle, there was a large reunion in the Hall of Honor of the Hotel. This was a building quite new, and Jean II, one of the richest Seigneurs of that time had built it with much magnificence. The Hall of Honor, an enormous apartment, in full arch to the centre, and pierced with windows, which affected the thickest Roman style, was ornamented with draperies and faisceaux d'armes, mingled with escutcheons already regularly blazoned. In the centre stood an octagon table, supporting the famous lamp of gold, a *chef-d'œuvre* of the goldsmiths of Bruges. Around the table were assembled a dozen great lords, under the presidency of the Duc de Burgogne, seated by the side of his host, Jean de Nesle, who had before him a pitcher of wine and a large rude goblet.

Among the other lords might be distinguished William des Roches, seneschal of Anjou, a renowned warrior; Henry Clement, marechal of France, Count Perche, Duc de Berri, Count Thouars, and the Counts of Nevers, Flanders, and Aumale. Opposite Jean de Nesle, and separated from the thick of the assembly, was a man of arms, handsome and still young, who bore no titles and was called simply Cadocu. This man, however, was not the least important personage of the reunion, for he had the honor of commanding all the highwaymen of the fine kingdom of France. After the King, I believe, indeed, that Caduco's was the heaviest arm in the Kingdom, between the Rhine and the sea. But the worthy young man did not seem any the prouder for that; for he civilly assisted the Lord of Nesle to empty his pitcher of Burgundy wine. Lastly, under the mantelpiece of the vast chimney were two men—the one standing and the other carelessly seated with his feet to the fire.

The latter has already been presented to you in company with the Saracen, Mason Mahmoud el Reis, who came from a great distance. It was Amaury Montreul, Lord of Anet, friend of the King, who came to Paris to kill a woman.

The other bore the sacerdotal costume. His name was Gratien Florent, he was Bishop of Orvieto, and legate of his Holiness Pope Innocent III. It was he who was speaking when we entered into the Hall of Honor of the Hotel de Nesle.

"My lords," said he, "though my voice is already exhausted, I do not flatter myself with having enumerated all the dangers which threaten the King of France; it would require a miracle to save him, and who can dare to think that God would work a miracle in favour of a Prince, who has incurred the Major Excommunication. My last word is this: Phillip Augustus is lost!"

He made a pause—during which the vassals of the King looked at him with anxiety and indecision. "The fact is," murmured the Duke of Burgundy, with a touch of timidity, "that the people are complaining since they were deprived of the sacraments."

"Pardieu!" exclaimed William des Roches, seneschal of Anjou. "I heard a clown saying the other day, *I also want two or three wives, since henceforth we are no longer to be cursed for that.*"

Jean de Nesle took a draught from his great goblet! "There, there," said he, "let my Lord, the King send this Agnes to the Evil One, and then we shall have peace."

"Why Madame Agnes?" asked sharply Amaury Montruel, "why not Ingeburge?"

Jean de Nesle took a second draught, "Because," muttered he, "because, Madame Ingeburge is the Queen."

Jean de Nesle was neither for Ingeburge nor for Agnes; but it is necessary to note this strange circumstance—for in spite of her marriage, the Bohemian was not accepted as Queen seriously by any body: she was the mistress of the King. Ingeburge, on the contrary—outraged and deserted—Ingeburge was the Queen. The power of Phillip Augustus had not been able to undo that which God had done. Ingeburge was so superior to her rival, that public opinion would not allow Agnes to be called a rival.

"Phillip of France will not drive his concubine away," said the legate, "the spirit of hardness and impenitence is in him. Be ye sure that he will be obstinate in his criminal existence."

"But," interrupted Amaury Montreul, answering his own thoughts, "if Ingeburge should happen to die, would not the Pope leave us at peace?"

Gratien Florent cast upon him a piercing look.

"Pardieu!" exclaimed, roughly, Jean de Nesle, "I had the same idea as thee, mon compère Amoury, "if that Agnes could only be passed from life to death, we should all be like so many little saints!"

Amaury Montruel shrugged his shoulders and growled out some unintelligible words.

"My lord," said Gratien Florent, the legate, "these are vain suppositions; let us reason upon the future. Do you intend to be lost with Phillip of France, or will you save yourselves with the church?"

The question was skilfully put. However the vassals of the King still hesitated—those who were the most forward against Phillip, undertaking to clear the road for others.

"I will go with the church," said d'Aumale, from whom the King had recently taken his two countries of Boulogne and Dammartin.

"I will go with the church, also," said Nevers Du Perche, and De Thouars said the same thing.

Henri Clement, marechal of France, and the seneschal of Anjou, William des Roches, replied in their turn,

"If the King, summoned in due form, rejects the authority of the church, we will side with the church."

"I will follow the others," murmured Montruel.

"Good!" exclaimed Jean de Nesle, "me also! me also! Pardieu! but I should like to know, what mon compère Antoine says—he seems to have put his tongue in his pocket this evening."

That compère Antoine was Cadocu, and Cadocu, in fact, had not opened his mouth during the whole sitting. The chief of the highwaymen, thus addressed, raised his head a little, and began by yawning impudently, while regarding, turn by turn, each member of the assembly.

"Me," replied he, at last, "I say, compère Jean, that there is no more wine in thy pitcher, and I am choking."

Eudes III., Duke of Burgundy, lowered his brow. "Are we in a tavern?" murmured he.

"Thank God!" replied Cadocu, without in the least disconcerting himself, "I have never regretted the time I have passed at the tavern; but this I call lost time——but," said he, in a good-tempered way, "the Duke of Burgundy has forgotten to tell us what may be his intentions."

"I am a Christian," said Eudes, in a firm voice, "and my sword is for the church."

"Ah! well then, mon compère Jean," resumed Cadocu, "fill the pitcher; for I am about to make a speech upon three points: for as I have the smallest title of any of you, my lords, I think it my duty to show myself the greatest gossip," blowing his nose, and coughing gently, after the manner of a licentiate about to unravel his thesis.

Among all these noble barons, Antoine Cadocu, son of a villan, was not so small a seigneur as he wished to appear. He was a very powerful man, and much dreaded. A moment ago, the Duke of Burgundy desired to send him away—but the Duke of Burgundy dared not. As to the moral side the chief of the highwaymen had scarcely any faith, and no law; but he was what they called a good fellow, and in short was worth more to the King of France than all those great unquiet vassals—jealous and directly interested in lowering the influence of the crown.

"Sire legate," said he, saluting Gratien Florent, "in sending you over the Alps, did the Holy Father think at all of poor Cadocu?"

"Doubtless," replied quickly the Bishop of Orvieto, "his Holiness expressly told me that my mission would not be fulfilled as it should be, if I did not conciliate to the cause of Rome the brave and illustrious captain of whom all Europe speaks."

"As to that, sire legate, Europe must needs talk of something, but we do not hear it ourselves. Did the Holy Father add nothing?"

"The Holy Father said that he held you in high esteem."

"Good, good—and what sum has he charged you to propose for me, sire legate?"

The Bishop of Orvieto paled with anger. Jean de Nesle burst out laughing with all his heart, and his hilarity was shared by nearly all the members of the reunion. Cadocu alone kept his grand seriousness.

"Holy Cross, my good lords!" said he, "I am much honored by your laughter, but I joke not. You have lands, fields, mills, tilled lands, great woods, and all that fills your pockets annually; but I have nothing but an army of great gourmands, who earn nothing, and eat all day, only stopping to drink—and think you that I could persuade them that they carry a sword by their side only to play at Easter holidays?"

"But," replied the legate, "those are not the considerations——"

"What considerations would you have?" exclaimed Cadocu, "I will furnish you some—if Jean de Nesle will pour me out a bumper, for I am stifled!"

Jean de Nesle passed him the pitcher, and he swallowed an heroic draught.

"Now here are some considerations," said he, "and famous ones. In the first place, if I was Phillip Augustus, King of France, it would not be two poor Queens that I would have. Twenty-four would be necessary to me at least—since, as simple Cadocu, I have already a dozen; and if the Pope had anything to say about it, I would turn Musselman to vex him."

"Thou blasphemest," said the legate.

"Yes, indeed, sire Bishop, I blaspheme," replied quietly the highwayman, "that is my manner; and if the church has any thunders left, and if it can afford them any diversion, let them try to excommunicate me; my hide is hard and my back is broad. We shall see which is worth most, the parchment of your bulls or my skin!"

"My lords," exclaimed the Bishop of Orvieto, "will you allow the Holy See to be thus insulted before you?"

"Abroad and in open day, perhaps not, sire legate," said Cadocu, "but here in the secure den of Jean, mon compère, that can be attended by no consequences; besides I am about to argue. I promised a speech on three points."

"Master Antoine," observed the Duke of Burgundy, "perhaps you may abuse the liberty which is given you."

"Do you find it so, my lord; ah! well, then, I will abridge my matter—if such is your good pleasure, I only wish to say this—Treason for treason; I prefer paid treason!"

"Do you intend to accuse us?" exclaimed the Duke, putting his hand to his sword.

"Not at all, my lord, not at all. If you ask

nothing for yourself, there will be more ducats for remunerating my humble abilities. After these loyal explanations I shall repeat my question, and I will ask the sire legate what sum he is able to propose for me?"

Gratien Florent was about to give vent to all his indignation, when John de Nesle rose.

"Sire Bishop," said he, "take care; you cannot have compère Antoine for nothing, and if you have him not, so much the worse for you!"

The eyes of the legate passed round the table, and he observed more than one face full of indecision and reflection—the Count d'Aumale made him a sign from a distance, which counselled him to capitulate.

"If ten thousand golden crowns," murmured he, while the blush of shame mounted to his forehead, "if ten thousand crowns will suffice you."

"Not at all, sire legate," interrupted Cadocu, "that will not suffice me."

"Twenty thousand."

"Are we going to proceed like the tricky people, who are selling old furniture at auction? Put down one hundred thousand crowns at once and the business is closed!"

"One hundred thousand crowns!" exclaimed the Bishop, "that is an enormous sum!"

Cadocu frowned in his turn. "The brave man does not like to be cheapened." Count d'Aumale made a second sign to the legate.

"One hundred thousand golden crowns, then," said the Bishop, with a sigh, "this is an interdict that will cost us dear!"

Cadocu pushed back his chair and approached the legate—shaking his white and delicate hand roughly. "Sire Bishop," said he, "I am yours. To prove it to you I recommend you to write it down here on the spot, and at this table, in a little agreement that all these illustrious lords may sign. I remember a clerk of great judgment, who said in Latin, "Words fly, writing remains.' As for the hundred thousand crowns, sire Bishop, I will give you credit with pleasure, till I accompany you to your dwelling!" He resumed his seat, filled his goblet, and concerned himself no more with what was passing around him.

The legate did not require the counsel of Master Antoine, for he produced the draft of an agreement from his pocket.

"Since all difficulties are smoothed between us, my dear lords," said he, unfolding a great parchment, "nobody here, will, I am sure, refuse to engage, by his signature or by his seal, to sustain, against all comers, the interests of the Holy Apostolic See."

"The word of a gentleman is sufficient," replied Eudes.

And every one of them shewed more or less explicitly the repugnance that he had. But the legate prevailed easier over Eudes and his peers than over the highwayman, Cadocu.

"Will you risk nothing my dear lords," murmured he, "to be independent and suzerains?"

"Who will answer to us for the price attached to our consent?" asked Count de Nevers.

"This," replied the Bishop of Orvieto, raising his parchment above his head.

"Read us your charter, then, sire Bishop," said the Duke of Burgundy.

Gration Florent immediately commenced: "In presence of the most Holy Trinity, the first day of March, 1202, I, Gratien Florent, by the grace of God and the holy Apostolic See, bishop of Orvieto, lateral legate of his holiness our Father, Pope Innocent the Third, I have received the engagement and oath of the undersigned noblemen, who promise, upon their honour, in this life, and upon their salvation in the other, to succour their said Father in Jesus Christ, against all comers, Christian or Pagan, and especially against Phillip of France.

"For inasmuch as that I have relieved the said noblemen of their faith and allegiance towards the said Phillip of France, their Sovereign Lord, declaring him hereby deprived of all his rights and royal privileges, heretofore recognized by the Holy See, in consequence of rebellion, sacrilege and forfeiture.

"In such a way that the said dukes, counts, and noblemen——"

Gratien Florent, bishop of Orvieto, had got thus far with his reading, which he had performed in a loud and intelligible voice, when Amaury Montruel shook him strongly by the arm, and the astonished bishop paused.

There was a noise in the adjoining chamber, on the pavement of which they heard a short and firm step.

Amaury turned pale.

"What is that?" said Jean de Nesle, half rising.

"What signifies it to us?" said Gratien Florent wishing to recommence.

But he could not proceed, for Montruel, seizing him by the body, without ceremony, carried him off his legs and ran with him out of the hall, through an opening in the tapestry which led to the private apartment of the Lord de Nesle. The heavy drapery closed over them and they disappeared. The duke and counts were endeavouring to account for the motive of that unexpected and bizarre action, when the folding doors opened and an usher in the livery of de Nesle appeared upon the threshold, and uttered in a clear voice that single word:

"The King!"

CHAPTER VI.

We have already described the man who entered into the hall, where the vassals of the crown were assembled, when we pointed him out to the reader upon the road which led from the tower of the Louvre to the Porte St. Honoré. It was the Chevalier Dieudonné, the second person met on horseback by Eric and his sister, Eve, under the walls of Paris; and consequently, according to the sorceress, Mila, "Destiny." And you see that the sorceress was not much deceived; for was not Phillip Augustus "Destiny" for Ingeburge, who adored him from the depths of her prison?

The King entered alone, leaving his handsome page, Albret, in the neighbouring room. We

have already said that he dressed with extreme simplicity; but this simplicity could not be merely a precaution at a time when all the world knew that he was threatened by the assassins of John Plantagenet—by the assassins of Canute—of Othon, and of the Old Man of the Mountain. But in the midst of these titled soldiers—coarse, shrewd, selfish, and cowardly, as they were, if not on the field of battle, at least in the council—in the midst of these great vassals—restless traitors, who rounded their vulgar foreheads with their golden coronets, Phillip Augustus, in spite of his grey livery, had alone the air of a gentleman.

We remember hearing, in our childhood, a beautiful story of this king. It was said that on the eve of the battle of Bruvines, Phillip Augustus assembled his jealous vassals at the church, and depositing his crown upon the altar, before them, exclaimed, "if there is any one here present who believes himself more worthy of wearing that crown than me, I freely give it him." This speech has been immortalized by poets and painters. But some *savans*, having nothing better to do, quarrelled with that speech and put it to death; and not contented with that murder, instead of allowing it to rest in peace after having assassinated it, the merciless creatures inflicted upon it the last outrage, that of burying it in a dissertation of their own belief. Phillip Augustus, say they, never said any such thing. No, never, never, never!

For our part we believe religiously in the words imputed to the chivalrous Cambronne, and even in the forty ages of Napoleon the 1st, perched, though badly at ease, on the apex of the Pyramids, we shall always remember the beautiful speech of Phillip Augustus. And all the better if some baron had put forth his hand to take the crown, for Phillip would certainly have left him one-handed. It is thus at least that we understand the thing, and to interpret that speech differently, whether apocryphal or not, would be an insipid platitude. For a king never surrenders his crown but to God.

Phillip Augustus crossed the great hall of the Hotel de Nesle, with a firm and decided step. The lords assembled round the table were very deferential, as would have been said in the days of the Fronde; they scarcely knew what kind of a face to put upon the matter, for Phillip was the last person they had expected to meet them that night. The master of the house blushed, stammered, and was seeking something to say. The others tried hard to keep a good countenance.

All rose—the king saluted them, and seated himself in the duke of Burgundy's place.

"God keep you, my lords," said he, "I have long promised to visit the palace of my cousin de Nesle, which puts our poor Louvre to shame; and though it is a little late, I have fortunately fixed upon this evening to find all my faithful companions assembled."

"What!" muttered Jean de Nesle, "did the king know?" Phillip smiled.

"The king knows everything," said he. Then casting his eyes round the table, they encountered those of Cadocu, to whom he gave an imperceptible movement of the head, but to which the highwayman replied with a wink of his eye.

"We were assembled, sire," said the Duke of Burgundy, "not for serious matters, but for our common pleasure."

"I see! I see!" replied Phillip, "when you heard the king announced you sent away your dice and false cards."

Cadocu burst out laughing, and Phillip, addressing him especially, added—

"Were they, then, snaring birds, Captain Antoine?"

Cadocu cast a look towards the door, hidden by the folds of the tapestry, and through which the legate and Montruel had disappeared.

"My faith, very dreaded lord," replied, he "I know not; but perhaps they may have been."

"Come," said the king, without losing the smile on his face "you will excuse me, gentlemen, for putting an end to your diversion. But seeing around me so many brave and loyal barons, I should not like to lose this opportunity of treating for my estate of France. The whole of Europe, and I believe other parts of the world, are against us at this moment. But it is my opinion that we shall have our rights from Europe and the whole world."

We should not conclude that all the lords assembled on this occasion at the house of Jean de Nesle were all equally deep in the thought of treason. Henry Clement, marechal of France, and William des Roches, were both ancient warriors, and ready to die for Phillip—but for Christian Phillip, and not for Phillip, excommuicated.

With the exception of the Count d'Aumale, the personal enemy of the king, Count de Nevers, the evil tool of John Plantagenet, and the Duke of Burgundy, who was too powerful, and too near the throne not to look upon it with envy; the others were really neutral—and equally with the thunders of Rome the chances would have been all on Phillip's side in that assembly. But under the interdict of Rome they believed Phillip Augustus crushed and lost.

"By the help of God," murmured the Duke of Burgundy, "the chevaliers of France can stand against the universe."

"By the help of God, my cousin, as you say," replied the king, drily, "for it is God who makes the hearts of men brave and faithful. Gentlemen," resumed he, suddenly raising his head and changing his tone, "we require your loyal support, and we reckon firmly upon it. The Pope, unmindful of the services that we have rendered to Christianity in the holy wars of the Crusades, and mixing himself up too lightly in our domestic affairs, has given an iniquitous sentence against us."

"Very dreaded lord," interrupted d'Aumale, "the sentences of our Holy Father cannot be iniquitous."

The lips of the king turned pale, while a fugitive carnation mounted to his cheek.

"Count," murmured he, between his clenched teeth, "has he promised to give thee back Boulogne, Dampierre and Dammartin?"

And as d'Aumale was about to reply, he reduced him to silence by an imperious gesture.

"John de Nesle," resumed he, "the king is thy guest; see that they do not again interrupt him."

"Let nobody interrupt the king any more,"

proclaimed the Chatelaine of Bruges gravely, pushing away his pitcher and goblet, and drawing his sword, he placed himself standing by the side of King Phillip, who said tc him:

"My cousin, it is good and I know your willing heart."

Cadocu laughed in his beard, and thought "Oh! the joker! who spoke just now of bird snaring?"

The king proceeded.

"He would lie in his throat, who should accuse me of not venerating and not loving the Vicar of Jesus Christ upon earth. If the great Pope Innocent III. had acted properly towards the King of France whom he has for so long a time called his well-beloved son, the King of France would have accepted on his knees his paternal remonstrances. But instead of employing the merciful means as taught by our Divine Master, the Pope has struck me cruelly, and without any resemblance of mercy, as if I had been the guiltiest of the guilty. Gentlemen, I have sought in the depth of my conscience, and have asked myself, what crime I have committed? Is it in having fought against infidelity; for the Pope Innocent III. has made common cause with the infamous Prince of the Mountain, whose poignards seek my bosom in the dark!"

There was now a sensation among the seigneurs, and though the argument of the king was certainly not very solid, there was a certain skilfulness in showing that the knife of the Infidel was leagued with the sword of St. Peter, and was calculated to impress strongly those coarse but subtle spirits.

"For my part," continued the king, "I cannot see what common interest can cement this alliance between heaven and hell. Is it a crime on my part for having called to account John of England for the murder of the husband of my daughter? But John Plantagenet, though himself excommunicated for that murder, employs in my city of Paris miserable beings charged with putting me to death by treason; so that if some day you should find me stretched upon the earth, and weltering in my blood, you may justly say, John of England has given this stab; but it was Rome who opened the king's cuirass."

Here a murmur was heard behind the tapestry.

"Oh! ho!" thought Cadocu, "that is sire Bishop, who will soon betray himself behind the door crying out *Nego Majorem!*"

The lords looked at each other.

"I am then excommunicated," repeated Phillip, "me! the Champion of the Church against infidelity—me! the champion of the orphan and widow against John Plantagenet—me! the Christian Knight who bears all over his body the traces of the fatigues endured in the Holy Land! Oh! my lords, I know well that I have sinned: God alone is pure and void of all crime. Obedient to a scruple of conscience, I repudiated the noble Ingeburge, who was a relation in a prohibited degree to the late Queen Isabelle of Flanders, my first wife. Then, ceding to a great passion, I called to my bed, Agnes, who is now Queen; and possibly it is not permitted to a sovereign to listen to the voice of his heart as the humblest of his subjects can do! But I demand of thee, Eudes Duke of Burgundy—I demand of you, Duc de Berri—of you, the Counts du Perche, de Thouars, de Nevers, and de Flanders, and of thee, William des Roches, and of thee, Henri Clement would you have desired that your sovereign—he, who considers it his greatest glory, the honour of planting his banner in advance of yours on the field of battle—would you have desired that the King of France should bow down his head like a criminal vassal?"

"No," said the seneschal d'Anjou.

"No," said the marechal of France.

That was all; the other lords kept silent.

However, Jean de Nesle and du Perche gave an equivocal nod of the head; they were half persuaded.

"Jour de Dieu!" exclaimed Cadocu, "my dreaded lord, the king has not interrogated me, because, I suppose, I am scarcely worth the trouble; but I have seen the English cut in pieces at St. Omer, at Gisors, and elsewhere—and I say still, Vive le Roi!"

The rough Cadocu knew how to flatter as well as another. Phillip thanked him with a gracious gesture. Then, just in the manner that the legate Gratien Florent had done, he drew from his breast a large parchment. At the sight of this, Cadocu, who had ceased drinking on the arrival of the King, filled his goblet and emptied it at a draught. Jean de Nesle, who dared not imitate him, regarded him with a sorrowful and jealous air.

Phillip Augustus unfolded his parchment saying "I should be glad to believe that all here, who have not yet replied, are, nevertheless, of your opinion, my faithful companions, William and Henri—I should be glad to believe that in the house of my cousin, Jean de Nesle, there are neither traitors or cowards; but I shall be more sure of it, when each person present shall have put his signature to the foot of this parchment."

All parchments of this nature resembled each other, at that period, when folded; but by good fortune the parchment of King Phillip Augustus was exactly the same in every particular, at least in appearance, as the parchment of the legate, and might easily be mistaken for it.

"I am ready to sign," said the seneschal d'Anjou and the marechal of France, both together.

"We should, at least, like to know—" began Eudes of Burgundy—

"Hold me the flambeau, Captain Antoine," interrupted the king.

Cadocu obeyed and the king read:—"In presence of the Very Holy Trinity, the first day of the year, 1202, I Phillip, by the grace of God, King of France, &c. I have received the engagement and oath of the undersigned Nobles, who promise, upon their honor, in this life, and their salvation in the life which is to come, to succour their said lord the king, against all comers, Christians or Pagans, notwithstanding the sentence rendered against him by Innocent, third of that name, Bishop of Rome.

"For inasmuch as in reward of their faithful support, I have assured the said Lords the possession of the fiefs which they hold from my crown, declaring their rights and privileges secured to them and to their successors.

"In such a way that the said Dukes, Counts and Noblemen——

"The king gives us nothing—" interrupted here the Count de Nevers.

"Silence," said Jean de Nesle."

"The King knows all," said Phillip, for the second time, "and he pardons—is that nothing?"

"It is not enough," replied the Count d'Aumale, boldly, "to fight with Rome is to be lost in this world, and damned in the other—no! it is not enough!"

Count de Perche and the Duc de Berri repeated, "It is not enough."

In fact, the king had offered nothing to his great vassals, in reward for the highest proof of devotion that a sovereign could ask; but was not that because the king had nothing to offer? Beyond his naked walls of the tower of the Louvre, his crown, and his sword, I do not see what Phillip Augustus could have given to his peers; for all these noblemen were at least as rich as himself—all that he possessed over them was his right and his genius. This was a great deal—but it gave nothing.

There was a long silence in the hall of the Hotel de Nesle. Gratien Florent, the lateral legate, who was spying this scene through some slit in the tapestry, must at this moment have entertained good hopes. The vassals of the king were, in short, consulting—and wore, for the most part, a decided air of refusal. In vain the two loyal soldiers, William des Roches and Henri Clement, preached obedience, by example, but selfishness preached louder.

Independence was the thought that took possession of their minds; and each one had a hope of fixing the crown on his own head, and becoming king.

France, it is true, would no longer exist, but independence! ah, independence!

Some future day each of these independents might be devoured piecemeal by the English or by some other power—this did not raise the shadow of a doubt—but independence!

The Bishop of Orvieto thought he had gained his cause. So much the more, that Captain Antoine Cadocu, seeing that his advances had been but indifferently received, had withdrawn into his shell, and was grumbling behind his pitcher. The legate said to himself:

"That Phillip passes for a clever man; had it been me I would have taken that brute Cadocu just now, and thrown him at the head of the other brutes."

The legate was a man of infinite wit.

"Well! my lords," said the king, "you have had good time for reflection. Will you sign?"

While speaking, he fixed his eyes on the seneschal of Anjou and the marechal of France, who were advancing to sign first.

The king clapped them both upon the shoulder, and whispered, "We know what we are doing, my masters; it was not to obtain your signatures that I entered here."

"I will sign," said Jean de Nesle," because the king has come to my house alone, and placed confidence in my faith."

"Idiot!" thought the Bishop of Orvieto, "I will wager that the sergeant-at-arms is at the door."

Amaury Montruel, who was with him behind the tapestry, caught him by the arm, and drew him towards a window, which opened upon the avenue leading from the Hotel to the Rue St. Honoré.

"You have gained your bet, sire Bishop," said Amaury, laughing.

The legate could see, by the light of the moon, thirty sergeants-of-arms of the guard—a body recently instituted by Phillip Augustus. Their chased steel armour plates shining on their shoulders like mirrors.

"Surely there are other issues," murmured he.

"Sire Bishop," said Amaury, "there are also other sergeants-of-arms." The legate was seized with a fit of trembling.

"Fortunately," said he, as if to reassure himself, "fortunately the king does not know we are here."

"The king knows all," replied the merciless Montruel.

"Well!" said the king again.

The Count du Perche said, with somewhat a bad grace, "I will sign."

"That makes four," said the king slowly, "there remain still my cousins the Dukes of Berri and Burgundy, the Counts de Thouars, de Nevers, de Flanders, and d'Aumale, Viscounts de Saintes, and d'Auxerre, Baron de Montbard, Chretien de Pruym, Jean de Chatillon,——and others."

"Very dreaded lord," replied the Duke of Burgundy, "all those whom you have named fear God more than the king.

"That is a formal refusal, cousin of Burgundy. It is a refusal."

"Hallo, Cadocu! rouse thee!" exclaimed Phillip Augustus, in a voice which vibrated through the hall, raising himself at the same time to his full height.

The highwayman shook on his seat—he was in fact half asleep.

"What would you with me, mon sire?" muttered he.

"I wish to know," replied the king, "how many brave boys you have to sell me, if I give you a proper price?"

"God's faith, mon sire," replied Antoine Cadocu, "if it's a question of fighting your good cousins, Burgundy, de Berry, de Nevers, d'Aumale, and de Thouars, I believe that I shall give you my little children gratis!"

"Hear that!" groaned the Bishop of Orvieto; "he asked me a hundred thousand crowns just now!"

"No, no! Captain Antoine," said the king, whose gaiety at that moment might appear rather bizarre, "good reckonings make good friends. I wish to pay thee, and to pay thee cash; only tell me how many lances thou canst furnish me?"

Cadocu assumed the air of a man who was making a complicated calculation.

"Ma foi, very dreaded lord," replied he at last, "I cannot tell you exactly. In the county of Soissons I have a company which is worth a little more than the whole contingent of the Duke of Burgundy. In Orleans I have twice as many of all arms than would be necessary to swallow the whole of Berri, its sheep and its Duke. At Boulogne I have my brother Francois, who would be the happiest rogue in the world, if you would give him the j[illegible] of breaking the

head of the Count de Nevers. In Normandy, sire, William de Roches can tell you my band is an army." The seneschal d'Anjou gave an affirmative sign of the head. "In short," pursued the highwayman, "with roundness and simplicity in your place, very dreaded lord, I would rather have at my service the poor Antoine Cadocu alone than that crowd of high valors, who inscribe upon their banners "*Each for Himself*," and who take refuge behind the name of God every time they desire to accomplish a treason," and the voice of the highwayman shook with anger.

All those whom he had insulted so audaciously were knights as well as high lords, and not one among them could be accused of wearing a sword, which was not always ready to fly from its scabbard. It was ten to one that the great hall of the Hotel de Nesle would not have blood shed upon its pavement that night.

King Phillip Augustus laughed kindly and made friendly and good-tempered signs—sometimes to the seneschal,—sometimes to the marechal—sometimes to John de Nesle, or to the Count du Perche. And yet King Phillip was not of an exceedingly frolicsome character. Was all this a comedy or was Cadocu only rehearsing a rôle composed by the king? Some of them believed so.

Seeing the general commotion, the king said, "my lords, be calm, I warn you; and above all touch not your swords."

"We have been outraged unworthily," said Nevers, who had already drawn his sword.

The king looked at him.

"Take care, Count de Nevers," said the king, lowering his voice a little, "the king is of opinion that Captain Antoine has spoken properly."

"Ah!" groaned the Bishop, "there is no blood in their veins this evening."

"Ma foi, sire Bishop," whispered Amaury Montruel, "I—who pretend to know the weak and the strong side of every one there,—I confess that I see not a drop; I would, indeed, give the Evil One something if he would tell me how all that is going to end."

Nevers and all the lords, whom Cadocu had insulted, were now standing.

CHAPTER VII.

Cadocu had turned himself round upon his seat, and never seemed more at his ease.

In spite of the orders of the king, the great vassals were grouped at the extremity of the large table, engaged in earnest debate. The Duke of Burgundy tried in vain to moderate their rising anger; and it was a strange spectacle to witness—on the one hand, the rage of the vassals, restrained only by the presence of the king—and on the other, the quiet scorn with which the king regarded them. No previous king of France would ever have been able to restrain that anger so long.

Phillip Augustus had already raised the throne two or three steps; but the great blow of Bouvines had not yet descended on the neck of the feudal opposition. It was indeed evident that the swords were about to leap from their scabbards.

"Come hither, mon compere Jean," said the king; De Nesle obeyed immediately.

"Thou didst not deceive thyself, Jean, mon cousin," resumed Phillip, "when you said that I came into your house alone and confiding in thy good faith; and thus will I ever come to the house of my trusty companions. But I knew also, that I should meet a numerous assemblage here, and I acted accordingly. I came alone, but I shall return well guarded; Jean, mon cousin, open the window."

De Nesle obeyed.

"What dost thou see?" demanded the king.

"I see, very dreaded lord, the maces of your serjeants."

"Ah, well; Jean, mon compere, these maces are for the swords which may be drawn in spite of the king's will."

"If that is a thrust at our order," said Nevers incapable of containing himself any longer——

"Albret!" cried Phillip Augustus, raising his voice a little.

The young and handsome page appeared on the threshold of the door, where Phillip had entered.

"Is Jacques Belin there?" demanded the king.

"He is here, and waiting for orders," replied a rough voice behind the page.

The Duke of Burgundy turned pale. "Are we betrayed?" murmured he, looking at De Nesle with distrust.

"Santa Maria!" said the Bishop, "does he still doubt that?"

"No! my cousin of Burgundy, you are not betrayed," replied Phillip; "the Hotel de Nesle has been surrounded, without the knowledge of its owner; surrounded by my orders—the orders of the King of France, who does not feel himself quite old enough yet, to let his crown fall into your hands. Pardon me, Jean de Nesle," added he with cordiality, "the king knows his friends as well as his enemies. My lords," resumed he, taking all at once that air of royal gravity which he knew so well how to assume on the right occasion, "our fathers had no guard; I have taken one to defend me against the knife of the Englishman and against the poignard of the Saracen. It is not my fault if it is also called upon to help me against your swords."

He made a sign, and through two of the principal doors, twenty-four macemen entered.

The legate could scarce contain his anger behind the tapis; but he was doomed to witness more unpleasantness. Cadocu gave a hearty shake of the hand to Jacques Belin, captain of the sergeant macemen of the guard.

"God forbid, my lords," continued the king, "that I should disarm the chevaliers of France! Keep your swords so long as you are chevaliers of France; and take your places if that will be agreeable to you. I will attend to you presently;" and with his head resting upon his hand he appeared to collect himself for an instant. At length, in a deep and solemn voice, he exclaimed.—"I am the master! God has confided to me these people of France, to govern and protect them. Whosoever shall place himself before me—

to obstruct me—I will break him down. Whoever comes to my aid, him will I reward to the extent of my power. Jean de Nesle, thou art as noble as myself, and wealthier than I am; I can give thee nothing but my friendship: it is thine. Guillaume des Roches and Henry Clement, you have been a long time the first lieutenants of the crown. Whatever thy wish may be, Count du Perche, thou must tell it. But here is mon compère, Antoine Cadocu, who is neither very noble nor very rich. Now listen and attend, all you who are present, and learn what a King of France is able to do!"

He drew his sword, saying, "Approach Messire Antoine."

Antoine waited not to have his name repeated.

"On your knees!" said the king.

Cadocu knelt.

The king touched him on the cheek with the flat of his sword, saying, "By the Grace of God and the Archangel St. Michael, Antoine Cadocu, I dub thee knight!"

There arose a murmur at the end of the table.

"That does not seem to please you, my lords," said the king, resuming his bitter smile; "Think you, then, that a faithful subject will tarnish the ranks of your chivalry? But you shall have cause for stronger murmurs yet. Cadocu! Wilt thou be a baron?"

"Why not?" replied the brigand.

"Wilt thou be a count?"

"If it is agreeable to you, most dreaded sire."

"Wilt thou be a duke?"

"I will be a prince, if you wish it."

Though to tell the truth, Cadocu did not appear to be much enchanted; and it was but too evident, that he would have preferred to have been rewarded in money, for was he not already more powerful than a baron, count or duke?

"It is all very well, Messire Antoine," said the king, "but it does not suit me that you should be a baron without barony; a count without a county; or a duke without suzerain states. By reason of high treason and forfeitures, I am about to dispose of a few baronies, several counties, and two duchies at least; so we have a good choice."

The great vassals found themselves like so many foxes, entangled in a snare, and looked at each other more abashed than angered. The blood spurted from the lips of Nevers. The Bishop of Orvieto, who had heard all that had passed, said to himself—

"This is a skillful man; he cuts down the forest of the Holy See, to exalt his own throne. I would rather have a flock of geese than these same terrible seigneurs! We have lost a beautiful game, nor do I care to have revenge. It will be more profitable to take a hand in that man's game."

"Which would suit thee best, Cadocu?" demanded the king,—"The duchy of Berri or the duchy of Bourgogne?"

Cadocu hesitated for a moment, and that moment was at once seized by the grand vassals of the throne of France to make their submission—they were not afraid of the king's sergeants-at-arms, nor of Messire Antoine, with his myriads of brigands, but rather of the king and his iron will. They had expected that he would have broken down under all the embarrassments that had surrounded him at once. They found him however firm and strong, and they were subdued. They felt that their influence—all rebellious as it was—withered up in presence of that unshakeable will.

The age was progressing; power had cast off its swaddling clothes, and light began to dawn on the governmental chaos. Certes we wish not to say that Cadocu, the highwayman, was a pure representative of the will of the people; but whoever had witnessed all that had just passed in the great hall of the Hotel de Nesle, might have guessed that already the people and their king were about to shake hands over the bowed heads or decapitated bodies of the high barons.

The vassals of Phillip Augustus knew, that with the support of the highwayman, to say nothing of the seigneurs who would rally to the throne, the king was well able to put his threat into execution; and they knew, moreover, that the resolution to do it was not lacking.

They were therefore afraid.

"Most dreaded sire," said Eudes de Burgogne, advancing respectfully, holding by the hand the Duke of Berri and followed by counts, viscounts, barons and chevaliers, "it is enough; may it please you to have pity. We have deceived ourselves by good intentions and devout scruples. Receive us with mercy; and do not debase too much those who are your peers by the act of God."

"Thou seest, then, Messire Antoine," whispered the king, "they do not think thee worthy of becoming a duke and peer!"

"By God's faith!" growled the brigand, "I would have played the prince better than thou: had they come to me, I would have done their business, and stripped them as naked as little St. John, and set them to work with some gang of earth-diggers: but as to the peerage, the wine of Messire Jean is more to my taste."

In proof of which he emptied an enormous pitcher.

"Cousin Bourgogne," said the king, "do you speak in the name of all our vassals?"

"Yes, sire."

And in short, dukes, counts, barons and chevaliers assented in one chorus.

"You desire, then," said the king, "to attach your signatures to the act with which I have already made you acquainted?"

"That is our desire."

"Then, in that case, my lords, let us be good friends, and forget the past; only," added he, while pointing to Cadocu, "it is but just that you should bear the expense of the joyous advent of this chevalier. I therefore levy a tax of two hundred thousand crowns of gold to be borne among you, according to your incomes."

"Behold a brave king!" exclaimed Messire Antoine.

"Venal soul!" thought the legate.

Jean Berlin, captain of the serjeants-at-arms, departed to perform his round of duties. All was pacified.

The seigneurs signed the engagement to sustain the excommunicated Phillip Augustus; and among our national archives that act is still pre-

served, showing, for the first signature, that of Eudes III, Duke of Bourgogne.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Now, Jean de Nesle, *my friend*," said Phillip Augustus, laughing, "where hast thou hidden the good Bishop of Orvieto, lateral legate of our Holy Father?"

"Morbleu! it really appears as though the king knows everything," said Messire Jean.

It is not to be supposed that the humiliated grand vassals were vexed to see the legate confounded in his turn. But it is easier to confound a Duke of Burgogne than an Apostolic legate, specially when that legate has been listening at the door. As Jean de Nesle rose to seek the bishop in his hiding place, that functionary burst suddenly through the door, with a smile upon his lips.

"Since the king knows all," said he, bowing with respect, "it is not necessary that I should now inform his majesty that our Holy Father, wishing to preserve, at any price, the greatest king in Christendom within the communion of the church, has deigned to convoke a new council to re-examine the affair of the two Queens, and *that, too,* at the special request of his well-beloved son Phillip, King of France.

It was doubtless in the event of Phillip, King of France, refusing to submit to the decrees of this new council, that sire Bishop of Orvieto was instructed to secure, in writing, the concurrence of the grand vassals."

"The king knows all!" replied the Bishop, with a gracious reverence, "it is impossible to hide anything from him. It was, in short, for that."

Phillip Augustus frowned; and for a moment, one would have thought that his anger was about to deprive him of all his advantages. Fortunately for him, at that moment, Amaury Montruel, in his turn, came forth from his hiding place. Phillip was this time really surprised.

"Thee here!" exclaimed he.

"I was with sire Bishop," replied Montruel, "and I can affirm to my dreaded lord, that sire Bishop is the passionate admirer of the merits of Madame Agnes."

Gratient Florent trembled—a new interest had arisen and a new mystery.

"Has sire Bishop spoken to you of Agnes?" enquired the king, naively, for the shrewdest politicians become children when the object of their love is in question.

"Sire Bishop has spoken to me of Madame Agnes," replied the imperturbable Montruel, "he told me that the Holy Father was in nowise ignorant of the greatness of her soul and of her many virtues."

"Indeed!"

"But"—would have interposed the legate —"And I promised him, to relate to you his words, in order that you might regard him with a still more favourable eye."

The legate bowed—not daring to deny; but he thought to himself—"In what coin does this Madame Agnes pay this Amaury Montruel?"

It was break of day when the gates of the Hotel de Nesle opened to let out that numerous and brilliant calvacade,—composed of King Phillip Augustus, his grand vassals, and Gratien Florent, Bishop of Orvieto, legate of the Holy See. Behind marched the sergeants-at-arms, commanded by Jacques Belin, who had by this time enjoyed a good souper-déjeuner. Everybody was satisfied, or at least appeared so—the most touching harmony reigned among that most noble escort, and the reconciliation seemed wide and complete. The king entered the Louvre, and each nobleman turned towards his own house. Cadocu sought some low haunt to get up a dance, in honour of his two hundred thousand crowns.

Amaury Montruel, the friend of the king, betook himself to a little street, situated behind the tower of St. Jacques-la-Boucherie—in which might be seen a simple archway, old and badly built; the door which formed the angle of the street opened under a turret overhanging the wall. On clearing the threshold, the visitor found himself in a broad vestibule, leading to a large hall, furnished with a certain magnificence. The friend of the king had the reputation of a man of exceedingly relaxed morals, and this residence of his in the quartier des Arcis—was said to be used by him for the purpose of hiding his orgies. Others maintained that this house, which had an entrance in an alley, without a name, and which communicated in another part with rue St. Jacques and rue des Ecrevains, was the place where the friend of the king assembled all the spies which he kept in Paris. For the friend of the king also passed as the chief of a sort of police,—sufficiently well organized to enable King Phillip to say with a certain degree of truth—"The king knows all."

These two versions were equally well founded: it was quite true, that in this mysterious place Amaury Montruel kept a vigilant police. A police was an institution little known at that period, and in which enlightened people placed no faith—and which the vulgar feared, as they fear every phantom. To remove every suspicion regarding its functions from the minds of the grand vassals of the king, Amaury Montruel had only to raise his shoulders and smile, though he took care, very adroitly, to wheedle out of them their own projects. But whatever stories may have reached them about the nature of the function of the police, they could not for shamesake show themselves as credulous about it as foolish girls and street vagabonds.

Thus we have seen the "Friend of the King" quietly installed on the Hotel de Nesle in the midst of conspirators. We must, however, add that if any of the grand vassals more clear-sighted than the others had thoroughly sifted the facts and made themselves once acquainted with the man, they might have, perhaps, discovered, under his mask of scepticism and indifference, sufficient good in him to have doubly re-assured them. They would, besides, have discovered that Amauray was under the influence of one single passion, which, by its violence, contrasted singularly with the assumed coldness of his character. Montruel was in love, hopelessly in love, and the woman that he loved belonged to the king.

There was in the hall of Montruel's dwelling, and where, as we have shown, he had just entered, a clerk, wearing the costume of the clerks in parliament, and half reclining upon woollen cushions. He was still young, but pale and wrinkled like an old woman.

"Master Samson," said Montruel, has anybody called during my absence?

"Yes," replied Master Samson, raising himself up and yawning, "Seigneur Herbert came in by the rue des Ecrivains; he said that a message had come from Normandy, to the effect that John Sans Terre had landed there last week. Scholar Tristan came in by the rue St. Jacques, and said that for one hundred golden crowns he could set fire to the four quarters of the city. I think, my lord, that Scholar Tristan will make a marvellously pretty rogue."

Montruel's only reply was a slight gesture of contempt.

"Well, well!" growled Samson, "I know, indeed, that in the matter of rogues we ought to be particular. Master Honoré, the freemason, also came in by the little gate. The noisy crew are to meet again to-night at the Cross of Trahoir. They have been chanting and placing garlands on the walls, and have been welcoming a new acolyte who calls himself—stay—who calls himself—I ought to take the names down in writing, for my memory fails me."

"Thou drinkest too much," said Montruel.

"My lord," replied Samson, impudently, "I drink nothing but what you leave in the bottom of your bottles. But the name does not matter. But at that ceremony assisted two other vagabonds of the trowel and hammer—countrymen of Madame Ingeburge certainly—Eric or Cedric, the Dane, and little Adam."

"Is that all?" demanded Montruel.

"No; but there is still another name which fails me," replied the officious clerk—"the name of some pagan miscreant; he arrived last night by the Porte-au-Peintres. He was mounted like a lord; but instead of a lance he bore a stone-cutter's hammer, and a trowel instead of a dagger."

The "Friend of the King" smiled.

"Hammer, trowel," growlingly repeated the clerk. "We see nothing else, now-a-days, in Paris. All the money in the kingdom is being turned into mortar and cut-stone. I am certain that there are at this moment ten thousand masons in the city."

"Come, come," interrupted Montruel, with an air of satisfaction, "I see that my men have not slept this night; but tell me, Samson, about that new adept of freemasonry, whose name thou hast forgotten; did he not call himself Jean Cador?"

"Pardieu!" exclaimed the clerk, clapping his hands, "Jean Cador! that's the name."

"And the Infidel who entered by the Porte-au-Peintres," continued Montruel, "did he not call himself Mahmoud el Reis."

"'Twas nothing else but that," said Samson, with admiration. "It appears, too, that you have not been asleep, my lord!"

Montruel cast off his cloak and threw himself into a large easy chair.

"I never sleep," said he; then, in a brief and imperious tone, he added, "Go! quick! and bid them bring me some Greek wine, and send some one for Fontanelle."

"Is that thy will?" replied Samson. "Fontanelle must be sleeping; for they have been drinking and dancing at her house all night."

"Let them give her the rod," said Amaury, "and Fontanelle will come."

The clerk went out, leaving Montruel alone, with his head resting on his hands.

He remained for some minutes, plunged into a profound meditation; then rising all at once and shaking back his long hair, he paced up and down the chamber with great strides. His physiognomy underwent a great change—he was pale and haggard.

"What do I want?" he murmured, clinching his fists with anger, "I know not, or where to go. The work upon which I am engaged might lead an ambitious man very far. The gibbet has no terrors for me; nor does the throne cause me any envy, and yet I go on, on—laboring as though my designs were as grand as those of the Emperor Charles, or of the King Hugh Capet. Designs! I swear that I have none. I would have served Phillip, who has the heart of a king, bravely and faithfully; for that would have been a task within my strength,—but that woman has come between us, and that woman I must possess. I seem incapable of comprehending more than that. Beyond that thought everything appears to me puerile and contemptible."

He stopped and again pressed his head between his trembling hands.

"Fool that I am," he exclaimed, "it is the thought itself which is puerile and contemptible! I know it well and feel it; but what is to be done? There have been fools before me and there will be fools again after me; and after all, what difference is there between the foolish and the wise?"

A noise was now heard at the door through which the clerk had left. Amaury suddenly composed his features, and resumed the cool manner which was habitual to him.

The door opened and a beautiful woman of twenty-five, and whose dress set all sumptuary laws at defiance, appeared upon the threshold.

"Enter Fontanelle," said Amaury.

Fontanelle obeyed, holding in her hands a flagon of Greek wine and two silver gilt cups.

"My lord," said she, in a voice somewhat hoarse, and which corresponded badly with the exquisite regularity of her features, "I wished to serve you myself as is my duty."

"Thou hast done well; approach, and pour out the wine."

Fontanelle filled one of the cups, leaving the other empty.

"Canst thou give me no reason for that?" demanded Montruel.

"No, my lord," replied Fontanelle, smiling humbly, "unless it be that I am past twenty-four years, and am aged. I have therefore brought you Agnes."

Montruel closed his eyes and his lips trembled. "Agnes!" he murmured in a changed voice; "oh! fool that I am, miserable fool!"

Fontanelle looked at him and smiled. "She is there," resumed she, "in the neighbouring chamber, and is waiting thee."

"I do not desire to see her!" exclaimed Montruel."

"Chut!" said Fontanelle; "If the poor child should hear thee, my lord."

Amaury raised his eyes and looked at Fontanelle with an air of suspicion and fear.

"Dost thou think that she loves me?" said he.

"Do I *think* it? I *know* it. She adores you!"

Montruel said again, but in a lower voice, "I do not wish to see her!"

Fontanelle suppressed a smile.

"Woman," said Amaury brusquely, "let us speak of business. I have work for thee; it is necessary that thou should'st draw into thy house two men that I am about to indicate to thee."

"I will draw a thousand there," to please my lord.

"Silence! The first is a freemason, of the name of Jean Cador."

Fontanelle bowed her head with an air at once modest and trumphant.

"The second," continued Montruel," is an Infidel, who came to Paris to cut stone after the Saracen style; his name is Mahmoud el Reis."

Fontanelle put more pride into her smile.

"Thou understandest me?" said Montruel.

"I can reply to my lord," said Fontanelle, "that his orders have been anticipated. I have already received into my house, Jean Cador, the freemason, and Mahmoud el Reis, the image-cutter of the East.

Amaury drew near, curious and attentive.

"But," continued the old woman of past twenty-four, "My lord speaks of two men—while I have received but one!"

"What sayst thou?" demanded quickly the friend of the king.

"I say," my lord, "that Jean Cador and Mahmoud el Reis are one and the same person."

Montruel could not restrain an exclamation of astonishment.

"And how knowest thou that?"

"Master Honoré, the freemason, brought to my house this night,"—replied Fontanelle,—"a companion that he called Jean Cador. The Englishman, Herbert, came an hour before daylight—to pass away the time, he said—for he had been knocking at the gate of your retreat in vain. When Herbert saw that Jean Cador, he went straight up to him, and though they conversed in a low voice, in a distant corner of the chamber, I heard Herbert call him several times by the name which you have mentioned."

"Mahmoud el Reis?"

"Mahmoud el Reis."

"Strange!" thought Montruel. "There are, then, some things which I do not know! Perhaps Herbert wishes to deceive me! And what has this man been doing in thy house?" resumed he, addressing Fontanelle.

"Master Honoré offered him wine, but he refused it, and drank two fingers deep of pure water; and then extended himself upon the carpet—wrapt in a cloak, softer than linen—and turned his face towards the east."

"Suppose I should bid thee get his secret from him—how would'st thou do it?"

"My lord," replied Fontanelle, "that man has not yet seen Agnes."

Amaury trembled and turned away his eyes. "I forbid thee to let him see Agnes," murmured he, "and I command thee to obtain his secret from him."

Fontanelle bowed respectfully.

"I will try, my lord," replied she. Then she added, glancing at the door of the neighboring chamber,—

"My lord forgets that she is waiting?"

"Withdraw, and let her enter," said Montruel, with weariness.

Fontanelle rose, but instead of obeying immediately, she remained standing before Montruel.

"I have a humble request to prefer, my respected lord," said she.

"Art thou in want of money," said Amaury.

"No!" replied the daughter of folly—seeming to have recovered a vague souvenir of her lost dignity—"I am richer than many noble ladies. What I desire is, that your valets may be ordered to spare me needless outrage."

"Ah!" said Montruel, yawning, "have they insulted thee, my poor Fontanelle?"

"Your servant, Samson, threatened me with rods."

"Has he insulted Agnes?" asked Montruel, slightly frowning.

"No! my lord; he has only insulted me."

The look of Amaury was distracted, and lost in space.

Fontanelle waited a moment for his reply, and a silent tear rolled down her cheek, but was quickly dried up, for her cheek was burning. Had Amaury noticed the look of Fontanelle at that moment, it would have caused him some fear—he who never feared anything.

"May God keep you! my lord," she murmured, trying to speak in a gentle and resigned voice. She withdrew.

Immediately after a young girl entered the apartment, light as a sylphide, and ran towards Amaury.

She was tall and slender, but of beautiful proportions, with black hair, more brilliant than the jay, and with restless eyes, like those of the daughters of the Zingari. She approached Amaury, who tried to repel her, but the young girl fastened her arms round the resisting chevalier, murmuring in his ear at the same time the fondest words. Amaury completely conquered, drew the forehead of Agnes to his lips. And now the coquette, certain in her turn of influence over him, resisted his caresses as he had resisted hers. She threw herself back, smiling and mutinous.

"What ails thee?" demanded Montruel, reproachfully.

Agnes who had slipped out of his embrace looked at him with a joyous, bantering air, saying, in a voice that her pertness could not entirely deprive of sweetness, "Art thou going to make me rich to-day, my lord?"

Amaury frowned.

"Oh," thou dost well to vex thyself!" resumed Agnes, "I desire to have my fortune made at once. Thou art rich—thou sayest thou lovest me; I shall certainly, then, not have to wait long!"

She saw that the chevalier was bewitched by her smile.

"Bye and bye," said he; "but remember! thou hast confessed also that thou lovest me."

"That may be wealth enough for thee, my lord; but as to me, I desire to be rich!"

"Then it is not for myself that thou lovest me?" said Montruel, with an air of melancholy, which appeared strange at such a moment and before such a woman.

Agnes gave way to a burst of uncontrollable laughter. "I love thee a little for thyself," said she, "that is much for me to say; but is it not the way of the world?"

And as Amaury continued to gaze upon her with sadness, she frowned in her turn, and suddenly changed her tone.

"My lord," said she, raising her eyes boldly upon him, "darest thou pledge thy faith as a chevalier that it is for myself that thou lovest me?"

The eyelids of Amaury drooped, and the smile of the beautiful Agnes became more bitterly mocking.

"No! thou darest not," resumed she, "and thou art right, for it would be a useless perjury! Is it for my sake that thou hast changed my name from Jeanne to Agnes? Is for my sake that thou hast given Fontanelle orders to furnish me with golden gauze, ermine mantles, girdle, decked with precious stones—everything, in short, that a queen might be proud to wear. Is all that for my sake?"

Amaury seemed dumb with fear.

"The wife of Phillip Augustus—Agnes de Meranie, resembles me," continued the young girl pitilessly; "Is it on my account that thou followest her everywhere and always with those ardent eyes?"

"Be silent," murmured Montruel, with fear; but there was scorn in the glance that Agnes the pretty threw at him.

"I am more beautiful than the wife of Phillip Augustus," exclaimed she, "and younger too; and yet it is not for my sake that thou lovest me!" And then Agnes reined up and began to play carelessly with the gold fringe of her girdle.

Amaury passed the back of his hand over his face which was streaming with perspiration. "It's true!" muttered he, with a sort of impotent rage, "all that she says is true. I am mad, and my madness, it appears, is no longer a secret; young girl," said he, rising suddenly, "thou shall have the gold, not because I love thee, but because I hate thee!"

"What difference does it make," said Agnes, "whether the gold comes from hatred or from love?"

Amaury bid her be silent, with a peremptory gesture. "Thou shall be rich," continued he, "rich at once—but not an imprudent word, not an indiscreet look—"

"My lord!" resumed Agnes, resolutely, "not only shall thou pay me, but thou shalt respect me. I am stronger than thee, and I will not take thy threats!"

Amaury trembled with rage; he fell for his dagger, and Agnes was, at one bound, at the other end of the chamber.

"Yes! yes!" said she, smiling with disdain, and seizing the latch of the door, "thou hast yet that advantage over me; so long as I am here, thy dagger! but thou hast failed in nimbleness, my lord, and I shall profit by the occasion. *Au revoir*, and remember thy promise."

Before Amaury could leave his seat, she had disappeared; her hard and mocking laughter might be heard in the adjoining chamber—a second door slammed noisily—and the scene was over.

When Amaury Montruel turned, he saw Samson—that clerk, who so much resembled an old woman, standing in the middle of the apartment.

Montruel could not exhibit more paleness than he had already done, but he trembled as though he had been suddenly struck by an unseen hand.

"Thou there?" muttered he, "then thou hast heard all!"

"Why! my lord thou hast drank but one glass of Greek wine—the beautiful Agnes was then not thirsty this morning?"

Amaury had time to recover himself.

"I gave thee leave of absence," said he, "what brings thee here?"

"As to having heard anything," resumed the clerk, avoiding a direct reply, "that was the last of my thoughts; but your days of generosity, my lord, are far before those days in which you examine matters too closely."

Montruel threw him his purse.

"He has heard everything!" thought he.

"Oh," said Samson, "I asked you for nothing, unless perhaps for thanks; for I came to tell you something which, in my opinion, ought to please you. Two people, who arrived here yesterday evening, have come to Paris to assassinate the king!"

Amaury darted upon him a look, which struck him with astonishment. There was in that look the sudden fright of a man who finds his most inmost thought laid bare in spite of himself.

"Oh! oh!" said master Samson to himself, "it must have been by the aid of the Evil One that I have seen so much as that."

"And thou believest, misarable," exclaimed Montruel, who had, though all too late, recovered a little presence of mind, "and thou believest that the arrival of such people as that can give me pleasure?"

"God forbid!" replied master Samson, frankly. "I know too well the loyal devotion of my lord. You did not allow me to finish; I reckoned that my news would rejoice Messire Amaury, because I thought that Queen Ingeburge might possibly be an accomplice in their design."

"Ingeburge is not queen," interrupted Amaury. "There is no other queen than Madame Agnes, the legitimate wife of our very dreaded lord, Phillip King of France."

Samson bowed, as a sign of respectful acquiescence. "How could Ingeburge be an accomplice?" demanded Montruel.

"Because," replied the clerk, "those who have come to assassinate the king are both from Denmark; and Thomas, the lodging-keeper, who has discovered them, says that they are foster-brothers of Madame Ingeburge."

"How dost thou call them?"

"I have already told you their names," replied the clerk, "they are Eric, the freemason, and his little brother, Adam."

END OF PART I.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

THOMAS, the lodging keeper, possessed a large half ruined building which stood on the confines of the estate belonging the chapter of the cathedral of Paris, the narrow and ill-formed windows of which looked upon the purlieus of Notre Dame. For many years it had been allowed to go to ruin, because its demolition had been decided upon, in order to give place to the great works that had been projected by Maurice de Sully. The neighbourhood was thereby covered all round by similar places, joining on one side the principal street of the city—and on the other, the empty spaces which were covered by bushes and by the *debris*, caused by the erection of the tower of the new basilique. Paris was already an old city—spreading its strength far from its origiual centre.

Phillipe Augustus and Maurice de Sully—the great prelate, founder of Notre Dame, both desired, in beginning those gigantic works, to place the soul of Paris in its normal centre, and they succeeded in doing so for some years at least; but Paris, like those trees whose sap constantly rises to the highest branches, had to submit to the same conditions as every other thing that increases.

The cathedral, that *chef d'œuvre* of the architectural age, remained to mark the heart of the colossus—the arteries lay far beyond.

The dwelling of Thomas, the lodging keeper, was divided into a multitude of narrow and dark rooms, which served as the habitation of the foreign workmen occupied on the works of Notre Dame. There were many similar dwellings spread about at hap-hazard, from the church of St. Julien to la Motte-aux-Papelards, forming the eastern part of the city, and all used for the same purpose.

On the left bank of the river, towards the spot where still stands the Hotel Dieu, and following the edge of the river to la place Maubert, there were convents, churches, and noblemen's hotels—all raising, in mingled confusion, their pointed roofs, towers, and turrets.

Such houses as those of Thomas, the lodging keeper, resembled somewhat the convents in their interior arrangements. They had great halls, serving for common dormitories, where every kind of domestic work might also be carried on, by payment of a small daily contribution; there were also private cells for those who could afford to pay a higher price. It is needless to say, that even these cells were scarcely comparable to the most miserable apartments in the poorest quarters of our day.

Between those massive erections, on the left shore, and the heap of miserable cabins strewn among the ruins, there was an extensive space of which the purlieus now existing round Notre Dame give no idea. The soil of this place was low and muddy, and the slightest rise of the Seine would change all the surroundings of the cathedral into an impracticable marsh.

Bazars made of planks, of all sizes, encumbered the purlieus, and were coloured by the same dust as covered the scaffolding of the lofty arches then in coure of erection. These bazars, or shops, were like a permanent fair, where the families of the masons, penned up in one corner of the city, would obtain all the necessaries of life. In short, amidst these bazars, grouped without order, and according to the caprice of their founders, the gigantic sketch of Notre Dame showed its confused but already imposing lines.

It was certainly a strange picture, and one which it is impossible to restore in our civilized times; but it is true, also, that we shall never build another Notre Dame!

The day after that on which our history begins, some minutes after sunrise, two men debouched upon the spot, by the turning of a little wooden bridge. They seemed pale and unsteady as though they had just risen from some orgie. One of them was enveloped in a narrow and rusty cloak, and wore on his head a skull cap of a clerk—the other had the costume of a cavalier, covered by the surcoat of a scholar. These vestments, worn by the latter, had faded by long use, and seemed tanned by the smoke of taverns; but they affected a certain elegance, and he who wore them had something of the air of a gentleman. He was tall, thin, and well built. His toque, or narrow-brimmed hat, worn by the men of the robe of that day, was placed crosswise over a head of magnificent black hair; he had a dagger in his girdle, and his buskins, pointed like needles, stuck out three feet in advance of him.

Johannot and Nanteuil, in their romances of the middle ages, have a hundred times over sketched this kind of galliard, flat-sided, bony, and bandy-legged, but preserving still a certain bizarre beauty, in spite of its diabolical form.

The man in the great coat was our good clerk, Samson, the faithful servitor of Messire Amaury; the other was the scholar, Tristan de Pamiers, the terror of the bourgois, and suzerain of the clerks of Parliament. Samson and Tristan had been carousing the whole night at some drinking booth, in the neighbourhood of the old Palace. As they were poking their way among the *debris* and the closed bazars, a man covered with a large dark cloak and coiffe, with a toque and visor, turned the angle of the rue de la Calandre, and was proceeding in the direction of the church of St. Julien. Beyond these three personages, the place was quite deserted.

The clerk and the scholar followed, as well as they were able, the bank of the Seine, and reached that promenade, planted with scrubby bushes, and called the Motte-aux-Papelards. On passing the lodging house, kept by maitre Thomas, Tristan stopped short—extended his long thin arm in the direction of the house, and with a gesture full of emphasis, said—"It is there!"

"What is there?" asked Samson.

"It is there that dwells the prettiest girl in Paris!"

The clerk shrugged his shoulders.

"I saw her at that window," resumed Tristan, "and at sight of me she fled away. *Incessu patuit dea....* I thought I had seen Venus herself illuminating, with her beauty, the darkness of that frightful dwelling."

"Let us speak of business. Yes or No?" demanded Samson, growling.

Tristan remained immovable, like a May-pole, before the house of Thomas, the lodging-keeper, with his hands crossed on his breast, and his eyes raised to heaven, with an air half impassioned and half joking.

"Had I but the lyre of Ovid—had I but the harmonious cithern of Propertius—or the viol, with its garland of roses, of old Anacreon,—now would I celebrate the celestial charms of that divinity!"

"Mon compere," interrupted Samson, "thou settest me to sleep. Rest thee here and sing, without either cithern or viol, while I go and find my bed."

"Oh, heart of rock!" groaned scholar Tristan, with melancholy; then changing his tone, he added—"Miserable thing! is it thus that a rogue like thee darest to speak to a man of my condition? If I have a fancy for drinking, thou should'st give it me; if for singing, thou should'st open thy long ears; and if it is my pleasure to sigh, thou should'st wait and be silent."

"Still it is me who pays, seigneur scholar," replied master Samson, gently jingling the gold crowns in the purse that hung at his girdle.

The scholar smiled.

"Well, well, Samson!" said he, "thy purse is right. After all, if thou art a villain, void of heart and soul, thy gold crowns are noble; and I can agree with them, as my peers and companions. I will return presently. But now I will go with thee; scold as much as pleaseth thee, I will listen;" and they resumed the road to la Motte-aux-Papelards.

The man in the dark cloak, who had entered the purlieus by the opposite way, and seemed to come from quarters on the right bank, had stopped to watch them, but all unperceived by the clerk and the student.

While they had remained before the house of maitre Thomas, the man in the dark cloak, hidden behind the corner of a chapel, had seemed to hesitate about leaving his shelter till they had passed the foundations of Notre Dame, but as soon as they had gone, the man in the cloak raised the visor of his toque, and discovered the young and honest face of the handsome page, Albret, who, as we recently related, had given up his horse to the two distressed travellers.

"Samson!" muttered he, that rogue of Montruel's, with the king of the clerks of Parliament! that presages some mischief. What could they be looking at?" added he, shifting his ground among the shops to gain the precise spot; "it was here," said he, after having moved in an easterly direction, "but I see nothing very interesting." His eyes at that moment were fixed upon the house of Thomas, the lodging keeper, the miserable windows of which were all closed.

"Allons!" said he to himself, "I shall not guess the secret of my old companion, Tristan, this morning; let us rather to our work,—for the king has bid me fetch him that pretty lad that we met yesterday on our way to the Louvre. On my soul, I am acquainted with more than one beauty who would like to have the complexion of that youth! A very bouquet of lilies and roses; and his voice—it seems as though I could hear it still. But all this will not tell me where he lives; and when the king has once said, 'I will it so,' to return empty-handed is no longer to be thought of."

He took a few steps in the direction of the confused mass of old buildings, then muttering to himself again, he went on,—"There are two,—three,—six,—there are twelve,—there are twenty,—the deuce!—there are at least fifty; and, I suppose, I must knock at every one of those worm-eaten doors, and enter all those dark alleys, to ask fifty times of fifty old furies, 'pray is it at this house that Eric, the mason, and his little brother, Adam, live?'" And he shook his handsome head, with an air of comical embarrassment. "A fool's business," he continued, "for each fury will show me her broken teeth and send me to Jericho; but the king has said, '*I will it so!*'" At this moment he was only some steps from the house of master Thomas, and one of the small windows that looked upon the purlieus opened, and the head of a young girl made its appearance, illuminated by the rays of the morning sun.

Albret stood petrified. "I am dreaming!" he murmured. He stood in the shade of one of the bazars, and was not perceived by the young girl, occupied as she was in gazing with curiosity on the strange neighbourhood we have already endeavoured to describe. The sun rejoiced in her simple and charming smile, and the morning breeze played with the ringlets of her golden hair. Her large blue eyes, dazzled by the strange light, were half closed, revealing through her long eye-lashes the exquisite softness of an angel's look. While Albret stood in contemplation of that rare beauty, he was obliged to press his hand upon his heart, which was beating as though it would break; he reflected a moment. "That is not him, it cannot be him, and yet what a strange resemblance!"

He threw back his hair, passed his hand over his brow, and feared he was losing his senses.

"It was night when we met," said he to himself, "and I scarcely saw him, and yet could two faces be more alike?"

The young girl, half clothed, as though she had just risen from her bed, encouraged by the apparent solitude of the place, remained supported on her elbows at the window.

"Alas! I have found something that I was not seeking," sighed the pretty page, "Behold me thoroughly in love; me who have ever mocked those who loved. My heart never beat before

but once, and that was when I saw Queen Ingeburge, so noble, so beautiful, and so unfortunate; but never before did it beat as it has beaten to-day."

A cloud spread over his brow and his eyelids suddenly closed.

"Ah!" said he, trembling, "this, perhaps, is what Tristan was looking at so earnestly!" In truth, the pretty page was already jealous as a tiger, though only a minute old in love.

A voice was now heard in the interior of master Thomas's house, and the charming young girl turned quickly, closed the window and disappeared.

Albret felt as though his heart would burst.

"I love her," murmured he, bending his head under the weight of that passion which he felt growing upon him with a sudden and invincible strength, "I love her and the destiny of my life is there."

There, in the dwelling of Thomas, the lodger of masons, the destiny of Albret's life, that youth of a seignorial race, and the favourite page of the most powerful king in the universe!

As to the orders of Phillip Augustus—as to the mission that he had received,—all was confusion and disorder in the mind of the handsome page. The truth was too romantic for belief; but still something told him, that the little Adam and that adorable young girl were one and the same person; but he repelled the idea as much as he could. Certainly the simplest thing would have been to have entered into that house, which was so near; but in such cases, how rarely we do the simplest thing?

Albret said to himself, "I will search every house, but I will accomplish the king's orders;" though at the same time he budged not, but remained with his fascinated eye fixed upon that window, now closed, but which had so recently served as a frame to the radiant vision that had appeared to him.

The clerk and student were all this time walking among the bushes of la Motte-aux-Papelards, like wise men.

The clerk said, "I know enough, see'st thou, compere Tristan, to make me a great lord, if I am not hung first."

"Have patience," interrupted the scholar, "and thou shalt be hung, compere Samson."

The clerk placed his bony and mis-shapen hand upon the student's shoulder, and in spite of the enormous quantity of wine which he had imbibed, assumed an air of gravity and reflection.

"I am not joking, friend Tristan," said he, "and though thou art a little insolent betimes, if thou showest thyself reasonable, I will protect thee when I become a great lord."

To show how reasonable he could be at a pinch, Tristan controlled a burst of laughter, which made great efforts to escape him.

"We may see as strange metamorphoses as that," resumed the clerk, whose tone became more and more solemn, "without going very far to seek them; but yesterday Agnes the pretty was but a poor foolish girl, and to-day have I not seen her pass in a gilded litter, going to take possession of her chateau d'Etampes."

"Her chateau d'Etampes," repeated Tristan, "the chateau d'Etampes belongs to Montruel—given him by the king."

"And Montruel has given it to Agnes," continued Samson, "and why? simply because Agnes had a secret."

"But is it the same secret as thine?" demanded the scholar."

Samson looked the scholar all over.

"A secret," resumed the scholar, who had in his turn become almost serious. "A secret, my brother, which is worth such a chateau as the chateau d'Etampes, must be a good secret."

Samson drew close to him and assumed a still more mysterious air.

"Listen," said he, in a low voice, "my secret is two-fold—it concerns Agnes and another with her. Montruel is the friend of the king; he has other chateaus besides the chateau d'Etampes. I will sign no quittance for less than two of the handsomest!"

As they were thus talking, an object came in view towards the point of the island of Notre Dame, called in our day the island of St. Louis. The object was surrounded by men, who were advancing slowly, and they could at first scarcely distinguish it, seeing only some gilded thing reflecting the rays of the rising sun.

"By Jove," said Tristan, "we were speaking of a litter; I could swear I see one—and a beauty, upon my faith!"

Samson looked on in silence; but as he looked, his eyes changed their expression, and all the intoxication that still remained about him was evidently leaving him.

"Thou hast nothing to say?" resumed Tristan.

"Thee, who see'st so far," said the clerk, in a changed voice, "say, is there any one within that litter?"

Tristan shaded his eyes with his hand, and after looking attentively, said, "it is empty."

The clerk's brow then recovered a little from its paleness. The litter approached towards a boat upon the left bank of the river, opposite the eastern point of the city; the men who were escorting the litter jumped into the boat, crossed the Seine, and landed in the face of our two companions.

Samson remained silent, while Tristan contemplated him with a curious eye.

When the boat touched the shore, the scholar heard Samson muttering to himself, "it is indeed her litter—why has it returned empty?"

"Friend Samson," responded the scholar, with a bitter smile, "these good people could tell thee."

Samson recoiled! his face was livid; for in those who accompanied the litter he recognized the inmates of that mysterious house that Amaury Montruel occupied in la rue St. Jacques-la-Boucherie, the tall and robust members of a police force without control—men that Samson himself had selected and trained to obey, without ever questioning the orders of their master.

"You are returning from the chateau d'Etampes?" demanded the clerk, addressing himself to the men.

"No! maitre Samson," replied the chief of the band who recognized him, "we have not been so far as that," and the man had a hideous smile upon his lips.

"In the forest," resumed he, "we met some bandits, who wanted the rich girdle of the damsel."

"She is dead——" muttered the clerk.

"Aye! dead enough!" maitre Samson, "said the man," moving on after the bearers of the empty litter.

Samson stood stupefied.

"Diable," said the scholar, "if thy secrets are worth as much as those of Agnes the pretty, friend Samson, thou will neither be hung, nor become a great lord."

By degrees the troubled face of the clerk recovered some serenity.

"Friend Tristan," replied he at last, "the chateau d'Etampes is a long way off, and there is a thick forest upon the road; I will choose two chateaus that are nearer. But now to our business again, if it please thee; this contretemps has quite sobered me, and I am about to talk to thee as out of a book."

"I am all attention," said Tristan.

Samson drew him toward the extremity of la Motte-aux-Papelards, and resumed, with his ordinary dry and firm voice.

"Amaury Moutruel, my worthy master, desires to produce some little show of an emotion through the city during these days."

"That is easy enough to do," interrupted the scholar.

"Doubtless," pursued Samson; "and I should have no necessity for thy services, if only an ordinary row was in question. But Messire Amaury has his own ideas—it matters little to him when the scholars and bourgeois exchange broken pates in the streets. What he wants now is a popular revolt, on a small scale, directed *comme il faut*, and striking a sure blow."

"What—against the king?" demanded Tristan.

"For the king," replied the clerk.

"Then try to explain thyself more clearly."

"The king is much embarrassed," said Samson, taking an air of presumption, "he is more enamoured than ever with Agnes de Meranie, and knows not what to do with Queen Ingeburge. Montruel, who is the friend of the king, naturally wishes to come to his aid; dost understand?"

"I understand that Amaury Montruel is the mortal enemy of Queen Ingeburge," said Tristan.

"That is nearly about what I desired to tell thee, my brave companion. "Now follow me again." King Phillip is weak enough to have a fondness for those schools."

"That proves King Phillip's good taste," said Tristan."

"I do not think so," said Samson; "but let us not dispute about that; for after all, I belong, like thee, to the university. King Phillip thinks that all these colleges, instituted or restored by him, will make his name renowned, and prove to be the glory of France. Ah! if he knew the respectable corps of Paris scholars as well as I do!".

"Come to facts, gossip," interrupted Tristan again. A bell was now heard from the purlieus of Notre Dame. The passers-by increased at every moment and were covering both sides of the river. It was half-past six in the morning.

"Thou art right," said the clerk, "the labourers are about to resume their work, and God knows we shall soon have company enough. I will be brief. The king, right or wrong, being attached to the schools—a fact which he has proved by deciding two or three causes in favour of the university, when, at the same time, the students and all the clerks of Parliament deserved to have been horsewhipped out of Paris. An opportunity now offers itself to the scholars to show their gratitude to the king. Consequently, my master wishes you to raise these learned philosophers, and that you assemble them altogether before the palace, making them cry out against Madame Ingeburge.

Tristan shook his head.

The deep and prolonged hum of the swarms of artisans employed on the cathedral, was now heard: numerous boats were rippling the quiet surface of the river Seine—clumsy tumbrils, loaded with stones, were labouring through the heavy roads which followed each bank of the river; over the rising walls of the cathedral, countless human faces could be traced, profiled against he sky: the bells of the neighbouring churches and convents began to chime, and the thousand other noises of Paris burst simultaneously into life.

"Against Queen Ingeburge," continued the clerk, who had not yet remarked the negative air of his companion—"Against that foreigner, who is the unhappy cause of all the calamities under which the unfortunate kingdom of France languishes!"

"That's a patent lie!" objected the scholar.

"A lie that is proclaimed aloud," replied the clerk, "is better heard than a truth proclaimed in a more reasonable voice. Say, will you cry it aloud?"

Tristan seemed to hesitate.

"Besides," continued the clerk, "do not our professors teach us that every question has two sides? For example, if Queen Ingeburge did not exist, Phillip Augustus would have but one wife; the major-excommunication would disappear—the people would again obtain the sacraments which the church has refused them—all would thus be for the best; and thou can'st not but admit that from that point of view, Madame Ingeburge is the true cause of all our misfortunes."

Tristan shrugged his shoulders.

"Hast thou, then," said he, "so much sophistry to expend, that thou should'st waste it upon me? Ingeburge was queen before we had heard of this Agnes; and it is *she* who has drawn upon us the thunders of Rome. And though, to tell the truth, these thunders of Rome give me little concern, you should reflect that the ignorant people are not so advanced as the members of the university! The people suffer, and they understand very well that Agnes de Meranie is the cause of their sufferings; and it is exactly on that account that Amaury Montruel desires that the scholars should go to the people and tell them that they are deceived. Amaury Montruel does not know the scholars; there may be young fools among them with many vices!"

"Say every vice," said maitre Samson, correcting him.

"Every vice," repeated Tristan, "well, I will even accord thee that; but remember they are younger than us, mon compere, and their hearts are not dead."

Maitre Samson set up a laugh; "*their* hearts!" said he, with a singular inflexion of voice.

Tristan folded his arms upon his breast, and looked at him curiously; "Friend Samson," said he, thou hast not yet reached thy thirtieth year, and yet thy visage is that of an old hag of fifty; thy grimaces, when speaking of the heart, are like those of an evil one, who has dipped his claws into holy water. Tell me, Samson, hast thou retained the smallest idea of what thou wast at thy twentieth year?"

"No!" replied Samson, without any hesitation.

The eyes of the scholar became dreamy, while a ray of intelligence and pride shot across his withered brow; "For my part," said he, in a slow and sad voice, "I shall soon be twenty-six. I have lived at the rate of one lustre, (five years) per annum; but I do not forget that I have been young—that I have believed—that I have loved! And I tell thee, moreover, compere Samson, that if at that day—when I was myself—if at that day a rogue like thee had come to me with the proposal that thou makest me to-day—to kill a woman by calumny—to assassinate her—not with a poignard, but to raise against her the blind mob, to tear her to pieces with their nails, and to devour her with their teeth—I would have replied to thee with my dagger and not with words!" and he grasped nervously the handle of his knife which hung at his girdle.

Samson bore all this unmoved.

"Yes! thou would'st have done all that formerly, compere Tristan," said he coolly, "but to-day what wilt thou do?"

"To-day!" exclaimed the scholar, carried away by an impetuous movement.

The clerk thrust his hand into the depths of his pocket and jingled his golden crowns. Tristan hesitated and his head fell upon his breast.

"To-day," said he, giving that word a very different inflexion this time, "to-day I am almost as great a sinner as thee, compere Samson. My heart is no longer touched by a regret or a reproach. That is a disease I would fain cure; to-day I leave my dagger in its place—I enter into discussion with the rogue and if I find his proposition materially acceptable—ah! well—I will accept it."

CHAPTER II.

There was nothing more now between the acolytes, but a question of excution—or possibility of execution. Tristan was overwhelmed with debts; that sudden good impulse of his heart could not endure, and his insatiable thirst for debauchery, which had become his second nature, returned in full force.

Samson drew from his satchel twenty-five golden crowns, which he counted out upon the spot, already too much exposed to the gaze of the numerous passers-by. In fact the bargain was closed.

"We are not children," said the clerk, smiling with complacency, "though I do not quite share thy opinion upon the chivalrous spirit of the Paris students; for though I admit that some big words incautiously addressed to these light-headed beings might be sufficient to make an adventure fail, such as, 'Assassinate a woman! Insult a woman!' and the like, and would be almost certain to bring the blood into beardless cheeks, and rouse up all the foolish impulses of youth, still remember, friend Tristan, that Messire Amaury and myself set small store upon thy virtuous companions—it is upon thee that we reckon."

"Still," said Tristan, "with all the will in the world, I cannot get up a riot by myself."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Samson, "do our little Paris students wear their name and quality inscribed upon their faces?"

A stronger repugnance still was depicted upon the features of Tristan.

"I do not understand thee.." said Tristan; but was it because he did not wish to understand?

"I thought I had warned thee of that," said Samson, "looking him through; thou hast my twenty-five crowns, and henceforth we must have no more joking, mon compere!"

"Perhaps thou wilt explain thyself," said Tristan.

"Good! Good! I have no false shame, and I will put, then, the dots to thine i's. All men resemble each other do they not? What difference is there between a scholar and a beggar, if the beggar has the same dress as the scholar?"

"That is infamous!" said Tristan; but these words were not pronounced with that brave tone indicated by his jauntily posed cap and his ferocious moustache—

"The question is not whether it be good or bad," said Samson, drily, "but whether it is feasible—is it feasible?"

"I think"—began the scholar—

"Oh! if it is not feasible," interrupted Samson, "give me back my twenty-five crowns, in order that I may provide myself elsewhere."

Tristan put his hand upon his satchel, not to give them back, but to defend them to the last extremity in case they should be attacked.

"If, on the contrary, it is feasible," resumed Samson, "hold out thy hand again, mon compere, and I will count out twenty-five more crowns for thee to pay for disguising the beggars as scholars."

Tristan hesitated—stamped and swore—but at last held forth his hand.

The approaches to Notre Dame being now encumbered with labourers, venders, and spectators, Samson, the clerk, and Tristan, the scholar, separated.

CHAPTER III.

In the house of Thomas, the lodging-keeper, and behind that closed window, that still transfixed the eyes of the handsome page, Albret, three persons were assembled. These were Eric, the mason—his pretty sister, Eve—and that venerable old man, with the white head and beard, called Christian the Dane.

We have already heard his name in the mouth of Eric, when the poor traveller, replying to the

questions of chevalier Dieudonné, told the hopes that he indulged of earning his livelihood in the unknown city. When that charming vision that had fascinated the handsome page, Albret, that beautiful fair child, who at sunrise was leaning out of her window, and who had so suddenly disappeared—it was because old Christian had just entered her chamber.

Eric, Eve, and the old man were now talking in a low voice, fearing that they might be overheard through the thin partitions of master Thomas's house; Christian occupied the only bench—Eric and Eve were seated upon the bed.

"You are good children," said the old man, in a voice full of emotion, "and God will reward you; but this long and painful journey, which has so exhausted thy strength, my son, Eric, and which has so often made thy poor little feet bleed, my gentle Eve,—that journey will not help them."

"And why?" exclaimed Eric.

Eve became pale as an alabaster statue, and murmured,

"Is our well-beloved princess angel dead?"

"God forbid," replied the old man, "but heaven alone can henceforth lend her any aid."

"If she is not dead," said Eve, with a flushed brow, "then I promise thee, my father, that our journey shall not have been made in vain. I will go to her, wherever she is—I will follow her like a tender sister and like a devoted slave—and when once there, the poignard of the assassain shall only pierce her heart through mine."

"Poor child," murmured the old man, "no poignard threatens her; King Phillip of France is a chevalier, and our beautiful princess is in safety in her prison. But despair can kill as well as poison and steel, and our beautiful queen is in despair."

"I will console her," cried Eve, with tears in her eyes.

"Listen," said old Christian, in a voice full of sadness, "I, who was one of her servants—I, who formed part of the queen's suite—have been five long months without seeing her. When I presented myself at the gates of the Abbey St. Martin, where the king, her husband, had enclosed her —the pitiless guards repulsed me. I prayed—I knelt in the dust of the road—but the halberds of the guards barred my entrance, and the heavy portcullis was allowed to fall such was the order of the king."

"The king must be very cruel," said Eve, whose heart rebelled.

"There is a curse upon him," said the old man, lowering his voice still more.

Eric and his sister maintained a fearful silence.

"If the prophecy spoke not of that," resumed the old man, "have no faith in the prophecy!"

"No," murmured Eric, "the prophecy spoke not of that."

Eve said nothing—but something more was required to prevent her from believing in the prophecy ot Mila, who had predicted the meeting with the man who threatened the life of Queen Angel, and the meeting with the chevalier Dieudonné, the aiding destiny. The head of the old man fell upon his breast and he seemed to be recalling his souvenirs.

"No; King Phillip is not cruel," said he, as though speaking to himself, "and I think that he would have loved her. The first time he saw her after our arrival, his eye became animated for he found her very beautiful! But on the day of the ceremony, a man came to Paris: he arrived from the country of Bohemia, they call him Berthoud, lord of Meran. Phillip welcomed him with a strange distinction; for in the first court of the universe, they could have well dispensed with the presence of that demi-savage adventurer. Before proceeding to the church, Phillip received the lord of Meran at his royal dwelling, and it is said that they passed more than an hour together in the private oratory of the king.

"What passed at that interview?"

"On leaving the oratory, Phillip Augustus wore suspended from his neck, a gold medal, and that medal bore—for I have seen it with my own eyes—the portrait of Marie, daugher of Berthoud, lord of Meran, who has been known from that time to all the world by the name of Agnes of Meranie."

Eric and his sister started with surprise.

"The same day as the marriage," murmured Eve.

"That day continued Christian, "was a day of sad and cruel omen. Early in the morning the sun was obscured by red vapours. The silver cross which surmounted the town of St. Germain-d'Auxerre was struck to the ground by lightning. At the doors of the church, I remember seeing a woman dressed in mourning, kneeling and weeping and bewailing with loud shrieks her dead husband. The bells rang a loud peal, but the master bell broke, leaving only two lugubrious clappers to continue the funeral knell. I was only a few paces from our princess Angel, during the nuptial benediction; oposite me stood the lord de Meran, covering the king with a sinister look; and the king turned pale, as though that look weighed upon his heart. When the bishop said in Latin, Phillip Augustus wilt thou take Ingeburge of Denmark for thy wife? the brow of the king became livid, and I could scarcely hear his reply. While the lord of Meran smiled, and cast upon the altar a look of impious defiance. In the evening the king withdrew to the tower of the Louvre, accompanied by the lord of Meran and Amaury Montruel, lord of Anet. Ingeburge, the new queen, instead of being installed in triumph, as every body expected, was shut up that same evening in the Abbey of St. Martin-hors-des-Murs, and since that time has never passed the threshold of her husband's home. Berthoud, lord of Meran, departed; his daughter, Marie, was seen to arrive, and Amaury Montruel became the favourite of the king. The rest is as well known, doubtless, in Norway as here."

"In Norway as here," said Eric, "they know that King Phillip did not fear to contract a sacrilegious marriage with Agnes of Meranie and that it drew upon him the anger of the church. They know, moreover, that Agnes, the illegitimate wife, is surrounded with grandeur and honours, while the true sovereign endures a cruel captivity—

"And it is for that," interrupted Eve, "that we are come—both of us—her brother and her sister. It is for that we have encountered the

perils and fatigues of the journey. Oh! venerable father, do not discourage us, I beg of you; kill not the faith that sustains and fortifies us! We have hopes that you know not of. God raised for us, on our arrival at this city, a powerful protector. We are weak—alas! I know it—weak against the enemies of our queen; but heaven will listen to our ardent prayers, and from to-day my brother will try to discover the good chevalier Dieudonné, who will, perhaps, be powerful enough to open the doors of the queen's prison."

"Dieudonné," repeated the old man, "I know no French lord of that name.

"And yet there is such a lord," said Eve, with vivacity, "a great lord, I am very certain of it."

And as the old man wore an incredulous smile, Eve continued, addressing herself to her brother—

"He does not believe, Eric," said she, "what the good chevalier Dieudonné has already done for us."

Eric then related, in the first place, his arrival under the walls of Paris in the night time, his misadventures, and the embarrassment from which he had been relieved by the second meeting, fortold by the famous prophecy of Mila.

"When the chevalier Dieudonné," continued he, "had left us inside the gate, we found ourselves as much at a loss in this dark and unknown city as we had been in the open country. Our first asylum was given us by the freemasons, my brothers, and afterwards I came to your home, master Christian. Then I fulfilled the order given me by the chevalier Dieudonné, by presenting myself at the dwelling of the Prelate, Maurice de Sully. I knew that the lord bishop must be very difficult to approach, so I took that step at once to have it off my mind. The secretary, who opened the door to me asked my name and condition, and shrugged his shoulders and growled at my reply.

'A mason! A mason!' said he; 'masons devour our bread, and leave us nothing but a heap of stones; pass on—for you may believe me, monsieur knows not what to do with the masons that are coming to him from all parts of the globe!'

I had been warned how to surmount that obstacle, so I slipped a piece of money into the hand of the servant and said to him, 'when I shall have seen your master, I will repeat that gift my worthy friend.'

The servant took the money, and allowed me to enter, but with a kind of regret. I entered into a decorated hall, with stone and wood carvings. The escutcheon of the lord bishop, surmounted by a mitre and cross, was suspended over each door—great draperies hung over the whole length of the windows, coloured as with precious stones. Upon the floor were thick and soft furs, which stifled the noise of my steps. The bishop was seated before an enormous manuscript, posed upon a desk which moved on a pivot. The vellum pages of that handsome book were all full of figures, representing portraits, rose windows, and windows whose bold arches were filled in with open stone work as light as lace—porticoes and proud towers and handsome galleries running round deep naves. A learned lord, thought I; and I could form a good idea of the handsome church that he is now building, with his knowledge.

'Friend what is thy wish?' demanded he, without lifting his eyes from a certain rose window, a delicate miracle—the details of which he followed with the points of his compass.

I answered, 'after having laid my respects at your feet, monseigneur, I would ask you for work.'

He did not yet look at me.

'What work?' he asked at last, in a kind of abstraction—murmuring at the same time to himself, as though carried away by the ardour of his thoughts—'I will put one of these over each side door, north and south.'

'Mason's work, monseigneur,' replied I.

'And a third,' continued he, placing his open hand upon the vellum of the manuscript, 'and a third, which shall be larger, between the two towers, over the great portal which faces the west.'

His eyes were now lost in space, and I said to myself, this is as it should be with the pointiff or the king, who undertakes to build the house of the Lord; and I thought of the history of the wise and inspired king Solomon, as related by our old men. I kept myself silent, out of respect, for the good bishop caused me no fear. He had forgotten my presence, and when he perceived me, he trembled slightly and smiled.

'Oh! ho,' said he, 'here is a young and stout boy. Thou hast spoken to me, my son, but I have not heard thee; once in my dreams, and my mind and body become deaf. What is it thou hast said to me?'

I repeated my request.

He rose, and I admired his majestic figure; though age and meditation had already bowed his head; one of the frames of his tall windows turned upon a metal hinge, and he opened it, when I saw immediately above me, and so near that it seemed by extending my arm I could touch it, I saw the church which was in the course of construction.

'That corner of the Parisian Island—that promised land—is it for me,' I exclaimed and the emotion drew from me a cry, which caused the bishop to turn towards me.

'Is it handsome, my son?' said he, with a sweet and calm smile.

'Monseigneur,' exclaimed I, 'may God grant me the grace to co-operate, by my weak part, in that *chef-d'œuvre!* I have no other desire.' And to my great shame—I speak truly, my sister, Eve, and my father, Christian—before that immense and magnificent design that I saw above me, and that I could embrace in one glance of the eye, I had forgotten everything else. I had forgotten the real motive of our journey—even to the hard captivity of the holy queen Angel, our sister.

The bishop seemed to measure the depth of my admiration.

He looked at me—'thou should'st be a good artisan, my son,' said he, 'for thine arms are vigorous; and one may see by thine eyes, that thou hast a willing heart. But it was not to show thee my dear church that I opened that window, it was to show thee the workmen.'

Without changing its direction my eye abandoned the work to seek the workmen—a strange spectacle to see that mass of granite covered by a sort of moving bark or by a human ant-hill.

'There are some there—there are some there,' said the bishop—'seest thou a spare place?'

My eyes searched the edifice all over and I was constrained to admit, that there were twice as many there as was necessary.

'Monseigneur,' murmured I, with sorrow but with profound respect, 'you have a feeling heart, and have not been able to refuse them.'

'It has become necessary that I should learn to do it,' replied he. 'I have sent away three times as many as my dear church occupies now. At the commencement, every time I said no! I found in my satchel some small pieces of gold to soften my refusal, and said to my friend, that I could not employ—'Wait, with that, my son—thy turn will come; but so many came that my purse is empty; then I could only say wait; and many are still waiting!'

I took the hand of the prelate to kiss it; for a refusal, made in such terms, left none of the hope that one indulges, from those refusals made by caprice or bad temper. Sire bishop had not even asked me my name, and finding him so affable, I had taken no care to commend myself on the credit of the good chevalier. On gaining the door, however, I remembered his last words, and said by chance—

'Monseigneur, I was sent to you by the chevatier Dieudonné.'

The good bishop at first said like thee, father Christian—he replied by reseating himself upon his handsome manuscript, saying—

'I know no chevalier of that name.'

'Still, monseigneur,' he gave it me to give to you as from your compere,' I replied.

'Dieudonné?' repeated the bishop, with indifference, 'mon compere,'

He gave me my congé with a gesture; but suddenly remembered, without doubt, for at the moment when I had reached the other side of the door, I heard his voice crying out—

'Ho! man, man!'

I hastened to re-enter, and found the good bishop laughing to himself over his manuscript.

'And where hast thou known that chevalier Dieudonné, my son,' demanded he.

I told him as well as I could what the chevalier had done for me and my little brother, Adam.

'That's a great sinner!' murmured the bishop, 'but has a fine soul .... allons, allons! thou art fortunate, my son. Thou hast had a happy rencontre on thy arrival. The chevalier is right and I am wrong; he has done me much honour in calling me his compere. On his recommendation, I receive thee as a mason on the works of Notre Dame; if there is no room we must make some. Go and seek lodgings in the purlieus, and hold thyself ready to-morrow morning at the first sound of the bell.'"

Just as Eric had uttered the last words of his tale, the bell suspended from a tall post in the middle of the premises began to call the masons to their labour.

Eric seized his hammer and trowel. Eve put on her apprentice costume—her plentiful blonde hair was hidden away under a faded cap, and her charming figure disappeared under a large surcoat all covered with plaster.

"That's a beautiful tale," my children, said Christian, and proves that the chevalier Dieudonné exists—but that is all.'

"It proves besides," said Eve, "that the chevalier Dieudonné has credit."

"Before the lord bishop, true," said the old man; "but all-powerful as he is, the lord bishop himself could not introduce you to the queen."

They descended the staircase of Thomas, the lodging keeper, and found themselves already on on the encumbered premises.

"Ah well! the king can do it," replied Eve, "and I will even go to the king!"

CHAPTER IV.

The shops were opened, and the kitchens smoking, preparing breakfast for the masters. There was upon the purlieus a compact and moving crowd—composed of all kinds of pedlars, and colporteurs of common objects, and objects that had been blessed. There were women who cried hard eggs and warm bread, in that peculiar and frightful voice, which seems to be the special heritage of Parisian vendors.

There were beggars, who wept and displayed their gangrened wounds. There were men carrying fountains on their backs, charged with the wine of hypocras like our modern cocoa merchants, with their less heady drink, and the silver tinkle of their little bells could be heard above the confused noises of the crowd. It was a veritable Babel—an incessant murmur which, from time to time, would all at one rise into a fracas, as they knocked against each other and disputed; the masons who were late, fearing to be fined, knocked down women and children in their passage—for women and children in that age, as in ours, formed a large element in the Parisian crowd.

The handsome page, Albret, was in the middle of that Babel, where his costume of a gentleman excited a certain surprise. What did he there so early—at the hour when such people, like him, had still three or four hours to sleep? His dark cloak and bent hat would have led to the belief that he had passed the whole night in running after some good adventure, if he had crossed the place quickly, like a man in haste to reach his lodgings. But he remained there, always in the same place, with his gaze fixed upon the house of Thomas, the lodging house keeper. The proprietor of the shop, against which he was leaning, came out like others to spread his stall—and was obliged to say to the page, "Mon maitre, I pray you to stand on one side, that I may take down my shutters."

Albret moved docilely, but without taking his eyes off the house he was so interested in. People began to question—Who there could be in that house to attract the attention of such a gallant seigneur?

Every one knows how little it takes among us Parisians to excite curiosity—they gathered together and criticised his conduct—half a hundred strange suppositions, absurd and ridiculous slanders which the fertile soil of Paris produces, were let fly in an instant. At the end of ten minutes the general and profoundly rooted opi-

nion was that queen Ingeburge had escaped from the hands of her pious jailors, and was to be found in the house of master Thomas. The principal fact once established, and the how and the why commenced. Never was Paris so embarrassed to find a ridiculous reply to an impossible question.

The small peddlars, the hypocras vendors, the old women and the beggars, invented the most ingenious and improbable details. We should be remiss were we not to tell that among these beggars were to be found, in the first rank, our unfortunate friends, Ezekiel and Trefouilloux, the nocturnal bandits of the rue St. Honoré.

Like their successors of the present day, Ezekiel and Trefouilloux robbed by night and begged by day. Their begging business was not much more profitable than their brigandage, for here again they found a detestable amount of competition. There was in Paris twice as many beggars as charitable souls, and the surplus spoilt that peaceable profession which might otherwise have had so many charms.

No one can be ignorant of the baneful effects of competition—killing all industry and exaggerating its efforts till it makes its agony a torture. We have seen rival carrying companies, giving free passages, either by land or by water, and even offering travellers refreshment on the road—and all to accomplish their mutual destruction; down that incline they are not long in reaching madness. Thus, in a normal state, a beggar only wants a broken leg, a paralyzed arm, or an incurable ulcer. A beggar, without any legs, passes in every country for a sturdy beggar; and a beggar purely blind has been known to excite the charity of passers-by. But it was not so within the purlieus of Notre Dame—necessity, that offspring of competition, had then heated the imaginations and inventive faculties of the beggar artists. The cul-de-jatte, or men drawing their legs after them on little trucks, and even paralytics, had but moderate success; something more striking, and less classic than these had become necessary to attract any attention.

Ezekiel, who, as a beggar, was one of the élite, had trussed up both legs behind his thighs, like a capon prepared for the table; he had his two arms reversed and a ghastly wound scored in red ochre across his brow.

Trefouilloux was another veritable artist; he had painted upon his left breast a complicated ulcer—his breast was bared to the light, and Trefouilloux constantly announced that for a liard any body would be permitted to look through that fearful skylight, and might see the working of his heart and lungs. The veritable English gobemouche had not yet been invented, or the unhappy Trefouilloux would have been taken at his word; in our day he would very soon have found some curious gentleman who would have paid his money and thrust his lorgnette into the man's stomach—but in Trefouilloux's day, after all the trouble he had been at, and the pain he had endured, the exhibition did not clear its expenses.

A gigantic woman—extended on some straw before him, and who lead four arms, on one of which was the foot of a goat—carried everything before her.

Ezekiel, in a psalm-singing tone, cried—See, Christians, a man who lost both legs in the crusade against the Pagans, whose arms have been tortured, and whose skull has been split with the stroke of a cimeter, who has been left for dead, without any succour, on the sands of the desert. Have pity, Christians, and secure your salvation!

See, Christians, resumed Trefouilloux, the great ulcer of the unhappy man who has only one day more to live—condemned by the faculty, and already pierced through and through by the gnawing worms which are devouring his liver and lungs.

But it was all of no use; there are some persons who never have any luck. Worms, Pagans, trussed limbs, ulcers and sabre-strokes completely failed; and there was only something for the woman with four arms—one of which had the foot of a goat.

CHAPTER V.

The curiosity of the good people who were watching the house of Thomas, the lodging keeper, still augmented. At the moment when the newsmongers abandoned the story about Queen Ingeburge, to fabricate another, where Agnes de Meranie played a rôle sufficiently scandalous, a new person arrived to complicate the scene.

This was our camarade, Tristan the scholar, with his cap saucily posed, and the elbows of his surcoat worn bare by leaning so much on tavern tables, and with his unmeasurable old pointed buskins. Tristan de Pamiers had finished with clerk Samson; his pockets were well filled, and he came now to ramble a little round that dwelling which, to his taste, enclosed the most beautiful girl in Paris; and Tristan was not without acquaintance with such matters. Just as he had raised up his head and put on a bold look, the door of maitre Thomas's house was opened, and Christian the Dane, Eric and little Adam came forth.

The noisy crowd knew nothing of the last two; as to old Christian, he had for many months kept shop within the liberties of Notre Dame, where he sold trowels, squares, hammers, compasses, and other instruments in use among the workmen on the church.

The page, Albret, leaped behind the shop, as though afraid of being seen.

"Stay, stay," growled the disappointed crowd, "that is neither queen Ingeburge nor Madame Agnes de Meranie."

"It is him—it is him!" said the handsome page, Albret, "and it is her also—I am sure of it."

These two opposite personal pronouns related both to Adam and Eve.

"Pshaw!" growled Tristan, who had posted himself insolently in the passage of our friends, "what means this masquarade?"

Eric, his sister, and old Christian the Dane, continued their walk to Notre Dame, and were talking with great vivacity, and appeared to pay no attention to the man who was watching

them. Eve still continued her efforts to convince Christian, who remained obstinately incredulous.

"The king can do anything!" said Eve; "I defy you to deny that."

"The king can do as he likes!" replied the old man, shaking his white head.

"When the king knows who I am—" began Eve, again with petulance.

"Speak lower," said the old man, perceiving that they were observed. He saw Albret, with his nose in his cloak, following them through the crowd.

"If it is nothing about queen Ingeburge or queen Agnes, at any rate they are talking about the king."

"The king would like it," exclaimed Eve at that moment.

Tristain, without any cermony, laid hold of her by the chin.

"Ah!" said he, twisting his moustache with his other hand, "I should like to know why you thus hide the most delicious figure that there is in the world under the ignoble livery of an apprentice mortar-mixer."

Eric tried to place himself between his sister and the scholar; "This is but a child," said he taking his heavy hammer in his hand, "wait till he is man's age before you insult him, mon maitre."

"Allons," said Ezekiel, in a melancholy tone to Trefouilloux, "here are two idle fellows going to kill each other, on purpose to hinder us from gaining our bread."

"And yet they will till you that king Phillip manages his city of Paris well!" exclaimed Trefouilloux, who always. inclined towards politics.

But just as friend Tristan had proudly took hold of his dagger, an unseen hand grasped him by the collar of his surcoat behind, and threw him back several steps.

"Who dares to touch the king of the baroche?"* exclaimed the scholar.

At the sight of page Albret, who stood before him, he stopped and crossed his arms upon his breast.

"Ha, Ha!" said he, recovering himself, "I did not expect to find thee here, my old companion; I know only two good ways of meeting a friend after a long absence—the first and best way is to click two full glasses together; the second, which also has its value, is to click bravely two sharp blades. Allons! mon pere. I would rather thy dagger than the hammer of that villain."

Ezekiel and Trefouilloux, drew themselves forward, with incredible contortions to have their share of the spectacle.

"Let us profit by the disturbance," said father Christian, "to pass on our way."

Eric and his sister exchanged looks; they had both recognized the handsome page of Dieudonné.

"Thou can'st not abandon him," said Eve, in a low voice.

"Withdraw, if you will, master Christian," said Eric. "I must remain; for that gentleman has taken up my quarrel."

* Clerks of Parliament,

Albret did not draw his dagger, but regarded the scholar with an air of scornful superiority.

"Never again will my glass touch thy glass, Tristan de Pamiers," said he; "as to my dagger, that's another thing; but before arriving at that hast thou no desire to settle the old account between us? I have lent thee many gold crowns in former times."

At this disdainful apostrophe of the page, Tristan's pride was touched and he changed colour; he plunged his hand into his satchel and drew it out full of gold pieces.

But we have already seen, in the course of this history, that Tristan's first impulses were better than his subsequent actions. He held out his hand reluctantly to the page.

The crowd thought he was going to settle the first debt, and arrange the other afterwards, *comme il faut!* But Tristan contemplated the crowns which were shining in his hand, hesitated, and showed too plainly the conflict raging within him: "Shame on thee," exclaimed he at length, "can'st thou not give me credit, Albret?"

That name soon ran through the crowd, who repeated in every tone—

"The king's page! The king's page!"

"No," replied Albret, "I will give thee no more credit."

"Ah! well then," said the scholar impudently, and returning the crowns to his pocket, "then thou shalt not have the honour of measuring blades with me this morning, sire page. I make no love gratis, seest thou; and besides," added he, knitting his brows, "this money cost too dear."

A howl came forth from the crowd.

Tristan drew his cap over his eyes and sprang into the thick of the rabble.

"Rogues that you are! do I owe you anything? Quick! give me passage, or I will break two or three dozen of your beggarly skulls, though I could not split the head of a gentleman."

He pushed forward, clearing his way through the crowd, who flew before him, and only effected his exit after everybody had witnessed the deep humiliation to which he had been subjected.

"Messire," said Eric to the page, "this is the second service that we have received from thee."

"And if it please you, mon maitre," said Albret, "I am about to render you a third. Your young brother spoke just now of the desire he had to present himself before the king."

Eve's eyes fell and she turned as red as a cherry.

"It is hardly worth while, messire," replied Christian, who now stepped forward to take part in the conversation, "to take notice of what children will say."

"Master Adam is no longer a child," said Albret, casting a furtive glance at him, "and besides that matter depends no longer upon you, mon maitre," said he, addressing the old man, with courtesy, "nor upon me, nor upon himself. The king wishes to see him."

Our three friends stood stupefied at that declaration.

Eve, however, recovered first, and fixed upon

the page her large blue eyes, which shone with a quiet bravery.

"I am ready to follow you, messire," said she.

"Can I not accompany my young brother?" said Eric.

"You cannot," replied the page.

Eve offered her cheek to her brother who kissed it tenderly.

"May God protect thee, my child," said he; "God has not heard my prayer—for I prayed him to reserve all dangers for me."

Christian embraced the young girl in his turn. "Be prudent," murmured he.

Eve scarcely replied to their caresses, for her thoughts were elsewhere.

"I am at your service, messire," said she to the page.

Albret bowed and led the way to the spot where he had entered the purlieus. Eric and Christian turned sorrowfully towards the works at Notre Dame. The crowd separated, gossiping about and criticising the affair—which was for them a complete enigma.

Two horses were tied to the gate of the Chapel St. Landry. Albret put little Adam upon one—though she did not look like a very skilful cavalier—and mounted the other himself. He had, however, given his knee to little Adam as a stirrup—what could he do more for the noblest dame in the land?

They galloped along the road by the river Seine, in the direction of la porte St. Honoré. The first moments were passed in silence. Albret looked at his young companion, from time to time, with a very tender interest, but seemed to fear letting her see what was passing in his heart.

"Messire," said Eve, at length, whose voice now began to tremble—for the exultation which had at first supported her began to cool—"are you indeed the page of the chevalier Dieudonné?"

"Yes, master Adam," replied the page.

And in pronouncing that name, "master Adam," he could not conceal a smile.

This troubled Eve more.

"And the chevalier Diendonné," resumed she, "is doubtless the servant of the king?"

"The king has not a more devoted servant," replied the page.

Eve remained quiet a moment, and then continued—

"Sire page, could you not permit me to see the chevalier Dieudonné before seeing the king?"

Her accents were so like a gentle prayer, that the heart of Albret was stirred to its depths. But he could not accord the impossible.

"You will see them both together," replied he, turning away his head.

Poor Eve dared not persist; and the remainder of the journey was made in silence—Eve sighing a little—the page very much.

When they had passed the porte St. Honoré, and had reached the open country, the page suddenly stopped his horse.

"Maitre Adam," said he, "do you remember this place?"

Eve looked all around her—behind her were the walls of the city, and the porte St. Honoré flanked with two pointed towers; before her was the tower of the Louvre, with its battlements and donjons; to her right and the left was the open country. They had entered an alley of young elm trees already tall and vigorous.

"No, messire," replied she; "I do not think I have ever seen this place before."

"Its true—it was in the night time, maitre Adam, and the snow always changes the aspect of things; still you cannot so soon have forgotten your nocturnal distress and the two cavaliers?"

"What!" exclaimed Eve, whose eyes sparkled, "was it here?"

Love does not see with the eyes of the world. Albret thought her as beautiful in her apprentice costume, as though she had worn the brilliant apparel of more fortunate young maids.

"It was here," repeated he, looking her for the first time in the face and permitting his eyes to express all their emotion; "It was here that I gave my horse to you and to your brother—it was here that I first saw your pale and handsome face...."

Eve trembled.

"It was here that I admired your supple and charming figure...and divined your secret."

Eve nearly fell from her saddle. "What would you say?" murmured she.

"Look at me, before you suffer yourself to fear me," resumed the page, in a supplicating and soft voice, "I know you are a young girl. I love you. Look at me and tell me if you think you could love me."

But the more he prayed Eve to look at him, the more she feared to do so.

"Perhaps you love another?" murmured Albret in a veritable fright.

Eve smiled. "No," said she; but so low that Albret scarcely understood her, and yet his look became radiant.

"Hear me!" murmured he; "I believe this is my destiny; they tell me that you are the sister of queen Ingeburge.

"The brother," said the young girl, wishing to correct him.

"Oh! do not try to deceive me longer, I conjure you. And if you cannot love me as I love you, at least place confidence in me, and regard me as the most devoted ofyour friends. It is out of affection for queen Ingeburge that you have left your country. Ah! if anything could induce me to cherish you more, it is the attachment that binds you to that noble and unhappy sovereign."

"Do you also love queen Ingeburge?" exclaimed Eve casting aside all prudence.

"I would lay down my life for her," replied the page, "if she required it."

"And yet you are a Frenchhmen. You do not know her?"

"I know how she suffers; and I know how holy and noble she is."

Eve gave him her hand, smiling.

"Thank you," murmured she. "Oh, it is long since my heart experienced so much joy. Everybody, then, in that great Paris, does not detest my darling queen—my adored Angel—my sister. And it is a Frenchman who has told me that queen Angel is noble and holy; oh! thank thee—thank thee, from the bottom of my soul, messire; and since you are so good, I believe that I shall love you; for I am, indeed, a young girl!"

She withdrew her hand, to place it upon her heart, and added, in a low voice—

"Stay—I fear that I love you already."

CHAPTER VI.

Messire Amaury Montruel, lord of Anet, and friend of the king, wasted not that day—the eve of which he had so well commenced.

We witnessed, in the morning, the scene in which Samson, the clerk, one of his agents, executed a part of his orders; but Messire Amaury had many strings to his bow, and did not confine himself to such small matters.

At about the same hour as the page gained the Louvre with his pretty companion, Messire Amaury was in his retreat at the Rue St. Jacques-la-Boucherie, in conference with two much more important personages than the clerk, Samson, or the scholar, Tristan.

The first of these personages was a man of fifty, with a swollen and blotched countenance, and rusty grey hair, he was called Herbert Melfast, lord of Canterbury. He had been a long time the private and confidential counsellor of John Plantagenet. For more than a year he had been absent from the English court, travelling in Europe, and even in Asia.

Those who knew John Sans Terre and his worthy servant, the lord of Canterbury, said that the latter had not been travelling merely for pleasure. He was met in the divers courts of Europe, at Copenhagen, Germany, Bohemia, and Flanders; he had crossed the Bosphorus, to confer with the Greek emperor at Constantinople; in short, he had made a bold push into the heart of that country, so little known in those days, and which was grovelling in the Mussulmans' error. He had confronted, they said, the dangers of barbarous Kourdistan, and cleared the limits of the fearful country of assassins!

The other personage with Messire Amaury was that man with the remarkable and intelligent face that we encountered in the opening of our history, upon the high road between St. Lazare and the Porte-aux-Peintres. An eagle nose—a keen and proved look—hair dark as ebony, cut short over a brow slightly depressed; of a tall and slender figure—but under whose frail appearance was hidden an uncommon degree of strength. He was handsome, though not from a European point of view—which exacts a roundness of contour and an amplitude of form as imperiously as gracefulness—his was the bizarre and wild beauty which seems to belong to the Great Desert.

He was, in comparison to European warriors, what the high-bred Arab steed, with his muscles of steel, is to our robust and heavy chargers from Normandy or Luxembourg. Everything about him denoted a man of decision—his beard was pointed, and his nails were like the talons of a tiger. His visage bore the impress of great gravity and coolness, and all his movements betrayed that quiet indolence of the handsome panther, by which we are so deceived, until we have been frightened by the prodigious vigor of its leaps. His age appeared to be about thirty. The reader already knows that this man bore two names: Mahmoud el Reis and Jean Cador. Mahmoud el Reis was the Mussulman who came from Syria with a mysterious and terrible mission, and was the man that Herbert Melfast, lord of Canterbury, had been to seek at the peril of his life, among the deep gorges of the Anti-Libian. He was one of the initiated and fiercer brotherhood, called the *Fedavi*, or Sons of the Crystal Poignard, who executed the orders of the Prince of the Mountain.

Jean Cador was the enthusiastic artisan, who had profited by the crusades to learn, at their very source, the secrets of the Saracen chisel.

Mahmoud carried a poisoned dagger next his skin; his thoughts were red with blood, and he belonged to Herbert Melfast, who had purchased him from the Old Man of the Mountain, on account of John Sans Terre, his master.

Jean Cador carried the sharp gouge of the image-cutter—his thoughts hovered over artistic space: he dreamed only of delicate lines—handsome arches—and beautiful granite saints. The pious prelate, Maurice de Sully, after having seen one of his sketches, had shaken his two hands with enthusiasm, calling him his dearest son.

"Now," said the lord of Canterbury, at the moment we introduced our readers to the scene enacting in the retreat of the king's friend, "Now, Messire Amaury, my cousin, the time for hesitation has passed—I warn you of it; before we leave this place, we must know whether you are with us or against us."

Amaury's eye was fixed and his brow was bathed in perspiration—for he was a rogue without any strength for mischief—but traitor enough for a dozen; and Phillip Augustus would seem to have been inexcusable for having chosen such a man for a favourite. We can understand kings deceiving themselves, and opening their secret counsels to great criminals, and we cannot understand a king soiling his hand by bringing it in contact with such impotent perversity.

Amaury Montreuil made no reply. Herbert Melfast looked at the Syrian, who maintained his impassibility.

"Well," exclaimed he, as the blood mounted to his face, "I am placed between one who has been little better than a mute from his birth,—pointing to Mahmoud el Reis—and my cousin Amaury, who trembles like a timid old woman, without ever being able to decide upon anything."

"If it was a thrust of the lance or a blow of the sword" said Montreuil.

"Ah! Mort de Diable!" interrupted the Englishman "if I was in thy place I would soon choose between the lance and the sword. Thou hatest that man as much as we do—more than we do—for thou art madly in love; and that man holds to thy beard the woman that thou worshippest."

Amaury wiped his anguished brow.

"That man," continued Herbert Melfast, "thou followest night and day—thou sittest at his table and thy couch is spread before his door when he sleeps; and yet, instead of killing him, thou watchest over him. When thou art capering on thy steed behind him could'st thou not use thy lance? When he sleeps after the

repast of the morning could'st thou not use thy sword?"

"We, French chevaliers," said Amaury, "have other uses for our weapons, milord," in a tone which showed that for a moment he had recovered all his pride.

Melfast gave him a bitter smile of disdain.

"Say plainly that thou art against us!" said he, in a dry and hard tone.

"I could heartily wish that I was, my lord, at the price of half my blood; for Phillip of France is my lord, and I have sworn fidelity to him. But alas I have neither strength nor reason; I love Agnes to my utter ruin. I am not against you. I am with you." These last words were uttered as with a feeling of pain and regret.

In spite of this assurance the countenance of Melfast still expressed a doubt; as to Mahmoud el Reis, he remained standing in the middle of the chamber as immovable as a bronze statue.

"If thou art with us," said Herbert Melfast, with a tone of distrust, "make thy conditions, my cousin; I have power to accept them, whatever they may be.

Amaury seemed to collect his thoughts.

"In the first place, I wish for Agnes de Meranie," said he.

"The love of Agnes," replied Herbert; "she alone can give thee; but as to her body, thou shall have it, though a whole army of chevaliers disputed it with thee!"

"And as it is necessary that Agnes should be happy, that is to say, powerful and rich as a Queen, I must have the appenage of a prince."

"Choose among the duchies of France and England, my cousin."

"I desire the duchy of Burgundy, in France, and the duchy of Suffolk, in England."

"Thou shalt have them."

"By letters of the king."

"By letters of the king, sealed with the great seal!"

"But," resumed the friend of the king, "Agnes has been suffering a long time."

Herbert Melfast pricked up his ears. Amaury seemed to be selecting his words.

"The hatred of a woman," said he, lowering his voice, "is not like the hatred of men, so long as Ingeburge lives, something will be wanting to the happiness of Agnes."

The Englishman assumed a cynical smile.

"We must do something for that beautiful and excellent lady," said he; and then turning to Mahmoud, he addr ssed himself to the Syrian "would'st thou have any repugnance to poignarding queen Ingeburge?"

The Syrian folded his arms upon his breast.

"None" replied he, in a grave and soft voice, in spite of its strange guttural accent, "she is a queen—she is a Christian,—and she is condemned."

Herbert Melfast turned towards Montruel.

"See my love for thee," exclaimed he; "and this should make thee great shame, my cousin Amaury; the bargain is then concluded. We will give thee a queen and two duchies, and thou shalt give us a king. It is not a bad bargain for thee; and I will concede that thou hadst thy good reasons for holding out; but let us to facts—how wilt thou deliver to us the king?"

"The king is now always surrounded by his new guards," replied Montruel; "we must watch our opportunity and give—give—— My cousin, the noble John Sans Terre, is subject to changes —I must first be secured in my duchies and in the balance."

Herbert Melfast did not show himself in the least offended by the distrust testified against his master.

"The duchies are my concern," said he, "with a great laugh; "but as to the balance, my cousin speaks of, that is the affair of thy poignard, friend Mahmoud."

The Syrian raised his handsome figure, rolled his eyes from one lord to the other, and then made a sign that he was about to speak. He threw a strange and solemn dignity into all his actions.

"There is only one God," said he, slowly, "and Mahomet is his Prophet; seven times glory to God, and three times glory to his Prophet. The sons of Sebbah were sent direct from Allah. From the day of his translation to the regions of felicity, his successors became heaven's representatives on earth. I am Mahmoud el Reis, son of Omar. My master Mohammed, said to me, follow that man—pointing to Herbert Melfast—and take thy poignard with thee! I love Dilah, who is more beautiful than the daughters promised for the eternal pleasure of the faithful; I was loved by her. We were about to be united. Dilah shed tears that my burning lips tried to dry up. The master said to me, if thou returnest with the blood of the king upon thine hands, I will watch over Dilah for thee."

The eyes of Mahmoud turned towards heaven, and he still spoke more to himself than to his two companions, as he continued—

"I went to Dilah, at the hour when the great trees cast their shadows on the terraces of the City of the Pure, and said to her, I will return—wilt thou wait me! Dilah gave me her timid brow and replied—'I will wait for thee.'

"And as I left the next day, at the rising of the sun, I heard the voice of Dilah murmuring behind the flowery hedge, 'return quick!'

"From that day," continued Mahmoud el Reis turning towards the Englishman and the Frenchman, "I am a body without a soul—my spirit remains in the shady gardens of the Pure. When the sun sets my eye seeks the same cherished star in the sky that Dilah watches, while waiting for me; but you have nothing of ours here,—not even our stars. If the blood of the queen will give me the blood of the king, then the queen must die, in order that I may return to my betrothed!"

Amaury was about to reply, but Melfast restrained him quickly.

"He has allowed us to speak," whispered Melfast, and he is noble among his brothers.

"I have promised to the priest with white hairs," continued the Syrian, "to carve him a statue; eight days are necessary to enable me to keep my promise. In eight days, if I have finished my statue, and if the queen is dead,

thou shalt show me by what road I may arrive at the breast of the king!"

Eight days, for men of the temper of Amaury Montreul is an age—they reckon on the events of the day, without a thought of the day after.

"In eight days," replied Amaury, "if the Danish woman is no more, I will do what thou askest me."

At Montreul's gate there stood a horse of the purest Arab blood, richly caparisoned, in the Persian style; two black slaves waited at the stirrups. Mahmoud leaped into the saddle, and gently stroked the shining neck of his horse, while the slaves handed him his stone-cutter's tools, and then took the road to the purlieus of Notre Dame.

All Paris was waiting, with curious anxiety, the arrival of the celebrated image-cutter that had been engaged by Maurice de Sully to sculpture a statute of the Virgin—to complete the twelve signs of the Zodiac, which were to ornament the chief portals of the cathedral. As soon as Mahmoud made his appearance, the crowd became more dense and tumultuous than in the morning.

"Jean Cador! Jean Cador!" they shouted on all hands, "that's the good artisan who is going to give us an image of our lady!"

The Syrian, on his magnificent Arab, and followed by his black slaves, passed through the press of his admirers, taciturn and proud. On the arrival of Jean Cador at the chief door of the church, two deacons presented themselves and conducted him to a temporary atelier that had been constructed for him on a level with the first gallery; Cador entered it with his two negroes—the doors were closed—leaving the disappointed crowd grumbling like the audience of a theatre upon whom the curtain has been let down too soon.

"I suppose that's too great a lord to work in the open air, like ordinary people," said one.

"Does he think we want to learn in his school?" said a jealous artisan.

"We have not been among the Pagans," said a third; "we work as our forefathers worked, and without the assistance of apprentices like demons. I hope that man will bring no misfortune on the church, or on those who are building it!"

At that moment they could hear from the little work cabin the dry noise of the hammer on the granite, and the splinters of stone flying off in every direction, striking sharply against the sonorous wooden partition; it was as though twenty men were working there with all their might. Artisans and bourgeois looked at each other, and more than once crossed themselves, repeating the words of the stone-cutter, "God forbid that that man bring us any misfortune!"

CHAPTER VII.

Through the large trees of a vast and irregular garden, planted on the side of a hill, might be seen the towers of an immense old abbey. It was at that season of the year when the large trees are still bare, but in which the shrubs are just putting forth their verdure. Wandering through the parterres whose compartments represeuted hideous monsters and and fabulous animals—might be seen a young damsel walking slowly, and followed by two women in the costume of nuns.

The latter had their faces covered with long veils—they spoke not a word, and regulated their steps by those of the young girl who preceded them. The young girl had just descended the moss-grown and half-ruined steps which led from the cloisters of the abbey into the narrow paths that wound through the bushy parterres. She appeared a little older than the sister of Eric, the mason; but she was at that time of life when a few years only add additional charms to beauty: and she was therefore, by so much, more beautiful than our pretty Eve. If we were not afraid of perpetrating a comparison too academical we should say that Eve was the rose-bud and the other the full-blown flower; further, we may say that there was a resemblance between our charming unknown, and if not strictly a family resemblance, they were unmistakeably of the same country.

Both were blondes, with the same soft golden hair—both had blue eyes—both were slender and well formed; Eve's figure was perhaps the stronger—but the recluse of the convent was more graceful and high-bred. For this delightful unknown was a recluse, and the two nuns who accompanied her, might well pass for her jailors.

The cloisters, towers, and vast dwellings, whose austere profiles could be traced through the trees, belonged to the abbey St. Martin-hors-de-Murs—the nuns were there only by a favour conceded to royal authority, for the convent belonged to the monks of St. Benoit, whose severe rules forbid the presence of women within their abbeys.

The beautiful young girl was the sister of Canute, King of Denmark, and was the wife of Phillip Augustus, King of France, Queen Ingeburge.

And yet, though we have called her a young girl, it was not from forgetfulness, for Ingeburge was as much a maiden as on the day when she quitted the old forests of her native country, and sailed for the land of France, with a heart full of hope and pride....to be the queen ...to be the well-beloved wife of the most glorious soverign in the universe!

It was only necessary to see her to read in her face the virgin purity of her soul. The poor queen had wept much; but she still preserved a little of that childish *insouciance* which can sometimes smile through its tears. It was early in the morning and the sun was playing over the newly-opened leaves of the lilies and white thorns.

On first coming out of her cell the head of the young girl-queen was bowed sorrowfully upon her breast, as though she was overwhelmed with her grief and solitude. History has told us that she loved her ungrateful husband with a profound and undivided love. And even those who have elevated the coarse Agnes into a heroine of romance, have never been able to tear from the truthful brow of poor queen Angel the sweet and poetic aureole that adorned it.

And for all the scorn, and all the injustice, and all the honors which were heaped upon her unworthy rival, and which where so many bleeding outrages, the loving young queen had always, in the depths of heart, pardon and devotion for her lawful lord. She loved: and in that slow martyrdom, which was consuming her youth—one word could re-animate—one caress would have made her happy.

She thought, alas! by times, of the fate of other women who were wives and mothers, and of the smiles of their cradled infants, while she, though queen, was neither a wife or mother.

In days gone by, she had her brother, her companions, her country. Phillip Augustus had robbed her of all these, and had given her, instead, a solitary and cold prison.

And wherefore? what had she done to that king? At the first call she had thrown herself into his arms, all radiant with joy. She had brought him her youth, her beauty, and all the exquisite perfections of her heart and soul;—and in return for these priceless gifts—the king had struck her down, without anger as without pity, and given her a living death.

And still she loved the king.

We have said that she was sad on leaving her cell, but as she left the gloomy arches of the cloisters, the fresh air struck her bent brow and she raised her beautiful blue eyes, full of melancholy, and when her pretty foot had once touched the gravel of the parterre, a smile already shone through her sadness.

Like those first flowers, called by the country people "pierce snow"—which, by the aid of the sun, thrust their heads through the frozen ground, queen Angel raised her head, and her lungs drew in that sweet air so different from the air of her prison. She gave an involuntary start, and seemed about to run over the grass plats, still wet with dew.

The two nuns gave a cough, which reminded poor Angel that she was the queen, and she resumed her slow and measured step.

But the breeze shook gently the branches of the odorous cytises—the amorous birds were singing in the green bushes—and the heart of Angel expanded in spite of herself, and in spite of her two austere duennas—a voice seemed to speak to her from the depth of her soul and promised her happiness.

Alas! if she believed in these promises it was the hopefulness of childhood—hoping ever. What happiness could the inhospitable and treacherous land of France give her—that land which, instead of the promised power and felicity, had given her death and abandonment?

All at once she uttered a cry—a veritable cry of joy.

The discreet nuns gave another warning cough; but the queen gave a spring light as that of a fawn and cleared at one bound the wide border which separated the parterre from the grass plat.

"Madame! madame!" shrieked the two nuns. But the young girl run over the grass, with her hair flowing over her shoulders, and her white robe streaming in the wind. She was no longer queen Ingeburge, but Angel, daughter of the North, and free, as formerly, in the fields and woods of her own country.

The two nuns, who had quickened their steps to overtake her, found her kneeling on the grass, and as they were opening with a duet of reproaches, she turned towards them with a smile on her lips and tears in her eyes, and in her hands she held a bouquet of small blue flowers.

"Pardon me, my sisters," said she, with the gentleness of an infant, "I could not resist; for I saw from afar, that my *vennen* (forget-me-nots) had blown."

"What does that signify," began one of the duennas, and the other supported her companion's question by a sharp glance.

Angel looked at them with astonishment.

"What signifies my *vennen!*" exclaimed she, clasping her beautiful white hands, "can you ask me that, my sisters? You know not, then, that this is the first flower which makes its appearance upon the terrace of our palace at Copenhagen; it is the flower of souvenir—it is the flower of our country." Her voice trembled as she bore the bouquet to her lips.

"Oh! my poor country!" she murmured, "oh! my cherished flowers; see how weak they are, and how their stems bend. That is because they are not the native flowers of France. They are exiles, like me; perhaps they suffer like me. Oh! my sisters," she added, bursting into tears, "your France is not good for everything that comes from our country!"

Some minutes after this queen Ingeburge was seated on a stone bench by the side of a friar, whose bald head and white beard gave him a very venerable appearance; the monk and the queen were conversing in a low voice—the two nuns stood off at a distance.

"I have confessed my faults, father," murmured the queen, her hands still joined and her eyes still devoutly lowered; "but I feel that I am still wanting in resignation to the will of the Lord. I have many desires and many regrets. I sigh for the past—the happy days of my childhood—my country—my brother—my companions. I long for some new country instead of the one to which they have brought me. I desire the attachment of some one near me—a little liberty, and the confidence and love of a husband. Alas! everything that I have not, my father. I know that it is sinning against God, thus to murmur under the weight of his chastisements. But God will pardon me, my father, for I have suffered so much and am so weak!"

The priest, who was the prior of the abbey, looked at her with a commiseration full of respect and tenderness.

"God has pardoned you already my daughter," replied he. "God pardons simple and honest souls like yours; but it is a fault to give way to obstinate despair, and to complain without ceasing. Judge whether heaven has abandoned you: the legate of our Holy Father has just arrived to cite Phillip of France once more before the council, to compel him to renounce his criminal life, and the guilty consequences of his second marriage."

The young queen shook her fair head doubtingly.

"I am but a simple maiden, mon père," said she, "and perhaps I do not understand everything; but all this was judged in the former

council, and the second marriage was then condemned. Should not the first sentence be revoked, before they enter into judgment again?"

Prior Anselmo involuntarily turned his eyes away.

Women and young girls possess the sagacity of a lawyer, when their private interests are at stake; and though this has been apparent to us ever since the days of our mother, Eve, we nevertheless continue always to express our astonishment at it.

"Oh! pray," resumed the queen who had observed the movement of the old man, "do not attach too much importance to my words, my dear father, I am sure that the church will sustain my cause; for the church could not be a party to any act of injustice. And these judgments and those councils...."

She stopped and the prior gave her an inquiring look.

Ingeburge finished with a still more sorrowful smile. "I desired to say that all these things could not give me back the heart of the king, my husband."

A silence ensued, during which the old priest, holding the queen's white hand in his own, contemplated her with paternal interest.

"There are some things which are beyond me, my daughter," said he at last, "but to my mind you are queen of France and were you only a poor girl, without support or protection, I should still feel myself attracted towards you; because your pure conscience is to me like a beautiful book—the pages of which I can turn over with love. If there is anything that you desire, and that is within the limits of my authority, as prior of this abbey, tell it me without fear."

The queen blushed slightly, and replied—

"Is it really true that my prayer will be granted?"

Père Anselme nodded assent.

"Ah, vell," said Ingeburge, "they tell me that in another and distant part of the buildings of your abbey there is an hospital for poor patients."

"You have not been deceived, my daughter," replied the prior.

"Accomplish, then, your promise, mon père," continued the young queen, and grant that which I shall ask thee." Here I am useless to others as well as to myself. Here I can do nothing but dwell on my sorrows, and shed useless tears, which are an offence against heaven; I would rather that my days were turned to some good account. I should like to devote my time to ministering to those poor patients."

"You—the queen!" interrupted prior Anselme.

"If I was indeed queen," said Ingeburge, "I should know how to relieve the suffering and aid the afflicted in a different way—but since I can do nothing...."

"My daughter," again interrupted the old monk, whose voice betrayed his emotion, "there are too often in our infirmary, contagious diseases."

"And if I should die by their means," murmured the queen, with an angelic smile, "I should no longer have to complain that France had refused me the queen's crown, since she would have given me a holier one!"

The prior contemplated the queen with admiration and raised her hand to his lips. "Your wish shall be granted, my daughter," said he, "you shall minister to our poor patients. Have you any other desire?"

"Oh yes!" replied Ingeburge quickly, but immediately hesitated—as one about to ask a favour too ardently desired.

"Mon père," resumed she after a pause, "I am here alone—and my heart can only open itself to you. These holy women—(pointing to the nuns—who stood at a distance like two statues of old wood—stiff and severe)—who follow me always and everywhere, these holy women do not understand me. Perhaps they do not love me. Is it not possible to give me a companion of my own age? and if you cannot accord me a young girl from the North country, speaking to me my own tongue—then a young French woman."

"The orders of the king are absolute," replied the prior.

At that moment a noise was heard coming from the cloisters, the arches of which were hidden from the queen and her confessor by the trees and shrubs. Neither of them paid any attention to that noise.

"I am told that you have much influence over my dreaded lord, King Phillip Augustus," continued the young queen, in a supplicating and caressing voice, "mon père, I pray you on my knees: it would do me so much good to hear the gentle voice of a young girl; she would soon love me. Oh, I am sure she would soon love me; and should I not love her who would consent to share my afflictions." The old man could make no reply; the noise in the cloisters increased, and they could distinguish the voice of a woman behind the thick bushes.

The attention of the queen and the prior was not yet aroused. A tear from the beautiful blue eyes of Ingeburge was coursing down her pale cheek.

"I do not insist," murmured she, "for if you refuse me, mon père, you, who are so good—it must needs be because my demand is unreasonable. I will try to forget the foolish wish which I have so nourished, of not being always alone and abandoned—and of having the heart of a friend always near me—a heart which might have received the overflowings of my grief. Alas! it is too true, when I reflect upon it—it would have been too much joy."

She wept and the good old prior felt that he was about to do the same; but he sought not to encourage a hope in her, that he could not share; for in all that related to Ingeburge the king had shown himself inexorable.

The young queen put her hands to her burning brow, and spoke no more, but her sobs bespoke her deep distress.

At that moment the noise behind the bushes redoubled and seemed to draw nearer. Ingeburge still paid no attention to it. What could that noise signify to her? but the old prior raised his head and listened.

All at once, among the confused murmurs, a clear and sweet voice arose—it was the voice of a young girl—and that voice said:

"Angel—my sister Angel!—where art thou?"

The young queen rose with a convulsive start; her brow became paler, her eyes wandered—she threw back the ringlets of her long fair hair—and muttered in accents full of fear—

"Oh! I am becoming mad!"—the prior himself knew not what to think.

Again the voice repeated, "Angel! where art thou—my sister Angel?"

The queen pressed her cold hands to her temples—then, as though she would combat that madness, which for a moment at least had made her happy—she fell on her knees, exclaiming—

"Here! Eve—my sister, Eve!"

Suddenly the rusthing foliage opened, and a young girl, clothed all in white—fair and charming as the queen herself, flew like an arrow across the grassplot and precipitated herself into the arms of Ingeburge.

It was our little Eve, who was no longer master Adam, and who had laid aside for ever her disguise as a mason's apprentice.

Breathless and agitated, it was long before Eve could find words to tell her joy to the laughing, weeping queen, who threw her arms round Eve's neck, looking at her affectionalely a long time, without speaking.

"My sister! my sister!" murmured she—without knowing that she was speaking—"Oh! my sister! do I see thee again?"

"Oh, my queen!" exclaimed Eve in the Norse language, "I have suffered much to reach thee, but I see thee. I kiss thy dear hands, and I have nothing left to do but to bless the goodness of God!"

Ingeburge continued to contemplate her as though she dared not trust the evidence of her eyes and ears.

At that moment the old nuns hastened forward and each seized Eve by an arm.

"What does this woman want?" said they in one voice—"We have orders to prevent any person whatever from speaking to the princess of Denmark."

At that word you would have no longer recognized the young maiden, whose portrait we have just been sketching—she rose suddenly into a strong and proud woman.

The prior had no time to speak for her.

"To the queen of France!" said she slowly, while her haughty look disconcerted, for a moment, the two nuns.

"To the queen of France," repeated one of the nuns who still held Eve by the arm—"be it so; that title avails you nothing, madame—and you will never miss it, by the respect you show for it." There was an ironical bitterness conveyed in these last words.

"My daughter," said the prior, moving towards Ingeburge, "the orders of the king are strict."

But Eve, drawing a parchment from her bosom, interrupted him—

"I am here by the orders of the king," said she.

The nuns could not conceal their incredulous smiles. The old priest himself seemed to doubt, while Eve extended the parchment towards him.

The queen seized it in its passage, and eagerly sought for the king's signature. When she had found it she kissed it respectfully, without knowing the contents of the order.

Then she returned the parchment to the prior who read it:

"The young girl does not lie," said he; "the king wishes her to be the companion of madame Ingeburge, the queen."

The two nuns withdrew, muttering to themselves. The battalion of frère servants, and other keepers of the monastery, who had chased Eve through the bushes, did the same, on receiving a sign from the prior, who at the same time laid his two hands upon the fair head of Eve.

"Thou hast a good heart, young girl," said he; "I pray God that he may give thee back the consolations and joy, that thou hast brought to our poor recluse. May this day," added he, turning towards the queen, before whom he bowed, "be the commencement of a happier life."

The queen extended to him her two hands, which he kissed, and withdrew with a slow step.

The queen, though she loved the holy prior well—for he had been her support and protector in her sad prison—was nevertheless anxious to be left alone with Eve, that she might enjoy more completely the souvenirs of her youth and of her country. As soon therefore, as the old prior had disappeared among the trees, she drew Eve to her breast, and held her a long time in her embrace.

"Thank thee—thank thee!" murmured she, through her tears—"since I set foot on the land of France, I have never had but this one moment of true happiness, and it is thee who hast given it me, my well beloved Eve; thank thee—thank thee!" They mingled their tears and their smiles, while unintelligible words fell from the lips of Eve, who was more overcome than the queen herself.

"How beautiful thou hast become, my little sister," resumed Ingeburge, holding Eve off, the better to examine her. "When I departed from that dear country—which would to God I had never left—thou wert still a child; now thou art a tall and beautiful girl. Yes! yes! thou art indeed beautiful, my sister Eve!"

"And thou, also, my sister angel—who wert renowned as the most beautiful, in the days of which thou speakest—how pale thou art? But thy paleness suits well thy royal brow! Oh, my queen and my sister, how blind and how heartless that man must be?"

Ingeburge turned away her head, with a sorrowful smile.

"He is my lord," said she, "and I love him. Speak of him ever as though he loved me."

"And who knows but he shall love thee yet, Angel?" exclaimed the young girl, whose blue eyes suddenly sparkled. "The Bohemian woman has captured his soul, by the aid of sorcery, that is as well known in Denmark as at Paris. But the king said in my presence to-day—'Queen Ingeburge is holy—queen Ingeburge is beautiful.'"

"The king!" stammered out the poor queen, "the king said that? speaking of his imprisoned wife. Ah! sister Eve! thou wouldst deceive me;" and she tried to withdraw her head—but Eve retained it and covered it with kisses.

"I have much to tell; listen, my sister, Angel,

and never distrust me; for though it were even to save thee, I could not tell a lie!"

Seated, side by side, on the grey stone bench, both young and smiling—both happy in their mental restoration—the resemblance to each other was not so great as it would appear at first sight. Eve was the rustic beauty; but Ingeburge, to the exquisite softness of her physiognomy, added the proud beauty of royal blood.

Eve had been speaking for a long time, relating her adventures in the simple poetry of her native tongue; the queen was wrapt in attention and lost nothing, and the different impressions produced by the exciting tale of Eve, were reflected and passed over her sensitive features like the images of clouds and birds passing over the polished surface of a lake.

"Ah! the good lord!" said the queen, at the moment when the young Dane came to that part of her story in which she related her weariness on the evening of her meeting with the chevalier Dieudonné, who had opened the gates of Paris to her and her brother, Eric.

"Yes, my sister," said Eve, whose smile had now an arch expression. "The chevalier Dieudonné is very good; and since that he has done still more for me."

"Relate it—relate it, my child," said the queen impatiently.

Eve desired nothing better. When she came to the ride she had taken in company the with handsome page, Albret, from the liberties of Notre Dame to the tower of the Louvre, it was the queen's turn to smile archly.

"Hadst thou any previous knowledge of him?" asked the queen.

"It was he who lent us his horse," replied Eve.

"But before he lent you his horse?"

"No," said Eve, "I had never seen him before that."

"And what did he say to thee on the road, my child?"

"Nothing up to the moment when he entered into the alley of elms, which is behind porte St. Honoré."

"And when you had entered under the elms which are behind the porte St. Honore?"

"Then," replied Eve, without hesitating, and looking frankly in the face of the queen, "then my sister, he told me that he loved me."

"Oh! these pages," cried the queen laughing, "and that made thee very angry—did it not, my sister?"

Eve blushed; for she thought the queen's words sounded like a reproach, and she felt quite unable to acknowledge the page had not made her angry.

"Ah, if thou couldst know, my sister," murmured she, "how that page spoke of thee! and with what an air of sincerity he compared thee to the angels;" I love everybody who speaks well of my darling princess."

"And therefore thou art in love with page Albret?" continued the queen.

"I told him that I believed I should love him."

The queen was about to open her mouth to give expression to a moral, but Eve closed it with a kiss. "I know all thou wouldst say," said she "and it is not necessary to tell it me, my sister; and if I had remained alone in this great city and without protectors, of what use would have been all our fatigues and our long journey? I desired to see thee happy; and if I remain the worthy daughter of my honest father, what signifies a word or a smile more or less?" and Eve resumed her narrative, without giving the queen time to reply.

"The page conducted me over a draw-bridge to a great gate, where hung a horn which he sounded. We entered, without dismounting, under a dark arch which led to the interior of the fortress. I was still in my boy's clothes; the page assisted me to dismount, in a narrow court surrounded by high buildings.

'Eve,' whispered he in my ear, as we passed through a vestibule supported by large carved pillars, 'pardon me if I cannot tell thee beforehand who is the chevalier Dieudonné; I should betray the orders of the master that I serve.'

"It is needless to say that I was not in the dwelling of a simple chevalier; and then thou knowest, my sister, that in the summer palace of thy noble father, king Canute, we amused ourselves by studying the escutcheons of all the Christian princes. I can emblazon a crown nearly as well as a herald-at-arms, and I saw all around me, the crown, with globe and cross, and the azure field, sprinkled with golden lilies without number."

"What!" exclaimed the queen, whose eyes began to open wide and who was losing her colour.

"I guessed," pursued Eve, "that the chevalier Dieudonné was the king."

"The king!" repeated Angel, who instinctively drew close to Eve.

"But all prepared as I was," resumed Eve, "when the page raised a screen of cloth of gold, and introduced me into the immense hall, where I saw the royal throne under its velvet canopy, I felt that my strength was leaving me and I had no longer any courage. The chevalier Dieudonné, bare-headed and without arms, was then all alone, pacing up and down, with long strides, and seemingly lost in reflection. In my agitation I turned, as though to seek the support of Albret, but the thick drapery had separated us, and I was alone with the king of France."

The queen drew still nearer.

"During a minute, but which appeared to me an age"—continued the young girl—"the king pursued his pensive promenade—then stopping suddenly, looked me in the face, and bid me approach. I obeyed, and bent my knee to the ground."

'Has Albret warned you?'—muttered he, frowning.

"No! dreaded sire," I replied, for I know the title by which to address the king; "upon my eternal salvation I swear that your servant has not betrayed your orders. If any one is to be punished it should be me alone, who deceived the king on entering into his palace, as one looks for the presence of God, on passing over the treshold of his temple."

"Eve, Eve," muttered the queen, "that was an act of impiety."

"The king did not appear to me offended by the comparison," replied the maiden with a cer-

tain complacency; "my sister Angel do not scold me—I felt the necessity of winning the king's good graces, and I thought," added she, with a look of pride "that no old courtier could have steered his bark more skilfully through that difficult passage."

The simple girl did not know that it was the policy of the king that had helped her at that trying moment. We should add, however, the beauty of Eve to the policy of the king, for these things never jostle with the most hardened politician.

"The king continued to regard me," resumed the maiden; "and I thought I saw that in spite of his frown, he had a strong desire to smile. I remained kneeling with my hands joined; I must acknowledge that I had somewhat forgotten my rôle of a young boy, and I was scarcely conscious of the costume I wore. When the king called me 'young man,' I trembled from head to foot, for I felt that I was on the point of betraying a very important secret. The king now fairly smiled.

'Come,' said he, with a little severity in his voice, 'we do not yet know how to lie!'

"And as he saw I was about to reply—he interrupted me with a look full of indulgence—

'Child,' said he, 'never try to deceive the king. The king knows all!'

"I was overwhemed by these words which seemed to reproach me with ingratitude; for that man was my benefactor, as well as the king of France; and I had still, under my surcoat, the purse full of gold that he had given me the night before.

'My daughter,' resumed he in a gentle voice, 'I guessed your sex at the moment I welcomed you with your brother. The king knows all; and I know that you come from that country beyond the Northern Ocean; and I know also that you came to seek the princess Ingeburge, and to succour her in her peril.'

"He did not say the queen," interrupted Angel.

"No," replied Eve, "he did not say the queen; but have patience my sister, and hear my tale to the end."

'I know,' continued the king, 'through what countries you have passed; people have told me that your brother, Eric, the mason, carries a poignard as well as a trowel; but there are already so many poignards in Paris destined for the breast of the king, that the king scarcely heeds, my daughter, a poignard more or less.'

"In saying this he looked at me with a calm and intrepid air; he does not boast, for that heart never knew fear."

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Ingeburge, pressing the young girl as though to thank her, "that is a brave chevalier, my sister!"

Eve continued.

'Would it make you very happy, my daughter,' said the king, 'if I were to tell you that you were going to see that princess again, who appears so dear to you?'

"My dreaded sire," replied I, pressing with both hands my palpitating heart, "for nearly a year I have journeyed and suffered—supported by that hope alone."

'Are you noble?' asked he.

"In the north country," I replied, "all laborers are men-at-arms. My father is a labourer and I may be the chamber-woman of a queen."

The countenance of Ingeburge assumed an expression of reproach.

"And thee also," murmured she, "thou darest not, then, say the queen."

"No, my sister," retorted Eve resolutely, "I dared not—because, above all, I desired to see thee—to be near thee—to serve thee on my knees. And when one desires to gain something from the powerful, it is necessary to name things as they do."

This little Eve had, after all, some tincture of the *savoir vivre:* it comes naturally to young girls of sixteen—we know not how.

"The king smiled," continued she, "and touched me on the chin."

'Ah well, master Adam,' said he, mocking me, 'I consent to your happiness. You shall be your queen's page from to-day, and you must enter the convent.'

"I restrained my transports out of respect for the presence of the king, but I thought that the presence of the Holy Father himself could scarcely have prevented me from leaping with joy. I rose like one beside myself, and seized the king's hand to kiss it a thousand times.

'Well! well! my child, proceed; I see that thou art honest.' And it was here that the king added—'You do well to love that beautiful and holy woman, who suffers with such resignation, and who has not deserved her suffering.'

Torrents of tears rolled down the cheeks of queen Angel.

For some time Eve remained mute, respecting the profound emotion of her sister. After awhile she again resumed her tale. "The king made me a sign to withdraw, and as I moved towards the door—he added—

'Your brother, Eric, has nothing to fear from me; I have no suspicions of those who love queen Ingeburge.'

Ingeburge raised her eyes to heaven, plunged in a sort of ecstasy. One intoxicating hope came over her, in spite of herself.

"The king said to me," concluded Eve, 'Princesses are always surrounded by liars, even when they are unhappy. If any one has told Ingeburge of Denmark that the king of France has suspected her of having purchased the knife of the Syrian assassin, they have deceived her, and I wish that Ingeburge should know it.'

"I!" exclaimed the distracted queen, "I! has any one, then, dared to accuse me of that frightful crime; and is it possible that there exist murderers who threaten the life of the king?"

"Both the life of the king and the life of the queen," said Eve, impressively.

The handsome countenance of Angel assumed an angelic expression.

"My God!" murmured she, "my poor life is as nothing; but the life of the king of France—the life of my husband—for he has proclaimed me his wife before God's altar, and God alone can break the tie that unites us. Has he sufficient guards to protect him, Eve? Has he faithful friends around him?"

That word *friend* seemed to awake a souvenir in the mind of the young girl, and instead of replying to the queen, she allowed her thoughts to run aloud:

"He who said '*I came to Paris to kill a woman*,' lives at the Louvre, and calls himself the friend of the king!"

The queen did not understand her.

After some moments of silence, during which her deep emotion was somewhat calmed, she asked her young companion if she had related all that the king had said to her.

Eve seemed to awake as from a dream, for she thought of the threatening discovery that she had made under the walls of the very abbey in which they were now confined, and she thought also of the prophecy of Mila, who had foretold that meeting, as well as that with the sovereign arbiter of the queen's destinies. The words of Amaury Montruel rung in her ears as though she heard them at that moment.

"The king!" said she, trembling; "true—I had forgotten something—the king said to me, just at the moment when his page Albert raised the arras and came to conduct me here.—'Take this parchment, and announce to the princess of Denmark that she will receive a visit from me before the sun goes down!'"

The queen rose from her seat, but so agitated that she could scarcely stand—for she could not believe that she had heard aright.

"Phillip!" exclaimed she at last, "I shall receive a visit from Phillip Augustus before the sun sets! Why hast thou not told me that before?" and then she added with great volubility, "Oh! Eve, I have hardly time to make myself beautiful; and I desire to be very beautiful if Phillip Augustus is coming to see me. I have never seen him once since that happy and that cruel day."

The poor queen was like one out of her senses. All at once she ran towards the monastery, then turned and ran back again.

"My *vennen!* exclaimed she, "my well-beloved flowers, which have brought me all the good fortune of this day—for it was only this morning that I first saw them blow—there were none yesterday! And when I first spied their sweet blue heads peeping out of the grass, my soul rejoiced. Let us remain here, my child, and gather all the *vennen*, for they will all disappear to-night. Dost thou remember how beautifully they used to set off our fair hair? Let us twine garlands of them for my head-dress. Help me, my little Eve. If thou helpest me, the king will find me pretty; and perhaps...."

She could not finish—but a smile of childish coquetry played upon her lips.

The tears came into Eve's eyes—and why? They twined the garlands; and the sweet flowers of the north shared their beauties with the admirable blonde hair of the queen.

It was a rare toilette that they made on that grey stone bench, and in the austere solitude of that convent garden; and a mysterious sadness hovered over the scene. Eve would have smiled, but hid her head to weep—and why?

As to the queen, all decked with her graceful garlands—she looked as beautiful as the beautiful angels in heaven, but, alas! the poor queen was fated to be deceived. Eve wept, because she had not yet told the queen all.

Eve had not yet told the queen that at the moment when she was leaving the great hall of the Louvre, she turned round to make the king a last reverence, and that she had then seen at the end of the hall, the golden arras open, and a young, beautiful, but haughty woman enter whose bitter smile seemed to say, "I have heard all!"

A woman who had in her eye, a look of implacable hardness,—tall and richly dressed—a coronet on her brow, loaded with precious stones—the broad fillet of which scarcely hid the jet black hair which fell over her masculine forehead.

The king exclaimed, with some agitation, "You here! Agnes, my dear."

And Eve had heard that woman in the royal coronet say—

"You shall not go!"

This was what Eve had not told the queen before. And it was for this that Eve wept.

CHAPTER IX.

The sun went down—and Ingeburge, all decked as she was—still waited, clinging obstinately to her fond hopes.

The sun went down but still the king came not. At the hour when he should have come, a dazzling calvacade, composed of lords and noble ladies, were following the right bank of the Seine and proceeding to the city of Paris.

It was madame Agnes and her suite. Madame Agnes had taken a fancy to visit that evening, the works of Notre Dame, attended by nearly all the great vassals of France, now transformed into eager and supple courtiers by the rough lesson they had received the night before.

Eudes III., Duke of Burgogne, was then attended only by a single page, and there also were the earls du Perche, d'Artois and de Dammartin. Jean de Nesle, Raymond de Poitiers, and nearly all those whom we cited as being present at the secret conference held under the presidency of the Bishop of Orvieto, the lateral legate of the holy see.

By the side of Agnes de Meranie capered Amaury de Montruel, lord of Anet, dressed in the richest attire, and mounted on a magnificient genet of Cordovan.

The bourgeois of Paris pushed and crowded to get a good view of that elegant cavalcade, and many were the biting sarcasms that were uttered on the purity of the king's couch.

On the other side of madame Agnes might be seen Herbert Melfast, Archbishop of Canterbury, looking like a colossal red pepper, and covered with jewelry, the product of more than one raid.

Behind, in the crowd, our friend, Tristan the scholar, was capering as well as he could upon an old steed which, in happier days, had been a war-horse. The worthy clerk, Samson, also bestrode an ancient looking animal, whose sires could be judged by his own long and sharp-pointed ears.

Mixing up with the peaceable bourgois were an active and noisy crew, crying, "Largess! largess!"

and cudgelling all these near them that would not join in the cry.

On turning the great bridge, Amaury Montruel drew up close to the side of Agnes, and pointed out to her, in the crowd of spectators, a tall man carrying over his shoulders a stone-cutter's hammer.

"Smile on him, madame," whispered Amaury, "for that is a man of importance. He is called master Honoré, the freemason, and leads his brethren were he pleases, like a flock of geese."

Agnes smiled on the man and gave him a gracious wave of the hand.

Master Honoré blushed deeply; for that flattering favour had taken him by suprise. He raised his hammer over his head and cried with the voice of a stentor, "Largess! for queen Agnes, Largess for the queen!"

The chronicles tell that the beautiful Agnes de Meranie preferred paying her obligations in that coin to parting with the ringing metal. She hoarded all the riches she could obtain; and being an Arab, in the full strength of the term, was her least defect.

Montruel gave a languishing sigh, exclaiming —"Oh! my queen! that is the way you gain all hearts."

Agnes knew well that she needed not to waste her time in captivating Montruel's heart—that was *un fait accompli;* but she had not yet made the conquest of Herbert Melfast, though Amaury himself had recommended her to seduce him as as soon possible, and was as jealous as could be when he found his queen undertaking the task with a willing heart.

The steed of Tristan having stopped short, that brave scholar occupied, for a moment, the front rank of the cavalcade. Amaury perceived him. "Smile again, madame," whispered he in Agnes' ear; "that tall boy is none other than the king of the scholars!".

Agnes at first glanced at his lean form with contempt, but finished by giving him a gracious salute and smile.

Tristan raised himself in his stirrups at the risk of bringing down his staggering charger on his breast—he waved his soiled cap over his head, crying, "Largess for queen Agnes! Largess for queen Agnes!" and this time the cry was well echoed; for the clerks and masons all took it up, giving a little rest to the zealous enthusiasts who had been splitting their throats all the way from the Louvre.

Agnes had still a little stock of smiles and gracious salutes on hand; for this with her was a promenade of business and not of pleasure. Accustomed as she was to the atmosphere of courts, she could not misapprehend certain symptoms that she had observed within the last forty-eight hours, and which revealed that something mysterious and threatening to her was brewing in the mind of Phillip Augustus.

She knew that Phillip was capable of being seduced; for he had the ardent blood of the Capets; but it was not possible wholly to subjugate him—for his head was still stronger than his heart, and his heart still stronger than his passions. And Agnes was full of fear, for she saw rising before her the phantom of that rival, whom she had always till then trodden under foot.

That rival—who was younger and more beautiful than herself, and who was, moreover, the first wife—she felt that she was too weak to defend herself; her policy was, therefore, to attack—and all these smiles and salutes were a sort of cash paid on account to her auxiliaries.

The little money to be expended in carrying out her schemes was to be provided by the devoted Amaury, from the sale of his domains; and Agnes desired nothing better than to supplement these funds by the smiles and gracious words which cost her nothing. And all this great array of forces was to be hurled against poor queen Angel, who was weeping in durance vile, for the absence of Phillip Augustus, at the abbey of St. Martin-hors-de-Murs.

Each smile and each salute added some strength to the clamor that welcomed the cavalcade. A success of this kind not being so difficult to accomplish at that period as it is to-day.

But the crowd which followed the escort of Agnes was suddenly brought to a stand by another crowd, composed of the trafficking busy vendors of comestibles, and the lazzaroni, who had established themselves within the liberties of Notre Dame, for the supply of the workmen; and it was not without an active use of their cudgels that the hired enthusiasts of queen Agnes could clear a passage for her.

We have said before that the true Parisians, as well as all true Frenchmen, regarded Ingeburge as their real queen, and Agnes de Meranie as only the king's concubine. It was, therefore, not to be wondered at, if, under this provocation, the disturbed swarm of purveyors should vent their anger, by hostile criticisms, on the woman for whose accommodation they had been so unceremoniously pushed aside.

"She has buried all the king's money in a pit," said one.

"Besides what she has sent beyond the Danube," said another; others, in succession, called out—

"The Bohemian!"

"The Jewess!"

"The Gypsey!"

"They say she keeps our poor young queen in a cell!"

"A dark cell, watched by monks!"

"And the Pope refuses her the sacraments!"

"What's the use of building churches, which will neither give our children baptism, or extreme unction to those who wish to die like Christians!"

Mingled with those threatening murmurs might be heard from the hired crowd, "Largess for queen Agnes!"

Agnes turned pale—Amaury Montruel turned his anxious eyes from side to side. The vassals of the crown had followed the edge of the Seine, in order to gain the rear of the church. Everybody knows how rapidly the anger of a crowd, once irritated, increases. Before the cortège of Agnes had reached the middle of the square, the crowd had completely surrounded it, and was raging like an angry sea. Agnes found that smiles and salutes were no longer current coin with the crowd.

Among the most clamorous were our old riends, Ezekiel and Treffouilloux. They were

both in a terrible humour; for they had been begging and whining since sunrise without attracting a sou. Unfortunate in their daily trade of begging—equally unfortunate in their nightly occupation of waylaying passengers who never came—these brave boys were sadly in want of some object upon which they could pour out the vials of their wrath.

"To the river with madame Agnes!" shouted Trefouilloux.

"Drown her! drown her!" cried Ezekiel.

And the frenzied crowd at once took up that terrible cry "Drown her! drown her!"

"Madame," whispered Montruel, whose livid brow streamed with perspiration, "we are prisoners, and must pay our ransom."

"Empty your purse, messire," said Agnes.

But Montruel had not waited for that order—his rôle being to steal from Phillip, and to ruin himself for Agnes.

For a moment the crowd was diverted by scrambling for the gold pieces, and more than one drop of blood was shed; but the ever-persecuted Trefouilloux and Ezekiel could not lay their hands on the smallest piece. "A diamond, Agnes!" shouted Ezekiel, whose eager eyes were starting from their orbits, "I must have one of thy diamonds!"

"I must have ten!" said Trefouilloux, "and large ones!"

"The diamonds! the diamonds!" cried the whole crowd, closing round the horse of Agnes.

"In the name of God, madame," whispered Montruel, more dead than alive, "do not refuse them."

But this was said timidly, for he knew the parsimonious habits of Agnes, and the difficulty of making her part with anything of value.

But, contrary to all his expectations the beautiful Agnes, with a perfectly good grace, took off her diadem, her pearl necklace, her ear-rings, her agraffe, and her girdle set with rubies. She kept nothing, and, smiling, cast all her spoils to the people, saying—

"Keep them, my friends—keep them; I brought them all for you!"

The crowd struck up an heroic epic, allowing the cavalcade to pass and busying themselves in fighting for the jewels.

When Agnes had got out of hearing of the crowd, and had reached the steps leading up to the great entrance of the cathedral, she turned to her faithful Amaury.

"Thank God!" said she, "that I had the prudence to leave my real jewels at the Louvre, or they would have had more than thirty thousand crowns worth."

"What!" stammered Montruel, in admiration of her sublime prudence.

Agnes pushed him towards the entrance to the church, saying,—"They were all imitations!" Ezekiel had three teeth knocked out. Trefouilloux had picked up two black eyes; and between them they had only gained a small piece of red glass, that Agnes would not have repurchased for a half sou.

CHAPTER X.

It must be acknowledged that the king's great vassels had not very valiantly defended Agnes de Meranie. Eudes, duke of Burgogne, had limited himself to forcing his heavy charger through the crowd—breaking an arm here and there—the other lords contented themselves with striking with the flat of their swords, to clear a passage to the church entrance. But none of them had seemed to care much what became of Agnes de Meranie; for to tell the truth, though nearly all of these powerful vassals hated Phillip Augustus, most of them would willingly have joined the people in crying—

"To the river with the Bohemian!" not from any feeling of devotion, but to spite the monarch whose heavy hand had began to crush out their influence.

Some entered the cathedral, while others rode round the open works. Within the building, and under the magnificent rose window already indicated stood the clergy of Notre Dame, headed by their chief, Maurice de Sully.

Agnes saluted the venerable prelate rather cavalierly; for Amaury Montruel, her political cicerone, had not marked the worthy bishop as a man worth gaining over: and in fact, Maurice de Sully paid little attention to the quarrels of the council, and to the great matrimonial struggles calling unceasingly for the interference of the Pope.

The interests of his darling church, which he saw day by day rising towards the sky, like the most imposing and the most magnificent of all prayers, was sufficient for the occupation of Maurice de Sully. But nobody was, perhaps, so indifferent to the progress of Notre Dame as Agnes de Meranie.

Among the priests who surrounded Maurice de Sully, Montruel pointed out a man with a long pale face, whose eager eyes were half hidden under bushy black eyebrows.

"See, madame," said he, "there is the bishop of Orvieto, legate of the Holy Father, who will have the upper hand in the approaching council."

Agnes walked straight up to the Italian, and taking his long thin fingers in her hand, she kissed them respectfully.

"My father," said she, assuming a gentle and submissive voice, "I have heard much of your great virtues, and I have come expressly to seek a blessing from one who is reputed to be a saint upon earth."

The legate made an effort to preserve a look of humility, but his eyes rose from the ground in spite of him, and his whole countenance betrayed an emotion of supreme vanity.

"My daughter," replied he, meekly folding his hands upon his breast, "I am but a poor sinner."

"Kneel down," whispered Montruel, "and the man is ours."

Agnes obeyed willingly. The bishop could no longer resist—he laid his hands upon her head and blessed her.

Agnes rose, and her joy, which was far from being feigned, was highly flattering to the bishop; and her joy was not diminished that she had joined another partisan without any expense.

Agnes advanced up the centre of the nave, and looked all around her; but she was too much a woman of the world to be an artist, and the marvellous creation of art before her was to her a sealed book. She saw nothing but unfinished columns and broken lines.

"This is a hideous place," she whispered to Montruel, "I expected to see something better;" and then aloud she exclaimed, "How beautiful! I did not look for so much religious splendor!"

Montruel said to himself, "What wit!—what finesse!" without for a moment reflecting that the most abandoned wanton might have sung that song of black and white as well as Agnes de Meraule. The good bishop made a low bow, to express his gratitude; for he loved all those who called his dear church beautiful.

"The day is wearing," said Amaury to his *queen*, "and our time is getting short."

"Respected sires," said Agnes, immediately to the clergy, "can I be permitted to see the image-cutter, who came from the Saracen country, and who is working on the statue of the holy Mary."

Maurice de Sully at first made no reply, while the priests looked at each other with embarrassment.

Agnes alluded to Jean Cador and everybody at Notre Dame was obedient to Jean Cador, who had strictly forbidden any one, under whatever pretext, to disturb him at his work.

To disobey Jean Cador was to run the risk of seeing that eccentric artist throw down his tools and leave his block of granite a shapeless stone; and then where in the whole universe could they find the like of Jean Cador?

"Madame," stammered the good bishop Maurice, who was picking his words, not knowing how to frame his refusal, "assuredly I would do anything in the world to please you.

Agnes divined what the nature of this reply was about to be. "I entreat you," said she, "not to refuse my request; before my lord the king gave me the name of Agnes, I was called Marie—and our Lady is my well-beloved patroness. Suffer me, my father, to go and worship my patroness."

Though this was so adroitly put, Maurice still held out; for he had heard nothing that seemed likely to contribute to the success of his work—but the legate came to the aid of Agnes.

"My venerable brother," said he, "let me add my entreaties to those of the illustrious Agnes of France; I beg you to accede to her pious wish."

Agnes reddened with pride; for it was seldom that she received that coveted title—Agnes of France.

Maurice de Sully dared not now resist, for the legate was too direct a representative of the papal family.

"Be it according to your wish, venerable brother," said he, bending before the legate, "may it please God that none of us have cause to repent the step. That staircase, madame, which is before you, leads to the atelier of master Jean Cador; but, pray, do not ask me to accompany you."

Little as Agnes was inclined to giving, she would willingly have paid for those last words that the good bishop had uttered; for her only fear has been that the bishop would desire to accompany her to the workshop of maitre Jean Cador. For this visit which she was about to make to the mysterious artisan was the very object of her hazardous passage through the streets of Paris.

Mahmoud el Reis was in his workshop, seated on a bench, with his elbows on his knees, and his head buried in his hands. He was thinking.

The two black slaves, half naked, were streaming with prespiration, and striking heavy blows on the block of granite which was about to become a statue of the holy Virgin.

On the boards of the workshop, there was a sketch traced out in black chalk, which indicated the contour of the image, and which was now lighted up by the last rays of the setting sun.

It was truly beautiful! a Christian artist would perhaps, have put less *abandon* into the pose of the Virgin—more purity in her celestial face; but he certainly could not have endowed her with a larger measure of physical beauty.

It was the beauty of the dream of an Eastern poet or of the divinities of the Persian religion. It was indeed beautiful, but it was not Christian.

The slaves redoubled their blows. Mahmoud was in a profound study—and the name of Dilah, his well-beloved, was dying away upon his lips.

It was, in fact, Dilah, and not the Virgin, that Mahmoud had sketched upon his walls. Dilah, the pearl of Asia. The houri, whose voluptuous form was at once rich and supple—the beloved one that the Prophet would have deemed worthy of ornamenting the eternal dances of his voluptuous Paradise.

Mahmoud was thinking of Dilah, and neither he nor his two slaves heard the door open, and neither he nor his two slaves heard Agnes de Meranie enter, accompanied by the inevitable and useful Amaury Montruel, lord of Anet. Agnes and her chevelier paused at the entrance.

Amaury pointed to Mahmoud, saying, "That's him."

Agnes contemplated the Syrian in silence, for some time, but with an eager look.

"His arms are muscular," muttered she to herself.

"He has the strength and boldness of the lion of the desert," whispered Amaury.

"And he has promised?"

"He has promised."

"What hast thou given him, Amaury?" demanded Agnes, who was not usually in the habit of troubling herself about the expenses of her faithful servant.

"That is my secret," answered Amaury, turning pale.

"And how does he intend to gain an entrance into the Abbey?"

"That is his secret," said Montruel.

The noise of the hammers still drowned the sound of their voices.

"He neither sees nor hears us," said Agnes.

"When we are in love," whispered Montruel, in a tone of bitterness, "we often become blind and deaf, madame."

Agnes would not understand his meaning.

"Messire," said she, "tell me, I pray you, what is the name of the young girl whose memory he treasures up with so much passion?—it may serve me."

"She is called Dilah."

A faint smile was visible on the lips of the Syrian, who repeated the name like a distinct and faint echo—

"Dilah!......"

Agnes raised her gorget and put her hand into her bosom, seeking some hidden object there.

"I have not yet given everything to the beggars," said she. "Call that handsome tiger of the desert here, Messire Amaury.

Montruel called "Mahmoud!" in a loud voice.

The Syrian still remained immovable for a moment—then turned slowly towards the voice that he heard so near and so unexpectedly.

It is only for us Europeans to tremble at the first suprise, and thus to betray our secrets, like children. The Khurds of Asia, the Ethiopians, the Kabyles, and the Indians of North America, whose brows are red as blood, are different men from us. They know how to hide their fears—their hopes and their astonishment—their joy and their pain—in such a way that an enemy can never penetrate the secret of their soul.

The two slaves suspended their labours, on a sign from their master.

"What would'st thou?" said Mahmoud coldly, "and why hast thou brought that woman here?"

His eyes turned till they met those of Agnes.

"This is the wife of the king of France," replied Amaury Montruel.

"The queen?" demanded Mahmoud, casting upon Agnes a furtive glance.

Agnes anticipated Montruel and answered in a firm voice.

"The queen."

Mahmoud showed no astonishment, but Montruel, advancing another step into the work-shop, the Syrian rose briskly and whispered those words in his ear—

"This is my house, and we never soil our dwellings. I will not kill this woman neither to-day nor in this place."

Amaury recoiled, appalled—frightened at the consequences that might follow on the execution of such a tragic error.

"This is not her!" exclaimed he; "the woman I named to thee was princess Ingeburge."

"Ah..." said Mahmoud coldly,"—I understand... this is her rival, who comes to see if I have a resolute air and a strong arm."

"Pshaw!" Montruel was about to say, but Agnes advanced and cut short his speech.

"I love the king," cried she with a pride that made her for the moment truly beautiful. "Thou art right. This woman disputes the king's love with me. Mahmoud el Reis, it is true: I did come to see if thine arm is strong and thine air resolute."

For a moment the Syrian turned from Agnes with an instinctive disgust; and yet that bold avowal pleased him better than deceit.

"Ah!..." said he, "thou lovest the king?" in a singular tone.

Agnes knew nothing of the schemes that were working to take the life of the king. We cannot tell if she really loved the king as much as she said she did; but it is very certain that her personal interests were too strictly connected with the existence of Phillip Augustus to render it probable that she would conspire against him. That was where Montruel deceived himself as he deceived the king, and as he deceived every one else.

Agnes believed that Montruel was working with the sole object of making her queen

She gave no heed to the words of Mahmoud but drew her hand from under her gorget. That hand now held a rich necklace of pearls of the purest water. Her look and smile seemed to say to Amaury, "These are not imitations like those I gave just now to the beggars."

Then making use of the name that Amaury had just reminded her of, she held out the necklace to Mahmoud, with the most gracious air she could assume, saying, in her gentlest tones—

"This is for Dilah, thy well-beloved!" This time the Syrian could not help trembling; he looked in the face of Agnes, for a moment, as in a sort of fright, then slowly extended his hand while his eyes fell upon the ground. The pearls fell into his hand, and he murmured as to himself some expression of acknowledgment.

On descending the narrow staircase which led from Jean Cador's shed to the nave of the cathedral, Agnes whispered to Amaury—"Another gained!"

"Oh! madame," replied the infatuated Montruel, "You have only to wish it, to have the whole universe under your feet."

Mahmoud el Reis remained motionless, with the necklace of pearls laying across his hands. By a sign he ordered the two negroes to discontinue their work and to bring his horse. Night had set in, and as soon as Mahmoud was alone, he turned his eyes to the sketch drawn upon the wall.

"That woman 'as seen Dilah!" said he; she uttered her name! Why did the name of Dilah, from that month, strike me as a bitter outrage?"

He held up the pearls between himself and the light and the last rays of the sun piercing through them gave them the appearance of large drops of rosy dew.

"The woman was beautiful, and these gems are rich and rare," he continued, "yet why do I despise them?"

He opened his hands and allowed the pearls to roll upon the floor, adding again—

"Why do I hate that woman?" and he crushed the pearls into the dust under his feet.

"Why?" repeated he, still grinding them mechanically under his feet. "While she was looking at Dilah, it seemed to me that Dilah was angry and knit her brows and I thought her voice whispered in my ear, 'Avoid that woman—I will not accept her presents.'"

He threw his rich cloak over his shoulders, and buckled on his yatagan.

As he passed towards the door, he again spurned with his foot the pearls which were in his road, and they fell through the open boards among the debris made by the chisels of the negroes.

Mahmoud mounted his handsome Arab—forbid his slaves to follow him—clapped spurs to his steed, and disappeared.

END OF PART II.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

At the very moment when madame Agnes, on leaving the shed of Jean Cador, was congratulating herself on having gained one more partisan, and at the moment when the faithful Amaury was telling her that a simple gesture of hers was enough to lay the world at her feet, a great noise was heard within the liberties of Notre Dame, caused by the swarming out of the masons who were leaving their work.

Eric was among them, and looked very sorrowful, for he had not seen his sister again since she was led off by Albret in the morning; and his imagination exaggerated rather than softened, the dangers of the great unknown city.

He regained the house of master Thomas, the lodging-keeper, in company with Christain, who shook his bleached head, and said—

"God be pleased that some good fortune may have happened to our girl."

Lords, men-at-arms, in short, the whole escort that had accompanied madame Agnes from the Louvre to the city, were wending their way back to the right bank of the Seine. The beggars packed up their baggage—the small pedlars cleared away their stalls—and the distant lights shining out of the dark streets, were already visible under the smoky porches and red windows of the taverns.

The Duke of Burgogne led the way, and was about to pass the angle of la rue de la Calandre, when, all at once, a noisy and drunken crowd shot across the road and barred the way.

"Clear the road, clowns," cried the duke, putting his hand to his sword.

"Oh! oh!" answered a loud and jovial voice, "here is one of my last night's noble companions—Salut, mon seigneur; you do not recognize me?"

"Give way," repeated the Duke, trying to spur his horse forward.

Night was rapidly approaching and the torches of the cortège were not yet lighted.

The crupper of the duke's horse struck against the man who had just spoken, but immediately sunk to the ground under the blow of a poignard which had been driven up to the handle between his two haunches.

"'Tis a pity to kill such good horses," said the jovial voice, as the Duke rose, maddened with rage, "but I could not in conscience strike his rider for so small an offence, mon sire!"

"Charge!" cried the Duke to his followers—"charge! and cut them down to the last man."

The jovial band, whose chief had so unceremoniously unhorsed Eudes III, Duke of Burgogne, struck up in chorus a great shout of laughter; and at the same time a cry ran through the whole escort of Agnes—"The brigands! The brigands!"

Montruel seized the arm of Agnes, and in brief and hurried tones, said to her—"That man, madame, must be gained at any price; all the others will count for nothing without him."

The jovial chief laughed twice as loud as his companions; but he knew how to play a generous part—for with his own hands he helped the duke upon his legs.

"Ma foi, mon seigneur," said he, "but you are heavy, and this laughing takes away all my strength—and yet you would like to have me cut to pieces—hey? Is that the way you pay off your obligations?"

"It is that ribald, Cadocu!" said the Count du Perche, from the midst of the escort, "and he is drunk into the bargain!"

Certes, the lords seemed in no hurry to obey the warlike summons of Burgogne—they made no charge, and it was as well for them; for fresh brigands were all the time pouring out of the taverns with a great clattering of steel, and the lords would not have had the best of it.

"Would it require a large sum to gain that man?" enquired madame Agnes, who did not feel in any immediate danger, for the whole escort stood between her and the brigands.

"The Bishop of Orvieto offered him one hundred thousand crowns," replied Montruel.

"One hundred thousand crowns!" repeated Agnes, with affright, "one hundred thousand! by Our Lady, we will let him pass."

"You cannot pass him," added Montruel, in a low voice, "Cadocu alone is worth the whole of us put together."

"One hundred thousand crowns!" groaned Agnes again.

"But," added Montruel, "he would not take the Bishop's one hundred thousand—for the king gave him twice as much!"

Madame Agnes was suffocating.

"Twice as much," she groaned in a half-stifled accent, "the king gave him two hundred thousand crowns; but that was our money, and what will become of me if the finances are thus wasted?"

The chief of the brigands had ordered his men to light their torches, and these orders were better executed than those of the duke's. The dull, smoky light of the resinous sap lit up the whole scene, and revealed a low neighbourhood where four streets terminated, and these streets were full of nameless alleys, with underground quarters; such as the hideous rue Glatigny of our day alone could furnish an example of.

Cadocu took a torch from the hands of one of his men and held it before his own face—"not uglier than thee, mon sire, as thou seest," said he,

with his loud drunken laugh, "thou hast surely not forgotten our session of the night before last. If Jean de Nesle is, then, among these gentlemen, I am sure he will give his compére, Antoine, the sign of life."

"Bonne nuit, mon compére Antoine," cried the voice of Jean de Nesle, from the midst of the escort, "thou hast supped *comme-il-faut*, I can see that; pray give way, and let us do as much, and may God keep thee!"

The duke of Burgogne was now standing. His face all livid and his pale lips fringed with foam. This was the second time the chief of the brigands had insulted him cruelly within the last two days.

"If I ever catch thee at Dijon, my man," muttered he, imprudently ventilating his rage, "thou shalt pay for all this at one reckoning."

"Good, good! messire," replied Cadocu gaily, "it is a good augury to hear thee speak of paying; and I pray thee to remember that besides the thirty thousand crowns that King Phillip has taxed thee with on my account, you still owe me much gratitude; for if I had only expressed the wish, I should now have been the Duke of Burgogne, and you would not have been as much as poor Antoine Cadocu."

"Monseigneur," Agnes said to Montruel; "though I should part with all my chateaus and jewels, messire, it would be insufficient to produce the enormous sum necessary to purchase that man?"

"I will help you, madame," replied Montruel, and he told over the seigneuries he could still mortgage for her service.

Agnes scarcely listened, for she was lost in thought; but suddenly interrupting him in his reckoning, she said abruptly, "I must have an interview with this Antoine Codocu."

"An interview, madame!" cried Montruel, frightened.

"Yes; I desire to see him this evening."

"It is impossibable."

"I wish to see him at your house."

"Certainly," muttered the unhappy Amaury; "my presence will diminish the danger."

Agnes cut him short, saying, in a peremptory tone, "I wish to see him without witnesses."

Montruel succumbed, for there was no contradicting the beautiful Agnes.

"Allons! allons!" cried Cadocu, who was still under the generous influence of wine, "I have yet some nobles left in my satchel, and the tavern-keeper at St. Landry knows me. I can get credit for thee, my lord duke of Burgogne, and for all of you, my lords, till to-morrow morning. Since Jean de Nesle wishes to go to supper, I am not the man to bar his passage. Pass, on gentlemen, unless you prefer to follow me to the St. Landry, and drink a cup of fresh wine to our better acquaintance."

"Another time, another time, mon compère Antoine," replied de Nesle, who was the only one that could reply to the brigand chief good humouredly.

Cadocu mounted the curb stone at the corner of the rue de la Calandre, and giving his men an imperious sign, the whole ranged themselves along the houses, and the escort passed between the two rows of lighted torches; and but for the laughing and shouting in which these rogues never constrained themselves, one would have supposed they had come there only to do honour to the duke and his suite.

"Ho! ho!" exclaimed Cadocu, on seeing the ladies approach, who till now had been kept in the back ground, "my Lord did not tell us of these," and he raised his torch and gave them a salute not altogether devoid of grace.

Antoine Cadocu was a stout, handsome man-at-arms, and was an object of great interest to the female part of the escort.

"Jean de Nesle!" cried he, "is madame Agnes among this gentle flock?" But Jean de Nesle was already out of hearing, so the good clerk, Samson, who was just at that moment passing, and who was anxious to make friends with the brigand chief pointed out to him the wife of Phillip Augustus; "Brave sire Antoine," said he "there she is."

Cadocu raised himself on tip-toe, the better to command a view of the whole party. "Ah," muttered he, "she is accompanied always by that cowardly rogue, Montruel. I have heard all about it; and they tell me that she resembles that poor Agnes the pretty, whom the cowardly scoundrel has had assassinated. It's true, pardieu! she does resemble her!"

Madame Agnes at this moment passed before him. She had heard the chief of the brigands asking if she formed part of the cortège, and the color came into her face, not that she was either ashamed or frightened, but because the curiosity of Caduco seemed so well calculated to answer her design. She was thinking of how to save her two hundred thousand crowus.

Cadocu saluted her and she replied with one of her most charming smile.

"Peste," tho[illegible] the brigand, who was inflammable to the last degree; "Peste! poor Agnes, though the pearl of Madame Fontanelle's boarders, could scarcely smile like that."

Agnes, with her smile, had also given him a coquettish nod of her head. And as Cadocu stood lost in astonishment at the queen's blandishments, he observed her moving towards Amaury, delivering in the ear of that faithful serviteur some very imperious mandates. Amaury bowed and left the cavalcade.

"Allons! my merry men!" exclaimed Cadocu, when the escort had passed, "let us now to the St. Landry; for we are drunk enough to find even that scoundrel Gauthier's wine sweeter than nectar."

The brigands were just rushing away to the tavern tumultuously, when Montruel came up, and laying his hand gently upon Cadocu's arm, said, "A word with you, master Antoine, if you please."

The brigand turned upon him and looked him through. "With thee?" growled he. "I warn thee, thou would'st be better anywhere else than here. *That* Agnes that thou hast killed was my friend. I have no love for white-livered vassals who hire other poor devils to commit assassinations, without incurring the danger which raises even the soldiers of the high road above them."

"I am not asking thee whom thou lovest or whom thou dost not love, maitre Antoine," re-

plied Amaury; "I come to thee with a message—wilt thou listen to it?"

"Would it not please the best if I said 'no?'" muttered Antoine, between his teeth; "and then thou could'st return and say thou had'st done thine errand. Ah, well, I consent to hear thee—but not here, at the next tavern, where thou can'st drink at thine own expense; for by all that's glorious, Antoine Cadocu will not ring glasses with thee!"

"That suits me very well," said Amaury, laughing, "for certainly, by all that's glorious, I should not like to click glasses with Antoine Cadocu."

Antoine turned and laid his hand upon the short sword which hung at his girdle; Amaury shrugged his shoulders and kept his arms folded.

"Pardieu," exclaimed Cadocu with an air of scorn, "why, I am playing the same rôle as the Duke of Burgogne; I touch my weapon without drawing. Follow me, Amaury Montruel; when thou shalt have delivered thy message, it will be time to attend to other matters."

The highwayman had now gained the tavern of St. Landry, where, on his arrival with Montruel, the noise within was as though hades had broken loose.

CHAPTER II.

The place they were about to enter was a large, low room, with a floor of worm-eaten boards laid on the moist earth, and reached by descending half-a-dozen stone steps from the street. There was a torch standing in the centre, and a small boy was employed constantly in keeping it trimmed; and here and there on the tables stood resinous smoky candles—and yet with all this lighting up, half the enormous cave remained in obscurity. On the appearance of the chief, a swarm of women, coming from all corners of the place, surrounded him; for in that pandemonium there seemed to be as many women as bandits.

"Salut! captaine—salut!" cried a hundred hoarse and screaming voices.

There was, however, one sweet and soft voice. This voice belonged to a young woman of dazzling beauty, who preceded the rest, and who threw her arms round the neck of maitre Antoine.

"Bon jour, Catherine, bon jour, ma mie," said the chief of the highwaymen, with an air of protection.

"Shall we dance?" asked the beautiful Catherine, "shall we sing?"

"Not yet," said Cadocu, "we must first drink a little, and let us have peace a little while; for I have business to discuss with this gentleman."

The swarm disappeared as quickly as they had assembled; but as to silence that was not a thing to be had there. The master of this establishment, François Gauthier, was a jovial fellow of about fifty—strong as a Hercules, and brown as an old copper bell. Cadocu and our host embraced cordially.

"Wine, maitre Antoine?" demanded Gauthier.

"A pitcher of it," replied Cadocu.

"With two cups?"

It was now Amaury Montruel who replied—

"One cup."

Gauthier looked at him from head to foot. Then turning to Cadocu, added—"Is it true, compere Antoine, that Phillip Augustus has lately invented stones and spies? For every body in the city knows that we have thrice as many spies as stones."

Amaury Montruel stood, head erect, immovable and whistling low the refrain of a drinking song.

"Allons! mon compere Francois," said Cadocu, "and fetch me my pitcher. If this gentleman is a spy, that's his business. Pardieu!" exclaimed he, as soon as Francois had turned his back, "the brave boy does not know how exactly he has hit the mark, massire Amaury. But for my part, I begin to esteem you; for I thought I saw you pale a little as you entered my domain."

"If you saw me turn pale, maitre Antoine, it is because I have no relish for the perfumes that surround us here, which is sufficient to give one three or four emetics; but let us be seated and finish our conference."

"If the king has sent him," growled Cadocu to himself, "he is, perhaps, worth hearing; for the king knows what he's about."

"Be seated, messire Amaury," he resumed aloud; "see, my wine is poured out. Speak, if you wish it, and I will listen to thee."

Montruel sat down and placed his two elbows on the table. If he was not anyways alarmed, he had at least the appearance of being rather embarrassed; for he was at a loss how to open with his negociation.

"I have come to thee," said he, after a short silence, "on the part of the queen."

"What queen?" demanded Cadocu;" for it is difficult to know where we are these times among the queens."

"I speak of madame Agnes."

"Ah! ah! and thou callest her the queen!—But the council with soon decide whether thou art right or wrong, Messire Amaury; I suspected that thou hadst come from madame Agnes. Well! what wants she with me?"

The words stuck in Amaury's throat, and it cost him a great effort to bring out these few words—

"She wishes to see thee."

"Ah! ah!" exclaimed Cadocu, again, "that does not surprise me; for I have exactly the same thought, and I have been taken with the fancy of seeing her."

It was impossible to felicitate Amaury Montruel any more upon the color of his complexion; his cheeks could be seen to blanch and his dark brow became furrowed with deep wrinkles.

He had but one sentiment left, and that was his love for Agnes de Meranie. Every word of Cadocu's entered his soul like a barbed dagger.

He, however, managed to dissimulate his feelings, and said in an altered voice—

"That is fortunate."

"Yes," resumed the highway chief, swallowing at the same time a large draught of his wine, "and thou who has ruined the other Agnes can well imagine my feelings. Poor girl! because she resembled Madame de Meranie. It is the same with me. I wish to see Madame de Meranie, because she resembles the other Agnes.

Big drops of cold perspiration stood upon Amaury's forehead.

At this moment a loud tumult was heard in the hall—the women screamed—the men yelled—cups were dashed on the floor—and they could even hear the noise of swords leaving their scabbards.

Cadocu seized his pitcher and rapped violently upon the table. Then with his stentorian voice, dominating over every other, he cried—

"Hola! there!! I asked you to keep quiet only for a quarter of an hour, and the time is not yet up. If any body wants a broken head, why don't he knock it against the wall?"

A little silence followed this appeal, for Cadocu never spoke in vain.

Amaury had profited by this interruption to suppress the rage which was taking possession of his brain, and he renewed the conversation with a calmer accent; but one could read in his face a determination not to allow himself to be moved by anything that might happen.

"Since the queen desires to see thee," continued he, "and that thou wishest to see the queen, maitre Antoine, my commission is at an end; for the queen is waiting for thee at my house."

"At thy house?" repeated Antoine, in an ironical voice, "Ah! ha! then Phillip Augustus has not such good eyes as people say he has!"

"Answer!" interrupted Amaury drily; "wilt thou come?"

What Cadocu replied must have been insulting to the last degree; for Montruel, in spite of the secret oath that he had made to keep calm through everything, leaped to his feet as though he had been struck in the face.

He turned on his heel, and directed his steps towards the door, without saying another word.

Cadocu held his sides, laughing with his whole heart; he was delighted with himself for finding the opening in that cuirasss which seemed so long impregnable.

"I have bitten him," thought he, "bitten him hard enough to draw blood! Messire Amaury," cried he, clipping his words in his irresistible fit of hilarity, "thou hast left me without speaking the last word; but remember if thou should'st take it into thy head to return, I shall be here till sunrise, and drunker and drunker every hour, Messire Amaury! Allons, allons! my sons," added he, rising in his turn, "allons! my girls; 'tis time to begin our revels. Dance, sing, howl, fight and strangle yourselves for joy. Come here, Catherine, ma mie, the good time has commenced."

CHAPTER III.

In that same chamber where Amaury had formerly given audience to Fontanelle—in that same chamber where he had promised mountains and marvels to poor Agnes the pretty—before assassinating her, the professed wife of Phillip Augustus, Agnes de Meranie, was alone.

She had already been waiting a long time the return of her ambassador, and her face, stamped with the consuming passions that agitated her soul, expressed a feverish impatience.

"What will the king say," murmured she; "the king is waiting for me and looking for me; perhaps he already suspects me!" A fit of trembling seized her; but she soon threw it off and resumed her pride and her smiles. "What matters," she resumed, "do I not know how to render him blind? And if he becomes jealous, he will only idolize me more." She was half buried in the same immense easy chair, with its carved back, that we remember Amaury in, on entering the Hotel de Nesle.

She was listening attentively and endeavouring to distinguish the far-off noises in the street. The apartment was lighted by a bronze lamp suspended from the ceiling, and the light fell from above on the fan of Agnes—revealing the bold outline of her features, and deepening the orbits from which her black eyes were shining.

She was handsome; and though half buried in the large deep chair, her figure still revealed enough to show its voluptuous character; and at this moment when she felt that no human eye was upon her, she had laid aside that mark of smiling *coquetterie*, which she usually assumed in the world, and which detracted something from the tragic character of her beauty.

Agnes de Meranie was a lioness, and lionesses are not improved by affecting the graces of the light gazelle.

"Amaury does not return," said she, while the clock of St. James was slowly striking nine; the gate St. Honoré will be closed. How shall I excuse my delay to the king, and at what hour can I gain admittance into the Louvre?"

She rose and took a few turns round the chamber with her arms folded, and her chin on her breast in deep meditation.

Suddenly, as she thought she had recognized his steps in the street, she enclosed herself in a cabinet adjoining the principal chamber. Here she found a mirror, and bringing it to the light she began quietly to improve her toilet She put off her hat, her ermine cloak, and the embroidered gold stuffs which covered her shoulders, and proudly surveyed the charms of her almost naked neck.

She rehearsed several poses with which she intended to receive her impatiently expected guest and it must be admitted that these poses did not indicate any great severity of morals. She smiled; passed her hand through her abundant hair—then threw it behind on her shoulders; satisfied with this trial and feeling certain of her omnipotence.

"I shall subjugate this man," murmured she. "I am fortunate; for it seems to me that I am at my best this evening. I intend that he shall leave this place as much my slave, as Amaury Montruel himself."

Suddenly she knit her black eyebrows as though some painful thought had struck her.

"It is not him," resumed she, listening again to the noises outside, "perhaps he is obliged to beg and pray. Oh!" exclaimed she, with a sudden burst of anger, "is it she?—is it my detested rival, from the depths of her prison, who devotes me to all this misery and shame?—Me, Agnes de Meranie! Me, the queen!—to be here waiting the coming of an obscure soldier—a bandit—a miscreant, who lives by pillage, and that robber—that miscreant—that bandit comes not immediately to the rendezvous accorded him the queen of France!" She resumed her promenade around the chamber.

"The queen of France," she repeated, with a bitterness full of hatred; "there are people who refuse me that title, and who will refuse it—as long as that odious Dane lives; days succeed days," exclaimed she, raising her clenched hand over her head, "it is lasting too long—shall I never be relieved from her?"

She sunk again into the great chair; and with her head resting in her hands fell again into deep and dark thought.

"He is necessary," she resumed, after a short silence; "if this Jean Cador dares not do it—Cadocu, who is said to possess neither fear nor pity, must do it. What signifies these councils, and these thunders of the church, which never overtake any but fugitives. I will brave all! I *will* be queen; and when I am queen," added she, with an insolent pride, "then woe to those who shall have braved me!"

Her thoughts seemed all at once to take another current.

"Amaury," said she, wearily—while her distracted look wandered in space—"What shall I do with Amaury when I am queen? These kind of people are necessary to one, while we are trying to reach the goal, but when once we are there we find them in the way. Those who mount to the assault of a fortress, often kick down the ladder by which they ascended—that's prudent."

She played negligently with the long purple cord tied round her waist.

She resumed with a strange smile—"They say that Montruel has killed that poor girl that they called Agnes the pretty, because she knew his secret. What could he say if I used his receipt?"

At this moment a door was slammed with violence. Agnes listened and heard the jingling of spurred boots upon the steps of the ante-chamber.

"At last!" said she, endeavouring to compose herself.

The door which was opposite to her opened wide, and Montruel entered hurriedly.

He was alone: he dashed his plumed cap upon the floor, and came towards madame Agnes—standing mute and with his arms folded before her.

"Well?" stammered Agnes, whose lips trembled with anger and impatience, "will you never speak, messire? Speak, I say!"

Amaury was as pale as at the moment that he left the tavern of St. Landry—his clothes were all in disorder—and everything about him announced that he was suffering from some extraordinary trouble. His mouth moved convulsively—but no words came forth.

"Speak, I say!" again cried madame Agnes, bursting with impatience; "why have you returned alone? Pardieu, messire, I begin to believe that you have disobeyed me."

Montruel made a great effort to command himself.

"Yes, I have obeyed you, madame," he at last got out with difficulty.

"Have you spoken with that man?"

"I have spoken with him."

"And you have told him that I wish to see him?"

"Yes; I told him that the queen wished to see him."

"And yet he is not here?"

She looked Montruel in the face with a hard and contemptuous expression.

"Thou liest, Amaury," said she, jerking out her words. "I am more woman than queen; and I tell thee I have seen that man often looking at me as I retured from Notre Dame in such a way....."

She hesitated a moment, and finished with—"I tell thee Amaury, thou liest; that man would not be able to refuse to see me!"

Lost and degraded as Amaury was, he could not avoid blushing for the abandoned woman before him, who seemed to have lost all shame; he guessed what was in her mind, and was profoundly disgusted.

He remained silent and turned away his eyes.

"Answer me," continued Agnes, who seemed to care little about the feeling she inspired him with at that moment, "say—has he refused?—Yes or no?"

"Madame," replied Montruel slowly, "for your sake I wish he had refused me."

"Oh!" exclaimed Agnes—her features suddenly brightening—"then he has not refused thee—he will come?"

"He will not come, madame."

Again her brows lowered, and her flaming eye seemed to express a desire to strangle that man with her hands, as a tigress would strangle its prey.

Though Amaury had exhibited no fear in the presence of Cadocu, he stood in awe of Agnes de Meranie.

"Hear me!" said he, humbly, "I would rather conceal from thee the details of that detestable interview; but you know that I am your slave, and if you require it, I must tell you all."

Agnes replied only by a sign of assent, which was more imperious than her orders.

"I will tell it, then," resumed Montruel sorrowfully; "for the first time in my life I must pronounce words that will offend you."

"Then he has cruelly outraged me?" said Agnes.

"You shall judge for yourself, madame. When I told him that the queen would be pleased to give him an audience—not at the Louvre—not even in open day and before all the world—but secretly at night in my house—he received the information with loud laughter, followed by coarse jokes on the fact of your being under the roof of your devoted servant."

"He did right," said Agnes, drily, "such a fact deserves to be joked at—and then?"

"And then he said, with his hateful laugh, 'Tis all for the best; if the woman thou callest queen has taken a fancy to see me, I also have taken the fancy of seeing the woman thou callest the queen.'"

"Well? well?" said Agnes—her whole mind too much absorbed with her own fixed idea, to enable her to appreciate the insolence conveyed in the reply of the brigand—"Well, I agree with him that 'tis all for the best. Why, then, has he not come?"

"Because there remains something more to tell you," resumed Amaury, in a tone still more

doleful, "and it is so extravagant, that I hesitate to tell it in spite of your supreme commands."

Agnes clapped her hands, saying joyfully, "I can guess it."

Amaury looked at her stupefied; for he felt that he did not yet know the queen.

"The impudent rogue," continued Agnes, "has replied that he did not care to put himself out of the way, and would, therefore, expect me at his own place."

"You have not guessed it yet, madame," he replied, "'tis worse than that!"

"Worse than that!" repeated Agnes,—crossing her hands on her knees and assuming the attitude of one who was seeking leisurely the solution of an enigma—"Worse than that! then he must be an insolent joker of a very curious species. Allons! messire Amaury, I cannot guess; I cast my tongue to the dogs—deliver yourself, I pray you, of this great enormity."

This lightness wounded Montruel in all the little modesty and delicacy that might still remain to him.

"Madame," resumed he,—with a kind of severity, though to tell the truth, a severity, alas! quite thrown away—"I am certain that you will share my indignation presently. No, it is not even in his own house that the brigand proposed to me to see you. At his own house, such a proceeding, which is perhaps necessary—though assuredly painful and degrading—might at least be buried in secret. But Cadocu wishes to receive you—you, the queen, in the tavern where he indulges his nightly orgies!"

Agnes rose abruptly.

Montruel proceeded, convinced that her pride would at last revolt—better late than never thought he. "Yes," said he vehemently, "to receive you in the infamous, dirty, indescribable place where he presides over the debaucheries of his brigands!"

Agnes threw her pelerine of cloth of gold over her shoulders.

"In that hell," continued Amaury, becoming animated, "which brings one's heart up in one's throat, and where one's feet slip with the filth that is under them!"

Agnes fastened on her ermine cloak.

"Where one hears nothing but the hideous yelling of drunkenness, accompanied by obscene songs, and where one sees nothing but brutal soldiers mixed *pêle mêle* with the refuse of the other sex!"

Agnes had put on her hat, and was now standing before Amaury.

"You are ready to leave, then, madame," said he, happy and proud of the salutary impression he had made upon her.

"Yes," said Agnes, "I am ready."

"Is it your pleasure that I should conduct you to the Louvre?"

Agnes cast upon him a cold and disdainful look.

"It is my pleasure," she replied, "that you conduct me to the tavern of St. Landry."

Montruel started back and stood mute and motionless.

"Allons! messire Amaury," resumed Agnes in a peremptory tone, "you are indeed a skilful limner, and your picture has given me a strong desire to see the original. Come with me, I pray you; and while I am conversing with maitre Antoine Cadocu, you can remain outside and wait me at the door."

CAAPTER IV.

When madame Agnes de Meranie and Amaury Montruel left the chatelet, and were passing over the great bridge which led to the city, all the chimes of the churches grouped round Notre Dame rang out ten o'clock at night.

It was very late; for, as we have already said, the streets became deserted immediately after sunset.

The Seine at that day flowed between banks still encumbered with reeds and bushes—in our day it runs through two lines of noble quays; thousands of lights are reflected in the river—which, owing to the lamps on the bridges, and the lights from the windows of the houses on its banks, presents a scene more charming than the imagination can dream of.

In that day the river rolled on darkly, and reflected nothing but the stars; the view was broken by the abrupt angles of fortresses and old buildings, whose walls were washed by the tide. It was a different place then from now, and perhaps a more suitable one for the painter; for when the silver moon played upon the rippling waves, and under the mysterious and dark arches, you would have said it was one of those magic decorations that the scene-painter of a theatre invents to give effect to the drama.

Centuries succeed each other, and the beauties of Paris change with them, but Paris is, nevertheless, always beautiful!

Agnes and her chevalier crossed the great bridge, and passed the ancient palace which the sovereigns of France had abandoned for the Louvre. They entered the rue de la Calandre by the old Roman road that the Cæsars had made through the city, and which bore at that day the same name as to-day, the Barillerie.

At the time of which we are speaking the rue de la Calandre was full of small drinking booths and taverns, full of cut-throats; and the passenger, long before reaching it, could hear the screaming viol and the piercing flutes, mingled with loud bursts of drunken laughter.

It was the arena of brutal quarrels, an immense temple always full of frightful debauchery and blood.

The tavern of St. Landry was situated near the middle of the street; Montruel, after having proceeded a few steps down the street, felt constrained to hold his nostrils, but madame continued her way without any sign of repugnance or weakness.

It must be admitted, that madame Agnes had not chosen a very agreeable task for poor messire Montruel; for in a street haunted by the cream of rascaldom, skimmed from the whole kingdom, and in which scarcely a night passed without witnessing some tragic adventure, Montruel was about to stand as sentinel at the door of the tavern of St. Landry.

Madame commanded and Montruel obeyed.

It was his punishment on this earth, for all his accumulated mis-deeds.

When he had ascended the steps which led to the low apartment, where maitre Cadocu held his terrible court, Montruel shrunk into a corner and kept himself there as the only chance of escaping from strangulation or the poignard. The orgie was at its height, and that great artist, Callot himself, could, I think, hardly have done justice to the frantic movements of that delirious crowd.

Men, women and children, were leaping, embracing, fighting, and drinking, the steaming and impure atmosphere was as thick as a fog; and nothing could be distinctly seen, but a confused melée, into which every individual seemed, turn by turn, to plunge, and to be lost in that terrible tempest.

Maitre Francois Gauthier, the host of this place, was seated on a barrel, half a sleep, and rousing himself only a little, whenever two of the drunken brigands were crossing blades, or another punching the head of some unfortunate woman.

If Agnes had made her entrance with her face uncovered, nobody would have noticed her arrival, in spite of her cloth of gold or her ermine cloak, for the women who resorted to these places set all sumptuary laws at defiance, and indulged in the most luxurious apparel.

But Agnes wore a half-mask of black stuff, and some woman on perceiving it, cried out,—

"Who is this?"

Twenty other women joined this cry in full chorus, and before Agnes had reached the last step, she was surrounded by a mob of bacchantes, who scented in her one who was profaning their temple, and who would have asked no better amusement than to have torn her to pieces.

"Hold!" exclaimed Agnes, repulsing the woman who was nearest to her, "Hold! maitre Cadocu, wilt thou not protect the person who has come here at thy bidding?"

At the name of the chief, there was a sensation among the crowd of women, and they repeated in every variety of tone,—

"Who can this be?"

Some said, "Let us take her to Catherine, the captain's mistress: she will soon tear her eyes out!"

Cadocu was seated at a table covered with the pitchers he had emptied.

"Catherine, ma mie," said he, "I never heard a woman who could sing like thee."

And Catherine immediately struck up, in a really harmonious voice, the couplet of some gay song.

It was in the midst of this couplet that madame Agnes' voice was heard, above the tumult, calling upon the name of the chief of the brigands.

Cadocu raised himself on his elbow, and his half extinguished eye shot out a slight ray of remembrance.

The beautiful Catherine rose all pale, for she had forgotten nothing.

"Oh!" said Cadocu, "with whom have I appointed a rendezvous to-night?"

"I know not," replied Catherine drily.

"Good," said the brigand; "if thou knowest not, then it must be with some rival, for thou art madly in love with me, Cathos, ma mie!" Come! you crowd there!" added he with more strength than could have been expected from his condition and wandering eye, "Allow the woman to pass, since she says that I sent for her. We shall soon see if she lies; and if she does lie, I will hand her over to you, mes mignonnes, to be whipped."

He filled his great cup to restore himself a little.

Agnes crossed the apartment, still masked, and escorted by a crowd of jealous enemies. If a look could kill, the look that Catherine gave her would certainly have pierced her through and through. Cadocu was right, Catherine was madly in love with him, and there were many others in the same case.

"A mask!" growled he; "how does she expect me to recognize her? But I know so much and so much! . . . ." Suddenly he reined up, and indulged in a low chuckling laugh, which nearly shook him off his bench.

"Oh! ho!" said he, "she is come! that's a good joke,—approach, ma belle; for my part I love nothing but queens and wantons!"

Agnes ran to his side. Catherine endeavoured to place herself between them; but Cadocu repulsed her roughly.

"Every one in their turn," said he.

The women looked on, whispering to each other. Some said, "Can this woman be a queen?" in a tone, which seemed to imply that the thing was impossible.

Catherine drew off humiliated, and with tears in her eyes.

Agnes whispered some rapid sentences into the ear of the chief, who was still shaking from his idiotic fit of laughter.

"Good! good!" said he aloud. "Have no fear, madame; I am not the man to betray thine incognito."

"Is it possible?" said those standing around.

Catherine stood at a distance, with her eyes fixed on the queen, and swore to be revenged.

Cadocu passed one of his arms round Agnes' waist, as he had just done with Catherine, and raised his enormous cup. Half an hour previously Cadocu would perhaps not have been so stupidly insolent, but there were now too many empty pitchers before him. He was one of those drinkers, whose excesses are always followed by extreme suffering, but who nevertheless cannot refrain from the thing that hurts them.

The bold cavalier, who was treated by the greatest vassals of the kingdom as one of their peers, who held the pope's legate in check, and even the king himself, was about to become, for some hours, a miserable brute, without strength or reason.

If Agnes de Meranie had arrived sooner, she might still have found that sentiment of covetousness and sensuality, that she had observed in the eyes of Cadocu, when he saw her in the cavalcade as it was leaving the purlieus of Notre Dame, and by favor of that same sensuality Cadocu, would have protected Agnes, and would have given her that kind of reception which gourmands always give to the preferred nuts of the feast.

Though he had just said he loved only queens and wantons, Cadocu was not much accustomed to see queens surrendering to his caprices; but there now remained to him neither caprice, or covetousness—his senses were all drowned in the thick wine of maître François Gauthier.

Agnes had fallen on evil times. She did not resent the coarse speech of the brigand, but said gaily—

"Maitre Antoine, I came to ask you a favour, that the king himself could not accord to me."

Cadocu assumed an air of importance.

"There are many others," replied he, "who, like thee, come to maitre Antoine when the king cannot help them; but I know what's the matter, madame," [illegible] he, falling against the post which se[illegible] a back to his bench, "somebody stands in [illegible] way; and amongst all the fine lords by whom thou art surrounded, there is not one with a willing arm. We will speak of this business another time madame; this place is for our amusement."

"Then let us amuse ourselves!" said Agnes, who, up to this, had superbly played the sad rôle that she had inflicted upon herself.

"Ma foi," murmured Cadocu, whose heavy head oscillated on his shoulders, "thou art a fine girl, madame. If I had known of thy coming, I would have drank deeper to keep up my gaiety."

He tottered and held on to the table.

Maitre Francois Gauthier gravely brought a large block of wood that he placed beside the post, propping Cadocu solidly between the two.

"What can'st thou do to amuse me?" demanded maitre Antoine, who breathed a little more at his ease in this new position.

"I can do everything," said Agnes, without any hesitation.

"Then thou can'st sing?"

"They called me the nightingale in my father's country."

"That was a brave man, thy father!" growled Cadocu, "the sire Berthond de Meran—a true gipsey and a priest of satan. Can'st thou dance?"

"Like Terpsichore!"

"I know nothing about Terpsichore. Can'st thou drink?"

"As much as you please, in reason, master Antoine."

The brigand shook his head with a satisfied air. To compare him to a Pacha, surrounded by his favourites, would fall short of his merits; for he was a thousand times more despotic than a Pacha.

Men and women formed a circle around him, contemplating this scene with a curiosity which increased at every instant. They hardly dared to whisper when the chief was speaking. One singular thing was that the masked woman's name was in every mouth and yet nobody could believe in the reality of her presence. But they all respected the mistress of Phillip Augustus more than they respected herself. For she was there, and yet they did not wish to believe that she was there.

Cadocu struck with his fist upon the table and his eyes searched the crowd.

"Where is Catherine? Where is Alix? Where s Jeanne?"

Two beautiful girls immediately presented themselves: these were Alix and Jeanne; Catherine waited a little longer, but at last she appeared—but her eyes were very red, and it was plain that she had been weeping.

Cadocu gave Alix a sign to approach. This was a tall girl of vigorous frame, in whose presence Agnes herself appeared but petite.

"Alix," said Cadocu, "there are some here who boast of being able to drink."

"Eh bien!" replied Alix, "let us drink together."

Agnes had good reason to boast; for in the noble fêtes which she was accustomed to give at the Louvre, to relieve the tedium of the long absences of Phillip Augustus, Agnes always remained queen of the feast—her gold cup, mounted with precious stones, was emptied, and filled unceasingly, with the perfumed wines of Syracuse and Nicosie.

She took from the table the great cup, from which Cadocu had been drinking, and filled it to the brim.

But that was neither the wine of Syracuse nor of Nicosie—it was that strong nectar, manufactured from the juice of the grape, mixed with alcohol and spices.

The odour which the cup exhaled reached her nostrils, and Agnes allowed a shudder of disgust to escape her.

Maitre Antoine shook his head with an expression of dissatisfaction.

Agnes plucked up courage, and drained the enormous cup to the dregs.

"'Tis thy turn, my girl," said she to Alix, handing her the cup.

Alix burst into laughter, and placed the cup upon the table.

"I do not drink out of that," replied she.

Agnes smiled triumphantly for she thought her rival found the cup too large.

But Alix choose from among the empty pitchers, which stood before Cadocu, the deepest and the widest, holding twelve cups, and this she filled to the brim, raising the pitcher to her lips with both hands. She continued drinking a long time till she seemed red in the face and the veins of her neck all swollen. Having drained the pitcher to the last drop, she removed it from her lips, drew a long breath, and smiling, handed it to Agnes saying, in her turn, "It is now for thee."

As Agnes hesitated and appeared frightened, Alix remarked, "that is only a commencement; when thou hast drunk that, I will do something better."

Agnes took the diamond pin which fastened her ermine cloak, and offered it to her victorious competitor. "I cry you mercy, my girl," said she, hoping to cover her defeat by an act of generosity.

But Cadocu did not approve of this mode of settling the drinking bout, and growled between his teeth—"She can't drink well."

Agnes was not more successful with Alix, who threw back her diamond pin with disdain, saying—"I know what your jewels are worth; for I saw those which thou hast given this morning to the beggars in the purlieus of Notre Dame!"

"Come hither, Jeanne," resumed Cadocu.

A girl stepped forward, of a supple and beautifully rounded figure, like those woman of Catalina, who travel the world making gold by the activity and graceful style of their dancing.

Madame Agnes was right when she said she could dance like Terpsichore. Nobody could approach her in the noble fêtes given by the Court. As soon as maitre Antoine had given the signal, and the viol had played the prelude, she sprang into the circle, which enlarged around her—the cup of spiced wine had mounted to her brain, and she surpassed herself in those gracious and classic steps which the Crusaders had imported from Constantinople.

Cadocu yawned and said—

"Now, Jeanne, show madame how we can dance."

Jeanne, at one bound, made a perilous leap over the table covered with pitchers; she was a performer of remarkable strength—with a perfect acquaintance with all the Bohemian and Egyptian dances.

Her leaps, in comparison with the great ballets of Agnes, were esteemed in that place as the drinking feat of the pitcher against the cup.

"That's what we call dancing," said Cadocu, emptying his goblet; "thou cans't not dance, madame."

"Come hither, Catherine!"

Catherine had dried her tears—comforted by seeing her hated rival disconcerted at every step—and she now stepped forward holding a *theorbe* in her hand, of a peculiar form.

That was Agnes' favourite instrument, upon which she had often charmed the leisure hours of Phillip Augustus—reciting the romances of chivalry. The king was passionately fond of those heroic songs which exalted the prowess of Roland, Renaud, d'Ogier, the Dane, and other preux chevaliers of the round table; and he had instituted at his own court a modern round table, in imitation of those of Arthur of Bretagne, and of the Emperor Charlemagne.

In truth, the epoch of Phillip was the classic era of knight-errantry—the fabulous exploits of the most remarkable romances date from that reign—though they related them as of Charlemaigne's time or of Arthur of England, framing them on the manners and customs of the twelfth century.

Agnes was not discouraged; for she felt certain that she was about to revenge all her defeats at one—blow she possessed a marvellous voice, and the art of singing was no secret to her. In her beautiful hands the theorbe gave a soft and gentle prelude.

Then she sung in a low and sweet cadence the romance of Huon de Bordeaux.

Every body listened attentively, as though seized with an instinct of the beautiful; for her performance was really beautiful.

But Cadocu was no longer of the crowd—he was below it; and something stronger was required to touch his paralysed ear.

"Enough! enough!" cried he angrily, "I verily believe you are mocking us, madame; are we in a church that thou should'st try to entertain us with those lugubrious accents?"

Agnes de Meranie was now fairly overcome, and she bent her head without making any reply. Avaricious as she was, she would have given all the jewels from her casket rather than have miscarried in the enterprise she had undertaken in this low place. To women of her stamp, victory would excuse and ennoble any undertaking; but their audacity once conquered, and there remains to them nought but bitterness and misery.

Catherine, radiant and charming with pride, drew from the hands of Agnes the still trembling lyre. She seated herself opposite Cadocu, and with her elbow supported on the table, threw herself into an attitude of graceful abandon—a happy smile illuminated her features. In her practiced and skilful hands the *theorbe* burst, as it were, into an explosion of melodies, the first notes of which roused Cadocu and made him tremble.

He gave way to a smile as the thrilling voice of Catherine struck up the song of the brigands:

Routier, routier, point de maison,
Point de prison!
La terre
Entiere,
Routier, routier, devant tes pas
S'ouvre là-bas:
Va faire
La guerre!
Routier, routier, ouvre la main
Sur ton chemin,
Pour prendre,
Pour rendre;
Routier, routier, pour prendre au fort
Et rendre au l'or
Au frère
Misère!

Cadocu pushed back his cup and cast a look of true tenderness at Catherine.

Catherine continued:

Routier, routier, le vin du roi
Coule pour toi.
La fille
Gentille,
Routier, routier, sourit toujours
A tes amours
Nouvelles
Et belles.
Routier, la reine a des bijoux
Et des yeux doux,
La reine
Méraine.
Routier, routier, tu les auras
Quand tu voudras;
Princesse,
Richesse.*

Catherine had finished her triumphant song, and she turned to cast a spiteful look upon her rival, for even victory will not always disarm the anger of a jealous woman.

"I will not say," said she, "that the princess never gives anything, but at least she never gives anything valuable."

Two or three loud laughs came from the crowd, proving that two or three women had understood the sarcasm.

Cadocu understood nothing, and yet Catherine's song had somewhat restored him—if not to reason, at least to life.

"Come hither," said he and he placed a loud kiss upon the young girl's brow, already intoxicated with joy.

Then he tried to rise, supporting himself on one side by the post, and on other by Catherine's shoulder.

* Recueil de Johan Order, traduction Anglaise de Browne.

"As to thee!" resumed he—addressing himself to Agnes, who stood like one stupefied—"Thou hast spoilt our night. See how quiet they are all, when they should be making a noise; for at this hour, I am accustomed to go to asleep to the noise of their revels."

He seemed serious, for he spoke with much emphasis; "I said just now," continued he, "that I only liked queens and wantons; but thou art not a queen—for Ingeburge, the Dane, was the king's wife before thee. Would a queen come here at the risk of soiling her soul and her crown?"

"Who will know it?" stammered Agnes, as to herself.

The merciless Catherine, pronounced those words which we have so often repeated in those pages, and that Phillip Augustus was so fond of repeating—

"The king knows all!"

Agnes trembled, and became pale.

"If thou art not a queen," resumed maitre Antoine, "neither art thou a courtezan—I say, a courtezan, worthy of us. Thou art beautiful; but Agnes th[illegible] pretty—whom thy evil favourite, Amaury Montru[illegible] caused to be strangled on the road to d'Etampes—was much more beautiful than thee. Thou can'st not drink like Alix—thou can'st not dance like Jeanne—thou can'st not sing like Catherine; therefore, I want nothing to do with thee. Away!"

Maitre Antoine fell back upon his bench, exhausted, while Catherine uttered a loud cry of victory.

This cry acted like a signal—the orgie recommenced, where Agnes had interrupted it; and amid the howlings of the crowd she regained the steps leading to the street.

Her bosom was bursting with the rage that was stifling her. She looked round her for Montruel, and not seeing him immediately, she called his name in a hoarse voice.

Montruel sprung from his hiding place.

"Oh!" murmured Agnes to herself, "I have no dagger! messire," screamed she, with the foam on her lips, "it was thee, who drew me into this infamous snare."

"Me!" interrupted Amaury.

"Silence!" cried madame Agnes, trembling with fury; "Thou art a traitor and a coward!"

She placed her two hands upon his shoulders, and shook him with the strength of a man.

Then reaching the last spasms of her delirium, she struck him in the face so violently, that the blood spurted from his eyes and nostrils. In another moment her strength had vanished, and she fell, half dead, upon the muddy street of la Calandre, and even before the threshold of the tavern of St. Landry.

Half an hour afterwards, you might have met with Amaury Montruel and madame Agnes, in the avenue of young elms, which led to the palace of the Louvre. They had stopped just at the same place where the handsome page Albret had told his love to Eve, on the morn of this eventful day.

But Agnes had now repaired the disorder of her toilet, and nothing seemed to remain of all that high fever, and of all that furious madness which had so lately overcome her. The bands of her jet hair were arranged with their customary elegance, and her cheeks wore no traces of her recent distress.

Montruel had not been able to recover himself so quickly; the blow on his face had wounded him most cruelly in his heart, and his features still retained an expression most piteous and desolate.

"Think no more of it," said Agnes. "Before I enter my chamber, I should be pleased in consequence of the esteem I have for you to be well assured that you entertain no rancour towards me."

"Madame," stammered Montruel.

Agnes tendered him her hand, and in a tone of indifference which belied her words, said, "It is well messire, it is well; I see that you think no more of what has passed between us; and believe me I am happy for it. I feared I had lost a faithful friend."

"Oh! my souveraine," exclaimed Montruel, "say *friend* unto death."

Agnes again interrupted him, with "Well! well! messire!"

"Speak but the word," continued Montruel, kissing the hand that had been left between his own, with idolatry, "do you wish that I should avenge you on that man?"

Agnes gave a contemptuous smile.

Montruel increased in warmth. "Speak," said he; "Oh! my souveraine, if it pleases you this very night my archers shall penetrate into that den of drunken brigands, and by to-morrow there shall not remain a living soul to accuse the queen of the events of this night."

"Thank you," replied madame Agnes, without betraying any emotion; "you think I am afraid, messire, and you think to reassure me; but there is but one person more powerful than the queen and that person is the king—and the king would not listen to any complaint against the queen, No! messire! I am not afraid."

She drew closer to Amaury, and her coolness vanished all at once as by enchantment. Amaury felt that her hand was trembling, and turning icy cold.

"No! no!" she whispered, "it is not of these vile brigands that I wish to be avenged, messire. I wish to be avenged on her who has cost me this last outrage—on her, who has made my royal life a long series of terror and suffering—on her, who still remains there, always hanging over my head as a threat—on her, who prevents my being really the queen; for that man told me," continued she, in a still lower whisper, "he told me—thou art no queen."

If poor Ingeburge had not been already condemned by the savage hatred of her rival, that speech of the brigand Cadocu would have been her death warrant.

Montruel replied, "you know well, madame, that this obstacle will be soon removed."

"I know nothing about it, but I expect it," said Agnes with energy. "So long as they tell me she shall die, I see that she lives. And who can tell but that myself am not threatened. This council that is about to assemble—may it not change my lot in a single day? Amaury Montruel, dost thou know what a woman can do

for the man who will realize her first, her most ardent, her only desire?"

Amaury pressed his hand to his breast to suppress the violent beating of his heart. The enchanted horizon which had all at once opened before him had intoxicated him; he felt no more the outrage burning upon his cheek; he remembered no longer, the miserable man, that the supreme happiness that had been offered him, had been disdainfully refused by the brigand Cadoeu.

He fell upon his knees and pressed the hand of Agnes to his lips.

"I have said too much," murmured madame Agnes, with an affectation of alarmed modesty; "I shall feel henceforth that it will be dangerous to find myself with thee. So till all is over, and well over, messire," said she, dwelling with emphasis on those last words, "it will be vain on your part to seek to see me."

The amorous Montruel protested and declared that he could not support life without the sight of his *souveraine*, but Agnes closed her ears to these declarations, and ordered him to sound the horn that hung at the drawbridge.

The drawbridge was let down and they entered the Louvre.

CHAPTER VI.

In that same great hall, whose stained windows were loaded with the brightest colours, and where Phillip Augustus had some hours previously received maitre Adam, there hung a lamp, whose light fell full upon the pale and haggard face of maitre Samson, the clerk.

If the king knew all, and it is certain that the king knew many things, it was not by sorcery.

Man's greatness is often made up by an agglomoration of littlenesses.

Phillip Augustus had the genius of a detective. If events had allowed that great prince more leisure, there would doubtless have existed in the thirteenth century a monumental police, organized according to the best rules of art; for Phillip was more resolute and shrewd than Louis XI., who had been held up by all historians and poets as the true type of royal finesse.

But as Phillip had no leisure to form a good police—compelled, as he was, to defend himself against the disloyal attacks of Asia and Europe combined—he limited himself to the rôle of an amateur, and even with the small means at his command, he accomplished some excellent results; he was prouder of being able to boast that the king knew all, than to tell of the battles he had gained.

There is an old prejudice existing against the police—as if it was not an established and historical fact, that all great statesmen, whether under monarchies or republics, have [illegible] pleasure in establishing and encouraging that liberal art; and many, to use a vulgar expression, have willingly dipped their hands in the dough.

Phillip Augustus did not act exactly as the good caliph, Haroun-al-Reschid, did—whom we read of in the Thousand and One Nights—running constantly about the streets of Bagdad, talking philosophy with his vizier, Giaffar—but, nevertheless, he did not disdain to watch his spies, and even the spies of his spies. By these means he knew just three times as much as he could learn by trusting solely to the reports of his faithful friend, messire Amaury Montruel, lord of Anet.

Maitre Samson was standing, hat in hand, before the king, who had sank into a deep easy chair, with his hands over his eyes, as though he would protect them from the strong light of the lamp.

"Ah! ah!" said he, "and so Amaury has killed that woman."

"Yes," replied maitre Samson, "at three leagues from Paris, on the road to d'Etampes; and because that woman knew his secret! Yes, she knew it as well as thee and me, sire."

"And where didst thou learn that, maitre Sampson?"

"By meeting the staffmen, who had assassinated poor Agnes, on their return."

"Ah!" said the king carelessly, "then this poor beautiful girl called herself Agnes?"

"Messire Amaury gave her that name," replied the clerk—giving his words a tone of accusation.

The king opened his hands a little, to peer through them at the thin yellow face of maitre Samson.

"And when thou saw the staffmen," said he, "what wast thou doing on the turf at Notre Dame, just before sunset, in company with the king of the Basoche?"

Maitre Samson, on first hearing this question, trembled; then his dull eyes took a simple expression of admiration.

"I should like to know who can hide anything from the king," exclaimed he; "I was there on business that concerned madame Ingeburge."

"What business?"

"My very dreaded sire assuredly knows much better than me; but since he deigns to interrogate me it is my duty to reply. Messire Amaury wished to excite some tumult in Paris, in favour of the very noble queen Agnes, who is in a constant state of jealously of madame Ingeburge."

"Ah!" said the king, for the third time, as his eyes turned involuntarily towards that magnificent drapery of cloth of gold through which madame Agnes had appeared like a dark vision to little Eve. "Thou art of opinion, then, that the queen is jealous, maitre Samson?"

A strange feeling was depicted on the face of the clerk; and it was plain that he desired to speak, but dared not.

"Hast thou nothing more to tell me?" demanded the king.

"Anything more?" replied the clerk, hesitating; "I do not remember."

"Was it then"—resumed the king, looking him in the face—"only to tell me that stupid story of Agnes, the poor foolish girl, that thou hast visited the Louvre this night?"

The clerk still appeared to hesitate.

"Then," said the king, opening a manuscript and spreading it out before him, if thou hast nothing more to tell me thou canst "withdraw."

Maitre Samson rose and was moving towards the door, turning his hat round and round, in

evident embarrassment, when he suddenly stopped as though he had screwed his courage to the point. "My dreaded sire," said he, "may I be permitted, without failing in my respect, to address you a humble question?"

"Ah!" cried the king, "you are still there, maitre Samson? Put as many questions as you please."

Samson came forward again softly.

"Is messire Amaury at the Louvre?" he asked.

"He should be here," replied the king.

"That is a different thing," said Samson; "and the noble Queen Agnes?...."

He stopped; and as the king interrogated him with a look, he took courage and finished—

"Is she in her apartment?"

"Where would'st thou have her be, at such an hour?" said the king abruptly.

Samson did not allow himself to be disconcerted; "If my dreaded sire would deign to reply—yes or no," he began—

"Well! yes," replied the king frowning, "the queen is there."

"My dreaded lord is certain of it?"

"Very certain.

"My dreaded sire has seen her?"

"I have seen," replied the king, stamping with impatience.

"Then," said the clerk, bowing very low, "I have only to withdraw, craving the king's pardon for having wasted any of his precious moments."

He again moved towards the door, but the king called him back.

"Thou art not going to leave me like that, maitre Samson," said the king; "why hast thou put all these questions?"

"Because—because...." muttered the clerk.

"Allons! speak quickly and frankly, or beware of thy shoulders!"

"I well tell you the truth, sire," replied maitre Samson; "If poor Agnes the pretty was not dead, I should naturally have believed it to have been her; but as she *is* dead, what other woman in Paris can resemble the queen to the same degree?"

"Ah," replied Phillip, rising from his seat, "upon what gamut dost thou sing now, maitre Samson? I commanded thee to speak freely."

Samson was frightened; for he saw the king was growing very impatient.

"I have deceived myself, noble sire—I have been deceived," said he hastily.

"Deceived in what?"

"I believed—pardon me the extravagant idea, for we spies sometimes discover strange mysteries—I believed that I had seen madame the queen in company with missire Amaury Montruel, towards the hour of ten at night; both were on foot and unattended in the rue de la Calandre, at the threshold of the tavern of St. Landry, where all the brigands of Cadocu had assembled.

The king set up a laugh—nor could maitre Samson detect anything forced in his gaiety.

"Agnes! alone! on foot in la rue la Calandre! at ten at night! Ma foi, mon maitre, thou hast indeed become foolish—get thee to sleep!"

Samson withdrew, covered with confusion.

The belfry of the Louvre struck twelve—midnight.

No sooner was the king alone, than his features suddenly changed and his handsome and intelligent head fell upon his breast.

"Alone!" murmured he, "on foot!—in the rue de la Calandre—at ten at night!"

It was not altogether sorrow that was depicted on the features of Phillip Augustus—it was first surprise; but afterwards, and above all, an expression of deep meditation.

If the king knew all—it must be remembered that he turned all to profit.

He rose from his seat—raised the gold drapery, and put his eye to the keye-hole, just as any unfortunate bourgeois husband would do, who desired to snare his light spouse.

"What will she say to me?" murmured he, "I cannot see her yet though I have been watching for her appearance so long; will she try to make me believe that she has never left her apartment? Yes she will try—for woman is a brave being—and never hesitates to attempt the impossible." At this moment the creaking noise of the drawbridge was heard as it swung on its rusty axle.

"She has returned," said Phillip Augustus, regaining his seat "and by means of some bright crowns, the guards at the gate will be discreet, and I shall know nothing."

He laughed again, and presently a light and almost imperceptible noise could be distinguished on the other side of the gold tapestry.

"Alone!" said Phillip again to himself—for his thoughts always recurred to those words—"on foot! in the rue de la Calandre! at ten at night!"

The drapery rose gently and the face of Agnes de Meranie made its appearance, wreathed in smiles.

"Have I not waited long enough," said she, assuming a soft and caressing voice.

"Why did you wait, ma belle mie," replied Phillip, with a gentleness equally caressing.

"I am always afraid to enter," said Agnes, "for fear of robbing the kingdom of France of any of those precious hours that its well-beloved sire consecrates to the felicity of his people.' She held her brow to the king who placed a kiss there.

"He knows nothing about my absence," thought she.

"Alone! on foot! at ten at night—in the rue de la Calandre!" thought the king.

CHAPTER VII.

All the bells of Paris—within and without the walls, of the churches, of the chapels, of the monasteries—and God knows they were not a few—rung out together a triple volley; it was a deafening noise—a concert of bells of every tone and calibre mixing their sharp or grave, gay or melancholy sounds.

In most of the principal streets, though it was still early, there was a crowd of common people and petit bourgeois—a busy and gossiping crowd, whose active tongues never relaxed for a moment.

Some chevaliers, in the full panoply of war, were crossing the street on horseback—here and there, at the corner of the public square, were to be seen animated groups, evidently waiting for some procession. Each window formed a frame filled up by as many women's heads as it could contain—groups of gossiping gamins hung about the corners—while the worthy shopkeepers were gravely discussing matters at their doors.

It was evidently one of those occasions upon which Paris stirs itself from top to bottom—joyous or sad—for a fête or a battle—for a funeral or a trial—for fireworks or a revolution.

The circumstance which on this day gave rise to so much agitation among the Parisian population, was the opening of the council, at which Phillip Augustus was to be judged before the delegates of the papal authority.

The church had called to her bar the most glorious sovereign in the universe, and had placed him, so to say, on the stool of the criminal—that in itself was sufficient to move our impressionable capital; but there was something beyond that—for the matter could not be considered as solely affecting the interests of royalty—the interests of the people were also involved; for the council was to divide on the interdict which was weighing on the entire population of the kingdom.

It was the hour when the prelates, abbots, and priests, composing the church, were to assemble at the new palace, in the city of Paris; and as most of them were lodged in the religious estabments of the city or its neighborhood, there was scarcely any street which did not enjoy its share of the spectacle. Those who had no chance of seeing an archbishop pass, might at least, look for a bishop or a mitred lord abbot.

The bells continued to ring for three hours, and until the performance of the High Mass of the Holy Ghost was finished in the holy chapel of the palace, to implore that the supreme wisdom of God might rest on every member of the council.

As the last sound of the bells died on the air, the archbishop, bishops, and abbots, in the order in which they ranked in the heirarchy, slowly descended the steps of the chapel, singing a Latin hymn, and preceded by banners and censors, began to wind their way to the ancient throne-room where their august tribunal was about to be organized.

An immense crowd was gathering on the place du Palais, and in the rue de la Barillerie; but it was not a noisy and riotous crowd, such as had blocked Agnes' way towards Notre Dame—it seemed impressed with the gravity of the occasion. All heads were uncovered, and a profound silence was observed, as the prelates passed chanting their hymn.

Suddenly the crowd began to undulate like a sea—a thundering clamor burst forth, while the caps thrown into the air obscured the sun.

It was the king, who was descending from the tower of the Louvre by the grand rue St. Honoré, and who was about to take his seat before the delegates of the church—his judges, against whom there was no court of appeal.

The people loved Phillip Augustus, because he was a brave and magnificent king; and, perhaps, because he was always at the wars, and rarely appeared but at some solemn conjuncture.

As to the crime of love of which the king was accused, the people of Paris have ever been exceedingly indulgent to that kind of sin.

King Phillip was handsome, and made a magnificent appearance upon horseback—he wore his armour; and his helmet, with its raised vizor, was surmounted by the royal crown, as though it desired to testify to his power at the very hour its master was submitting to the pontifical mandate. The king came on, surrounded by all his great vassals—none failing him; and the brilliant calvacade extended so far, that some were still prancing in the rue St. Honoré when the king had dismounted at the steps of the old palace.

"With all these lances," said the crowd, as the cries of "vive le roi!" were from time to time suspended, "with all these lances, our sire, the king, could, if he wished, carry the whole council off to his tower at the Louvre!"

Both the lower orders and the bourgeois were convinced that Phillip Augustus would never cede the point, even if the sentence of the prelates should order him to separate form Agnes; for, in spite of the interdict from which they were suffering, the people had a secret desire that the wife of the king of France might triumph at any price. The feeling of selfish opposition which engenders a forgetfulness of all patriotism, had not yet descended lower than the high noblesse.

As Phillip Augustus disappeared within the great doors of the palace, one of the knights of his suite was observed to force his horse through the middle of the eager crowd, and to take the direction of Notre Dame.

The vizor of his helmet was down, but every one recognized messire Amaury Montruel, lord of Anet, and the friend of the king.

Every one crowded to get out of his road—for the friend of the king was known to be hard towards the defenceless; he was now in one of his worst humours, and struck at the people right and left. Those upon whom his blows fell grumbled loudly, but Montruel soon left their curses behind him, gaining the eastern angle of the square which led down the narrow streets adjoining the purlieus of Notre Dame. Here the aspect of things was completely changed, for instead of a crowd there was a complete solitude.

Montruel put his horse to a gallop.

At the corner of the rue de Calandre and at the entrance to one of those dark alleys, which led to the underground taverns, stood Maitre Samson, the scholar, Tristan de Pamieres, and Honoré, the freemason, caps in hand.

Without arresting the pace of his horse Amaury Montruel gave them a sign of recognition, calling out, "this evening!"

"Messire Amaury is in great haste," said the scholar, in his important way, "it seems to me that he might have stopped and saluted me properly."

"You heard him, my compères?" said Samson; "he called out, 'this evening'—are we all ready?"

The freemason and the scholar were both drunk. "I am charged," replied Tristan de Pamieres, "with leading on thy flock of rascals, and with furnishing some frippery which is to give them the appearance of students. Well! I have the frippery ready; and when thou shalt have brought on thy beggars, we will see what can be done with them."

"I am charged," said the mason, "with bringing three or four armed workmen, with good lungs, to bellow and good hard fists to strike—that's the least they can do for a queen, who salutes and smiles upon them so graciously; as to leading my men further than that into the quarrel, its not to be thought of. Men who can get their living by honest labour never mix themselves up in such matters."

"All is for the best," resumed Samson; "maitre Honoré will find the flesh for the scholars, and Tristan the costume. That's the game; for my part I will give the sauce—a thousand Bohemians and rogues, who will each yell loud enough for fear, and who will do something better than that if you give them plenty to drink."

Montruel crossed the purlieus at full gallop.

Nearly all the shops were deserted, and there were but few workmen about the facade of the principal entrance to the cathedral of Notre Dame. He tied up his horse and slowly mounted a kind of ladder which led to the workshop of Jean Cador, the image-cutter.

Several days had passed since that night of adventures—when madame Agnes had dared the outrages that had been heaped upon her at the tavern of the brigands. During these days Amaury had doubtless suffered cruelly; for ten years of furrows and wrinkles seemed added to his forehead. He was pale, and the fever was still burning in his hollow eyes.

When he entered the door of the work-shed, the two black slaves were sitting cross-legged on either side of a stone statue, still unpolished, and which was evidently about to receive the last strokes of the chisel.

The eyes of Amaury sought the master. "Where is Jean Cador?" he demanded.

The negroes remained mute and immovable.

"They do not know him by that name," murmured Amaury; "Where is Mahmoud-el-Reis?"

The negroes rolled the whites of their eyes, but still gave no answer.

Amaury stepped into the middle of the shed, and for the first time remarked the finished image of the Virgin.

"What!" muttered he, "in eight days!"

The idea that there was some witchcraft about the work, presented itself immediately to his mind; but another thought immediately seized him and he recoiled with astonishment.

"It is her," he said to himself; "it is the queen! Is this by chance, or has he really seen her?"

He moved round the status, to examine it more closely—the eyes of the neogres still remaining immovable.

"Yes! yes!" he repeated, "it is indeed the queen; I cannot be deceived. Has any woman been here?" exclaimed he, turning to the two slaves.

Still no reply.

In his anger he laid his hand on his sword, and the negroes prostrated themselves before him, uttering inarticulate sounds, and opening their mouths that Amaury might see that they had no tongues.

"How shall I now be able to learn, if she has been here, and who is to tell me whether I can count upon this infidel?"

A slight noise was heard opposite the door of entrance. Amaury turned and saw that a curtain that divided the shed had been drawn, and that Mahmoud-el-Reis was standing with his arms crossed upon his breast, before him. The Syrian had laid aside his rich oriental clothing, and donned the dress of a French workman.

"He whom thou callest an infidel," said Mahmond, "has never betrayed his oath—I hope it may be thus with thee, Amaury Montruel."

Amaury sprang towards him, and seizing him by the arm, demanded eagerly, "Is this a portrait?" pointing to the statue.

Mahmoud nodded by way of affirmation.

"The portrait of whom?" demanded Montruel.

Mahmoud extended his arm, and pointed to a sketch upon the boards of the shed, which was half effaced.

"Ah!" said Amaury; "I see—but it is very strange."

The Syrian studied his features with great attention, and said—"Then thou knowest some woman who resembles that sketch?"

And as Amaury made no reply, Mahmoud added, with a certain bitterness in his voice—"It is not the woman that came here with thee the other day, and that thou callest also a queen."

"No," replied Montruel, "it is not her.

"Then," said Mahmoud, "do all you Christians have two wives?"

Amaury curled his lip, and exclaimed, "I do do not love that one—I hate her!"

Mahmoud caressed the image, with a tender and melancholy look.

"Dilah!" he murmured.

Then added in a voice so low that Amaury could not hear him—

"Each soul has its sister. The woman who resembles Dilah is without doubt the sister of her soul, and whomsoever she may be I will love her."

CAAPTER VIII.

Mahmoud had dismissed his two slaves with a sign, and was now alone with Montruel.

"In our fraternity," said he, in a slow and solemn voice, "the man who hesitates to give his life, to accomplish the commands of the master, commits a sin; but he among us who risks his life uselessly, even though in accomplishing his master's order, commits a greater sin, so great that the seventh penitence is required to wash it out!"

"Hast thou then not understood me?" interrupted Montruel; "Why, it is to-day! to-day even!"

"I did understand thee," replied the Syrian; "now try to understand me. In the country that I come from they indulge in few vain words.

King Phillip Augustus wears steel armour, and is surrounded by well armed and faithful guards. I do not care to attack king Phillip in his steel armour and surrounded by his faithful guards."

Amaury had laid aside his helmet, and was seated, holding his head between his two hands.

"King Phillip Augustus," he repeated, as though trying to fix his thoughts; "The king knows all—the king knows too much; we must no longer trifle with him, and betray him by halves!"

Mahmoud was standing before window of his work-shed, running his eye over the small arm of the Seine, over which hung, like a bizarre fringe, the lace-like roofs, the small towers, and the buttresses of the water arches, but from time to time he turned round and run his eye over the contours of his new statue.

Mahmoud scarcely listened to what Amaury Montruel had been saying. He was thinking that his task was over; he was thinking that that was the morning of the eighth day, and that the road which was to restore him to happiness was much shortened.

The man who had been speaking to him he regarded only as the instrument that was to facilitate the orders of the master.

Then suddenly he exclaimed, "Salim had steel armour and faithful guards. Salim was as much above thy king as the great sun is above the little stars. Salim, the friend of God—the commander of the faithful. Five hundred black eunuchs, armed with sharp scymetars, were always about him—always preceding him in his progresses, and never sparing the unfortunates who were found in the way of their lord. To look at him only was death—his name alone could make Bagdad and the provinces tremble. Mahommed, the holy and the strong, represented heaven upon earth, master of Alamont and of seven hundred priories, told me it was necessary that I should go to Bagdad and kill Salim, the commander of the faithful. Twelve *fedavi* had already left to accomplish that enterprise—none returned; but left their bones bleaching on the high roads around Bagdad. I knew that, though I was but sixten years of age. I departed on my errand, with some gold in my girdle; and for the first time the crystal poignard hidden under my clothing. In the streets of Bagdad marble monuments had been erected, to mark the places where those had fallen who had tried to compass the death of Salim, the commander of the faithful. They showed me twelve of them. I visited the palace and marked out with the point of my poignard, where the thirteenth place would be, saying to myself, 'Here I or the kaliph shall fall!'"

Montruel rose; "Of what importance is all that?" exclaimed he; thou hast promised me to kill the queen!"

"And thou promised to free me from the king!"

"Have I refused thee?" began Montruel.

Mahmoud coolly leaned against the window.

"If thou hast not refused," said he, "then listen to me, in order to know how I should wish to have the king delivered to me."

"At the place where I drove in my crystal poignard" said he, without in the least departing from his slow and grave style, "there was nothing but a grove of palms. I assumed a beggar's dress, and drawing a large stone there, to serve me as a seat, in my watchings for the commander of the faithful. I waited a little more than a year. He came at last, with his black eunuchs, and at the moment when I was about to spring forth, one of those pierced my breast with his scymeter. When I returned again to that place, where I had said the sultan or myself should die, a whole year had passed; for a whole year I had been streatched upon a mattress incapable of moving. There were no longer any palm trees there, for they had broken up the ground to establish the foundations of a mosque, and I heard the people of Bagdad say, that the kaliph Salim had built that temple to Allah for having protected his life. I searched a long time for the place where I had thrust my crystal poignard and I found it exactly in the middle of the space reserved for the great door. All around this mosque, which was in course of erection, were numerous stone-cutters, preparing the ornaments for the windows, galleries and minarets. The Prophet inspired me; I quitted my beggar's clothes and immediately set about learning to cut stone. During four long years I lived in that temple, which was constantly growing over my head. It became my dwelling—I knew it stone by stone. I had become a skilful artisan—the master of the works spoke of me to the kaliph. Mark on what occasion."

God knows, Messire Amaury had no desire to know on what occasion the kaliph Salim had wished to speak to Mahmoud; but as Mahmoud did not often speak, he pretended to agree with him.

"Over the spot where I had thrust my crystal poignard," he continued, "the chief door of the mosque had reached the desired height—then nothing further was wanted than to carve and fit the key-stone of the arch. Twenty times already that key-stone had been cut and ornamented at great cost, according to the Persian rules of art; but on each occasion some demon that haunted the church had split and rent it to pieces."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Montruel out of all patience, "thinkest thou, maitre Jean Cador, that I have time to stand here listening to thy sleepy tales?"

"I waited seven years to kill the kaliph Salim," replied Mahmoud-el-Reis, with the most perfect tranquillity, "and I have only been at Paris a week. If thou hast no desire to serve me precisely as I wish to be served, let us separate. I can wait still."

"Speak, then," said Montruel, with resignation.

"The demon who burst that stone," said Mahmoud, who would not abate a word of his narrative, "was me! I had learnt in the kingdom of Kathay how to manufacture that terrible dust which bursts at the approach of fire, and bursts through every obstacle by its prodigious powers of expansion; I employed my nights in boring the key-stone. I filled up the hole with that dust of sulphur and saltpetre, then on the eve of the day upon which the stone was to be keyed, I lighted a match and the stone was rent asunder. The sultan said to me, 'Mahmoud-el-

Reis, thou who art so skilful, wilt thou charge thyself with cutting a key-stone and adjusting it? If thou shouldst succeed, I will give thee twenty thousand sequins; but if thou shouldst fail th[illegible] shalt die under the baton.'

"'I will charge myself with cutting the key-stone, and I will adjust it,' I replied, 'if the king of kings, a sight of whom dazzles like the light of ten suns, will accord one favour to his humble slave." And as the kaliph made me a sign to speak I added, while prostrating myself at his knees, 'There is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet! The grace that I ask of the commander of the faithful is that he will assist with his sublime presence at the placing of my key-stone, keeping himself at the exact spot that I shall indicate.'

'For what object?' demanded Salim.

'Because the presence of God's favourite, like the presence of God himself, shall drive away all evil spirits and thwart their curses.'

"I was a whole year cutting and preparing the stone, which was larger than the cube of the chamber in which we now stand. When it was finished I passed the whole night preceeding the day upon which it was to be placed, watching over it, scymeter in hand. The following day all the officers of the court, the virgins, the priests, the doctors and the kadis were to accompany the kaliph Salim at the ceremony. All the musical instruments that Bagdad contained formed a concert to celebrate the long-expected completeon of the mosque—Salim was full of joy and said to me—

'What place hast thou assigned me, Mahamoud-el-Reis? for I must acc[illegible] me of my promise as thou hast done of thine.'

"I pointed to the place where I had first thrust my crystal poignard in the earth, seven years previously, on my first arrival at the city of Bagdad. The kaliph placed himself on the spot, under a canopy of Cashmeres, borne up by sixteen slaves. At a signal from my hand the ropes tightened in their pulleys, the enormous stone left the ground and became poised in air. I was on the crown of the arch and had a sharp scymeter concealed under my clothing. when the stone arrived over the canopy of Cashmeres, I seized my scymeter and called loudly, three times before the stupefied crowd, upon the dreaded name of Mahommed, the lord of the mou[illegible]ain. Then my sharp steel severed the ropes and the great stone fell, crushing everybody that was under the Cashmere canopy. Dost thou now understand, messire Amaury," resumed the Syrian, changing his tone "why I have told thee this long story?"

"Not yet," replied Montruel.

"I have told it thee," continued Mahamoud, "because here in Paris, as in Bagdad, I feel myself too weak against a sovereign surrounded by his guards. And because to succeed before him, I require a longer arm than the poignard of my order; because I wish to have, without further delay, if thou canst bring Philip Augustus here to me, under the portals of Notre Dame, at the day and hour that I shall indicate."

Montruel reflected a moment; this fashion of killing the king seemed to please him more than we can tell. He had a certain repugnance to opening the door of the king's chamber, which was confided to his care; but a stone falling from the scaffolding of Notre Dame; that resembled an accident so much, that the easy conscience of messire Amaury found itself suddenly at ease. In his joy he extended his hand to Mahamoud-el-Reis, who kept his own crossed upon his breast.

"A good idea!" said he without noticing this proof of Mahmoud's disdain—"a good idea, mon compagnon! I cannot bring the king under the portals of Notre Dame at the precise day and date that thou shalt indicate; but I can tell thee before hand at what day and hour the king will pass under those portals. Does not that amount to the same thing?"

"That will do as well," replied Mahmoud.

"Ah, well, then, since this business is arranged," said Montruel, with vivacity, "we come now to the promise thou [illegible] made me; thou knowest not what I suf[illegible], mon [illegible]mpagnon—thou knowest not the [illegible]adness that consumes me. It is now eight d[illegible]ys since I ha[illegible] seen her who is my passion, my [illegible], my [illegible]esire, my hope—my whole being—[illegible] I live [illegible] her and for her.

"It is eight days since I [illegible] her, and I have counted the hours and the minutes of [illegible] hours of all these days! Thou hast lately [illegible] I remember it well, mon compagnon, [illegible] also wert suffering from the absence of [illegible] one—that thou wast a body without soul—ever since thy departure from the pure one. Ah! well! I adore that woman as thou adorest Dilah! thy well-beloved!"

Mahmoud-el-Reis frowned.

"Christian," murmured he, "never pronounce the name of Dilah; and, above all, never compare her to that woman!"

Montruel turned pale, and his lips trembled; for of all outrages that is the most cruel which is addressed to the object we love. He, however, made an effort to suppress the reply that came to his lips.

Mahmoud had crossed the work-shed, and was standing before his statue contemplating it with a respectful love. "I was the cause of that!" he murmurmed in a voice soft as melody. "Pardon me, Dilah, treasure of my life! It was me, imprudent fool that I was for giving them thy name. It was me who had no fear of profaning my heart by showing them thy image. Pardon me, Dilah! those who have heard thy name shall not repeat it anymore; and I swear to thee an oath, that they shall never possess thine image." These two last phrases died upon his lips.

Montruel did not hear them.

Mahmoud drew a curtain, and the image of Dilah disappeared suddenly behind that veil.

CHAPTER IX.

"Time passes," said Montruel, "I am waiting."

"I am ready, "replied Mahmoud. Thou hast not told me how thou wouldst introduce me near the princess Ingeburge?" At the name of Ingeburge, pronounced for the first time, a rustling noise was heard behind the wall of the work-shed.

Mahmoud listened attentively, though taking care to preserve his calm ; Montruel trembled and rushed hastily towards the window.

"Has anybody overheard us?" said he, full of fear.

"Look," said the Syrian.

Montruel stretched himself as far as he could out of the opening, but could see nothing but a forest of unfinished clustered columns and stones, lying pell-mell, waiting to be placed in position.

"There was nobody," said he, drawing his body back again into the shed ; by way of caution, however, he closed the shutters of the window.

"Is access so very difficult to the convent that contains queen Ingeburge?" said the Syrian.

"Nearly impossible."

"Even for thee, the favourite of Phillip Augustus?"

"Even for me."

"They tell me that there is an infirmary at the convent."

"It is true," replied Montruel, seizing that idea impetuously.

"But," added he, on further reflection, thou art not ill."

"I can become so."

"One might feign it," began Amaury.

"I did not say I would feign it," said the Syrian, dryly. "I said I could easily become ill —listen and lose none of my words. In a minute I shall be lying there on the ground, without voice or motion ; thou wilt then call the nearest masons who are working below at the portals—command them to place me on a litter ; and I think," added he ironically, "that thy powerful influence will go far enough to induce them to receive a dying man at the hospital."

Montruel looked at him stupefied. Before he could find words to reply, Mahmoud had drawn from his breast a small flask and put it to his lips.

At the same moment he fell back like one struck to the earth by lightning, and after a slight convulsion, had no more motion than a corpse.

The emotion in the city remained as great as ever. Upon the place du Palais, in the rue de la Barillerie, and beyond the two bridges the crowd increased.

Every one was eager to learn the smallest item of information regarding the proceedings of that tribunal which was about to decide the fate of such high destinies.

In the silence of every other bell of Paris, that one from the belfry of the new palace rang out, at measured intervals, a long and deep tone, announcing to the city and its neighbourhood that the council of prelates were deliberating.

A thousand rumours circulated—for Paris always insists upon having some news, however impossible it may be to obtain it.

The walls of the throne-room were thick ; the doors were closed ; it was certain that not a word could escape from that redoubtable chamber ; and yet the lying and credulous bourgeois related to each other, from minute to minute, all that had passed in the council—they were not particular about details ; but each risked his own little fable, and generously accepted the fable of his neighbour—and these accounts, fabricated with the usual Parisian ingenuity, acquired a very respectable degree of authenticity, after having passed through a dozen months.

Some said—"Our sire the king is standing in the midst of those churchmen. His helmet on his head, and his gauntlet hand upon his hip, as well becomes a brave man-at-arms to do when he is surrounded by a room full of hypocrites!"

"Ah! ha!" said another "our sire, the king, may well feel proud as Herod—he has made his bow before all these assembled bishops."

Another voice in the crowd proclaimed that the king had said to the council, "judge not—judge not, my good sirs—I am the king, and will do ever and always as I please."

Another voice affirmed that the king having first crossed himself, like a good Christian, said, "I am the king, but our holy father is the representative of the king of kings—and you are the representatives of our holy father ; whatsoever you shall judge proper, my reverend masters, I shall accept your sentence devoutly."

And between these two extreme versions, there were a million of intermediate shades—proving that Paris, though as yet only adolescent, was already the most famous gossip of Europe!

The passing of a closed litter, containing a poor patient, that they were carrying to the infirmary, was not likely to attract much attention from a crowd so steeped in political considerations. A few asked who that sick man was, borne by four workmen from Notre Dame, and followed by a man-at-arms, who seemed to be escorting him.

Those who, in that man-at-arms, could recognize sire Amaury, suspected that some diablerie was on hand ; but it was not considered so improbable that some unfortunate artisan might have fallen from the scaffolding.

One remarkable thing, however, and which, under other circumstances, might have furnished the text of many commentaries, was, that the litter had already passed by many infirmaries without stopping. Every time they reached the door of some hospital or convent, the masons who bore the litter attempted to set it down, but were urged by Messire Amaury to advance, who said to them, "When it is time to stop I will tell you."

The last orders of Jean Cador had been executed to the letter. Messire Amaury had called, at hazard, four of the masons who were working on the scaffolding and had required them to lend their aid. The three first who saw Jean Cador extended on the floor of his workshed shook their heads and said—

"It is no use to carry him to the infirmary ; it is a coffin that he requires and not a bed!"

The fourth who had an indefinable expression of fear and suspicion upon his face, knelt down by the side of the supposed corpse and watched it a long time. He rose at length without uttering a word ; and when Messire Amaury gave orders that the body should be carried away—it was him who fetched the litter.

But once on their road the three others assumed that air of sadness, that every fatal accident gives to those even, who are not

directly interested. The fourth was nearly as pale as Jean Cador himself—his anxious eye seemed unceasingly to be interrogating the crowd—and to be eagerly seeking some one, among all those strange faces that surrounded him.

One would have said that he had some great secret in his heart, but could find nobody to whom he could confide it.

A little before they reached the great crowd which encumbered the approaches to the chatelet, and at the moment when the gossiping groups were increasing, that compagnon with the pale and frightened face perceived, at the turn of a street an old man, with white hairs, who was listening to the rumours of the crowd. His face suddenly changed and became lighted up with a ray of satisfaction:

"Christian," cried he, "come to me, Christian, mon père."

The old man heard him, and immediately approached the litter.

By instinct, Messire Amaury seemed to understand that his designs were threatened with some interruption—of what nature he could not guess—but he desired to prevent the old man from joining and talking with the compagnon.

He urged on his horse, but unfortunately all progress became very difficult, owing to their proximity to the palace, where the cause of the king and his two wives was being decided.

All that Messire Amaury could do was to separate the old man with white hairs from that pale faced stone-cutter just as they had shaken hands.

But it was too late, for the stone-cutter had had time to say to the old man,—

"The man who is within the litter wants to assassinate queen Angel!"

Old Christian stepped back, mixed with the crowd, and followed the litter at a distance.

The fourth stone-cutter, with the pale face, was Eric, the Dane, who had come from the far-off north country, to save the queen of France.

Eric remembered the prophecy of Mila. Eric had not forgotten the strange rencontre that he and his sister had experienced on the night of their arrival at Paris. Ever since he had been working on the portals of Notre Dame; he had never, for a single moment lost sight of that man, so plainly pointed out by the prophecy—that man who bore both a Christian and a Mussulman name—that Mahmoud-el-Reis who had sculptored the image of the Virgin Mary, and that the freemasons called Jean Cador.

When Messire Amaury had been suddenly interrupted in the midst of his conversation with Mahmoud, and had thrust his body out of the window to see if any one was standing on the watch, he could perceive nothing along the entablature of the first story; but the intrepid and agile brother of Eve had been there and had slipped down the outer columns to the ground.

Eric had heard the whole conversation—but Eric had more of good will than of resources. He would have been a stronger man in the wild forests of his own country. In Paris he felt lost, and was a thousand times more isolated than in those desert woods were he had passed his childhood—in the midst of these unknown manners and customs his intelligence was at fault. Besides he missed Eve, that gentle fairy, who was at once his inspiration, his courage, his heart and mind.

At that moment he would have given ten years of his life to have seen his sister, if only for one moment. But where was poor Eve? It was now a whole week since page Albret had led her to the Louvre, by the orders of the king, and Eve had not since returned; and her brother, in spite of all his enquiries, could not find the page, who alone could have told him what had become of her.

When they had crossed the bridge and had reached the gateway of the chatelet, the litter-bearers did not stop till they had reached the inner door. Amaury Montruel then raised his vizor, and the guards allowed the cortège to pass in the name of the king.

At five hundred paces from la Porte-aux-Peintres, Amaury took the lead, and before the litter came up had rang at the bell of Saint-Martin-hors-les-Murs.

In the name of the king, he demanded a private cell for the excellent artisan, Jean Cador, who was about to enrich the grand portal of Notre Dame with an image of the holy virgin—which was a *chef-d'œuvre*.

Prior Anselm came forward to receive the litter at the threshold of the abbey—the bearers not being permitted to pass over it.

Montruel put both spurs to his horse and returned to Paris.

Of the four bearers, three resumed their way to Notre Dame. Eric slipped behind that hedge which enclosed those fields, where, on the evening of his arrival at Paris, he had overheard that conversation between the friend of the king and Mahmoud-el-Reis.

Some moments after he met with Christian, the Dane, who was waiting for him under the high walls that enclosed the abbey.

PART IV.

The sun was already descending towards the horizon, and the belfry of the palace had ceased to sound its measured and grave tones.

In a narrow cell of the abbey Saint Martin-hors-les-Murs, and which contained nothing but a bed, a bench, and a prie-dieu, lay Mahmoud-el-Ries—his pale face had still some bronze tints—but he was motionless; by his side sat an old monk, with an impassible face, lazily reciting his rosary, and thinking no more of his patient than of the grand Turk.

In fact, the new comer not having given the slightest sign of life since his admission into the abbey, in the king's name, was supposed to be really dead; and Christian charity could only now give him the prayers which help the soul on its last journey.

The rosary of the old monk had many beads, and when he was tired of passing them through his fingers, he relieved himself by performing a little sum, which seemed to refresh him and give him courage to pursue his task.

When the old monk was asleep, an observer coming by chance into his cell would have been struck with the strong contrast presented by the two faces before him.

The monk's face was in full bloom, under a half-bald skull: his cheeks though slightly pendant, presented a happy mixture of the lily and the rose; he had three chins all well developed; the general expression of his features was gentleness, though with a shade of apathy. One could see that he was a kind man, and who, if he had never done much good, had never done much harm.

The other face, on the contrary, was energetic, haughty, and powerful—repelling all idea of negative qualities, and proclaiming an active superiority, whether for good or evil.

The life of the monk had doubtless been a long sleep—without dreams—without remorse—but also without aspirations.

The life of the stranger had been a tempest, and the bronze that tinted his pale features seemed but the mysterious reflection of some volcano which was buring in his soul.

The day was falling, and the red light of the setting sun, penetrating through the bars of the narrow window of the cell, fell upon the bed of the patient.

At intervals a warm ray mixed itself with the dead tints which leadened the skull of the Syrian—around his discoloured lips, something like a bitter smile seemed at times to be playing, under the soft and silky tufts of his black moustache.

The same ray falling upon the broad face of the honest monk deepened its vermilion. His rosary lay coiled around his crossed knees, and his whole aspect betokened a state of beautitude and peaceful sleep.

Suddenly the eyelids of the Syrian, which, up to then, had appeared to be completely soldered, half opened by a slow and nearly imperceptible movement; but you could scarcely recognize the piercing eagle eye of Mahmoud-el-Reis—the furtive look that he cast around him was weak and almost extinguished.

Mahmoud did nothing by halves—the dose of poison that he had taken had not only produced the appearance of sickness, it had rendered him seriously ill.

The most skilful leach in the world that might have been called in to examine him, would have pronounced his life in danger.

It was the first time that Mahmoud had opened his eyes since his arrival at the abbey of Saint-Martin-hors-les-Murs—his swoon had lasted several hours, and at the moment that his senses seemed to be returning, one would have said that he had scarcely a breath of life within him. It was sometime before he could distinguish the objects that surrounded him.

"Am I blind?" thought he, while a vague feeling of fear was depicted on his features, "or is it dark night?"

He tried to raise his hand to pass it over his eyes, but it remained paralyzed by his side.

"The dose was too strong," thought he again. He however, made no attempt to call for aid. Some more minutes passed, when his sight began by degrees to improve, and he felt that his limbs were slowly returning to life.

All at once he perceived the rubicund face of the monk resting on his pillow. Mahmoud was no longer thinking of his own condition—the thought of his task had returned to him; he made an effort to sit up and place his face near to that of the good monk.

In this position he examined him long and attentively, he knit his brows, shook his head and murmured—

"I shall be able to make nothing of him, for he has no passions."

Scarcely had his intelligence returned than he found himself possessed of its full strength—he was able, at one glance, to discover the soul of the monk through its thick covering, and he came to the conclusion that his mind was weaker than his body, and he allowed him to vegetate in his apathetic sleep.

Mahmoud turned on his pillow and closed his eyes—the exertion that he had made had exhausted him. Great drops of perspiration broke out upon his forehead, and he quickly fell asleep, overwhelmed with fatigue.

The good monk, on the contrary, woke up having been disturbed by some confused noises

in his dream, stood upon his legs and made a great sign of the cross, muttering to himself—

"Lord Jesus! hath not the dead man moved?"

His trembling hand vainly sought his rosary which had slipped upon the floor.

His teeth chattered and the shades of evening seemed to him full of phantoms. He had not time, however, to die of fright, for he heard the noise of voices and steps in the adjoining gallery.

The door of the cell opened, and prior Anselm made his appearance with a veiled woman.

"This is fatigue enough for to-day, my brother," said the prior. "Go and seek the repose that you have earned."

The monk, instead of obeying, immediately continued his search for his rosary.

"Go!" repeated the prior.

"Have I," stammered the poor monk, "committed any sin of idleness, my father? I have been overcome in spite of myself in the midst of my orisons; and it appeared to me, on my waking, that the deceased had moved."

"The deceased!" exclaimed, in one voice, the prior and the veiled woman.

At the same time the prior seized Mahmoud's wrist and felt his pulse.

"Go! my brother," said he for the third time, "and sin no more."

The monk having found his rosary, now took his departure.

"Is he dead?" asked the veiled woman, with anxiety, timidly approaching the couch.

"His pulse beats feebly," replied the old man, "but there is still life."

They were alone—they could hear the sounds of the monk's steps dying away in the distant corridors.

Prior Anselm took the hand of the veiled woman and led her to the only seat in the cell.

"Yes! my well-beloved daughter," said he as if resuming an interrupted conversation, "the king appeared in answer to the citation of our Church, and I assisted for our lord the abbot, who was absent at the first sitting of the council. The king bore himself like a Christian."

"May God be with him," said the veiled woman in a voice trembling with emotion.

"The council have as yet decided nothing," continued the old man; "but it is easy to be seen that the decision will be in your favour. You will have justice done you, my dear child; you will be queen of France."

Ingeburge raised her veil, showing that her beautiful face was bathed in tears.

"Queen of France," murmured she, "say rather the wife of the king; I do not desire a place on the throne, but to be by the side of Phillip Augustus."

The prior smiled while contemplating the depth of that love, which no outrage could kill, or even weaken.

"Remember, my daughter, that you have solicited the favor of attending on our poor patients. It is eight days since I promised my consent. I have neglected my promise till this evening, when, on entering the convent, I learnt that a patient had knocked at our doors and demanded admission, in the name of the king."

"In the name of the king!" repeated Ingeburge.

"And I said to myself," continued the prior, "this shall be the first patient confided to the care of the queen."

CHAPTER II.

Mahmoud's cell was now plunged into complete obscurity. The eye, accustomed to darkness, could only just distinguish a white from kneeling on a prie-dieu.

A weak sigh came from the bed of the patient, and before queen Ingeburge had time to leave her praying position, Mahmoud raised his voice and said—

"Am I alone?"

He thought he was dreaming, when, instead of the voice of the old monk, he heard the sweetest and most melodious voice he had ever heard in his whole life.

He thought he was dreaming when that charming voice, out of the darkness, replied to him—

"You are not alone, my brother. There is some one watching over you, and praying for you."

Mahmoud felt as though some beneficent emotion was suddenly warming his breast.

"If I was a thousand leagues from here," thought he, "in the blooming and odorous forests, where roses spring up from the dry beds of the torrent, I should say that I had heard the voice of Dilah!"

He rose this time without effort; for his sleep had driven away the fever.

His eyes made vain efforts to pierce the darkness which separated him from that angelic voice.

"Where are you?" asked he.

There was no reply, but he could hear the noise of the flint striking against the steel, one or two sparks only were emitted, for it was evidently a novice with unpractised hands, who was trying to strike a light.

"Give it me," said Mahmoud, "my breast burns. I am thirsty—and I think I should be relieved if I could see a little light."

What he desired was to see his unknown companion; for he was among those who cannot distract themselves long from their object, and he had told Amaury that morning, that if there were men about the queen he would ask a day, but if only a woman, he would ask but an hour.

Mussulmen know the tradition of our mother Eve—of the apple and the serpent—and they are still more severe in their judgments on women than we are.

Mahmoud held out his hand in the dark, a light step glided over the floor of the cell, and a small soft hand touched the fingers of the Syrian.

Mahmoud wished to press the small hand between his own, but it quickly escaped him, and he retained only the flint and steel. Some minutes after the lamp was lighted: and Mahmoud beheld a woman clothed in white, her face hidden by a veil, but showing a young and graceful figure.

Through her veil Ingeburge could perceive that the supposed dead man, had suddenly be-

come a galvanized corpse, and was fixing upon her his black eyes, which sparkled like diamonds.

She was frightened, and yet something at first attracted her towards that strange man, so different from those she had seen each day since her arrival in France, and also from those she remembered to have seen in her dear country in the North.

She took a phial from the table and poured its contents into a cup which stood near the patient's pillow.

He refused the drink with an air of impatience. "Water," said he, "some pure cold water."

"This is a remedy," said the queen.

Mahmoud continued to regard her with ardent eyes; the returning fever giving them additional brightness.

"How long is it," said Mahmoud "since the Christian maidens have adopted the custom of eastern slaves, in hiding their faces?"

"Drink, my brother," said Ingeburge, instead of replying to his question.

Mahmoud put forth his hand, but it fell again by his side.

"In our arid deserts"—murmured he—"I have seen the wounded lion crawling on the sand, leaving the track of his blood along his path—until he reached a fountain of pure cold water; and ever as he crawled, his panting sides, his drooping mane and his hoarse groanings denoted his near approach to death. But as soon as the pure cold water touched his lips, he rose—shook his mane—lashed his sides—and roared like a conqueror. Maiden, I am of the desert, like the lion. The remedies of Europe are not made for me; give me some pure cold water."

Ingeburge listened to him, overcome by a bizarre interest that she could not define. She threw the cordial out of the cup and filled it with pure water.

Mahmoud, like the wounded lion, seemed to recover himself all at once; he raised his energetic head, and a proud light seemed to illumine his dark eye.

"Thank you, young girl," said he, in a voice which made Ingeburge tremble as though she had heard the voice of another man.

He gave her back the empty cup, and shifted the lamp in such a manner that the light should not fall too directly on his features.

He was about to enter upon a contest and was trying to secure every advantage.

"Thou art kind, and succored me, young girl—the all-powerful always rewards mercy and goodness. For a glass of water, the sacred poets tell us that the Prophet gave the rich dates of Aroen to Sidda, wife of Moses. I am Jean Cador, the image-cutter, to whom even princes speak with respect. The high priests of Paris will pay for my stone statue by its weight in gold. If thou wilt accept it, young girl, I will share with thee the price of my statue."

Ingeburge made no reply—not that she was offended by the words of the sick man—but because that name, Jean Cador, awakened in her a vague fear that she could not explain.

She had a confused recollection that that name had been pronounced by her sister, Eve, in the long tale she had related to her, and in which so many different names soccurred.

The memory of Ingeburge wandered over the details of Eve's story, but she could call to mind no particular incident connected with the name of Jean Cador.

"Hast thou no desire to be rich?" asked Mahmoud, whose eyes were endeavouring to pierce the queen's veil.

The queen was but a woman after all—and had a woman's curiosity; adventures which begin like a romance always take the daughters of Eve on their weak side: the queen was curious to know more, and replied—"Oh! yes, my brother, I should indeed like to be very rich."

Mahmoud thought to himself he had asked too much, when he asked messire Amaury for one hour.

"Riches," resumed he, softening his voice as much as he could, "are like the brilliant varnish that painters spread upon their canvass, to heighten the effect of their colors. Riches give the decoration, which embellishes even beauty!"

"With riches, my brother, one may heal wounds and soften the sufferings of the sick."

Mahmoud was about to continue his illustrations of the theme he had chosen—but he stopped suddenly—and there seemed to be some shade of respect in his hesitation.

Respect for the simple and pure young girl—who had sanctified, by one word, the expression of her simple desires.

Still Mahmoud had as yet no suspicion of the success of his attack. Poor human nature is sometimes carried away by good as well as by bad sentiments—it is only a question of knowing how to put on the bait and how to present it *apropos*.

"There are so many suffering around us, are there not my daughter?" continued the Syrian, shifting his battery, "misery is so cruel in this great Paris. God be praised, my gifts would not be bestowed on vain and foolish prodigalities. Instead of decorating thy beautiful brow with jewels and pearls—thou wouldst decorate thy soul with good deeds."

The queen's mind was still seeking to discover what it was that her sister Eve had told her about Jean Cador—who seemed so good and was yet so ignorant of all Christian things; at the same time she listened to him attentively, to see if she could catch a word to assist her memory.

"Didst thou think, then, my brother," asked she with simplicity, "to find in this holy place women delivered over to worldly vanities?"

They had laid Mahmoud already dressed upon the bed—finding that the conversation was not tending toward his desired object, and that the young maiden's replies thwarted his diplomacy too easily—he felt that it was necessary, without further delay, to produce more efficacious arguments—he therefore drew from the breast of his surcoat a long silk purse marvellously embroidered, and full of gold. In spite of the pious words of his young nurse he expected to surprise her into some expression of coveting this magnificent purse—but Ingeburge was too deep in her own reflections, and the purse seemed to make no impression upon her. Mahmoud thought he had gained one point, for he beleived that his pretty companion was dissimulating—and in a

game of this kind he who expects to cheat has lost beforehand.

"I have heard say," said he, proceeding with more confidence "that the first wife of Phillip Augustus is confined in this convent; have they not deceived me, my young girl?"

"They have not deceived thee, my brother," replied Ingeburge, redoubling her attention.

"Perhaps you know her?"

"I do know her."

"And perhaps you love her?"

"I love her," said Ingeburg, trembling and hesitating.

The queen's voice trembled, because her memory had suddenly given to the name of Jean Cador a terrible signification, and she felt herself threatened with some fearful danger.

She recoiled as though the purse with which the Syrian was playing had been a poisoned poignard.

"You have another name?" she stammered suddenly.

"Yes," replied Jean Cador, without exhibiting any emotion.

The queen's knees bent under her. "Oh Lord, my God!" she inwardly prayed, "if this is to be my last hour have pity on me and receive my sinful soul into your mercy!" for she had at once recalled the name of Mahmoud-el-Reis, who had come to France to kill the queen.

In her confusion she had attributed to Mahmoud the design of Amaury. But, alas! it was not the thought of death which most cruelly tortured her.

By a strange chance Mahmoud at this moment said to her—

"I will give thee this purse, young girl—and this purse contains a fortune—if thou wilt assist me to speak to the queen."

Hot tears filled the eyes of the poor young wife, and the dreadful pain which wrung her heart might be traced in these few words.

"And you were admitted here in the name of the king."

She knew well that she was an obstacle, and she concluded that the king had at last determined to put that obstacle out of his way. At this moment of supreme distress, all that Eve had told her seemed now unravelled. This man was the executioner sent by the king, charged to accomplish a mysterious execution, which no one should be able to reveal.

She was the more confirmed in this idea because she adored the king; and the sufferings that she endured from not being loved again disposed her to see in everything new proofs of his hatred. We believe that which we fear much more readily than that which we hope.

Mahmoud had no idea of what was passing in the mind of his nurse, prevented as he was from reading her impressions on her features, he could therefore only judge at random; and as almost always happens to the sportsman, in such cases, he missed his mark.

"Yes," replied he, expecting to advance his business at one stroke, "I am here by the king's orders."

"And was it the king who gave you that purse?"

"It was the king."

The voice of Angel died away upon her lips. She, however, managed to get out—"To tempt some one to betray the queen into your hands?"

She waited for that reply as for her final sentence. Jean Cador replied—

"You have guessed it."

The queen uttered a feeble cry and fell like one dead.

Mahmoud-el-Reis was kneeling over the queen, contemplating her, as though plunged into a sort of ecstsy. He raised her veil. The light of the lamp struck full on the noble features of Ingeburge, whose marvellous beauty had the paleness of death.

An exclamation of astonishment burst from the lips of the Syrian, he passed his hands over his eyes as though to assure himself that he was not under the influence of an ecstatic dream.

"Dilah!" murmured he, in that melodious and tender voice in which he always pronounced that idolized name. "Dilah! it is her dear and supple figure! the divine sweetness of her features—the same pride on her brow—the sadness of her lips. Dilah—such as the pale sun of these climes would have made her—with the the azure of the sky in her eyes, and the tints of gold in her hair!"

He bent slowly and placed a respectful kiss upon the icy forehead of the queen.

"Dilah! that kiss to thee," said the Syrian, "I will love this woman, for she is thy soul's sister!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Under the narrow window, which gave light and air to the cell, where Mahmoud-el-Reis was alone with the queen of France, the immense garden of the abbey began to come out of the darkness—the rays of the moon pierced through the leafless branches of the trees, vaguely designing the contours of massive and fabulous monsters on the parterres.

The garden was deserted and silent. But beyond the garden, though one could not say where, there was doubtless a great emotion; for the weak echoes of confused and distant clamours penetrated even into the cell.

Sometimes the noise was extinguished, as though the breeze of the night had wafted them away on its course—sometimes they suddenly swelled like the murmuring on the shore, or like that other murmur raised by agitated crowds of men.

Mahmoud-el-Reis paid no attention to it—the queen remained in her swoon.

Mahmoud, with body bent, and hands joined, kept his eyes fixed in contemplation of her.

At the first movement of the queen, and before she had completely resumed her senses, the Syrian uttered a cry of joy, and a ray of enthusiastic pleasure illuminated his face.

He had placed his pillow under the queen's head, and he now placed his arm under the pillow and gently raised it.

The queen opened her eyes, and cast around her that stupefied look always given by people returning to animation after a fit of fainting.

"I have been dreaming," said she, in a weak, and slow voice; "where art thou, then, my sister Eve?"

"Her voice also," murmured the Syrian, whose eyelids were wet with tears.

That man, with a heart harder then adamant, could weep at the sole remembrance of a woman.

Ingburge, trembling, looked at him, and put her hands over her eyes, with a gesture of profound horror.

"Oh!" said she, "it is the assassin. My God! then I have not been dreaming!"

Mahmoud continued on his knees.

"Since thou lovest the queen so much," young girl, said he, still softening the musical and touching accents of his voice, "the queen shall be protected. Do not tremble thus—a sight of thee alone has made me thy slave—neither blush, young girl, for the sentiment I feel for thee is not that of love."

Ingeburge's fears were not diminished. The Syrian smiled.

"What fearest thou from me?" resumed the Syrian, "hast thou not been lying there in my hands and defenceless....."

There are some arguments which strike us so just and forcible, that the mind, ever so alarmed, perceives them, and submits at once to their influence.

"It is true," thought the queen.

And besides the voice of the stranger was so changed, and had an accent of such respectful and fraternal tenderness! The queen was but a girl, and perhaps the most unsophisticated of all young girls. She demanded nothing but to believe and to be reassured.

"What, then, has the queen done to you," she stammered, timidly, and half raising her eyes towards the Syrian, "that thou should'st have charged thyself with executing the cruel orders of the king?"

"I have deceived thee, young girl," replied Mahmoud, without hesitation; "and now that I have seen thy face I would rather die myself than deceive thee again. It was not by the orders of the king that I desired to kill the queen."

Ingeburge crossed her hands upon her bosom and raised her beautiful eyes towards heaven, full of tears; from the bottom of her soul she thanked God for the greatest joy she had ever experienced in her life.

Was it a sovereign balm that Mahmoud had now applied to the wound he had so recently given her!

Ingeburge almost smiled, and she had sufficient courage to look at Mahmoud, and it now appeared to her that the proud and wild physiognomy of the Syrian was completely transformed. He was kind, submissive, tender, and his look was as timid as that of an infant.

"Thank thee," said Ingeburge; "thou knowest not the happiness that thou hast given me, my brother."

"Thy brother!" repeated the Syrian, who had never till then understood the signification of that title of Christian charity.

"But then," said Ingeburge, "if it was not by orders of the king, why should'st thou have wished to assassinate the queen?"

"That would be a long story to tell thee, young girl," replied the Syrian, in a melancholy tone, "and doubtless I could not succeed in making thee comprehend it, for we have neither the same manners nor the same religion."

"What!" exclaimed Ingeburge, "art thou then not a Christian?"

Mahmoud folded his arms upon his breast.

"There is but one God," said he solemnly, "and Mahomet is his prophet!"

In spite of her weakness, Ingeburge rose and withdrew to the furthest extremity of the cell to put herself as far as possible from that man that her creed taught her was under the direct influence of unholy laws.

"I knew that thou would'st regard me with horror," resumed the Syrian, whose voice became sad and plaintive; "but I have already told thee that since thy face is that of my beloved Dilah, I cannot deceive thee any more."

These last words were an enigma to the queen. She had never before heard the name of Dilah, and yet the repetition of that name now struck her as that of some forgotten friend.

"Is there any truth in the Asiatic creed, and has each soul some far-off sister, who feel each other's joys and pains?"

Mahmoud continued in a grave voice—"Dost thou love any one, young maiden?"

"I do," replied she.

"With ardour—with passion?"

"With ardour," replied Ingeburge, whose large blue eyes sparkled. "I love with passion!"

"To dying for him thou hast chosen?"

"To dying a thousand deaths!" exclaimed the queen.

"He is a happy man," thought Mahmoud.

The queen bent her head, as though humiliated with the thought, that the man to whom she was so devoted gave her nothing in return but indifference and disdain.

Mahmoud continued—"I sought to kill the queen, because a man said to me, 'I will give thee the life of the king for the life of the queen.'"

Ingeburge pressed her hands to her brow as if a sudden light had broken in upon her mind—the whole truth of Eve's narrative appeared revealed to her.

"Fool that I was!" cried she, "and unfortunate! I that have suspected the noble heart of Philip Augustus, when it was Philip Augustus himself that they wished to kill."

She stopped as though to recall the name of that other assassin mentioned in Eve's tale.

"Amaury Montruel," began Mahmoud.

"That is it—that is it," interrupted Ingeburge. "That is the name of the man who wished to kill me!"

The Syrian recoiled in his turn. "To kill thee!" murmured he, while his dark brows involuntarily knitted. "No! it was the queen of France that Amaury Montruel desired me to kill."

"I am the queen of France!" said she.

For a moment Mahmoud remained mute. A bitter strife was raging in his bosom—the implacable fanaticism of his sect was struggling

against the chivalrous sentiments engendered in the poetry of his nation.

"The queen!" he repeated, with his long eyelashes drooping over his dark and wild eye.

"The queen," repeated Ingeburge; "and I can repeat to thee the words of that coward who proposed this sanguinary step to thee—'For the blood of the queen thou shalt have the blood of the king.' But I say to thee...." Her tears burst forth, and for a moment her voice failed her; then falling on her knees, with clasped hands and beseeching accents, she continued: "but I say to thee, take the life of the queen, but let the king live."

And her hands convulsively tore open the delicate linen which covered her bosom, as though to give the poignard an easier access.

"Thou lovest only too well," said Mahmoud, shaking his head; "for thou art not beloved again."

"I asked thee for death," said the agonized Ingeburge, and thou hast given me torture!"

"There also exists one who loves me," resumed Mahmoud, who seemed to be recovering his native pride; "and she who loves me, waits me; and in order that that long and cruel delay may have an end for both of us, it is necessary that I return to the feet of my master with the blood of King Philip Augustus on the point of this dagger.

Saying this, he snatched the crystal dagger from his breast, and brandished the glittering weapon over his head.

Ingeburge shrunk within herself.

"That is my reason for having wished to kill the queen," said Mahmoud.

A moment of silence ensued, during which nothing could be heard but the stifled sobs of Ingeburge, and also that strange clamour, the distant and confused echos of which we mentioned before.

It increased—it drew nearer.

For the first time, Mahmoud-el-Reis seemed to notice it. For a moment he listened, then gave a look of impatience, as though he would say—"What is it to me!"

Perhaps it signified more to him than he thought for.

CHAPTER IV.

The queen remained silent—crushed under the weight of her great grief—for this man inspired her with a suspicious fear; she assigned no limits to his power, and her delirium pictured to her the pale corpse of Philip Augustus, with the crystal poignard in his heart, and stretched out in some apartment of that unknown palace of the Louvre where she had never entered.

Mahmoud on the contrary was talking to himself; but as soon as his eye fell upon the distressed queen, all his wild energy disappeared again as by enchantment.

The queen was now to him like a vision of Dilah! and it seemed to him as though Dilah was interceding for the queen.

"I have sought in the western sky," murmured he, plunged into a reverie which overpowered him in spite of himself, "I have sought the brilliant star that Dilah looked at on the night of our parting. It was not there. That mysterious thread which connected our hearts is broken, and it was to replace Dilah's star that the genii's have sent me the sister of her soul. Yet what shall I tell Dilah when she shall ask me—'What hast thou done to obtain me? Show me the blood on the point of thy poignard. Art thou brave or art thou but a coward, unworthy of the love of a woman?'"

Ingeburge implored no more; but the silent tears coursed down her cheeks, paler than alabaster. It was better to let the absent Dilah plead the cause of her distress.

An extraordinary conflict was stirring the depths of Mahmoud's heart. On the one hand, was the promised prize of love; the burning fanaticism that the Kurds imbibe with their mother's milk; the fearful oath that order of assassins impose upon its *fedavi;* on the other hand, there was but a poor illusion,—a dream! A resemblance aided by one of those oriental myths, so dear to Asiatic imaginations.

Certainly the struggle was an unequal one; but the dream was founded on the exquisite flower of the North, that stood before him—the dream was incarnate in the divine beauty of Ingeburge.

Mahmoud loved, as they only love in those climes where the burning passion leaves an ineffaceable impression on the heart; the dream spoke louder than anything else to the ardent imagination of Mahmoud. He hesitated—struggled; the terrible and threatening countenance of the Old Man of the Mountain passed more than once before his dazzled eyes, but behind the severe mask of the prince of the assassins there stood a pale vision, soft and beautiful under its melancholy smile. It was Dilah!

It was Ingeburge to Mahmoud. Ingeburge and Dilah were so mingled, that they appeared to him but one adorable and adored being.

Suddenly he put aside his long brown hair, and passed the back of his hand over his moistened brow—

"Sister," said he abruptly, approaching the queen, as if in his trouble he had heard from the lips of poor Ingeburge all the reasoning that had conquered his fanaticism. "What does all that signify? Do not Dilah and thyself possess the same soul, divided between thee by the hands of genii? If thy heart is stricken, will not her heart feel the blow? If I kill the king, wilt thou not die?"

It is needless to say, that Ingeburge did not understand all this. For it required strange and subtle sympathies to interpret the passions, and that which might appear absurd and foolish to cooler reason has a different signification to the lover

Ingeburge began to see, though but confusedly, the light that was dawning through this opened door of salvation, and answered at hazard—

"Oh, yes! if the king were to die, I should die."

"Ah, well! it is necessary that thou should'st live. Do I not know that if one of these two souls were to perish, the other would fade and wither also. Do I not know that the life of Dilah

and thine own are one and the same life? Under the great shadow of the Pure, when I shall see her again, more beautiful than ever, and better loved, I will say to her, 'I had the poignard raised, the life of the king was in my hands, I could have accomplished my oath, and gained without effort, the delights that the prophet has promised to his elect. I could have done it. I can do it now,'" as though he was making the last struggle.

The queen watched the varying expression of his countenance with an anxious look.

"No! no!" he resumed in a firm voice, repelling for the last time the phantoms of his fanatic creed. "He shall live to love thee. I swear it in the name of the prophet! And I will tell Dilah in our last embrace: I have returned to die, and not to be happy. For my life and my happiness, O! Dilah! I have given them to the sister of thy soul!"

Amidst that dull and continued hum of voices which swelled and increased without ceasing, they suddenly heard another and a nearer noise; it was a quick step coming along the corridor, and leading to the cell where they were; sometimes it hurried on quietly, sometimes it seemed to hesitate, and they could hear a confused mixture of exclamations and words rapidly exchanged.

The queen listened, Mahmoud-el-Reis rose, and assumed the impassable and cold manner usual with him.

They could distinguish a woman's voice, which said, "Father Anselme alone could tell us into which cell queen Angel entered!"

"Eve," murmured Ingeburge.

They could hear doors opening and closing noisily.

"Search! search!" cried another voice. "No one has left the monastery. The assassin of the queen cannot escape us!"

"My brother Eric," murmured Ingeburge.

Not a muscle of the Syrian's face moved, he looked like a bronze statue.

The steps approached, the door was shaken from without, and a voice said—

"It must be here, it is the last cell, and the assassin is doubtless hidden here."

"Queen," said Mahmoud, in a low and solemn voice, "protect me if thou desirest thy husband the king to live; for his breast is threatened by other poignards besides mine."

"Eve, Eve," cried Ingeburge, "this way, come to me, Eve!"

The Syrian spoke not another word; he folded his arms upon his breast and looked at the door which was about to open with an assured eye.

CHAPTER V.

Eric had been watching all day under the walls of the Abbey St. Martin. Three times he had presented himself at the gates, and three times the gate-keeper, in obedience to strict orders, had refused him admittance.

Eric was not discouraged; his was one of those patient and strong natures which are accustomed to overcome all obstacles. It had taken him many days to clear the distance which now separated him from the forests of the North. His talisman during that long and difficult journey had been, "never to despair!"

He had come to protect queen Angel, his sister: and had entered upon his task with a full knowledge of his weakness.

The hour to defend queen Angel was at hand, and poor Eric was at his post, ready to lay down his life for his noble sister.

He knew that an assassin had introduced himself within the walls of the convent where the queen was; but that to effect his object the assassin had been obliged to swallow a draught, the effects of which he had seen with his own eyes.

He knew that some time would be necessary to enable Jean Cador to recover his strength, and that after that, more time would be consumed in his attempt to reach the queen.

For Eric had not been able to avoid the afflictions which overtake poor travellers on the weary road; he knew, from experience, what the inside of a convent infirmary was like, and he knew that some labour was required to gain the interior of the convent after leaving the infirmary. And Eve's brother had said to himself, "when the night comes I will not ask for an open door, and yet I will get at the assassin in the monastery!"

We said just now that Eric's talisman, during his long journey, and by which he had put every obstacle out of his way, was patience—he possessed another: Eve, his sister, that gentle and brave child—ever sustained him—gave him courage; and the quick intelligence of the young girl had often found the saving expedient in the greatest embarrassments of their journey.

How many times did Eric think of his sister Eve that long day, as he wandered among the dark bushes that surrounded the enclosure of the abbey.

What had become of her after her interview with the king? and why had the king asked to see master Adam, his poor little companion, engaged by him to carry mortar at the works at Notre Dame?

Eric could not tell, and betimes his heart was wrung with agony when that frightful thought came across him, "I shall never see her more."

The hours seemed very slow; towards sunset and about the same time that Angel had arrived at Mahmoud's cell, to relieve the good old sleepy monk, Eric plunged into the thickest of the bushes and seated himself at the foot of an oak where he could see through the trees the high towers of the convent.

He looked and reflected that queen Ingeburge was a prisoner within those walls. He looked—urging the tardy course of time and calling the night propitious.

Far, very far, at the extremity of the cloistered buildings, there was a small tower whose narrow windows were reddened by the setting sun shining through branches like a fire.

"That's where she dwells, perhaps," thought Eric, "our poor sister Angel."

In the midst of these reflections, one of the windows of the tower opened, and a woman clothed in white leaned out.

Eric sprung to his feet.

"It is she," murmured he; then shading his eyes with his hand, he continued looking a long time with his whole soul in his look.

His heart beat violently.

"Eve," stammered he; "My God, I believe it is Eve."

The sun sank down behind the trees which bound the horizon, and the form of the young girl in the turret became indistinct.

"I must have deceived myself," murmured Eric, giving away again to his grief, "I think I see my poor Eve everywhere.

He stopped to listen; he heard a song borne on the breeze of the evening.

Eric thought he could recognize that sweet air of the Song of the Swallows—sung by the choir of the freemasons on their fête days.

But the wild breeze turned and the song died away.

At that window, where the young girl clothed in white had appeared, a light was placed as soon as it became dark. Eric marked its position through the trees and took it for his compass.

He scaled the walls of the abbey, descended into the gardens of the monastery, and directed his steps towards the lighted tower.

Some mysterious attraction led him there. The large garden was deserted, but under the obscure cloisters he could hear the measured tread of the monks, and at times a slow chant from the arches of the chapel.

Eric advanced by paths unknown to him towards the distant light.

Suddenly he stopped to listen, and kneeling down placed his ear to the ground.

Long before Mahmoud-el-Reis or queen Ingeburge had heard that noise, that we have several times spoken of, it had attracted the attention of Eric; and he could tell that it came from the direction of Paris.

On his travels Eric had sometimes heard, by putting his ear to the ground, the distant noises of an army on its march. This noise was similar to it—the noise seemed to tremble against his ear.

Perhaps it was King Phillip Augustus leaving Paris to fight the English.

As he was not there to listen to the noises outside, Eric pursued his road after many detours, and at length reached the lighted tower.

But Eric was abliged to acknowledge that he was not much nearer to the object of his enterprise; the window was too high to be reached by climbing, and it would require an iron ram to batter in the door which opened into the garden.

A dead silence reigned all round, the psalmody of the monks was hushed and they had doubtless retired to their dormitories.

Eric remained motionless, overpowered with the idea of his impotence.

"Ah, if my poor sister should be there?" murmured he at last; "Whenever I was at a loss as to what saint to offer my vows, Eve always helped me with some happy thought."

He looked up at the window by chance and saw a shadow against the glass, then he heard the voice of a young girl humming a couplet of the same song he had so lately heard under the oak. The voice said,—

"Master! master! thy daughter has a son; thou art happy, the sons of thy daughter shall be called after thee.

"The trowel shines brightly, it is the glaive of the artisan. We will all go to the baptism.

"Is not the cross on the belfry already rusty?"

Eric clasped his hands, and sang the last couplet by way of answer, as he had done on that night when the same song had announced to him the approach of his brother masons.

"The swallow is come; his nest is in the tower.

"Master, alas! the bells are ringing!

"Thou art dying, and thy daughter is dead: we shall all die, but the tower will live.

"And in ten times one hundred years, it will still be the house of the swallows."

Eric had commenced in a low and timid voice, and his first notes were lost in the night.

But as he advanced, he swelled his voice, so that he felt certain that his song had reached the inmates of the tower.

There was, however, no sign of life, and even the handsome silhouette had disappeared from the window.

"Eve!" cried Eric, without any more fear or caution; "Eve! Eve! dost thou not hear me?"

The light was put out.

Again Eric cried in a louder voice, "Eve! Eve!"

"Silence," murmured a voice, which seemed to come through the thick walls.

Eric raised his head, and saw just over him, one of those narrow openings in the wall designed to permit the archers to discharge their arrows through; the next moment a heavy door turned upon its hinges, and the gentle Eve was suddenly in the arms of her wondering brother.

A long embrace followed, accompanied by half-stifled words and tears of joy.

Then Eric, rousing himself all at once, repelled Eve's caresses.

"Where is the queen?" he asked abruptly.

"Queen Angel is good and pious as ever," replied the maiden. "She has this evening obtained permission to watch over a patient."

She could not see that these words had struck Eric with the force of a thunderbolt.

She, therefore, continued gaily, "Thou, then, hast thou been able to reach this place, my brother?"

Eric made no reply, for he was crushed by his terror. Eve tried to take his hand, it was icy cold, and Eve could perceive that his limbs trembled beneath him.

"What is the matter?" said Eve, who became alarmed in her turn.

"That patient," stammered Eric, with an effort, "did he come here to-day?"

"Yes," replied Eve.

"At what hour?"

"About mid-day."

"And how long has queen Angel been with him?"

"About an hour."

Eric raised his hands over his head and uttered a stifled cry.

"May God have mercy on us!—may God have mercy on us!" he repeated.

Eve was obliged to support him to prevent

his falling to the ground; great drops of cold sweat fell from his brow on to the hands of Eve.

"Dost thou know?" resumed he in a vacant voice, "the name of that patient with whom the queen has been for this last hour?"

Eve began to tremble also.

"Repeat it to me," said Eve, frightened.

The voice of Eric burst forth—"Mahmoud-el-Reis," cried he; "and in exchange for the blood of the king that the traitor Amaury has promised him, he has promised that traitor the blood of the queen!"

It was Eric and his sister Eve, with some archers of the convent and some monks, that Mahmoud and queen Ingeburge, had heard in the corridor adjoining their cell.

At the cries of the queen, the door was burst open, and Eric rushed impetuously into the cell. He was armed with a dagger, and his dagger immediately sought the breast of the Syrian.

Ingeburge arrested his hand with a sign. Eve was already weeping and embracing the queen's knees.

The archers and monks, astonished to see that man standing upright who had been brought to the monastery doors half dead, muttered among themselves something about sorcery, and were debating whether it was not better to strike him down at once, like some animal that was mad. The discussion was soon ended, and four or five halberds were presented at his breast at once; but the Syrian never seemed calmer in his life. He coolly and skilfully turned the halberds aside with his hand.

"Queen," said he, casting a quiet but a proud look at Ingeburge, "thou hast but to speak the word to save me. I expect thy testimony in my favour."

"Down! down! with the assassin of the queen!" cried the lay brothers and servants of the monastery, who had remained outside in the corridor.

There was an evident expression of gratitude in the glance of the eye, that Ingeburge gave to Mahmoud-el-Reis; and she was doubtless about to pronounce the word that would have saved him, but she hesitated, and during the few moments that followed, she saw that man again, as she had first beheld him—terrible and implacable, powerful and fascinating as a demon.

In his hand she recognized the frightful poignard, and Phillip Augustus assassinated before her eyes.

"Seize him," cried the queen, in an agony of fear.

Mahmoud made no effort to defend himself; his face showed no change, but a sad smile played upon his lips.

He was immediately struck down and loaded with chains.

He turned his eyes upon the queen.

"I pardon thee," he murmured; "thou wert thinking of him; I saw it in thy face. Oh queen! thou lovest well—I pardon thee!"

At that moment every one within the cell and in the corridors started as if struck by a violent electric shock.

A sort of thunderbolt seemed to have shaken the old abbey walls, and every body turned their eyes with fear on Mahmoud-el-Reis, whom they regarded as possessed of some diabolical power, owing to his wonderful resurrection from death to life. But they were not long allowed to attribute the thunder to Mahmoud; for an immense tumult was heard both from without and within the walls of the convent.

At the same time, they heard the frightened servants of the monastery running to and fro, and crying—

"Help! help! they are assaulting the holy house of St. Martin! Help! help!"

CHAPTER VI.

The assailants of the abbey were the same army that Eric had heard so far off, when he put his ear to the ground in the garden; it was certainly a grotesque army, but not the less terrible.

Towards sunset, at the hour when the artisans were leaving their scaffolding, a considerable number of masons and their apprentices might be seen taking the direction of Saint-Jaques-la-Boucherie, and singing in chorus.

While the workmen entered their homes to partake of the evening repast, a noisy troop, chiefly composed of young lads, made an irruption into the taverns near l'Eglise St. Jacques. Now the taverns of la rue Planche-Mibray, of la rue de la Tixerandorie, and of la rue Jean-de-l'Epine, were not much cleaner, and had not a more honest reputation than the underground taverns of the city.

Besides the apprentices, another crowd issued from the portions of Notre Dame; these were all beggars, male and female, who generally plied their calling round the works of the cathedral.

Some highwaymen followed, escorted by those nameless beings that the city of Paris keeps always hidden in her bowels, and who never make their appearance except on fatal days, like those obscene animals who break out of their muddy prisons on rainy days.

It was not only the island of the city that furnished its contingent to this tumultuous assembly. Every other quarter of the city furnished its ragged quota: these from la place Beaudoyer, these from la place Saint-Michel, from la Porte Buci, and from la Cour des Miracles.

The tavern-keepers in the neighbourhood of l'Eglise St. Jacques, evidently had their instructions, for among all these empty pocketed people, not one was refused a cup of hypocras, or a jug of spiced wine. But the tavern which had the greatest call was that of Master Jean Fontanelle, the husband of that beautiful Fontanelle, that we remember to have met in the retreat of Messire Amaury.

This appeared to be their head quarters, for here the good clerk, Samson, and Tristan the student, gave audience to the secondary chiefs who were to lead off the dance.

The good clerk, Samson, with his old sick woman's face, had evidently absorbed a prodigious quantity of wine since the morning, still managed to keep his legs, and except for a few

hiccups, maintained his usual eloquence. The scholar, Tristan, was still further gone, though he had drank three times less than Samson.

But your ordinary toper, who can only indulge occasionally, can never hold out against these fellows, meagre valetudinarians, who contain a sponge instead of a stomach.

Samson had mounted upon a table. "Come hither, Ezekiel," said he in a mocking tone; "Come hither, Trefouilloux, Jean, Pierre, Luc, Francois, and Gilles!"

Ezekiel and Trefouilloux were the first to come to the call, and it was marvellous to see the transformation these fine boys had undergone; certainly none of those simpletons who had given him a sou to be allowed to peep into his breast, through the sham skylight, would have recognized him again in his new costume; and it was the same with poor Ezekiel, whose limbs usually dislocated and bent under him, had now resumed their natural position.

Ezekiel and Trefouilloux both wore the student's cap and long hose; and the student's cap was also saucily posed crosswise on their ignoble brows, each envied the other's ugliness; but they were not bad representatives of those false neophytes who grow grey in the schools. Our age would err greatly if it thought it could boast of having invented that burlesque thing in the schools, called a student at fifty.

Pierre, Jean, Francois, Pacome, Gilles, and Joseph, and several hundred other beggars, advanced disguised as scholars. Fontanelle's tavern was full and overflowed into the street.

At the sight of Ezekiel and Trefouilloux, dressed in student's gowns, Tristan hardly knew whether to laugh or scold; for low as he had descended, he still retained some of that *esprit de corps*, which gave so much strength to the universities, and his pride was touched.

"Tete-diable!" he growled, "what a profanation!

"Bah!" said Samson, "I like these sham students as well as the real ones; they are both rogues."

It became necessary for Tristan to thrust his hand in his satchel, and finger over the gold pieces that Samson had deposited there, to prevent him from plunging his dagger into the body of his compere.

Samson, however, continued his speech—"My friends," said he, "I am pleased with you; but you must tear your costume a little more: your appearance is still too decent. Trefouilloux and Ezekiel, your caps are too clean—drag them a little in the mud. There, now, you are perfect; and I doubt whether more ignoble men of letters could be found, if we were to search the whole length of la rue du Fouarre. Good! now my children, you understand the nature of the work we have to perform this evening."

"Yes, yes!" master Samson, replied the beggars, "we have had a hint of that."

"I have told them," said Trefouilloux, with importance, "that we were going to force la Porte aux Peintres, and to take the abbey St. Martins-hors-des-Murs by assault."

"And you were not frightened, my darlings?" croaked the clerk.

"Not at all—not at all, master Samson," answered the crowd.

"I have told them about the monk's wine cellar," said Ezekiel, approaching Samson, confidentially, "and they are all fire and tow."

Tristan appeared seized with a fit of morose drunkenness, and breathed not a word; but Samson did not disturb himself about that—for he knew a sure means of reanimating his ardor.

"Now let us understand each other," my children," said he, again adressing the beggars. "Down there, in la rue Jean-de-l'Epine, they are organizing the brotherhood of freemasonry; but remember, our party represents the men of the gown and the holy republic of letters."

"Profanation!" repeated Tristan, in an idiotic accent, "profanation!"

"Consequently," continued Samson, "we are all savants, from first to last. We are primed with Latin and even a little Greek, and remember we never speak French but at the last push."

"Vive le Latin! and vive le Grec," cried Trefouilloux, seconded by his colleague, Ezekiel. We will speak nothing but Latin and Greek!"

"That's right—that's right," cried the whole crowd of beggars, laughing and pressing to get inside the tavern—"Down with the French language; let us speak nothing but Latin and Greek."

"Shall I teach you a few words," said Samson.

"We know enough already," said Trefouilloux, raising his shoulders.

And his colleage Ezekiel immediately burst forth with a sample—

"*Magnificat. Cicero. Cara Michel Larigus!*"

The clerk burst out laughing; but Tristan again repeated, "profanation!" and raising his eyes to heaven added—

"*Infandum!*"

"A little rehearsal was necessary," continued the clerk, "and then when the people of Paris hear our talk, they will say—'there goes the University: the daughter of the church has pronounced against Ingeburge the foreigner—the curse of France and of her king."

"Good! good! master," said Trefouilloux speaking in the name of the whole assembly; "The people of Paris may say what they please—that's certain; but it is time that we left, so that we may arrive at the abbey before the monks have eaten their supper.

"Let us leave then," repeated the clerk, leaping down from the table.

A great riot now ensued, owing to the sham university men trying to force their way through the outside crowd.

Tristan remained behind.

"Hola! mon compagnon!" said the clerk, shaking him gaily by the arm, "art thou not coming with us?"

"Profanation!" stammered the scholar.

"We require then to speak the Latin," said the clerk—"the pure Latin of our classics those rogues may use some kind of gibberish, that will do for the multitude, with their long ears—but suppose some learned man should be passing...."

Tristan laid his head upon the table.

Samson looked at him, and laughingly said, "hast thou forgotten the most beautiful girl in Paris?"

"She is gone away," replied Tristan. "I have been hanging round the house of Thomas the lodging keeper for the last eight days, hoping to see her; but she has left."

"Ah! Vertudieu!" added he, half rising, "neither Phidias nor Praxiteles ever sculptured anything half so perfect, friend Samson. She seemed to me to have the laughing waist of Venus!"

"Yes, yes," said the clerk, coldly; that was a pretty sprig of maidenhood; but she has gone —gone at least for thee, mon compere Tristan."

The scholar started to his feet, and looked the clerk in the face—"Gone for me," he repeated; then thou knowest where she is?"

Samson gave an equivocal sign of the head.

"By all the powers of satan, thou shalt tell me," exclaimed the scholar, putting his two hands on his shoulders.

"And if I tell it thee thou wilt come with us?"

"Yes! though that masquerade be a profanation!"

"And thou wilt speak Latin along the road?"

"Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, if necessary."

"Ah, well! mon compere Tristan," said Samson, striking him upon the stomach, "thou art in better luck than thou hast deserved to be; for the most beautiful girl in Paris is at the very place to which we are going."

"At the abbey St. Martin-hors-des-Murs?"

"At the abbey St. Martin-hors-des-Murs, in attendance on madame Ingeburge."

Tristan cocked his cap and plunged into the crowd, working his way with his elbows; from that out he took the lead of the cortege. Samson followed laughing.

In la rue des Arcis the university, headed by its banner, met the freemasons with their banner displayed.

These two respectable bodies, escorted by an enormous crowd, took the direction of la Porte aux Peintres.

The tumult increased as they advanced—the bourgeois hung out of their windows, and their enchanting wives pretended to be frightened.

At the head of the crowd there was a man chosen for his fine voice who repeated at regular measured periods—

"*Le loz des écoles et les privilegs de l'Université!*" and the crowd of beggars growled out—

"Death to Ingeburge the foreigner—the curse of France and her king!"

Those who had not witnessed the prologue of that infamous comedy discovered nothing but the lugubrious side. The bourgeois, persuaded that the schools had risen and joined the people, demanded, with arms in their hands, the death or banishment of the queen.

And that had a great effect upon the city; for the schools, not being understood at that period, enjoyed a great prestige.

The sovereign protected them, and the ignorant placed faith in their vain and empty pretensions. It required ages to lay bare the miserable pomp and the falsity of their teachings!

As the cortege ascended la rue St. Denis the crowd increased, augmented by the wild theories of those gossips that Paris produces, and will produce to the end of time.

The success of the masquerade was complete; no one had the slightest suspicion of its real character, and the agitation spread rapidly through the city.

"All goes well!" said Samson.

"Yes," replied Tristan, who had sworn to speak latin, "but—*si forte virum quem*....!"

"I believe that king Phillip himself would be unable to place here the *quos ego*."

Ezekiel cried—

"*Turlipit credo, discipulis suis! Ergo! porro! confiteor.*"

And Trefouilloux repeated his famous "*Magnificat Cicero*" &c.

How was it possible that the people could avoid fancying themselves in the presence of scholars, on hearing such learned words?

When the head of the cortege arrived at la Porte aux Peintres half the city had followed it as accomplices—the gossips emulated each other in their attempts to heap abuse upon poor Ingeburge; and some of them spoke in Latin in order to pass with the crowd for young scholars, though many of these idiots had outlived twelve school periods.

Beggars, sham masons, and sham scholars sang, from time to time, with open throat; the nymphs of the city—the fairest and vilest of whom had been convoked for the occasion—danced and laughed on either wing of the army, and carried flagons and cups to seduce the guards of la Porte aux Peintres.

"*Mars adamat venirem,*" said Tristan, who had recovered his good humour, and was vomiting Latin at all pores.

Samson added—

"By the aid of Bacchus, and some nymphs, we shall have soon overcome these blockheads and then we shall be able to say—

"*Panduntu e Portæ!*"

"That's it," exclaimed Trefouilloux, translating in his fashion that Virgilian Hemistich. "We will hang them all at the gate, if they don't open to us."

Tristan was so enraptured with Trefouilloux's translation that he was near choking with laughter.

The Bourgeois said, speaking of Trefouilloux, "that's a learned scholar, though so full of merriment."

The guards at the gate had been kept for some time on the *qui vive;* and their chief had ordered them to let down the port-cullis.

"What means all this disturbance?" he asked, "we have surely not yet reached the *fools' fete day.*"

There were possibly among his men some old veterans who had been gained in advance; for whenever the chief asked for some explanation of the noise that reached him from time to time, they always replied that it was nothing, and when the first rioters reached the gate the archers hastened to fraternize with them.

In fact, these poor soldiers saw nothing in the affair but a troop of women dancing and singing, and they apprehended no danger from them.

The mob part of the crowd at first observed a profound silence, and having extinguished their torches, the guards of the Porte aux Peintres believed in good faith that they had to do with some merry making party that they had rambled without design into these parts.

For some minutes there were shaking of hands exchanged through the bars, some free jokes and some full glasses tossed off.

Then, as though it was woman's destiny always to play the tempter and always to succeed, the bars were half opened by an amorous soldier, and the women poured through the gate.

A great cry of triumph now rose from the crowd in the street, and the guard found themselves all at once in the power of the beggars.

At this moment Fontanelle, who had followed the drunken procession at a distance, took hold of a very young girl—whom she had compelled to accompany her—by the arm.

"Martha," said Fontanelle, "dost thou remember thy sister Agnes the pretty?"

The little maiden who up to that moment had been laughing like a fool, fell at once into tears.

"I see that thou dost remember her well, Martha," said Fontanelle. "Thou art weeping because they have killed thy poor sister. Would'st thou like to revenge her?"

Little Martha seized Fontanelle by both hands and her dark eyes shone like two lights in the shade.

"Good," said Fontanelle, "then dost thou desire to avenge her; Martha, the man who killed thy sister is there in that crowd, disguised and hidden like a coward. Take thy way, Martha, directly to the tower of the Louvre; ask for young Albert, the king's page, and tell him all that is going on here."

"And will he kill my sister's assassin?" asked little Martha in a voice full of emotion.

"Yes, Martha, he will come and kill thy sister's assassin, especially if thou forgettest not to add that those who have forced the Port aux Peintres are going to take the abbey St. Martin by assault, where queen Ingeburge is with her attendant, the Danish woman, Eve."

Martha waited to hear no more but flew away with the speed of a fawn, and disappeared like an arrow shot into darkness.

Along the whole line of road, not a bush, nor a flower, nor a blade of grass, escaped the withering influence of these human locusts.

Three tall rascals who preceded the crowd, and immediately behind the university banner, bore on their shoulders a heavy oaken beam, in form of a battering ram, which constituted the artillery of the invading army.

Behind these came fifty scoundrels, armed with axes and mallets, and in the centre were some of Cadocu's brigands that had allowed themselves to be debauched—these men formed the most formidable part of the expedition; for Cadocu's companions were worth more than the whole of the army of Phillip Augustus put together.

The greater part of this howling pack were armed only with wooden stakes, old swords, and old halberds, past service, and even kitchen spits.

The motley crew were now fast approaching the end of their march, and on their flank two figures might be seen—a man and a woman—who seemed to keep aloof, and to be walking unconcernedly in the cultivated fields, as though they felt no interest in the movement. The man was dressed like one of the dirtiest beggars.—the woman's toilet was that of a bold and extravagant harlot: but if any one could have heard the style in which the seeming beggar addressed his companion, when they were alone, they would have thought they were listening to that exaggerated kind of gallantry which has been preserved to us by the romances of chivalry: they would have heard the beggar addressing the woman as *ma souveraine*, just as though it had really been messire Amaury Montruel, the friend of the king, talking to the noble Agnes de Meranie; but they would have heard nothing but abrupt and ungracious replies on the part of the woman.

"Eight days," she muttered, when they had gained their first battle and passed la Porte aux Peintres, "eight whole days without any result. I believe that I have done wrong to trust myself to you, messire."

"Oh! ma souveraine," exclaimed the doleful rogue, Montruel—for it was indeed him, and the bold harlot was no other than madame Agnes—"if you knew what I have suffered during that age which you call only a week?"

Agnes shrugged her shoulders and interrupted him—

"That miscreant that you reckon upon so much?" said she.

"Mahmoud-el-Reis has been at the abbey for several hours," replied Montruel.

"Then why all this masquerade? will your Saracen hesitate to strike at the proper moment."

"I did not think so this morning," replied Amaury; "but since morning I have discovered a secret which astonishes me and frightens me."

Agnes darted her eager eyes at Montruel.

"What secret?" she impatiently demanded, seeing that he had stopped short.

"The statue," said Montruel gravely, "that Mahmoud has been making is the portrait of madame Ingeburge, and it appears to be an object of idolatrous worship to him."

"Holla! brothers!" called out a blown voice in the crowd, "not so quick, I pray you; the road is very steep and we have plenty of time."

"*Celsâ sedit eolus arei*" replied the learned scholar, Tristan, who continued to maintain his place at the head of the cortege, "the monk's wine is at the top of the hill—courage, mes enfants, if you would arrive before supper!"

"And if Mahmoud betrays thee?" resumed Agnes.

"If Mahmoud betrays me," replied Montruel, speaking still lower, "I have a man at hand who will replace him."

They now drew near to the thickest part of the crowd, and Montruel pointed out to his "souvernine," a miserable object, whose ignoble features lighted up by the flare of a torch, was working energetically in the midst of those hang-dog faces.

"I have seen that man somewhere before," said Agnes, seized with a fit of horror and disgust.

"You have seen him in the purlieus of Notre Dame," said Montruel; "it was him who begged for the largest ruby of your necklace. Do you not remember poor Louise?"

Madam Agnes looked surprised; for she was not in a humour for joking.

But Amaury was not joking.

That man that all the great and small of beggardom knew by the name of pauvre Louise, was the fortunate rival of Ezekiel de Trefouilloux in the purlieus of Notre Dame; by counterfeiting the character of a woman, with four arms, one of which had the foot of a goat.

Pauvre Louise was now charged, in consideration of a handful of sous, to supplement Mahmoud-el-Reis, in case he refused to perform his job, and to poignard queen Ingeburge as soon as they could procure him admittance to her retreat.

Now with poor Louise, there was no fear of false delicacy or tenderness. When Agnes had well examined that hideous and repulsive face, she said with more calmness—

"The king gets weaker, messire. The result of the first sitting of the council has not been favorable; and I tell you that the life of this woman threatens me more than ever."

The three ram-bearers had now halted before the principal gate of the abbey, and a heavy blow against the folding doors awoke the echoes of the interior.

The good monks had not expected anything, confident in the respect inspired by the character of their establishment; nothing was further from their thoughts than an assault on their abbey. Most of them were walking in the cloisters—some had already retired to sleep—while a few were still prolonging their vigils in the chapel.

By virtue of the temporal power of suzerainte that the abbots exercised over the precincts of the monastery every convent had its contingent of men-at-arms.

The abbey of St. Martin-hors-des-Murs was one of the most important in Paris, and had a little garrison, well armed and well disciplined; but unfortunately most of the archers and men-at-arms, warned of the intended assassination of queen Ingeburge had momentarily left their posts—but for that the beggars would have had some trouble, for the abbey was a veritable strong place.

The outer gates once forced, there was nobody to defend the curtain, and the approaches to the great staircase—the crowd, therefore, rushed into the interior, with its thousand discordant cries, and dominating over all could be heard the *basochenière* clamor—"*Le loz des écoles et les privileges de l'Université!*"

In an instant cloisters, galleries, and corridors were filled by the intoxicated crowd—made daring by its easy access.

In refectories might be seen beggars and women feeding, mixed pell-mell.

Scholar Tristan, who had been drinking all along the road, was in a state of delirium, and his Latin, like his hair flowed as loosely and as wildly as the locks of a *bacchante*, so that the beggars who tried to repeat what he said were uttering the most prodigious barbarisms.

The outer crowd, who had not yet effected an entrance, cried "Sack! sack the house of the hypocrites!"

"Let them bring us out the foreigner!" replied the rogues who were eating and drinking with the women, under the austere eyes of the granite saints.

Further off might be heard some contests going on between the brigands and the archers of the abbey, who had now recovered from their stupor.

Blood and wine were flowing at the same time—the monks, who had attempted to interpose their sacred character to quell the fury of the combatants, had been outraged.

A truce was no longer possible, and the madheads began to debate whether they should burn the abbey or pull it down.

"This nest of hypocrites must be rooted out," said the amiable Trefouilloux, *de fundus in comblum.*"

Which the purer taste of Ezekiel converted into—

"*De fondo in comblos.*"

It was on the whole an atrocious orgie, in the midst of the holy saints; but in spite of the delirium that seemed to have taken possession of every head there was one present who had been economizing his faculties, and that was maitre Samson.

He whispered a few words into the ear of a bandit, and immediately a fatal clamor burst forth on all sides—

"The foreigner! the foreigner! give us the foreigner!"

A few moments after the invasion of the monastery, and at the moment when the tumult was at its height, there might be seen in the darkness of the night which covered all exterior objects, three shadows moving on through the broken doors.

Two of these were Messire Amaury Montruel and pauvre Louise, the latter holding in his hand a long and sharp cutlass: following them, in the deeper obscurity, was a masked woman, who seemed desirous of concealing herself.

"On leaving the vestibule, thou wilt take the right cloister," said Amaury in a half whisper, but loud enough to be heard by the masked woman, who was listening attentively. "Ascend the great staircase, at the first landing of which stands the statue of St. Martin. Turning to the right thou wilt find thyself in the cloisters of the second story, into which the doors of the infirmary open. There thou wilt meet some monk or brother, and compel him at the point of the cutlass to show the cel' of Jean Cador. Dost understand?"

"I have understood," said pauvre Louise, with a self-satisfied air; "is that all?"

"Jean Cador, the image-cutter, will be able to tell thee where to find madame Ingeburge."

"And when he shall have told me that?...." began pauvre Louise.

He did not finish, but made a significant sign with his cutlass.

One could hear the short and hurried breathing of the veiled woman.

Montruel turned towards her as though to ask whether she was satisfied. Pauvre Louise had already started on his errand.

"Stop!" cried the veiled woman.

Pauvre Louise stopped with an air of bad humor—like a man who feared they were about to complicate his work.

Montruel, in his simplicity, believed that his *souveraine* was seized with remorse; but his error did not last long.

"Suppose that Jean Cador has turned traitor?" said the veiled woman in a harsh voice, "or suppose he is sick on his bed, and impatient from not having properly measured the poison that he took?"

Montruel sighed.

"Listen," said he to pauvre Louise, "you understand, if Jean Cador refuses to tell thee where madame Ingeburge is, or cannot move from his bed, dispatch him, and return again to the cloisters; and again at the point of thy sword compel some monk or brother, to lead thee to madame Ingeburge—monks and brothers never resist these arguments."

"And if thy commission is well executed," added the veiled woman, advancing a step, "I will give thee, over and above our agreement, a gold chain weighing thirty-two crowns."

Pauvre Louise uttered a wild scream and bounded off, brandishing his weapon.

He must have worked many years in the purlieus of the cathedral to gain thirty-two golden crowns.

As soon as he had left, Amaury and his souveraine disappeared among the bushes that bordered the enclosure of the abbey.

CHAPTER VII.

In the large hall which led to the refectory an old man of tall form and snowy hair suddenly appeared in the midst of the delirious crowd.

"Madame Ingeburge! the foreigner!" they cried pressing round him on all sides, for they guessed him to be some great dignitary of the abbey.

Prior Anselm cast a calm but sorrowful look over the crowd.

"And who are you," he demanded, "that come here to profane the House of God?"

"May it please you, my lord monk," replied Tristan the scholar, "we are pious sons of the university. We have come from a pious motive—*pietates causa*. It grieves us to be kept fasting from all the sacraments of Holy Mother church. We would break down the obstacle that stands between us and our eternal salvation."

"That's it—that's it," cried all the rebels in chorus.

And Trefouilloux, fearing to lose such a solemn moment, hastened to put in here his best Latin—

"*Magnificat Cicero, cara Michel Sarigus.*"

A slight flush rose to the cheeks of the monk.

"You are joking with fearful matters, lost children," he murmured, "may God grant you repentance before your last hour."

We need not say that religion at that day held a supreme influence over all classes. There was no *caste*, however void of honour and propriety, that had not at some day been made to submit to that gigantic influence wielded by the power of faith.

There was immediately some sensation among the crowd, some souls surprised, some heads bent, and more than one countenance, inflamed by drink, became suddenly covered with paleness.

A general silence prevailed, in spite of the obstinacy of some incorrigible rogues.

"*Quousque tandem....*" began Tristan.

But Samson, feeling that the success of the enterprise was being compromised, interrupted him—

"Reverend father," said he gravely, "joking is very far from our thoughts. We have come here to do what the assembled council of Bishops have been vainly attempting to accomplish this last eight days. We have come to put an end to the lamentable state under which the kingdom of France is groaning. We are serving the church and we are serving the king. Deliver madame Ingeburge to us that we may conduct her out of France, where she ought never to have entered; and if necessary we will take her to Denmark, beyond the sea."

The clerk Samson knew his business, for by these words he had excluded the idea of profanation or murder, and remorse that had began to take hold of the public conscience, became extinguished.

In short, what was there so culpable in removing an obstacle which prevented Phillip Augustus from returning in a Christian spirit into the bosom of the church, and bringing his people with him?

The beggars, lately so contrite, asked no better than to be persuaded that they were engaged in a pious work, and when the prior endeavoured to speak to them again, his voice was smothered in a general murmur.

"Reverend father, you are wrong," exclaimed Trefouilloux, who considered himself quite qualified to settle that point; "the noble scholar, Tristan, king of the Basoche, told you the truth when he called you '*Quosque tandem!*'"

Tristan endeavoured to speak, but the crowd all cried "*Quousque tandem! Quousque tandem!*"

"Ah! ah! Tristan has hit the mark; that's a *quousque tandem*."

While prior Anselm was struggling in vain against the *quosque tandem*, which is in itself an invincible thing, pauvre Louise was gliding silently along the cloisters, thinking of the thirty-two gold crowns promised by the unknown woman.

The choice of pauvre Louise, by Amaury, was all in his favor; for that was a wicked soulless brute—a kind of mad wolf, who, for thirty-two crowns, would willingly have cut the throat of sixty-four Christians.

Thanks to the directions of Montruel, pauvre Louise could not mistake the road; he arrived at the second landing upon which the doors of the dormitories, composing the infirmary of the abbey, opened.

But there were no monks to be met with in the cloisters—some had courageously run to oppose the invaders, while others had sought some hidden retreat.

For the present we must leave pauvre Louise to his embarrassment, which will, no doubt,

distress those of our readers who are interested in him, and enter the cell of Jean Cador.

The scene that we have been describing occupied only a few moments. In the cell of Jean Cador, they were still in ignorance of the cause of that fracas, which had so suddenly burst out in the basement of the abbey.

The monks, servants, and men-at-arms who had left the cell at the first alarm, had not returned.

Only five or six monks, with Eve, Eric, Jean Cador, and the queen, remained in the cell; they could obtain no news of what was going on outside, and their anxiety increased every moment.

Though neither Eve or Eric could possibly guess what was going on, their vague terrors told them that it was the queen who was specially threatened.

Eric was constantly on the point of rushing out to discover what was happening, but he could not resolve to leave the queen; every minute the clamor grew more hoarse and threatening—there was not the shadow of a doubt that the invaders were advancing.

The thick walls of the old convent shook with the mad dancing of the conquerors, and at times the quick ear of Eve caught, among the confused cries, the adored name of her sister, Angel—

"Ingeburge! Ingeburge!"

"Good saints! who could be pronouncing that cherished name with anger and cursing?"

As to the monks they were afraid to leave and trembled to remain; they prayed, and demanded who these invaders could be, who violated the holy places, like Genseric or Attila.

Among all those in that narrow cell, the queen and Jean Cador alone preserved some sort of calmness.

The queen was still under the influence of the drama which had just been enacted, and in which she had played so large a part, and she constantly watched, with wild eyes, that man who had entered the convent to put her to death in exchange for the life of the king; and as she watched him, his recent words were constantly striking violently at her heart; at times the queen was tempted to exclaim—

"Deliver this man—break his chains—for he gave me my life: and he can save the king from the assassins' poignard."

But the words always stuck in her throat; something more than a vague sentiment of confidence was required to unchain a tiger ready to spring.

The queen no longer viewed things through the medium of her own mind—a combat was constantly going on in her own heart, and prevented her from hearing the noise that was raging beneath her.

When in spite of herself, her eye would meet that of the Syrian, resigned and melancholy, she was grieved, but at the same time frightened. It was like looking into an abyss which her simple eye could not fathom.

Mahmoud lay immovable on the spot where Eric and the men-at-arms had struck him down.

At the moment when the noise attending the forcing of the doors reached the cell, Mahmoud's face lighted up, and a rapid smile could be detected on his lips through the silky meshes of his moustache.

It lasted but a moment, and he resumed his cold and impassible look.

But nothing can escape the eyes of devoted affection. Eric had noticed that smile and watched Mahmoud with redoubled attention.

There was no possibility of his escape, for when the queen had given orders that he should be secured, they had bound him from head to foot, and he lay like an inert mass, scarcely able to turn his head freely.

Eric was watching him with eager eyes, not that he had any fear of his being able to make his escape, but to divine from his looks, the new danger which threatened Ingeburge. Eric, though he could read the dark face of Mahmoud like a book, and the sudden joy that he had exhibited, made him feel certain that those who were now approaching were enemies.

He drew the dagger that he had by precaution stuck in his girdle.

Mahmoud perceived Eric's action and a slight expression of contempt passed over his features.

The cell was poorly lighted, Eric's eyes still fixed on the Syrian, persuaded himself that he saw him tremble; at the same time his ear caught a sound as of cords straining and breaking.

Once he approached Mahmoud, and felt the cords that bound him, but Mahmoud maintained his silence and only smiled.

Every moment now augmented the anxiety and distress of those who remained in the cell—the shouting and noise became so threatening that they believed the destruction of the monastery had commenced.

The whole army of assailants had crowded into the inner court, and the cry of "fire!" and the light of torches had reached them through the cell window.

The monks knew no longer to what saint to address themselves for succour.

Suddenly, in the midst of the breathless silence that pervaded the cell, the grave voice of Mahmoud rose—

"If thou wilt release me from these bonds," said he to Eric, as the latter was stooping over and examining him, "I will save the queen."

"Then those who are coming intend to attack the queen?" said Eric.

"Those who are coming will deliver me if thou dost not," replied Mahmoud; "and it will be too late to save the queen."

"Then thou art of that party that is coming to kill the queen?" said Eric clutching his poignard convulsively. "Thou ownest to it: thou hast said it thyself. But I swear that neither those who are approaching, nor any one else, shall deliver thee, for at the first blow struck against that door I will leave thee a corpse."

Mahmoud turned his head aside with an air of indifference.

"There is but one God," he murmured, "and Mahomet is his prophet. Destiny is written in the book of Allah. Allah does not wish that the queen should be saved."

A brighter light than that of the torches now shone upon the cell window which looked into

the interior court; wild and obscene songs dominated over every other noise, and dancing could be plainly heard in the court below.

"The foreigner! the foreigner!" suddenly cried a great concert of voices, when the dance was finished; "We want Ingeburge, the foreigner, who is the curse of France, and the curse of the king."

The poor queen covered her face with her hands.

"That is my sentence," murmured she; "I pray you, my fathers, prepare my soul to appear before my God."

The stupefied monks remained motionless. But at last one of them, ceding to the supplications of the queen, placed himself beside her and in mistake commenced the prayer for the "agonized." Eve was on her knees, at the other end of the cell, immediately under the high and deeply bayed window which looked over the surrounding country; but it was necessary to mount to a stool to look through it, as it was several feet above the ground.

In singular contrast to the inner window which we have described as admitting a red light from the torches of the rioters, this outer window admitted the pure pale light of the moon, now playing upon the fair hair of Eve and giving a death like pallor to her brow.

All at once Eve rose to her feet; for at her end of the cell a new noise reached her, borne through the outer window on the cool breeze of the night; but it was only palpable to her, for the fracas in the inner court deafened every other ear.

Eve climbed upon the stool and leaned through the window; but the confused and silver rays of the moon seemed to have covered every object as with a diaphanous veil. The noise which at first reached her only faintly, had now swelled up into great distinctness, and Eve could hear the tramp of horses' feet and the clicking of arms. Straining out of the window to her utmost, she could now perceive through the bare branches of the trees, the light dancing on the glittering steel.

Eve was but a young maiden, yet this was not the first time that she had seen steel helmets and polished armour reflecting the rays of the moon.

Suddenly she cried out—"The men-at-arms! the king's men-at-arms!"

Mahmoud, at that sound, raised his head quickly. Eric, who was watching him with redoubled attention, was astonished to see that the face of the Syrian brightened up at Eve's words instead of becoming more gloomy; he therefore doubted the possibility of his being able to understand that mysterious man.

The queen also, on hearing the name of her husband, had quitted her place.

"Are the men-at-arms numerous?" demanded Mahmoud.

"They cover the whole road," replied Eve, in a voice tremulous with joy. "And he who leads them," she added pressing both hands on her heart, "oh! I recognize him—I recognize him!"

Mahmoud turned his ear in the direction of the interior.

"If they are within hearing, young maiden," said he, in a voice which checked the joy of poor Eve. "Call them—call them quickly, or I fear they will be too late."

"Albret!" shouted Eve at the window. "Albret! my lord and my friend!"

But alas! her cry was smothered in the dark night, and when she tried to repeat her cry, those within the cell could scarcely hear the sound of her voice, for a thundering clamor had just then broken out from all parts of the invaded monastery; the mob, which had been momentarily arrested by prior Anselme, had cast aside that last barrier, and were rushing up the great staircase uttering obscene songs and horrible blasphemies.

At the same time the fire which had been lit in some corner of the building by these mad men, was already shaking its wild and threatening mane of flames.

Death was all around. Eve and queen Angel fell into each others arms, resolved to die together.

Eric was obliged to support himself by the couch that Mahmoud had so recently occupied.

The monks, frightened out of their senses, flew out of the cell and scattered in every direction.

Mahmoud-el-Reis alone preserved an almost supernatural calm.

He turned his ear to the right, then to the left, as though weighing in the mysterious balance of his instinct, the chances of the first arrival out of the two opposing noises.

Was it the poiguard or the sword, the assassin or the saviour, whose star was to be in the ascendant?

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CHAPTER VIII.

Pauvre Louise was industriously threading the corridor, now in this cell, now in that; and had some one possessed the power of examining minor details in those terrible moments, some one could not have failed to observe how visibly poor Louise grew in bulk, whenever he emerged from the cell he had visited.

Whether it was owing to the influence of the feminine surname he had assumed, or of the role he had daily played, as a woman, in the purlieus of Notre Dame, we cannot say; but certainly pauvre Louise exhibited all the weakness of good house-keepers with regard to linen; he evidently adored linen.

We have known ourselves such worthy women of the citizen class, who had a passion for hoarding sheets and towels equal to the passion of any miser who ever heaped up gold, filling large wardrobes to such an extent, that when these honest women were called to a better world, their heirs stood in ecstacies before the heaped treasures of chemises, handkerchiefs and table cloths.

And thus it was with pauvre Louise, which proves that if her education had not been much neglected, she might have become a discreet person, full of innocence and habits of economy.

Pauvre Louise had this devouring passion for linen, and each time that he entered an infirmary cell, whether occupied or not—whether it con-

tained a corpse or a living being—pavure Louise had no delicacy, but borrowed the sheets of every bed indiscriminately, till he bore round his body three or four pair of sheets, besides half a dozen good shirts.

But while gratifying this inoffensive taste, pauvre Louise did not lose sight of the golden chain promised him by the unknown woman; and the first monk that he met coming from the queen's cell found the cutlass of pauvre Louise at his throat.

"Ah! now—mon pére!" said he to the monk, tell me where hast thou hidden Jean Cador, the image-cutter."

The monk, in the last extremity of terror, fell upon his knees, but could not utter a word.

Pauvre Louise laid hold of a second and a third monk; and at last fell in with one who had just sufficient strength left to point with his finger to the cell of Jean Cador.

But at this moment the flames were making serious inroads over the whole of the buildings which surrounded the exterior court, and the swarm of marauders rushed towards the staircases, the keener scented found their way to the wine cellar,

Just as pauvre Louise had taken the first step towards the cell of Jean Cador, the cloister of the second story was invaded by Tristan and his crew; but in spite of the diabolical noise created by the advance of these brave boys, above it all could be distinctly heard the noise of battle below.

Whether the archers of the convent had at last rallied and taken the offensive—whether unexpected reinforcements had arrived from Paris—nobody in Tristan's troop could determine.

Pauvre Louise, at any rate deemed it advisable to act with expedition. Entering Cador's cell, he found himself in the presence of two women. Eve and the queen instinctively rushed from the human butcher.

"Oh! ho!" said Louise, "my job is here!" then he looked at Eric and then at Mahmoud-el-Reis.

"Which of you two is Jean Cador, the image-cutter?" he asked.

"I am," replied Eric, without a moment's hesitation, and turning to Mahmoud he whispered hurriedly, "If thou deniest it thou art a dead man."

Mahmoud remained silent, but as Eric left him a moment to approach the new comer, he gave his body a sudden wrench and snapped the cords which bound him asunder.

A deep sigh escaped from the breast of the liberated Syrian.

"Ah! ha!" said pauvre Louise, "then thou art Jean Cador, the image cutter. It is thee, then, who is to show me which of these two women is queen Ingeburge?"

As Eric was about to reply, Eve advanced and anticipated him, exclaiming, "I am the queen."

The remainder of this scene, though it may here take us some minutes to relate it, was but the work of a moment.

Pauvre Louise made a spring and seized Eve by the throat, thinking himself fortunate in meeting such an opportunity of gaining his gold chain legitimately.

Eric immediately seized him from behind by his thick hair, and dashing him to the ground drove his dagger up to its hilt in his breast.

Pauvre Louise neither moved nor uttered a sound, his rubicund face lost none of its color and he lay like a mass of inert flesh under the feet of Eve's brother.

"The foreigner! the foreigner!" cried the mob, who entered the cell at the heels of Tristan.

Tristan, intoxicated with wine, as well as by the riot, was always occupied in searching for that beauty—that divinity—that he had first seen at the window of Thomas, the lodging-keeper. Compelled to confine himself to Latin according to his agreement with the clerk, Samson, he profited by the occasion to sport some descriptive verses, where Virgil spoke of Venus, Dido, Nereus, or Galatea.

On perceiving Eve, he waved his cap over his head, and shouted—

"At last. *Eu! Ecce!* She is here! Behold her!" He flew towards the young girl; but behind him and his troop of beggars, other voices could now be heard, crying, "Kill! kill! in the king's name!"

For a moment there ensued a tumult and a *melée*, which we have no power to describe.

Glittering helmets rose over the faded caps of the sham scholars, and a sea of blood soon inundated the floor of the cell.

Eric, believing the last hour had arrived, sprang upon Mahmoud with his uplifted dagger, exclaiming—"I promised thee thou shouldst not see the queen killed."

He struck a furious blow at the Syrian's breast, but the latter rose as by magic, while his hands fell at his feet. Snatching the dagger from Eric's hands, with a blow of his fist he prostrated him on the floor of the cell.

Then putting Eve aside, who was embracing the queen, he took the latter on one arm, and carried her off triumphantly, brandishing over his head, with his disengaged hand, the dagger he had taken from Eric.

The handsome page Albret split, at one blow of his sword, the skull of his old friend, Tristan, just as that gallant youth was attempting to snatch a kiss from the prostrate Eve.

Tristan stretched himself out with his arms extended, and Albret immediately turned, with upraised sword, to bar the flight of Mahmoud; but Albret had to succumb in his turn—struck by a blow in the neck from Mahmoud's dagger.

And then Mahmoud, towering over the whole crowd like a giant—his nostrils dilated, his eyes on fire, and brandishing his bloody weapon, while the fainting queen still lay lifeless on his arm—dashed like lightning through men-at-arms and marauders alike, and disappeared in the darkness beyond, but the echo of his deep voice could be heard proclaiming aloud—

"There is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet!"

While the poor dying king of the students replied, with the last verse of the Æneid, in accents half choked with his own blood—

"Vitaque cum gemiter fugit indigna sub umbras."

Thus died the learned scholar, Tristan, practicing scholastic lessons with his dying breath.

Studious and peaceable travellers, who run over the whole globe to learn what are the manners and customs of far-off countries, if you would judge by a glance of the eye of the political situation of an empire, mark well the noses of its statues.

If the statues have whole noses, in a good state of preservation, you may boldly affirm that that that country is free from all civil commotion; but if, on the contrary, the statues should be without noses, or should be able to exhibit mutilated noses, make up your mind that internal revolution is working there.

Why should revolutionists be inspired with such savage violence towards the noses of statues? What can these wooden, marble, or plaster noses of statues have done to revolutionists? We cannot tell; but this we know that history and philosophy may ponder a long time before they discover the solution of that mystery. The fact, however, exists: for example, with us Frenchmen, to recall all the outrages inflicted on the noses of our statues, is to tell the story of all our misfortunes for the last eighty years. And this is how it happens, the people are passing on—the people with that powerful hammer which breaks up empires and republics alike—must break some unfortunate nose off—they cannot help it. Then come the bourgeois, trembling and groaning—he spies the nose in the dust, and picks it up. If the people are saddened, the bourgeois carries the noso to the company of police, and says, "See what what damage has been done by the rabble." But if the people gain the upper hand, the bourgeois will preserve the sacred dust under his watch glass, and exclaim—"Ah! this people! this great people! how admirably it breaks noses! and for twenty years after he will still show that sacred dust to his children, repeating for the thousandth time these remarkable words: "On such a day, in such a year, the people and I, we broke that nose off in taking the Tuilleries. Ah! my children! may you never see the scenes that I have seen!" And the little sucking advocates and the baby notaries and discounters would feel a strong desire to break noses when they should be old enough to imitate their idol papas.

The day after the assault delivered by the sham students of Paris against the wall of St. Martin-hors-des-Murs, the damage done did not appear to be much—a great part of the building seemed scorched—windows had been knocked out, and tapestry had been torn, but everything could easily be restored to order; and the general aspect of the building had not much changed. If the rogues had only left intact the noses of the stone statues of the saints which were standing in the vestibules, on the stair-cases, in the cloisters, and refectories.

All these holy images were uniformly mutilated, presenting sad countenances, and exhibiting in the middle of their faces fresh marks of the indignities they had suffered.

They had buried the dead, of which there had been many, both among the archers of the convent and among the ranks of beggardom. All, however, was now calm; and next morning the chapel, hastily restored, was in a condition to be used for the offices of the community.

There was one thing most difficult to repair, which was the void produced by the wine-butts of the monks by the inextinguishable thirst of the sham students. The abbey of St. Martin-hors-des-Murs had very fine and well stocked cellars. When they had cleaned these vaults and driven out the beggars who had dispoiled them, they sought in every direction for Queen Ingeburge, who had disappeared without leaving any trace behind her. They sought her in the the gardens, in the courts, and in the neighbouring fields. The poor queen was nowhere to be found.

Among the archers of the convent and the lay brothers the belief gained ground that that sham patient, who had entered the infirmary by fraud, was the great enemy of mankind in person, and that the queen had been carried off by the fallen archangel, who had assumed the features of Jean Cador.

The good prior Anselme wished to direct these searches himself. Full of sorrow he had gone through all the vaults under the cloisters, and when he returned, broken-hearted, to his cell, he had visited every cellar of the establishment. We must, however, except one, for nobody had a key to the private cellar of the abbot. That was a retreat made in the farthest extremities of the underground premises. Father Anselme had tried it, but had found it secured.

"There is nobody there," he said to himself; and the monks who accompanied him withdrew, leaving the underground premises, as they supposed, a solitude.

But they were sadly deceived—for there was some one in sire abbot's private cellar; and when their steps denoted that they were at a sufficient distance, a merry laugh broke forth through the grating of the door, which proved to demonstration that those within were not feeding upon melancholy. Let us do what father Anselme was not able to do—let us set the door of that noble cellar ajar, and take a peep at the joyous companions who had selected that strange place for their orgies.

It is as dark and stifling as in an oven; but hark! you can hear the noise of a pitcher as it touches the stone floor, and you may see the end of a lighted torch shooting its smoky rays through the darkness. The torch lit up three red and satisfied faces, and these belonged to our old friends Ezekiel, Trefouilloux, and pauvre Louise.

"What! our old pauvre Louise, who had rereceived the dagger of Eric the Dane full in the breast?" It was indeed the same.

There are some beautiful and pure sentiments which may be regarded as the flowers of human life—such as friendship, love, and honour. Poets have always admitted that these holy feelings were capable of acting as talismans for the protection of those who bore them. We have seen brave men upon the field of battle, saved from the bullet which was destined for them by the star of honour. We have seen, especially in romances, simple medallions containing the portrait of the loved one—or even a simple ringlet of blonde or brown hair, breaking the point

of a weapon which was about to pierce the heart defended by them. But we must be permitted in this instance to supersede friendship, love, and honour, by a much more modest attribute.

The life of pauvre Louise had been saved by his natural love of linen; the sheets and shirts that he had stolen had parried the dagger so vigorously handled by Eric—and pauvre Louise was there drinking like a fish, near the bundle of linen which had saved his life.

These three thirsty rogues, in the well-fornished wine cellar of my lord abbot of St. Martin-hors-des-Murs, were indeed three rats in a cheese—they had already made acquaintance with every corner and every bin; and Trefouilloux, who was but lightly versed in the science of arithmetic, had calculated that they could drink there, without choking, for two years to come.

The misfortune was, they had nothing to eat—that, however, did not as yet disturb them; for they had come to the conclusion that if they kept themselves drunk all the time they would not experience the pangs of hunger.

"Oh! my brothers!" exclaimed the grateful Trefouilloux, "what a different life this is from that which we led upon the liberties of Notre Dame!"

"No sun here to burn our skulls," added Ezekiel.

"And no rain," exclaimed pauvre Louise; "that cold rain which pierces to the marrow!" and they all raised the flagons, which served them as drinking cups, to their lips, fraternally drinking to each other's good health.

They were all seated round the lamp on their casks—the dark depths of the cellar absorbed most of the light, leaving nothing visible but their three illuminated faces. And yet they could not avoid a certain gravity in their joy; they felt, indeed, that they were in possession of such extreme delights as could scarcely have been imagined in their wildest dreams. Wine from morn to night—from night till morning—an inexhaustible source of warmth and intoxication—a very paradise!

"When they come to draw the abbot's wine," resumed Trefouilloux, "we must hide behind the empty casks."

"Ah! that's true," groaned pauvre Louise, in a bad humour; "that rogue of an abbot will be sending for a little of our wine every day."

The other two found nothing to laugh at in that, and were seriously thinking of some means of preventing the abbot from broaching their nectar.

"Bah!" cried Ezekiel, "everybody must drink."

"And besides," said Trefouilloux, with an air of reflection, "when we return to the liberties of Notre Dame, it will be no time to be fabricating tales. We must say that we have been beyond sea, and have visited the Holy Land, and we may as well concoct these stories now, we are at leisure."

"When we return to the liberties of Notre Dame ......," said Ezekiel, in his turn—

But here pauvre Louise, with his hands pressed on his stomach, interrupted with—"Have you not an old crust of bread in your pockets, my brothers?"

"Bread!" cried Ezekiel and Trefouilloux, shrugging their shoulders, "what do you want with bread?"

"I want to eat it," replied pauvre Louise, naively.

Ezekiel and Trefouilloux could find no words to express their contempt.

"Listen, brothers," resumed pauvre Louise, already bending double with his arms crossed upon his breast, "if your stomach has not yet warned you, it is because you supped later than me—perhaps as late as the night before last—but patience. You will not have to wait long!"

"If thou art so hungry, can'st thou not drink?" cried Trefouilloux.

"The fool!" added Ezekiel, "to be talking of an empty stomach in the middle of a sea of hypocras!"

Pauvre Louise, wishing to fortify himself against the first attack, followed the counsel of his brothers, and drank off a large bowl of wine; but he had scarcely followed it when a deep groan escaped his breast.

"I am burning! I am burning!" said he.

Ezekiel and Trefouilloux, never very brave, were seized with fear, and sickness soon followed on the heels of fear. They looked at each other anxiously.

"In fact," muttered Ezekiel, touching the pit of his stomach, "I have a hell raging here."

"I don't perceive it," said Trefouilloux; "but one would think you were touching a hot plate of iron."

"I am burning! I am burning!" repeated pauvre Louise, in pitiful accents.

The whole scene was now changed; our three friends, pale as death, cast their terrified eyes around them—regarding with horror the empty bottles, demi-johns, and casks that lay around them, and which had so lately inspired them with nothing but gaiety.

Ezekiel and Trefouilloux now joined pauvre Louise in his lamentations; but exceeded him in the misery of their tones.

"I am burning! I am burning!" they cried. They would have given ten tuns of the best wine for one mouthful of water.

"Oh!" said Trefouilloux, "how dark it is here. I am suffocated. What would I give for one ray of that fine sun that we enjoyed in the purlieus of Notre Dame!"

"And God's blessed rain, that I have sucked drop by drop!" added pauvre Louise.

"I was saying just now," resumed Trefouilloux, in a voice which betrayed much emotion,—"I was saying—when we return to the purlieus of Notre Dame,—but oh! my good brother!" added he, bursting into tears, "who can tell if we shall ever return there?"

Upon this they rose from their seats on the barrels, as by one impulse, and rushed towards the door; but the door was as secure as the doors of a prison.

They returned and gathered round the torch, which was about its end, while their groans filled the cellar. One final flare of the torch before its total extinction, transfixed their agonised eyes, and seemed to foretell the fate of their own lives,

which were to be extinguished in that dreadful darkness; the torch went out and nothing more was heard, through the night but their heavy and indistinct groaning.

Towards dinner hour, the good old sleepy monk, who had been put to watch Mahmoud-el-Reis in his cell before the arrival of the queen, came to the abbot's cellar to procure a flagon of wine. He turned the great key without fear or suspicion.

At the spectacle that meet his view—he thought he was still asleep and dreaming. The casks had all been rolled out of their places, broken demi-johns lay about in confusion, while, crouched upon the ground, he observed three men who were snoring with all the unconsciousness of innocence. The poor sleepy monk thought all this was the effect of witchcraft, and being now wide awake began to scream like a peacock. That was not the wisest thing which he could have done; for he woke up the three bandits, who, leaping to their feet, refreshed, but still preserving some idea of the agony they had experienced on the former evening, took the good monk and his lamp for a sign-post pointing to the purlieus of Notre Dame, which had been miraculously opened to them; there was the glorious sun—the refreshing rain—the open air and liberty, that they had been bemoaning.

Oh yes! the poor sleepy monk had committed a great error in screaming. But that was his last scream. The bandits strangled him and took to their heels, Ezekiel and Trefouilloux, as though the evil one was at their heels—and pauvre Louise more leisurely—for he had to open his bundle of linen and add thereto the shirt of the poor sleepy monk—which was still in good condition.

And the gossips of Paris were now in their glory. All the dark schemes of the king's assassins—the war with the English—the tales of the Holy Land—and the sittings of the council were laid aside as things of the past.

Paris never gossips but of one subject at a time, and the absorbing subject now was queen Ingeburge. That name was now in all mouths—to the facts of the late riot were added a thousand embellishments, and every one was enquiring who was the leader and promoter of the quarrel.

The students of the universities protested that they had nothing to do with it—the grand master of the freemasons swore upon the gospels that his fraternity had taken no part in the sacrilegious proceedings.

Some mischievous tongues had endeavoured to show that the disappearance of Madame Ingeburge was in accordance with the cherished plans of Phillip Augustus. But how could that be, when it was the archers of king Phillip who had laid their heavy hands upon the rioters and dispersed them?

It is true that page Albret and the king's archers had arrived very late, and that the queen had disappeared.

Then the question arose, "Where was she? Had they put her to death? or had they plunged her into some dark prison?"

The people of Paris—the true people this time—that rough and honest crowd, who are so apt to judge correctly, when all sophistry is laid aside, took a decided interest in the fate of that poor unhappy young maiden, whose arrival they had one day witnessed, so full of happiness and so beautiful—to be Queen of France; but who, instead of a palace, had found the cheerless cell of a monastry—then a prison—and then, perhaps, a tomb. And the poor queen had done nothing to deserve such a fate; her only crime was that of adoration for the king, who hated her. They, therefore, began to grumble around the Louvre; and it is certain, that if the gentle queen had been capable of heading a party, she would soon have found an army to support her. But Queen Angel only knew how to pray, and how to love; and besides that, no trace of her could be discovered—though she was sought for by all the ardent hearts of Paris.

There was Eve—adroit as a fairy—old Christian, and Eric, whose wound did not prevent his being constantly on foot; then there was the handsome page Albret, whose wound, given also by the hand of Mahmoud, did not prevent him from commanding the king's forces, and also of disposing of the king's favours.

All these friends of the queen were exhausted by their useless efforts—neither the queen nor Jean Cador, the image-cutter, were any where to be found.

One night in the large corridors of the Louvre, which were lit up by wax-tapers, suspended from the arched ceilings, Albret thought he saw, in the shade, the sharp features of the Syrian. He sprang forward to seize him, but he must have been grasping at a vision, for his hand had only clutched at emptiness. Albret's heart and soul were feverish, and fever produces phantoms. How had Mahmoud been able to clear the wide and deep ditches which surrounded the Louvre? how have scaled the walls of the tower and eluded the vigilance of the watch?

Albret was obliged to confess that his head was all wrong. All those who were seeking the queen, were asking whether the mysterious story spread abroad by the lay brothers of the abbey St. Martin might not be true, and if the dark enemy of the human race had not really carried off the queen on that unfortunate night.

Four days had now passed over since the assault was given to the House of God, and Phillip Augustus was engaged in a low and tender conversation with Agnes de Meranie, in his bedchamber.

"Alas! my well-beloved lord," said Agnes, passing her fingers through the hair of Phillip Augustus caressingly, "may I not know why I never feel quiet and safe? Why my love for you increases a thousand-fold each day? And why that love, lately so full of delights, is now changed into martyrdom?"

She looked at the king, and her beautiful eyes were full of a sorrowful inquietude?

"The heart judges aright," she murmured, "and tells me that if I suffer, it is because my lord loves me no longer."

Those who knew with what passion the king

had loved Agnes de Meranie, and those who knew the magic powers which the accents of that enchantress had hitherto exercised over her royal lover, would have concluded from the foregoing scene that Phillip Augustus was still under the charm of Agnes de Meranie, for he still looked upon her with ravished eyes.

And who is ignorant of the rare beauty exhibited by those daughters of the gipsey race in their hours of dalliance. Their bizarre physiognomy—so striking at first sight—is now all illuminated, and a radiance spreads over that low brow—between the audacious eyes and the luxuriant tresses—and the ardent and almost masculine expression of strength, is subdued by the all-conquering passion. Agnes de Meranie was as beautiful that night as could be desired—beautiful with the soft melancholy of regret.

I repeat it, these women have enchantments; and if in open day the radiant and calm beauty of more holy women puts their blandishments to flight, they rise again at night, with the light of conscious triumph sparkling in their eye.

"Foolish woman," murmured Phillip drawing the hand of Agnes to his lips, "knowest thou not thine empire over me?"

Agnes, on feeling the lips of the king touching her hand, experienced something of the sensation of one suffering from some dangerous malady, and whose pulse is being felt by a physician; but she shivered, for the king's lips were cold. Her eyes glaced towards a mirror hanging opposite to her, and though it satisfied her about her admirable beauty, it could not completely reassure her. "Ah! of what account is beauty, when one is no longer loved?"

"I believe you—I believe you," my lord, she said, "for if I believed it not, I should die."

The king kissed her hand again. The magnificent Agnes was acting this comedy superbly; but she had some experience and some knowledge of the king's skill in that line. She knew that Phillip Augustus could give her some points, and still win the game. What rendered her more foolish and bold, was her belief that the king was ignorant of her secret ways; but, ever and anon, her heart would sink within her, when she called to mind that threatening voice that she had heard at the brigand's tavern, repeating those ominous words—

"The king knows all!"

It was something in Agnes' favor that a perfect calm reigned around the place—leaving the king's bed-chamber quite undisturbed—and Agnes wished to profit by it, for she had still another battle to fight there, and something told her that upon the result of that battle depended her whole destiny.

"I thank you, my lord," murmured she,—"you are very kind; and you re-assure me, because I observe that you have some pity for your poor wife. But you must know that anxious love sees everywhere symptoms of abandonment, and I have been neglected so long. Shall we not be happy to-night as formerly, when, with a smile on your face, you would fall asleep to the sound of my voice and my lute?"

Just as Phillip was about to reply, the clock of the Louvre struck eleven.

"My adored lady," said he, rising abruptly, "I have been fighting all day for love of you—not with my sword, but with my tongue—not against men-at-arms, covered with steel, but against churchmen, carrying under their surplices a whole arsenal of texts and arguments, which have quite overwhelmed me. In former times, when I was engaged in fighting with the English, I had more leisure, but now that I am engaged in debating with the council, I am obliged to excuse myself, and cannot listen either to your lute or your songs!"

Here was a *congé*. Agnes rose immediately, and did her best to conceal her chagrin.

"I must thank you again, my lord," said she, trying to assume a tone of gaiety; "if you gain the victory, and the council allows me to be with you, I shall only be too happy. But when will that tedious council ever deliver its judgment?"

Phillip Augustus gave her his hand, and led her towards the door.

"To-morrow, at this same hour," replied the king, "the council of bishops will hold their last sitting—no longer in a hall of the palace, but in the choir of Notre Dame, the key-stone of which was placed yesterday. When the hour of midnight strikes, the mass *d'action de graces* will be pronounced, and the prelates will then proclaim the name of the queen."

Thus saying, Phillip Augustus, for the third time, kissed the hand of Agnes. These last words were pronounced with such an accent of affectionate gallantry, that any one hearing them might have put the name of Agnes in the place of the queen, without fearing to have it struck out again.

Madame Agnes, who had half opened the door by which she was about to leave, understood the king's words in that sense, and pressed Phillip's hands with gratitude.

Outside the door stood Amaury, armed at all points, and fulfilling the duties of his charge. He bowed low and respectfully to Agnes, who returned his salute.

"Good evening, Amaury," said the king, kindly.

"May God preserve you, my dreaded sire," replied Montreul, "and give you peaceful slumbers!"

The king said, "thank you," and re-entered his bed-chamber.

Montreul laid down, all armed as he was, across the closed door.

CHAPTER XI.

As soon as Phillip Augustus found himself alone in his apartment he gave a great sigh of fatigue.

"Ingeburge," murmured he to himself, "was the daughter of a king, and the sister of a king—Ingeburge was beautiful....but there is a demon in the heart of man!"

He then, without noise, pushed two small bolts which secured that door from within, which that faithful friend, Amaury Montruel, was guarding on the other side. Then smiling at the precautions he had taken, he approached his magni-

ficent bed, whose canopy, supported by large square columns, reached to the ceiling of the apartment. In short, this splendid piece of furniture was like a closed cabinet, which formed an inner chamber to the room.

On reaching the bed, the king called mechanically, according to his custom, for his page, Albret. He did not raise his voice, for the ear of the handsome page was very keen and never allowed the king to wait. When he had called him, he gave himself no further trouble about the page—for he never remembered having been obliged to call him twice.

He drew the heavy curtains of the bed aside and stood a moment in an attitude of reflection before the great bed which was ready to receive him.

"Ingeburge is a pious woman," said he to himself, "she is now about twenty-two years of—she has suffered much. What a spectacle that would be, to witness her joy, if we were to determine to make her happy!"

Just at that part of the bed where the coverlid came up to the pillows, some brilliant object that lay there sent back its corruscations to the light of the lamp. Phillip Augustus at first took it for the glittering of some jewel that had been lost, and found its way to that spot by chance—for the beautiful Agnes had often lost some jewel in the king's bed.

But scarcely had the king touched the object than he was seized by a violent trembling, and allowed a smothered cry to scape from his lips.

The glittering object was a poignard of sharp glass, pointed like a needle, and having some arab characters engraved upon its blade. For the first time in his life Phillip Augustus felt that cold perspiration which is always the concomitant of sudden fear.

Nobody was ignorant, in those days, of the mysterious executions that were made by the terrible orders issued by the old man of the mountain.

They knew the meaning of that verse from the Koran which was inscribed on these poisoned daggers, and they knew also that name which it bore—"*The grand master of the brotherhood of assassins.*"

The conclusions of the king were natural; the ditches of the Louvre must have been filled up—the walls must have been raised to the ground—the garrison must have been either corrupted or conquered, since the inner chamber of the king had been invaded! Popular opinion at that day attributed a supernatural power to the assassins, but Phillip Augustus had no faith in the supernatural. He held the chrystal poignard in his hand and could not take his fascinated eyes off it.

"Albret!" he called again, and then added mentally, "can it be him?"

But Phillip Augustus wore a strong head on his shoulders. Any one else, at such a moment, might have been reasonably carried away by his suspicions and have distrusted every body around him. Though roused by the threatened danger that was hanging over him, Phillip's nerves were not shaken, and the clear glance of his eye showed that his mind preserved all its serenity. Without turning his head in the direction of the door where Montruel was watching, he said to himself—

"No! no!" it is not poor Albret; the traitor is on the other side of the door. But as I have bolted the door, the assassin will not be able to follow his dagger."

At this moment he heard a slight noise behind him—

"Thou art very late this evening, my son, Albret," said he.

But as Albret did not reply, the king turned round, and there saw, immediately under the light of the lamp, a strange vision—there, erect and immovable, stood a foreigner, clothed in a sumptuous Saracen costume, with a turban on his head, sparkling with rich jewels; from his girdle, studded with two rows of pearls and emeralds, hung a dazzling scymetar.

The king stood amazed, believing himself the sport of some nightmare. The stranger remained mute and immovable.

The king surveyed the four doors of the chamber, as though seeking that one by which the assassin had contrived to enter.

"I came by the same road as the poignard!" said the infidel, slowly and deliberately, by way of reply to the silent interrogatory of the king.

The voice of the stranger seemed to produce upon the king precisely the same effect as would a spur upon a pure-blooded horse—he stood erect and assumed that majestic pose, so becoming to the king of France.

"I have been expecting thee," said he "but not so soon!"

There was a slight accent of irony in the voice of the foreigner as he replied—

"The king ought to have been prepared to see me, since the king knows all!"

The king fixed an enquiring look upon the bizarre and intelligent physiognomy of the Syrian; but there was no trace left of the first expression of surprise that the appearance of the stranger had caused him. Possibly Phillip Augustus may not have possessed that iron frame and soldierly dash on the field of battle which characterised the knight-errants of his age; at any rate it is certain he did not possess it in so high a degree as his great rival, Richard Cœur de Lion—but history tells us that he was always firm and resolute in the hour of danger. His courage was the truekingly courage—calm, reflective and reasonable—and we need not waste any words in showing how far that noble species of intrepidity is above the more common kind of audacity.

Phillip Augustus, always eager in the pursuit of knowledge, was already casting in his mind to turn this adventure to account. In the assassin who stood before him, he saw a new kind of police agent, and possibly a most valuable instrument. Whoever this man might be, it was plain that he had lost a fine opportunity.

Phillip Augustus now stood before him, armed with his good battle-sword, and Phillip, thus armed, was not one to be easily assassinated.

"Friend," said he, "thou hast not much the appearance of being one of those who would put much faith in the knowledge of the king."

"In my country," replied Mahmoud, "we have a proverb which runs thus—'He who knows all things is ignorant of everything'—which means that all human knowledge is vain and blind."

"And was it to teach me the proverbs of thy country that thou hast forced thy way into my palace?" resumed the king. "It is certainly not for such trifling matters as that, Mahmoud-el-Reis, that the sons of Ishmael ordinarily introduce themselves into the palaces of sovereigns!"

The eye of the Infidel did not quail under the searching look of the king.

"I wished to kill thee," replied he, "but I could not; I could have killed thee, but I did not!"

"Thy first words are true," said the king;" as to thy second, I do not believe them."

Mahmoud folded his arms upon his breast. "Yesterday, at this hour," said he, "the king passed through the avenue which leads from the gate St. Honoré to the tower of the Louvre. The king was unattended, except by his page Albret. When the drawbridge was lowered, did the king recognise the face of the archer who took his horse's bridle?"

The king's eyes opened widely, as though a clear conception had suddenly come to him, but of some confused remembrances.

"It was indeed thee," said the king, "and thou hast not lied; for at that moment thou couldst have killed me; and," he added, with an expression of curiosity, which he found it it impossible to repress.

"Why did'st thou not do it?

"And why thee?" returned Mahmoud—"and why thee? believing that I had come to assassinate thee—believing, also, that I was in thy power—why did'st thou not, just now, cut me down with thy weapon? It was because thou hast a hope of turning me to thine own account; and thou art right, sire, for I can serve thee better than ten of thy noble barons. In spite of the oath that I made to my father and to my master, I have refrained from killing thee; and it is because there is one thing in this world—and that one thing the king of France only—the living king of France—can give me."

"Oh! ho!" exclaimed Philip, "that must be a costly favour! Then it is some bargain that thou hast come to propose to me, seigneur Mahmoud?"

"It is a bargain."

"Does it resemble in anything that bargain you made with the Caliph Selim?" demanded the king, sarcastically.

"I have already told that story once to the friend of the king, in order that the king might know it," replied the Syrian, with great gravity. "If the king had been ignorant of it, I should have been under the necessity of telling it again; for it is necesrary that the king should know all that Mahmoud-el-Reis can do."

The king did not allow himself to be offended at this kind of equality that circumstances seemed so have established between the Ishmaelite and himself. It must not be forgotten that in spite of the high order of his policy—in spite of the enormous weight he threw into the balance of his age—Phillip Augustus had his share of the contagion of the spirit of adventure which had been imported into Europe from the land of the Crusades. Nor especially should it be forgotten that Phillip Augustus was so devoted to the romances of chivalry, that all the wonderful inventions of the poets of his time found in him an enthusiastic protector.

"I do not require any proofs of thy ability, friend Mahmoud," replied the king. "The English archer can put an arrow into the butt at five hundred paces; the Dane can swim like a fish in the open sea; the soldiers on the Rhine can kill a fly on the wing with a stone from their sling; and the Italian subjects of our holy father the Pope can poison a man only by speaking to him. God keep you! Every nation has its aptitude. As to your people from the Anti-Liban, you are most accomplished assassins; nor," added Philip, with an involuntary expression of triumph, "do I require to be told whose will it is that directs thy dagger. It is not the noble Saladin who fights a loyal friend in that treacherous way. It is the infamous Englishman who has armed thee against me—it is John Lackland who has paid thee the price of my blood."

Doubtless Phillip Augustus thought he was making a certain impression upon Mahmoud by thus showing himself so well informed; but the Syrian regarded him with that indulgent smile with which the learned professor regards the infantine efforts of a young pupil that he does not wish to discourage.

"If the poor servant of the king," said he, bowing reverently, "should lay him down on the dry moss of the forest between the den of the lion and the nest of the viper, think you he would accuse the strong and noble beast of giving him the virulent sting by which his foot would be swollen on his waking. Let not the king deceive himself; the lion and the viper know their own strokes."

"And the people of the East their long parables," muttered Phillip, with annoyance. "A truce to all this," he added, "and let us know at once what it is that thou desirest?"

"I wish to know, in the first place," replied the immovable Mahmoud, "whether it is necessary to deceive thee, like a king, or to inform thee, like a man."

Phillip Augustus now knit his brows. "Speak quickly and speak with respect," said he, in a voice which shook somewhat with anger, "if thou would'st escape from here with thy head upon thy shoulders."

"Come, then," said the Syrian, designedly, "since thou threatenest me, we have only being losing our time. I see that in order to gain thy consent to treat with me on equal terms, king, I must prove to thee, here in the heart of thy palace, that you are not the strongest of us two."

"Take care what you say," said Phillip, who glanced at his sword, "for my patience is near exhausted."

"I have patience enough for both of us," said Mahmoud.

Phillip moved some steps from his antagonist, then seated himself with his naked sword lying across his knees. After a short pause, he resumed again, in a severe tone:

"Thou art here in my power, Mahmoud-el-Reis. I know not by what means thou hast introduced thyself into my dwelling; but the traitor who opened the door to thee can no longer protect thee. Mark me well," added he, extending towards the infidel his muscular arm, "dost thou think that the chances of a combat between us would end in thy favour?"

"On the plain," replied Mahmoud, "on thy vigorous horse, and thy heavy lance, I would not answer for the issue; but as we stand here, thee with thy sword and I with my scymeter, I believe that thy life would be in my hands."

Phillip Augustus sprang to his feet. "Then I will not attempt the unequal struggle, friend Mahmoud," said he, in a tone of sarcasm. "I do not think that thy poor split skull would add anything to the glory of Phillip Augustus. It is the business of others to despatch such as thee," and thus saying he approached the double doors near his bed, and behind which two halberdiers of his guard watched day and night; he shook the draperies on their rods, without even looking in their direction, so eager was he to watch the look and expression of the infidel, on finding himself taken in a snare. But the infidel remained with his arms folded on his breast, and preserved the same impassibility as ever. The king turned his head from him to the scene presented behind the curtains, and at sight of which he was nearly losing his balance.

Instead of two halberdiers of the guard, he beheld two negroes' faces, plastered over with white, with their eyes rolling and shining like carbuncles.

"Albret!" cried the king, in that voice which had so often risen above the fracas of the battle, "Ho! pages and squires! Help here!—help!"

At the cry of the king, Mahmoud at length moved; and crossing the apartment slowly, he raised another drapery which hung behind the negroes, and now Philip Augustus could see his page and two of his squires lying on the ground as motionless as corpses.

A sharp cry escaped the king's lips, for he thought they were all dead.

"They are only sleeping," murmured Mahmoud, in a melancholy accent. "He who gave them that sleeping draught, could, if he had chosen, have given them poison; but that man will never kill any one again; and, suiting the action to his words, he unchained his scymeter, and threw it at the feet of Philip Augustus.

"King," said he, humbly bowing his head, "wilt thou now trust me, and listen to me?"

CHALTER XII.

That was a strange spectacle. The guards overcome by a magic sleep; the two negroes, sword in hand, immovable in their niches, and rolling their demon eyes, and the king standing stupefied before the assassin, who had cast his weapon at his feet. The king might well have believed himself the toy of some wild and extravagant dream.

Mahmoud-el-Reis was still addressing the king, and his voice, though firm, was still tinged with melancholy.

"He who fails in his oath," said he, "is taken at the hour of noon, stripped and tied on a hurdle, and taken into the great forest of Khyam. The ancients and priors, who surround him, recite over him the prayers for the dead. For the space of twelve hours, twelve times an hour, the warriors and the *fedavi* come and strike him on the face, saying, 'Traitor! traitor! traitor!' And when the twelfth hour is proclaimed from the tops of the minarets in the city, the Iman, the ancients, the priors, the warriors, the *fedavi*, and the people, utter a supreme curse on the criminal, leaving him alone with the executioner. The executioner then makes twelve scores with his knife across the condemned man's breast, and retires in his turn, because the blood which flows from the twelve wounds is sufficient to attract the tiger—however far may be his den—and the tiger completes the work of the eexecutioner. Such, O king! is the fate that awaits me, and that I am willing to accept."

Philip Augustus was now seated on a high seat, surmounted by the escutcheon of Franco and the royal crown.

Mahmoud was still standing in the same place. The rays of the lamp fell between the two, but all the remainder of that vast apartment was buried in comparative obscurity.

It was the habit of the Syrian, when he spoke at any length, to seem to be rather thinking aloud than speaking.

Phillip Augustus listened with a passive and distracted air.

"I have described to you the destiny which I have chosen," said he: "now hear the destiny which I lose. It was neither gold, nor diamonds, nor fertile lands, nor power over the people, that they promised me as the price of my devotion: it was happiness. Thou, who hast trifled with thy crown, and more than with thy crown—with the well-being of thy people, for the love of a woman—thou ought to be able to understand what love is. She is beautiful. She is holy and pure. She loves me; and it was thus that they spake unto me—

"Thou shalt be her husband, and dwell with her on the banks of the Black River, under the shadow of impenetrable trees, where the fierce rays of the mid-day sun can never penetrate. I can see now, in my dreams, the small isolated house where Dilah's mother hides the beauty of her daughter, as the miser buries his precious treasure. In the evening, when the breeze ripples the dark waters of the river, I see Dilah cooling her naked feet in the wave that washes the shore. Dilah has pledged me her faith in the face of heaven. All this—the cool shadows, enchanting river, and the unrivalled beauty of the sister of the Geniis, was to be mine."

He remained silent for a moment, with his eye plunged in space. Then, turning his eyes full on Philip Augustus—

"King!" such was my destiny, and I would not."

Phillip regarded him for a moment in silence, as though he would divine his most secret thoughts; but as ever, the countenance of Mahmoud remained a closed book.

"And what price dost thou ask of me," at

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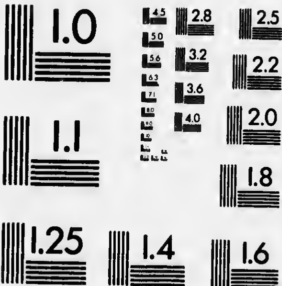

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last demanded the king, "to renounce all these gifts, and accept misfortune?"

"I ask of thee," replied Mahmoud, "what neither the threats of kings, nor the prayers of the people, nor the thunders of the church, have as yet been able to obtain from thee."

Philip Augustus half rose upon his chair—

"Thou comest," said he, "on behalf of Madame Ingeburge," while his eyes suddenly changed their expression, and were full of suspicion and distrust.

There was a shade of disdain in the smile of Mahmoud-el-Reis—the blood rushed to his pale brow and his voice became more animated.

"Oh! no! thou dost not know all, king!" said he, with bitterness, "or, indeed, if thou dost know all, God has deprived thee of thy reason; for she who deceives thee, thou lovest; and she who adores thee, thou repellest!"

"I am the master here!" said Phillip drily. Then turning his head and trying to rally, he added—"Madame Ingeburge chooses singular ambassadors."

"Madame Ingeburge," said the Syrian, "weeps and prays;" then suddenly subduing his voice, continued, "yes, she weeps over and prays for thee. It is four days since I introduced myself into that monastery, where thou hadst imprisoned her—it was to assassinate her; for they promised me that I should have the blood of the king for the blood of the queen. But God is great: God placed his hand before me. I saw the image of Dilah, like a beautiful angel spreading her wings, decending and protecting the heart of that saint. And when the armed men entered the abbey, I feared for thee, as I had feared for thy people; I was already the slave of queen Angel. Smile not, O king," said he, "we were just now speaking of my destiny—poor worm of the earth as I am: it is now thy destiny, powerful prince as thou art, that we have to decide this moment. I was afraid, because I knew that queen Angel was an obstacle in thy path, and that it is thy custom to remove all obstacles. I defended the queen against the fury of the people; I wished also to protect her from the interests of thy policy. If I have deceived myself, pardon me, and I shall soon see whether I have been mistaken."

The king preserved a disdainful silence.

"I carried her off in my arms," resumed the Syrian, "in those very arms which she had ordered to be loaded with chains, in order to protect thy life against my poignard. I bore her off, all fainting as she was, into a secure retreat, known only to myself. It is four days ago; and during those four days, I never left her. And if it is necessary to explain to thee, in one word, the secret of my conduct, which defies thy proud reason and the subtleties of that intelligence of which thou, oh king! art so vain—know that that pious queen, thy wife, hath performed a miracle, and that I stand before thee—a Christian!"

The king was still speechless.

To understand the depth of certain emotions it is necessary to connect ourselves with the spirit of the period of which we write, and denude ourselves of the inert indifference in regard to religious matters which characterizes our own day. We must call to mind that the great question in Phillip's day—that question which demolished the walls of cities and which set all Europe against Asia, and caused rivers of blood to flow—was the question between Christ and Mahomet.

We must remember that Phillip Augustus himself had invaded the holy land in Christ's name—and that Mahmond-el-Reis had come from Syria, across seas and deserts, concealing under his vestments the poignard upon which were engraved the words of Mahomet.

The king rose.

"How, a Christian?" he repeated, "wherefore then dost thou desire to return to thy savage country. Why accomplish what remains of thy impious oath?"

"Because Dilah is still under the shadow of the pure," replied Mahmoud, "and because it is necessary that Diliah also should become a Christian."

The hours of night were passing rapidly away—in the outar silence nothing could be heard but the watch-cry of the sentinels and the distant clocks announcing the progress of time. A leaden sleep still weighed down the eyelids of the page Albret and the two halberdiers. When the rays of the rising sun began to struggle through the casements against the weak light of the land, Phillip Augustus was still standing before Mahmoud-el-Reis. They had drawn near to each other and were conversing in a low voice.

"There are eight of them," said Mahmoud, "and I was the ninth. There was Herbert Melfast, lord of Canterbury, who came to Syria to seek for me, in the name of king John; there was Honoré, the freemason, who follows the orders of the duke de Bourgogne; Jean de Valenciennes, who is in the pay of count Dammartin; there is Steinbach, from the city of Hamburgh' purchased by the emperor Otho; there are the three brothers Guiscard, cursed souls of Beaudouin of Flanders......"

He stopped here.

"And the eighth," demanded Phillip, "does he not come from Denmark?"

"No!" replied Mahmoud, "he comes from France."

"And thou callest him?"—

"Amaury Montruel, lord of Anet!"

"The friend of the king!" said Phillip bitterly, then added mentally, with a singular smile "*the same who led Madame Agnes into la rue de la Calandre, alone! on foot! at eleven o'clock at night.*"

"The bargain is made," he added, rising abruptly and giving his hand to Mahmoud, "thou hast the word of the king of France for it."

"And thou hast the word of Mahmond-el-Reis," replied the other.

"At midnight," resumed Phillip Augustus, "in the choir of Notre Dame."

"At midnight," repeated Mahmoud, "out of nine of the assassins of the king there will remain but me alive!"

CHAPTER XIII.

From early dawn to the setting of the sun the good prelate Maurice de Sully had been busily running over the whole of the lower part of the cathedral, full of anxiety. The grand fête of the opening of the new church, though far from being finished, was on the morrow to receive its first consecration as the Cathedral Church of Paris—under its roof the august council of bishops were about to assemble, and to deliver their judgment on the same night.

It was the day following the king's adventure with Mahmoud-el-Reis. The artisans had quitted the works at the grand entrance, at an early hour, and were spread about in the choir and through the naves, like a docile army, at the orders of the great prelate.

It was also a fête day for the masons of Notre Dame—for, as we have already said, every soul who had taken a hand in the creation of this colossal church, loved it almost as much as Maurice de Sully himself. They had seen the foundations laid in the earth—watched them rising to the surface of the soil, and their gradual rising above it, till the grand design of the whole building was made manifest. They had seen the grand portals from their framing to the finishing, and blending of their noble stone arches; and every man could pick out, from the harmonious *tout ensemble*, the very stone he had cut and placed.

The whole length of the galleries, which overlooked the purlieus of Notre Dame, were decorated with evergreens and bouquets of flowers. There were garlands of colored ribands twined round every column, nor could even the authority of Maurice de Sully prevent the freemasons from suspending the banner of their order from the awning which formed the temporary roof of the great centre aisle of the building.

The choir, which was in a more advanced state than the rest of the church, was entirely roofed in and had its rich chandeliers ready for lighting up.

Much contrivance was necessary to light up the remainder of the edifice, deprived as it was of the strong reflection which the vaulted roof, if finished, would have given—and wanting also the proper support for the suspension of the lamps. There was scant time between sunset and midnight to make all the necessary preparations for the great events that were about to be enacted.

The bishop had placed against each of the clustered columns, small trees full of wax lights, and had hung lustres from the scaffolding of the frise, so that garlands of fire ran along the whole length of the walls.

Maurice de Sully hurried to and fro, watching the effect from every new point of view that he could discover—humming all the time hymns of thankfulness, and asking God to pardon him for loving his dear church so much—for he could not help feeling that there was much of human vanity in that passion for his work, which he wished to be wholly Christian. But that God, who loves genius, and by whom these *chefs d'œuvre* are inspired, would surely pardon him.

The heart of Maurice throbbed with joy, as he saw the principal nave lighted up and all the furthest ends of the building coming out of darkness. But when Maurice saw the grand canopy of the communion lighted up, and the dazzling rays piercing through the columns of the altar-piece, the tears came in his eyes; but when the great wax torches spread luminous festoons over the host itself, Maurice fell upon his knees and thanked God.

At this moment the masons of Notre Dame, whose work for the night was completed, found themselves grouped round the bishop, and remained there some time full of silent emotion. They were very numerous—they were as great devotees of art as the architect himself—they were strong men who had come from all points of the earth to join in that great and peaceful crusade—they carried in the depths of their simple and enthusiastic hearts a portion of that flame—an atom of that creative genius, which spread over the world those miracles of Catholic art. But above all they were Christians.

And when they saw the bishop kneel, each bent a knee on the mosaic floor of marble, and, as though inspired by one common feeling, a thousand voices burst forth, entoning that song of pious rejoicing, the magnificent and triumphant *Te Deum*.

Outside the building the crowd were hastening to the ceremony which was to be open to the whole public. At a given hour the doors were about to be opened to all the world. peasants, bourgeois, and seigneurs were about to enter therein, without distinction of rank, till the church should be filled to overflowing.

It is needless to say that the approaching ceremony was the subject of every body's conversation. The sentence of the council was hardly doubtful, and the probable death of poor queen Ingeburge would, it was hoped, smooth over all difficulties.

But in the midst of this gossip strange rumors began to circulate through the crowd—some spoke of murder and some of blood—some said that more than one violent death had taken place in the city during the day. And these doubtful rumours were mixed up with innumerable jokes, such as are borne on the wild breeze of the Parisian atmosphere.

The king was in accord with the council. The king was about to place himself at the head of his men-at-arms, and to leave that night immediately after the ceremony, to go and crush once more that English tyrant, Jean Sans-Terre, who had assassinated Arthur of Bretagne!

They were about to see madame Agnes, the only true queen, led by the legate of his holiness in person.

The body of poor Ingeburge was going to be placed behind the altar, between two rows of wax lights, and after holy mass had been said over it at midnight, the embalmed body was to be placed in a chariot, and to take the great northern road, and to be restored to king Canute of Denmark.

As some expressed doubts about this story, one honest bourgeois affirmed, on oath, that he had seen the royal coffin under the canopy of Notre Dame.

Towards midnight the cortege of bishops left the city palace and debouched on the purlieus—the hautboys and chanters walking in front, as well as the *porte pupitres* Then came the banners of Notre Dame, followed by the ensigns and banners of all the surrounding churches. The whole cortege had the appearance of a moving hedge of enormous wax torches, lighting up the rich pontifical costumes.

The folding doors of the grand portal of Notre Dame were thrown open, and the council entered, while a chorus of ten thousand voices joined in the priests' canticles.

As soon as it was seen that the council of prelates had passed in, all the world pushed *pell-mell* into the cathedral, and a great shout of admiration burst from the assembled crowd. A great space had been left before the altar for the accommodation of the lords of the court of Phillip Augustus; on the right side of the nave stood the masons, each in the costume of the fraternity and carrying long white wands ornamented with banderoles,

As soon as the agitation of the people had a little calmed down, all eyes were fixed on the space over the portals of the abbey, for there was some mystery standing there which singularly excited the general curiosity.

In that place where the grand organ of our days is usually placed, stood the atelier of Jean Cador—the front boards had been removed and presented to the public gaze a remarkable spectacle.

This was a simple group, strongly lighted up, and composed of two men standing before a statue. The two men were black and the statue was covered with a long white veil. The two men were as motionless as the statue itself.

Now every body knew that under that veil was hidden the famous image of Our Lady, cut by Jean Cador, that artisan who had no rival, and who had travelled into the holy land to master the secret of the Saracen sculptors.

"Ah, when will they uncover that statue? and when will those black statues show that they are flesh and blood?"

All the other marvels of the cathedral could be seen—this alone remained hidden. It is needless to say that the good people of Paris made cheap of everything else, and preserved all their impatient and capricious desires for the uncovering of the statue.

CHAPTER XIV.

Through the ranks of the freemasons, the words passed—

"We are all here, except Jean de Valenciennes and maitre Honoré, our brother."

"And Jean Cador," added a voice, "Jean Cador has never returned among us since the day we received him into the brotherhood."

At this moment Eric advanced holding his sister Eve by the hand. She was clothed in mourning and was very pale with weeping.

He approached the spot reserved for the masons, and said to them—"Neither Jean de Valenciennes nor maitre Honoré will be here, my brothers. Jean de Valenciennes has had his head split with the blow of a sword at his lodgings in la place Maubert; and maitre Honoré has had his breast pierced with the thrust of a knife, at the house of Herbert Melfast, lord of Canterbury.

"Bad luck to the lord of Canterbury!" cried several masons.

"The lord of Canterbury has nothing more to fear from man," replied Eric, "for the knife which pierced our brother Honoré passed through the heart of Herbert of Melfast."

The freemasons looked at each other, stupefied. A sensation, which now took place in the nave, was caused by some newcomers, who related that in the middle of the great bridge, only twenty paces from the gates of the chatelet, and under the holy lamp, devoted to the Virgin Mary, the corpses of the three German brothers Guiscard, had been found; and even while this story was being told, a loud cry of agony arose.

This proceeded from a German, named Steinbach, a native of the city of Hamburgh, who had just arrived at Paris—nobody knew why—and who had now fallen under the very doors of the cathedral, struck by some invisible hand.

He uttered but one cry, and his blood inundated the steps.

"Give way! give way!" cried the heralds, pronouncing at the same time the names of the great vassals of the crown, as they arrived one after the other.

Among that agitated crowd, the dukes of Bourgogne and Berry, the earls d'Aumale, du Perche, d'Alencon, Jean de Nesle, and several others, passed on to the seats reserved for their order.

Then a wider path was made in the middle of the nave, and a herald, dressed in the royal livery, and covered with countless fleurs de lis, proclaimed from the grand entrance—

"Our lord the king!"

Every head was now bent for[ward an]d every neck stretched to its utmost to c[atch] the best view of Phillip Augustus, and doubtless, as they expected, of Agnes de Meranie, in all the *éclat* of their royal apparel.

But the king entered alone, followed by his page Albret—he wore the tarnished and bruised armour which had served him on the battle field.

Behind him, at a little distance, came the halberdiers of the king's guard, commanded by captain Jean Belin, and when these had reached the middle of the nave, according to the great and solemn custom still preserved by our military, the captain, in a loud voice and in the midst of universal silence, gave a series of military commands.

As the page Albret passed by Eve, they exchanged a look, but alas! it was a very sad one.

The people now began to whisper to each other "Where is the queen?"

The king approached the altar, knelt down and said a short prayer.

On rising, he turned towards the bishops who were seated in a circle in the choir.

"My venerable fathers," said he, "whatever may be the tenor of the sentence which you are

about in your wisdom to pronounce, henceforth that sentence will be of no avail. Your meeting has been purposeless; and I give you your *congé* by my royal authority."

"Phillip of France," exclaimed the bishop of Orvieto, pale with anger, "it was not thee who called this council together, and it is not thee who can dissolve it."

Phillip Augustus pointed towards heaven with the finger of his gauntleted hand—

"The will of God will be accomplished in spite of us, my venerable fathers," said he, with a calmness which set at naught the anger of the legate; "your respectable council has no longer any object, since the king of France has now but one wife."

A prolonged murmur ran through the row of bishops. For these words rang in their ears as the avowal of some terrible deed of violence, and so the people understood it, for they murmured also.

"The king had two wives," said some voices, who, however, were careful not to pronounce their accusation too loudly. "One that he loved and one that he detested, that is dead."

"Here comes the one that he loves," replied other voices near the entrance.

Madame Agnes had, in short, arrived—the crown upon her head and clothed in the royal mantel—through the great doors she could be seen descending from her litter, and giving her hand to sire Amaury, lord of Anet.

The king saw it as well as the spectators, but he remained immovable and spoke not a word. The prelates were consulting in a low voice. As madame Agnes arrived at the threshold of the cathedral, two halberdiers of the guard crossed their weapons before her.

"Halt there!" called out the rough voice of Antoine Cadocu.

Messire Amaury, on the contrary, was rudely pushed forward into the church. His head had just passed under the atelier of Jean Cador. For the first time for two hours the two black statues that were standing before the veiled image were seen to move. The statue of the virgin tottered on its base, and fell, crushing in its fall the body of Amaury Montruel.

The blood spurted on the people, who recoiled with fear.

"To the Chateau d'Etamps!" was heard at that moment outside, from captain Antoine Cadocu, who had just placed madame Agnes on a pack horse.

An escort of twelve brigands, who had accompanied the honest clerk Samson, left at the same time, and entered the same ferry-boat which had so lately brought back the empty litter of that other Agnes—Agnes the Pretty.

Agnes de Meranie could not yet believe the full extent of her misfortune.

"Does not the Chateau d'Etamps belong to messire Amaury?" she asked.

"Messire Amaury is dead," they replied to her, "and the Chateau d'Etamps belongs to captain Antoine."

Midnight sounded, and it was the hour when the mass of thanksgiving was about to commence. During the tumult caused by such an accumulation of unlooked-for events, many things escaped the general attention. But without either bishops or people being able to say from whence she had come, they suddenly beheld standing, in the middle of the nave, a veiled woman, wearing, like madame Agnes, the crown and royal mantle. She was accompanied by a man dressed in a magnificent Saracen costume. Page Albret from one side, and Eric and Eve from the other, flew towards her with extended arms.

"King," said the Saracen, bending before Phillip Augustus, "the hour of midnight has struck. Out of the nine assassins of the king, there remains but me. Perform thy promise, as I have performed mine."

The king took the trembling hand of the veiled woman, who was presented to him by the Saracen; and, raising her veil, a great shout arose from the assembled multitude, for everybody recognized the sweet and holy beauty of queen Angel.

Eve and Albret, with hands joined, fell upon their knees.

The king kissed the brow of Ingeburge, who was ready to sink, and leading her up to the steps of the altar, they both knelt down together.

"Before thee, O Lord God! I declare this woman to be my wife," said he. Then, turning towards the people, he added—

"Behold thy queen!"

It was absolutely necessary that the Bishop of Orvieto should discover some object on which to expend his wrath; he therefore sprang towards Mahmoud.

"Infidel," exclaimed he, "whose presence defiles this place—what wouldst thou here?"

"I have come here to be baptized," replied Mahmoud el Reis.

The council of bishops declared that the anathema that had been fulminated against the king, and the interdict which had been proclaimed throughout the whole kingdom, were annulled.

The king departed that same night to enter upon his glorious campaign against the English.

Ingeburge was now queen. History, alas! does not tell us whether she was happy; but history tells—and we know that history never lies—that Agnes de Meranie died of love—I do not know where.

But while every one knows that love never kills, every one does know that passion will destroy.

On the same day that queen Ingeburge had given her blessing to the union of the handsome page Albret with our pretty Eve, she found Mahmoud-el-Reis waiting for her at the entrance of her palace.

His two black slaves were already in the saddle, and a third horse stood all ready to receive the Syrian.

The queen extended her hand to Mahmoud, who kissed it, and pressed it for a moment against his heart.

"Adieu, queen," said he. "I have come to take my leave; for I must now go and see Dilah, and then die. God will listen to thy prayers, as to the prayers of his highest angels. O queen! pray for poor Mahmoud, and for Dilah, the sister of thy soul!"

He leaped upon his Arab steed, and, with his two faithful slaves, disappeared in a cloud of dust.

A rumour reached Europe that terrible chastisement had been inflicted by the prince of the mountain upon one of his *fedavi*, who had been converted to the Christian faith, and who had seduced his *fiancée* to abandon the creed of her people; and to the last day of her life, the pious queen Ingeburge prayed for Mahmoud-el-Reis, and for Dilah, the sister of her soul. F. M.

THE END.

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