

W. E. Lewis

HENRY LA NUIT:

No. 52. —OR— #1 two of
THE FOUNDLING OF THE CASTLE OF ESTELLA.



THE DUKE OF SALVA AND HENRY LA NUIT.—See Page 11.

BY AUSTIN C. BURDICK.

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H. E. Lewis

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THE FOUNDLING OF THE CASTLE OF ESTELLA.

A Tale of Navarre, in the Olden Time.

1838. H. E. Lewis.
BY AUSTIN C. BURDICK.



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HENRY LA NUIT.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST GRIEF.

It was early summer, and the sun was just ready to sink behind the frowning tops of the distant mountains. The last golden beams were laying like a flood of fire upon the walls and turrets of the great, old castle of Estella, and an hundred armed men were lounging about the wide ballium, ready to catch the first cool breath of evening. The waters of the river Ega sent up their gushing music as they moved along to pay their tribute to the majestic Ebro, and they seemed to bring upon their silvery bosoms the sweet odors which they had taken to themselves from the many orange groves through which they had wound their way. The sinuous vales and hills of Estella were all clothed in their most seductive garbs, but no touch of the summer magician could make the gray walls of the great castle look anything but rough and frowning. To be sure, the massy face of rock that looked towards the setting sun had put on a more startling color, but it seemed to be a ghastly, gory look, and the deep windows appeared like so many fiery eyes looking out from a great head of dying flame.

Philip de la Carra, Duke of Salva, was the feudal lord of the castle of Estella, and, save the king himself, none other was more powerful in Navarre.

The lower disc of the sun had just touched the far-off mountains when the sound of horses' tramping hoofs came up from the road, and ere long a troop of armed and armored men rode over the drawbridge and entered the outer court. They were led by a noble-looking knight, who wore above his armor the robe of a duke. Next to him rode a younger man, who also bore the insignia of knighthood. The grooms hastened forth from the stables to take the horses, and as soon as the younger knight had alighted he hastened away to the inner court and entered the castle.

The knight could not have seen more than three and twenty years, but long and arduous exercise in the manly sports of the times had served to develop the physical man in all his strength and skill. He was tall and well made, and possessed a face of more than ordinary beauty. His hair, which was of dark brown,

hung in light masses about his neck, and his eyes, which were quick and energetic in their movements, bore a cast of deep, rich hazel. His dress was somewhat showy, but not enough to detract from his noble bearing. Over a silken doublet he wore a light armor of polished steel, and over this was a crimson scarf, passing over the right shoulder and knotted beneath the left arm. A lace collar, richly pointed and embroidered, adorned his neck and shoulders, and the nicety with which it was adjusted showed that hands more delicate than his own had helped place it there. Upon his head he wore a helmet of burnished steel, the visor of which was thrown up and hooked, and above this waved two large ostrich feathers. The young knight was called Henry la Nuit.

With quick steps the knight hurried across the great hall; nor did he slacken his pace until he reached the spacious sitting-chamber in the western wing of the castle. He hesitated a moment at the door, as though he would have gained some fresh courage, and then he entered. The only occupant of the apartment was a girl, who sat by one of the windows gazing out upon the golden landscape. She was a beautiful creature, with a form of faultless symmetry, and the expression of a sinless soul beaming out upon her fair features. No clouds had left their touch upon her pure white brow, nor had sorrow yet drawn a line upon her face. She was but nineteen years of age, and yet she had bloomed into the very spring of ardent womanhood. In stature she was just tall enough to comply with a well-developed frame, for her every look and movement showed that she did not suffer for the want of healthy exercise. Her hair was dark, very dark, and when it did not catch the direct sunlight it seemed really black. Her eyes were certainly black, but yet soft and warm—not sharp and piercing, like some black eyes, but deep and lustrous,—full of heart and soul, and seeming like the windows through which the god of love was constantly looking. She was Isabella de la Carra, the only child of the duke.

"Now, now, Isabella," cried the young knight, as he hastened towards the fair young girl, "I may speak to you the words which have so long lain silent in my soul. I am a knight now. See—these spurs the king himself did give me. I have carried my right to knighthood, and so have I earned the right to speak with thee. I am courageous now, or I should not dare to tell you what is in my heart. O, Isabella, Isabella,

I love you—I love you truly, fondly, dearly. For long years I have held your image next to my heart of hearts; your every look of kindness has been treasured up with my love; but I dared not tell it until I had earned a name worthy of thee—until I had gained the goal of my ambition. I am a knight now, and I may tell thee that thou art beloved. Give me thine answer. Come."

The maiden trembled violently, and the great tears started from her eyes—but they were tears of love, of happiness. Her bosom heaved with a wild emotion, but she did not speak in words. Henry la Nuit knelt at her feet, and caught one of her hands and pressed it to his lips.

"Speak, Isabella," he said. "I have told you all. My heart is in your hands. You should know what kind of a heart it is. Speak to me."

And yet the maiden did not speak, but her head drooped forward until it rested on the knight's shoulder, and then she wound both arms about his neck. What more could she have said? And yet Henry la Nuit was not satisfied.

"One word, Isabella—only one word. Tell me that you love me, and I shall ask for no more."

"Henry, Henry," whispered the maiden, "you know I love you!"

"And will love me ever—will be mine—mine alone—my life, my sunshine of joy and gladness?"

"I will be yours!"

Henry arose to his feet and sat down by the side of Isabella. He took her hand again, and again he told her of his love. His words were warm and impassioned, and they were sweet music in the ears of the maiden, for she listened to them with a waking joy, and her dark eyes sparkled with the rapture she felt. How could she, whose life had been thus far but as the flower in the sunshine, feel aught but gladness in the possession of the noble youth's love? Not even a doubt came to cloud the sun that had risen upon her way, and when she whispered of her own pure love she did it with a firm reliance upon the propitious fate which had thus far through life been her heavenly genius.

Thus sat the lovers—thus were they telling over and over again of their love, when a heavy tramp sounded in the corridor.

"It is my father," said Isabella; and, for the first time, a slight shadow came upon her face.

It rested there but a moment, however, and when it had gone she was as joyous as before.

In a moment more the duke entered the room. He had not yet removed his armor, nor had he thrown off the ducal robe. He was a tall, powerful man, with a countenance of determined will and great force of character; yet in his high, open brow there was a nobleness of intellectuality which could not abide with littleness or deceit. He was very stern in his look, and yet he was kind at heart; but he was proud, very proud.

Don Philip paused as he entered the room, for his eye caught at a glance the expressions of the two young people before him. A dark frown gathered upon his brow as he gazed upon them, and again that shadow came upon the face of the maiden, but this time it was deeper than before, and it did not go away.

"How now, my children?" said the duke, looking first upon one, and then upon the other. "What has troubled you?"

Henry la Nuit arose to his feet and took a step forward. He hesitated for a moment, and then he moved on and took the hand of the duke.

"My lord," he said, with an effort to speak calmly, "I will tell you that which you should know, though I doubt not that your own eyes must long ago have detected my secret. I have just confessed my love to the Lady Isabella—a love which has long lain deep in my soul, and upon which my hopes for happiness have lived for years."

"Ah," uttered Don Philip. The cloud upon his brow grew more dark, but his voice was firm and clear. "And what said the Lady Isabella?"

"That she loved him in return," murmured the maiden, as she saw her lover's glance fixed upon her. She sprang to her father's side as she spoke, and caught his remaining hand. "I do love him, father, and I know that you will not be angry with me for it."

"But what does all this love mean?" asked the duke, for the first time trembling. "I think you, Henry, have understood me. I have spoken very plainly to you in days gone by."

"Yes—yes—I know it," stammered the young knight. "You told me that I must first gain a name; and now I have gained it. At the bloody pass of Saint Jean Pied de Port I earned it, and the good King Alfonso has given me the knighthood. Surely, to be a knight of Navarre is name enough."

"And have you, on the strength of that, been confessing your love to the Lady Isabella?"

"Yes, my lord."

"O, poor fool!" muttered the duke, while the cloud upon his brow grew darker than ever. "I told thee then that thou hadst no name, and thought the matter was well settled. I was careful then lest I should hurt your feelings, but now the truth must be told to you. Henry la Nuit, the Lady Isabella can never be your wife!"

Isabella de la Carra gazed for a moment into her father's face, and then, with a low cry of anguish, she dropped his hand and tottered back to her seat. Don Philip saw that she was faint, and he cried out for help.

"Katrina," he said, addressing an old female servant who had entered at his call, "attend to your young lady. She is not well." And then, turning to the young knight, he continued: "Leave us now."

"And do I leave her without hope?" asked Henry, in a tone of such sad despondency as only a true heart can feel. "O, do not tell me that all my holy aspirations are thus to be dashed to the ground!"

"Go," repeated the duke, looking still stern. "I will speak with you of this in the morning."

"But O, sir, tell me if I have any hope?" urged the young man.

"Of my daughter's hand—none!"

As Don Philip thus spoke, in a deep, decided tone, he took the hand of his child in his own. She had revived, and her old nurse was trying to comfort her. Henry la Nuit turned away, and placing one hand upon his brow he sobbed aloud. This blow had come upon him with a fearful, blasting power.

[SEE ENGRAVING.]

The cloud upon the duke's brow lightened a little as he saw the grief of the youthful knight, but none of the stern purpose was gone. Once more he waved his hand towards the door, and, with a heavy heart, Henry la Nuit left the apartment. After he was gone, the nobleman gazed upon his child for some moments in silence. The cloud was all gone from his brow now, and his stern features were softened.

"Isabella," he said, while his lips trembled with emotion, "I trust this event will leave nothing to work its venom in the joy of your future. I mean to do the best for you that I can."

"And is Henry gone from me forever?" murmured the maiden, with her eyes all tearless, and her face as white as marble.

"You will see him again."

"Ay, I shall see him—but how? O, I cannot take my heart from him. He had it all!"

Philip de la Carra soon saw that his child was too grief-stricken for reason then, and he said he would see her again when she was more calm. More calm! Ah, Don Philip forgot all the love of his own youthful days. He forgot most all but his family pride; he saw that his child was unhappy, and he only thought of the means he should take to turn her mind from the object that had thus come so mighty upon it. He stooped down and kissed the trembling girl, and then he strode from the apartment.

Ere long afterwards, Isabella sent Katrina away, and once more she was left alone by the great window. The sun had gone—the last red tints had died away in the western horizon, and the twilight was fast deepening into darkness. Yet there sat Isabella de la Carra, and she still gazed out into the dark blank where the landscape had faded away. Her first deep grief had come—the first blow had fallen upon her heart—the first drop of bitterness had been poured into her life-cup. Hers was a love that had been

burning long and ardently. In the light of it she had lived, and though its buds had all germed in secret, yet they had lent much of holy fragrance to her way. Though Henry had never told her in so many set words, yet she knew that his young ambition was to prove worthy of her love; she knew that when he had rushed boldly into the thickest of the fight he had done it because he would raise himself to her; she knew that when the king placed upon him the glittering insignia of knighthood, his first thought of gratitude was based upon his long cherished hopes of love from her. Ah! she had loved him with her whole great heart; she had loved him with her whole power of living thought and feeling.

And there she still sat by the great window, and gazed forth into the darkness. Her father had spoken, and she well knew that he never spoke idly. His words still rang in her ears, and their meaning had sank coldly into her soul. It was her first grief. She did not ask of the far-off Spirit, that looked down upon her through the darkness, if it would be her last!

CHAPTER II.

A REVELATION.

On the next morning, Henry la Nuit was the first in the court. He was there early enough to catch the first rays of the sun that came leaping forth from behind the distant Pyrenees; but the bright beams brought no joy to his soul. He looked downcast and gloomy, and his step was slow and heavy as he paced up and down the wide enclosure. What now to him were all the honors he had gained? He had toiled long and hard, and his king had rewarded him; but what to him could that reward be now? He had sought it, to be sure, but only as a means of raising himself to a position where he might ask for the love of that gentle being whom he had so long held within his own glowing affections. And now that he had gained it, the boon was lost. He had just raised the joyous potion to his lips; he had just tasted the sweet nectar of life, when the cup was dashed to the ground, and all, all was gone!

The young knight walked up and down the court, sometimes weeping, and sometimes striving with his sorrow, and thus two hours had passed away, when Don Philip de la Carra came out from the castle and beckoned the young man towards him. The duke turned back into the hall and Henry followed him. They passed on

to the nobleman's own private room, and when once there the door was closed, and the young knight was motioned to a seat.

The duke looked very calm and stern, and whatever may have been his emotions none of them were revealed in his countenance. After he had himself become seated, he turned towards his young companion. For an instant a softened look dwelt upon his countenance as he noticed the appearance of the youth, but before he began to speak it had passed away.

"Henry," he said, laying one hand upon the table beside him, and resting the other upon his knee, "are you aware of the rigid law that exists among the nobles of Navarre—a law that has existed for more than three centuries?"

"To what law do you allude?" asked Henry, gazing anxiously into the speaker's face. "I know of many laws in Navarre."

"Ay—but this is one that is confined exclusively to the nobles, and it is simply this—that no person of noble blood shall marry with the stock of the people. And the law is a most necessary one, for much evil might flow from the mixing up of the rulers with the ruled. Among all the laws of Navarre, there is none more binding upon me than that."

Henry la Nuit clasped his hands upon his knees, and looked down upon the tiled floor. A pallor had crept over his features, and he trembled.

"You understand the nature of that law?" continued the duke, after the lapse of a few moments.

"Yes, yes," said the young knight, raising his eyes to his companion's face. "I knew such a law existed, but I did not know—"

Henry hesitated, and again looked down upon the floor.

"You mean to say that you did not know that it applied to you," added Don Philip, in a softened tone.

"I did not know that it did," returned Henry, more agitated than before.

"Well, Henry, I have called you here now to tell you that which I may have too long kept a secret from you. You have understood that your father died and left you in my care. I don't know that I ever told you so directly, but I know that this is the impression you have received, and I have not deceived you."

"And is it not so? Was not my father a gentleman, at least?" cried Henry, with sudden vehemence.

"Be patient, and I will tell you all I know," resumed the duke, with his countenance still stern and unmoved. "It is now somewhat over twenty-three years since I laid the only son I ever had in the tomb. He lived only a few short days, and then he died. It was mid-winter when we buried him; and only a few nights afterwards a male infant was left upon the steps of the porter's lodge. It was well protected from the cold, being snugly wrapped up in thick blankets, and was laid in an old wicker-basket. Accompanying it was a note, directed to me. You shall see it."

The duke arose from his great chair, and went to a quaint old cabinet that stood in the corner. From one of the many curiously-contrived apartments he drew forth a piece of paper, and then returned to his seat.

"You may read it," he said, as he passed it over to the youth, "and then you will see its import."

Henry took the paper with trembling hands. It was of rough, badly finished fabric, and much discolored. The characters were scrawling, but yet sufficiently plain to convey the idea which the writer intended. It was addressed to the duke, and read as follows:

"This is a poor, unfortunate child. Will you let some of your many people take charge of it, and save it for some use. Let it walk in the humbler way of life. It is of right belongs. I am too poor to sustain it, and yet I cannot see it. I know the Duke of Salva is kind, and he will find some one among his retainers who will be a parent to it. God bless him if he does."

It bore no date nor signature. Henry read it through a second time, and then he folded it up and gazed upon its soiled back.

"What are these deep stains?" he asked, while he gazed upon the spattered spots that marked the paper. He shuddered as he spoke.

"They looked like blood when I first saw the paper," returned the duke. "But that is nothing. They may be the stains of something else. But now let me tell you the rest. The infant was brought into the castle, and my wife, herself, took charge of it. She placed it where her own had been taken from, and nursed it at her own breast. The child grew up to be mild and gentle, and it soon won our love. We cared for it as though it had been our own; but still it could not claim our blood, nor could it claim even gentle blood of any degree. You, Henry, are that child. I gave to you the name of La Nuit, and I have done all for you that I could, and I have done it because I loved you. Your education is superior to that of half the nobles in Navarre, and your more manly exercises have been well cared for. At my request the king has bestowed the boon of knighthood upon you. I have done all that I could. Now you know why you may not look to my daughter for her hand—for even were I willing, the laws of our kingdom would forbid it."

For a long while Henry la Nuit remained silent. He sat with his brow leaning upon his hands, and his breathing was long and heavy. At length he raised his head and looked towards the duke.

"Don Philip," he said, in a husky voice, "do you know who was my father?"

"No, Henry."

"Do you know anything of me more than you have already told me?"

"No. I never could gain any clue to your parentage; but I have thought that this paper told its own story of your birth in the light of truth. I think you must have been the child of parents who were indeed too poor to bring you up, and who thus placed you off their hands

before your budding childhood could claim their affections. Perhaps they took advantage of our loss, and shrewdly held the idea that you might take the place of the infant we had lost."

"O misery! misery!" groaned the young knight, in the depth of his anguish.

"You must not repine now," said the duke. "It is no part of the character of a brave man to give way to such things. The world is all before you, and there may be much honor for you yet."

"O, and what is honor to me now!" cried Henry, closing his hands, and bringing them down with a vehement motion. "If you could know how I have loved that fair being, who is your child; how every thought of my heart had been hers; how my whole ambition has been to prove worthy of her, you would not now coolly point me to this world's honors. O, sir, the very hope that could lead me to honor has gone from me!"

The duke was moved, for over his stern face there swept a pitying look. He bowed his head for a moment, and when he again looked up his features were all cold and calm as before.

"You will outgrow this," he said. "It has come upon you now with its first force, and the disappointment may be great; but it will not last you long. I thought I had once before spoken to you so plainly that you could understand me. It was when I first feared that you might love the Lady Isabella."

"I know you spoke to me," returned Henry, in a low, gasping tone, "but I did not fully understand you. O, I wish I had, for then I might have fled from the power which has now become fixed upon me. But answer me one question, my lord. If it were not for this law would you give me the hand of your child?"

"That is not a fair question, Henry."

"Yes, it is."

"But why should you ask it? The law is fixed and irrevocable."

"Because I would know if, in your eyes, I am worthy of her."

The duke was for a while silent. He gazed hard upon the youth, and again that pitying look came for an instant upon his face.

"You are worthy of my highest esteem, Henry," he at length said, in slow, measured accents, "and it would be hard for me to love an own child better than I love you; but yet that is no

reason why I should look with favor upon your suit for my child. There are many things which I love, and there are many people about me whom I honor and respect, but each has its own place, and in their places respectively must I hold them. Now, there is old Pedro, my armorer—a more faithful fellow never breathed. He is brave and fearless, and he has saved my life a score of times. I love him dearly; and yet I should think it strange were he to come to me and ask me for the Lady Isabella's hand—and more strange still if he were to make my answer the test of my love for him. I love Pedro, and I honor him; but he has his social place, and it is in that place that I respect him most. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, yes, my lord; I understand you too well."

"Then there is no need that I should say more upon the subject. Yet I would advise you that you seek not the society of the Lady Isabella until this wound be somewhat healed; but your own judgment will dictate you in that. You may still look to me for my protection and my friendship. Do not let what you have now learned sink too deeply into your heart, for it has not changed your position. You have only learned what you really are, and I hope I shall ere long see you cheerful once more."

Henry made no reply, but he bowed his head forward until his brow rested upon the edge of the table, and there he wept. He remained in this position for some time, and when he again raised his head he found himself alone. He started up and gazed about him, but nothing met his eye except the heavy carving of the old furniture about him. The great lion looked fiercely at him from the back of the duke's high chair, and the smaller lions seemed ready to leap upon him from the arms and pillars.

The young knight was sure that he was alone, and then he sank back into his chair; and when he again arose the tears were gone from his face, and he had done weeping. He took a few turns up and down the room, and when he at length laid his hand upon the door-latch, his features had assumed a settled expression, in which there was much of determination. Yet his step was not firm as he passed out into the long corridor, but he walked unsteadily, and ever and anon he would falter as though his mind was not yet quite settled.

CHAPTER III.

THE PILGRIM.

It was towards the middle of the day, and the sun was shining down upon the hills and vales of Navarre with all his power. The lower herds had crept away into the shady brooks, and those upon the hillside had sought the shelter of the thick-leaved trees. The herdsman reclined at full length upon the greensward where he could find the coolest shade, and even the birds seemed to remain quiet amongst the protecting foliage. It was at this time that a pilgrim was toiling his way up the hill that led to the castle. He was an old man, and as his cowl was partly thrown back from his head his hair was seen to be white—not a snowy white, but crisp and sunburnt. His form was naturally tall and commanding, but age and hard usage had somewhat bent it, so that now he stooped as he slowly walked along. He wore the long brown robe and cowl of the holy pilgrims of the times, that was secured at the waist by a cord, from the end of which depended a rosary of wooden beads. In his hand he carried a stout oaken staff, that gave evidence of having seen long and serious service.

At length, all toil-worn and weary, the old pilgrim reached the gates of the castle, and the porter at once gave him admittance. He was covered with dust and sweat, and when he reached the great hall he sank down upon one of

the stone benches. Shortly after he had found this place of rest, Henry la Nuit came down the broad staircase at the upper end of the hall, and would have directly passed out into the court had not the appearance of the pilgrim arrested his attention.

"Ah, a benison upon thee, my son," uttered the old man, as Henry came up to where he sat.

"The same be upon thee, venerable father," responded the youthful knight.

The pilgrim rested both hands upon his staff and gazed up into the young man's face. His look was earnest and searching.

"Does the good lord, Philip de la Carra, still rule here?" he at length asked.

"Yes," returned Henry.

"And thou art his son?"

"No."

"Of what relation then?"

"None."

Again the pilgrim cast his gaze earnestly upon the youth, and this time a strange look of intelligence beamed upon his wrinkled features. He leaned further forward and raised one hand above his eyes, as if to shade them from the strong light.

"You must forgive me if I seem too inquisitive," he said, as he lowered his hand to its former position upon the staff, "but your coun-

tenance looks familiar to me. What is your name?"

"La Nuit—Henry," replied the young knight, with a quick tremor. "Now what do you know of me?"

"Perhaps nothing. But who gave thee that name?"

"The duke."

"De la Carra?"

"Yes."

"Then you are a godson of his?"

"Yes—and a foster-son, too."

"La Nuit," muttered the pilgrim, seeming to be speaking with himself; "that is a strange name. But," continued he, looking up again at Henry, "you seem sad and downcast. What can have come across the path of one like thee?"

"Never mind that," said the knight, somewhat impatient. "If you can trace aught of my family in my looks, I pray you speak."

"O, my son, you misunderstand me," returned the pilgrim, with a light smile. "I thought your features looked like those I had seen before, but I know nothing more. You have told to me a secret which I might have been long in guessing."

"Ha! What do you mean now?"

"Why, from your own words I have found you to be a foundling. Am I not right in that?"

Henry la Nuit trembled, and an ashy pallor overspread his face. Once he turned to go away, but he came back again.

"You are right, father," he said, with an effort to speak calmly. "I am a foundling, and the words you have spoken lead me to speak still more plainly. I was left at the porter's lodge, by the gates of the castle, when I was a speechless, helpless infant. There never was left a clue to those who thus abandoned me; but I have been cared for here, and this has been my home. Now, if my face opens any intelligence for you, I pray you speak it. If you have the least thought in your mind of who I am, or may be, I conjure you to tell it to me."

"Ah, my son, I might as well try to call up the dead from their graves. Your countenance only struck me as being peculiar—that's all." And then the old man went off into a sort of meditative mood, and he muttered over the name of La Nuit. After a while he raised his eyes again to the youth's face, and while he lifted the forefinger of his right hand, and shook it very meaningfully, he said:

"If you will take the advice of an old man—

a man who has seen much of the world—you will let this matter drop. It could do you little good to find out who were the parents that cast you off. You had better go ahead and carve out your own way through life, and not think of those who have thought so little of you. If your parents lived, and wanted you, they would be pretty sure to come after you; and if they are dead and gone, then you had better let them rest. Ignorance, on this point, may be of more service to you than wisdom."

The knight had become absorbed in an interest with the pilgrim, and so much so that for the while he forgot to grieve for the loss his heart had sustained. He was of quick perception, and he thought that the old man spoke more like one who knew than like one who merely surmised. His manner and his tone seemed to betray that he had more knowledge than he was willing to own. At least so it appeared to the young knight, and he determined to push the matter.

"Hark ye, good sir pilgrim," he said, his eyes brightening with the energy that moved him, "you are a stranger to me, and I know not that I ever saw you before; but you have said that which has awakened more than a passing interest in my bosom. You speak as though you knew of my parentage. Stop—do not interrupt me, but hear me through. I say you speak as though you knew something of me and mine. I have marked it in your looks, in your manner, and in your words. Now if you know—tell me."

"I have nothing to tell thee, my son."

"So you say."

"And so I mean."

"Ah, if you know *anything*, tell it to me."

"Why, my child, you push me now with folly. I have told thee once, twice, thrice, that I had nothing for thee to hear. Ah, here comes the good duke himself, else my eyes deceive me. Is it not he?"

Henry looked up the hall, and saw Don Philip coming down, so he quickly gave the old man an affirmative answer, and then hastened away out into the court. As the duke came up, the pilgrim slowly arose to his feet and bowed, and then wished for a blessing upon the head of the noble host.

"You seem weary, good father," said the duke, as he cast his eyes over the pilgrim's dust-covered robe. "Have you walked far?"

"I have walked from Palestine, my lord. I

have seen the holy city, and rested upon the mount where our Saviour died. I left the infidel Saracen in triumph there."

Don Philip moved nearer to the way-worn man, and sat down by his side upon the long stone bench. The pilgrim cast his eyes up at the nobleman's face, and, as he did so, the latter gave a quick start. He moved off further towards the end of the bench, but he still gazed hard into the old man's face.

"Who are you?" asked the duke, while a cold shudder ran through him.

"A poor pilgrim," returned the other, considerably moved by his companion's manner.

"Ay, you may be a pilgrim now—but what have you been? What is your name?"

"Let my name rest, my lord; and let what I have been be forgotten," said the pilgrim, in a stern, earnest tone. "I have come here to seek a short repose for my weary limbs, for I know that the noble Duke of Salva would not turn a foot-sore traveller from his doors."

"Of course you may rest—rest here as long as you please," returned the duke; "but you must not seek my society. You may be now what ought to be respected, but yet memory cannot all be hushed, even by penitence."

"Then you are sure you know me," said the pilgrim.

"Yes. Years have not so altered your features but that I recognize them."

"Will you not take my hand?" asked the old man.

"No, no—I cannot," uttered Don Philip, drawing still further away, and shuddering. "You are welcome to the hospitality of my roof, but you must ask no more. I cannot forget the work those hands have done."

The old pilgrim bowed his head upon his staff, and his gaunt frame trembled. What was the secret that lay so gnawingly upon his soul? It must have been one of deep and lasting import, for long years have rolled their wasting tide over it, and yet 'tis not forgotten. Penitence had been poured upon it, but it could not be healed; but there it lay in that old man's bosom—a thing from which he would gladly have escaped, but which clung to him, and which nothing but the grave could hide. And shall the grave hide it! That old man would have been happy if he could have felt assured that in the world to come his secret could be forgotten. But no such assurance was his. He groaned beneath the burden, and he feared that he might have to bear it always.

CHAPTER IV.

FAREWELL.

IANTHE, the Duchess de la Carra, was alone in her great chamber, a chamber that looked to the eastward, and which commanded a view of wild grandeur. The duchess was not more than fifty years of age, and even that weight of time she carried very lightly. There were some streaks of silver upon her head, and a few touches of time upon her brow. She was still fair, still beautiful in age, bearing yet the same lineaments that marked the face of her lovely daughter, only they were ripened, and the bloom was beginning to fade. No one would look a second time into the face of the duchess to feel assured that mildness of disposition and purity of thought underlaid her whole character. Yet her large dark eyes burned with a light that told of some noble thoughts, and the pretty lips were cast in a mould that bespoke much of real firmness. She was sitting by her window, with a lute in her hand, when there came a light rap upon her door. She merely bade the applicant enter, and just as she had laid the lute aside, Henry la Nuit came in, and went up to where she sat and kissed her hand. As he did so a tear fell upon it.

"Weeping, Henry?" said the duchess, looking quickly up into the young man's face.

"Never mind, my lady," returned the knight, "I am going to try to conquer my tears. But I have come now to bid you farewell."

"Farewell!" repeated the lady, with surprise. "You are not going to leave us?"

"I am going," he said, in a tone of utter dejection. "I know not where my steps will lead me, but I must go from this place."

Ianthe de la Carra gazed up into the young man's face, and in a moment more she drew him down by her side. Henry was not of her blood, but yet he held the place of a son in her breast. He had lain upon her bosom when an infant, and she had watched his growth in goodness and virtue with all the deep affections of a mother—he was in truth a plant of her own making, a man of her own fashioning, and upon no one's sorrow could she more freely weep than upon that of her cherished foster-child. She drew the youth's head forward until it rested upon her bosom, and then she asked him why he was going away. The youth turned his tear-wet eyes upon the kind face of her who had been a mother to him, and in a low, but yet distinct tone, said:

"Alas! I cannot stay here longer. Years ago, when my young mind was first opening to a comprehension of the beautiful about me, I learned to love the gentle child whom you call daughter. Age wrought some changes in that love—but those changes made it stronger. At length I knew how and why I loved, and then came the prayer into my soul that I might pos-

ness that fair being to love always. To that end that I might prove worthy of her I did all that I thought could become me as a man. I had some trials, and upon the battle-field I have endured some hardships, but I gave them no heed—I only sought for laurels to lay at the feet of her whom I loved. In the light of her kind smiles have I lived, and in the hopes of possessing her have I found a little heaven of my own. O, I loved Isabella—I loved her with all the love my poor heart could feel. But the cup of bliss is passed from me, and it has been dashed in pieces upon a rock I could not move from my way. All my hopes were in it, and they have been blown from me. All the honors of earth can be nothing to me, for I am but a poor foundling, and may never possess the hand of the being I love. The duke has sternly pronounced my fate. I cannot, do not, blame him, for I know why he acts; but I cannot remain longer here. It were but madness for me now, since I have nothing to gain but sorrow. I could not go without your blessing—without first bidding you farewell."

The duchess knew it all. Her husband had told it to her, and she could only weep in her sympathy. She drew the youth more closely to her and kissed him.

"I know—I know," she said, in a faint tone. "O, Henry, I wish I had the power to reverse this decree, but I have not."

"I bless you all the same, my kind lady. I know my fate, and I have not come here to ask you to change it. I have only come to bid you farewell, and to ask you—"

The youth sobbed, and his utterance was choked.

"What would you ask? Ask me anything that I can do, and it shall be done."

"I would ask you," continued the knight, overcoming his sobs by a strong effort, "to speak with Isabella for me. Tell her—tell her that I dare not see her. Tell her that—"

But he could not go on. His head sank lower down till it rested upon the lap of the duchess, and then he gave vent to his grief. His stout frame shook beneath the tempest of sorrow, and his moans struck with an agonizing power upon the heart of her who held him. Suddenly he started up and throw back the rich brown locks from his face, and with one effort of his will he stopped the flow of his tears.

"My lady," he said, in a subdued tone, "forgive me for this unseemly burst of feeling. God bless you for all you have done for me; and

when you think of me, remember me as one who will never forget you in his prayers. Farewell, farewell!"

So he spoke, and then turned towards the door; but the duchess had not heard him. She had been sitting with her hands pressed hard upon her brow, and her face had been working with emotions of her own. Before the young man could open the door, she started to her feet.

"Stop! stop!" she cried, as she reached forth both her hands. "Stop, Henry, and listen to me." The young man stopped and turned back, and the duchess met him in the centre of the room.

Having taken his hand, and gazing for a moment into his face, as though she were yet laboring with the thought that had entered her mind, she said:

"You must make me a promise, Henry, before you leave me. You must promise me that you will not leave Navarre, and that if you settle down anywhere you will take the first opportunity to let me know where it is. Will you promise me this?"

"Yes, lady. All that I can promise easily."

"Then I can ask no more. I cannot ask you to remain in the castle, for I know full well the obstacle that lays in your way; but wherever you go may God be with you and bless you!"

Henry la Nuit did not dare to trust himself to speak. He raised the lady's hand once more to his lips, and then he hastened from the room. He did not hear the deep sob that sounded from the little ante-chamber, he heard nothing, not even his own heavy footstep. The long corridor into which he had entered led half way around the great building before it reached the end stairs that came up from the hall, and ere he had reached the end of it he felt a light hand upon his arm, and turning, he beheld Isabella.

"Going! going!" she murmured, as she flung herself upon his bosom.

This was the hardest blow yet, and the youth had hoped that he should have been spared it.

"I must go, Isabella."

"And not have seen me?—not bid me farewell?"

"O, heavens! how could I! My heart is all broken now. Why should I have seen you when fate has fixed us as it has?"

"O, Henry, we will not be separated always," cried the fair girl. "At some time I will come to you!"

The young knight strained the weeping maiden

to his bosom—he imprinted a warm kiss upon her pure brow, and then he raised his hands to his eyes.

"Farewell!" he cried. "I must not stay here now—I must not remain with you thus, for my pledge to your father forbids it. I shall always love you—always remember you—always bless you. Think of me sometimes, Isabella. Farewell!"

As he thus spoke, he turned and rushed away from the spot. His horse was standing in the court all ready for him, with the portmanteau strapped on, and the knight's heavy sword hanging from the saddle-bow. The knight took off the light weapon that he had worn thus far through the day, and in its place he put the heavier one that had used itself to hard passes.

"Will my young gentleman be back to-night?" asked the groom, as he took the light sword from the hands of his young master.

"No, not to-night. Perhaps—never!"

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The man started, and looked half wildly at the knight, and would have caught the bridle-rein had not Henry quickly turned his horse aside. Our hero waved an adieu to the honest fellow, and then he dashed out through the outer court, passed the gate, nodded affectionately to the old porter, crossed the drawbridge, and soon he was moving swiftly down the hill. At the distance of half a mile he came to a gentle rise, and upon the top of this he stopped. He looked back, and there he saw the old castle towering up against the sky. Big tears started to his eyes as he looked upon the place that had been so long his home, and his stout bosom heaved when he thought of those whom he had left behind. He raised his hand to wipe the tears from his cheek, and when he once more gathered up the reins, his lips trembled; but they pronounced but a single word. It was:

"FAREWELL!"

CHAPTER V.

THE ROYAL MISSIVE.

THE sun did not shine upon the old castle of Estella, for a thick, dark haze hung over the country. The hills, the vales and the mountains were all shut out from sight, and even the old gray turrets and towers seemed almost lost to those who stood in the court. Then the same kind of gloom seemed to rest upon the hundred armed men who stood about the soldiers' apartments; and the servants, too, as they passed to and fro, looked sad and serious. The old porter at the gate answered all applicants surlily, and the butler gave his orders in short, snappish sentences. The old armorer, Pedro, had many a broken plate of steel upon his bench, but he touched them not.

Henry la Nuit was gone—and they had found that he was to return to them no more. All had loved him, and all sorrowed in his absence. He had been so brave, so kind, so noble, that the very life of the old place seemed to have departed with him. And how was it in-doors? Go to the room of our Lady Ianthe, and there you will find the fair daughter sobbing with grief, and the weeping mother trying to soothe her. But the mother may try, and try, and she will but try in vain, for she can give no assurance that can reach the afflicted heart.

So days on a tedious week, but yet the young knight is missed. All this while Don Philip has

worn the same stern, unbending brow as ever. He does not frown, nor does he speak angrily, but he seems cold and impassible—as though he felt not a single regret at what had transpired. When he sees his child weeping, he turns coldly from her, and when his wife entreats him he puts her away, and simply talks of his family pride. No words can bend him, nor any tears move him.

It was late in the day when a horseman ascended the hill and entered the court of the castle. He was a knight of Navarre, and bore himself with a proud mien. He was stout and firmly knit, and gave token of having seen much service. His countenance was fair enough to look upon, fair for any one of his years—for he had seen forty of them,—at least,—but yet there was a look of secret cunning about it that was not calculated to impress the close observer so favorably. When he smiled, a suspicious person could have detected something, almost like malice, lurking about the corners of his mouth. And then he had a dark look, too—a look that bespoke a very brave man, but also a very reckless one, that is, if mere physical daring can be called bravery. His hair was of a sandy hue, and his eyes were gray, but very quick and sharp. When he alighted from his horse, old Pedro knew him for Sir Nandon du Chastel, a knight attached to the person of the king.

"Sir Nandon, I give thee welcome," was the duke's greeting, as he met the knight in the hall.

Du Chastel took Don Philip's proffered hand, and having thanked him for his kindness, the two repaired to the duke's own apartment. Wine and bread were served, and then the new comer drew forth a sealed packet from his bosom.

"This is for you, my lord duke," said the knight, as he passed the package across the table. "It is from the king."

"Ah—and how fares our good king?" asked the duke, taking the packet, and glancing at the royal seal.

"As well as can be; though I must say that I think he shows less of health than has been his wont. You may see by the penstrokes there that his hand is growing unsteady."

"Yes—I see," said Don Philip, as he opened the missive.

While the duke read, Du Chastel poured out a cup of wine and sat sipping it while he watched the reader's countenance. But he might as well have watched a stone, for the nobleman's features changed not a shade. He finished reading, and then he folded up the paper and laid it upon the table by his side.

"Du Chastel, do you know the import of this thing?" He spoke as though it were a mere ordinary transaction of business that had been alluded to.

"I think I do, my lord."

"Then the king has conferred with you upon the subject?"

"Yes—it has been a subject often referred to between us."

"You will remain with me over night, of course."

"Yes."

"Then I will give you my answer on the morrow."

And this was the duke's present notice of the missive he had received. Could it be of much moment, when it had not even power to draw or touch the slightest nerve in his face? Could it be of serious import to aught concerning him, when he could so carelessly throw it aside and join at once in a stirring conversation upon other topics? Ah! there was one in that castle from whom the sight of that royal message would have drawn a shriek; but she was destined to sleep in ignorance of its presence.

The night passed away, and the morning dawned, and again Du Chastel and the duke were

together. The former showed a little anxiety upon his countenance, but the latter was as cool and calm as a frozen infant.

"Well, my lord duke," commenced Du Chastel, "have you thought over that matter yet?"

"Ay, Sir Nandon; and I am prepared to send the king my answer. I shall comply with his request."

The knight started forward with outstretched hands to thank the duke, but he was waved back with a decided movement.

"Hold, Sir Nandon," said Don Philip. "You have no need to thank me, for I do this out of no great friendship. I honor you for a brave man, and I hope I may respect you for an honest one; but it is to the king you must turn the most of your gratitude for it."

Du Chastel sat back somewhat abashed, and though a shadow flitted across his face, yet he was soon calm, and after drinking a full cup of wine, he went on with his usual tone of conversation. He intended, he said, to remain at the castle for a week, and the duke familiarly extended to him an invitation to do so.

It was in the afternoon when Don Philip sought his daughter. He found her in her own apartment, and he took a seat by her side.

"Isabella," he said, without bending at all from his cold dignity, "I have come to make you acquainted with an important transaction which I have this day concluded. Some time ago the king spoke to me about the bestowal of your hand in marriage, and I partially acceded to his proposal. He has now selected Sir Nandon du Chastel for your husband, and, after mature deliberation, I have given my assent. Du Chastel is a wealthy man, and of one of the noblest families in Navarre. He is also in high favor with our king, and, as his wife, your position will at once be pleasant and important."

During this speech, Isabella had regarded her father with fixed eyes, and when he concluded, her face had assumed a mild look, but yet rigid as ice.

"Marry with Nandon du Chastel!" she uttered, in tones that seemed to come frozen from their source. "Be his wife! I am dreaming all this!"

"Then it must be a faithful dream, for it is all true, my child."

"The wife of Nandon du Chastel! O, you do not mean it! You will not consign me to such a fate. What have I ever done that I should be thus given over to utter misery?"

"This is folly, Isabella. You should not let your heart run away with your head. I have many reasons why this marriage should take place, and I have fixed upon it as a thing which must be done. Estella must have some heir. My house must not be left heirless in the male line. Du Chastel is the best match in Navarre, and I doubt not he will make you a good husband. I have now told you of it, and you can consider upon it at your leisure."

The maiden spoke not, nor did she raise her head when her father went out; but when she was alone she wept. Ere long she sought her mother, and to her she told the thing of her new grief. But the mother knew it all before—her husband had told it all to her, so she could only urge her child to try and bear up under it. They both knew that the purposes of the duke were like the laws of the Medes and Persians—that they were fixed and unalterable when once founded and understood.

"Alas! my child, he is fixed in this, I know," said the duchess, as she drew her daughter to

her bosom. "You know you must marry at some time—your father has set his heart upon that long ago, and he has thought Du Chastel as good as any of the nobles who are marriageable. But the nuptials may not take place for some months yet, so you will have time to wear off the sharpest points of the pang. Take heart, Isabella."

But how could the poor girl take heart when her heart was gone? How could she take heart when her heart was all crushed and bleeding? The admonition fell coldly upon her, for she saw no hope of comfort.

"O, I wish I were dead!" she groaned, as she clung to her mother's neck. "If I were in the grave I should be free from this."

"Hush, my child. You speak now from the promptings of an over-heated brain. Trust to time. Drowning men catch at straws, and in the months that are set apart before your marriage there may be something upon which your hopes can grasp. You can at least soften down the pillow by prayers and meditations."

CHAPTER VI.

A MYSTERIOUS PRESENCE.

TWILIGHT was deepening into night, and the landscape was becoming dim and indistinct, when a Benedictine monk was seen making his way up the hill to the castle. He was not a very old man, nor yet very young, appearing to be rather of a middle age. His face, as the last dim rays of the twilight fell upon it, seemed pale and wan, and about the dark eyes there was a look of restlessness and disquiet. The dark robe was gathered closely, about his form, as though he felt cold and chilly in the evening air. As he moved slowly on his way, his eyes wandered furtively about him, and several times he stopped and looked behind him as though he hesitated about keeping on. When he gazed full upon the castle at the top of the hill he seemed to shudder and tremble, and at length he stopped outright and sat down upon a stone by the wayside. He did not appear to have done this from fatigue so much as from indecision, for he was still restless as he sat there, and his eyes betrayed the conflict that was going on within.

The dew was now beginning to fall damp and fast, and ere long the Benedictine arose and gathered his long robe once more about him, and then, after another hesitation, he moved on again towards the castle.

"I can find some place there," he said to himself, in a tone at which he himself seemed

to start; "some place where I can be safe. It is a dangerous work, but I will try it."

The large gates of the castle were closed when he reached them; but he entered by a wicket, and the porter only craved a blessing as the admission fee. It was now quite dark, and as the Benedictine entered the inner court he became lost in the gloom. He had passed on by the main entrance to the great hall, and he may have gone to the postern, near the lodgings of the soldiers.

"Come, come, my fair lady," said Nandon du Chastel, as he stood by the side of Isabella, after supper; "you have not smiled upon me once this evening. You are miserly of your kindness."

The maiden cast a timid glance up into the knight's face, and a cold shudder ran through her frame. At first she had only thought of him as one whom she must unwillingly, unlovingly wed, but now she shrank from him because of himself. He looked so dark and sinister, and then she thought she saw gleams of malignity in his countenance—she was sure she could read a sort of triumphant look in his face.

"I am not in a mood for smiling to-night," she said.

"Are you not well?"

"Not quite, sir."

"Then suppose we take a turn in the court. The fresh air may revive you."

"No, sir. I would rather seek my own room."

Du Chastel did not fail to see the aversion that the maiden manifested, and it caused a dark cloud to come upon his already dark features. He played with his sword-hilt a moment, and seemed the while to be revolving some project over in his mind. He caught Isabella by the hand as she started to move from him, and bending his head low down so that his words might reach no other ears but those for which they were intended, he said:

"The duke tells me that the poor foundling, Henry la Nuit, has left you."

The maiden felt Du Chastel's hot breath upon her neck and cheek, but she dared not look up at him. She felt that his eyes were fastened upon her, and she tried with all her power to be calm.

"And no one knows where he has gone," resumed Du Chastel. "Strange that he should have gone away. Was he not pleasantly situated here?"

Still Isabella struggled to keep her passions down. She knew now that the speaker was trying to look into her heart, and she would have kept the secret to herself.

"I had thought," continued the dark knight, in a low, searching tone, "that Don Philip meant to have done well by the foundling. Strange that he should have left so suddenly, and especially just as the king had made him a knight."

Poor Isabella! She could not break away from the man who held her, nor could she much longer hold back the tempest that was raging in her bosom.

"Perhaps—indeed, I have thought—that the young man might have been unguardedly insolent—that he might have imposed upon the good duke's charity, and aspired to things beyond his deserts. Can you not inform me, lady?"

Poor, broken heart! It had stood all it could. Isabella uttered one deep sob, and, as her tears burst forth, she tore herself from the knight's hold and rushed from the room. She would have fled to her mother, but the duchess was herself indisposed, and had retired, leaving orders with Katrina that she should not be disturbed; so the maiden fled to her own room, and there she gave way to her grief.

No one in the hall had noticed Isabella's

movement, save Du Chastel, and after she had gone he stood for some moments and gazed upon the spot where he had last seen her stand. A dark smile played for a while upon his features, but at length it settled into a moody frown, and his hands worked nervously by his side.

"'Tis as I thought," he muttered to himself, as he turned away to one of the windows, and looked out upon the stars. "She loves that young foundling, and so she must needs be cold to me. I think a cure may be worked here."

It was a grim smile that passed over the man's countenance as he spoke these words, and that smile lingered about the corners of the mouth until it assumed a fearful look; but when, a few moments afterwards, he rejoined the duke, he was more gay than ever.

It was quite late when Nandon du Chastel retired. The chamber that had been set apart for his use was in the eastern extremity of the castle, and was separated by a thick wall from the tower. When he reached the apartment he carefully locked the door behind him, and sat down at the table, and then having placed the candle in a convenient place, he drew some papers from his bosom and began to look them over. After he had examined the writing as long as seemed his purpose, he spread a sheet of paper before him, and having produced an ink-horn and pen, he began to write. He wrote nearly an hour—for he formed the letters slowly and with difficulty—and at the end of that time he folded the sheet. He seemed to have no wax at hand,—or, if he had he did not use it then,—but he simply folded the paper upon which he had been writing, and, having placed it with the others, he put them all back into the pocket from whence he had taken them. After this he proceeded to undress; and having tried the door to assure himself that it was fast, he extinguished his light and went to the bed.

Sir Nandon du Chastel slept soundly. He had forgotten for the time the triumph he had gained over a poor weak girl; he had forgotten everything—for he slept too deeply to dream. The vast quantity of wine he had drank closed his eyelids tightly, and he snored so loudly that even the tempest-howl might have been silenced by it. The stars peeped into his chamber, and the gentle breeze whispered through the half-open window; but the sleeper heeded them not. Yet that breeze did not whisper in vain—for there was one who heard it;—and the star-beams, too, fell upon a dusky form that crouched

by the bedside. That form raised itself up and leaned over the bed, but still the sleeper snored. Then it moved towards the table, and when its back was turned it drew forth a small lantern from its bosom and opened it. Some of the rays shot up and revealed the pale features of the Benedictine. What could he be doing there?

The monk ran his eyes quickly over the table, and then he turned to where the knight had laid his clothes across a chair. He noiselessly searched about these until he had found the papers, and having secured them he turned back towards the bed. When he reached the wall he seemed to lean against it for a moment, and on the next instant he had disappeared. There was no door to be seen there, and yet the Benedictine must have passed through there somewhere. Either he must have mysteriously melted into air, or else he must have found some secret passage through into the tower.

Du Chastel slept on; and again, at the end of half an hour, the same dark presence glided back into the room and passed his bed. The papers were all placed exactly as they were found, and again the Benedictine disappeared as before.

The sun was high up when the knight arose from his bed, and he thanked his fate that he had enjoyed an undisturbed rest. When he had dressed himself he went down into the duke's study, and having obtained a piece of wax he sealed the letter he had written the night before, and then went out and ordered his horse. He told the groom to inform the duke that he should not be back to breakfast, but that he might be expected to dinner. After this he mounted his horse and rode off, taking the road towards Pampeluna.

Let us look back a little into the night that had passed. While Sir Nandon du Chastel was sleeping so soundly in his bed, Don Philip de la Carra had not yet retired. The duke was all alone in his study, and now that there was no one to see him his features were somewhat relaxed. He did not seem moved much, for those same emotions that would have made sad havoc with the complacency of others, had but little external effect upon him. What his heart may have felt few people knew. He may have been worked upon by the tenderest emotions, or he may have nursed the most fearful hatred in his bosom, and in his face it would have been all the same.

It was long past midnight when the duke arose from his chair, but even then he did not seek

his chamber. He took his light, and having passed out into the long corridor he took his way towards the eastern part of the castle. At one of the eastern angles of the building stood the high tower, within which was the chapel, and it was to this chapel that the duke went. When he reached it, he entered with a reverent step, and set his light upon the altar. Then he knelt down before the wooden crucifix and prayed; and who could that stern noble pray for at that hour, and in that place?

Don Philip prayed for his daughter; he prayed that he might see her happy under the circumstances that were hanging over her, and that the marriage he had projected might prove a blessing to her. He confessed that he was taking a step of necessity, but he hoped he was doing right; but above all, and most earnestly, did he pray that his child might submit meekly to the trials that had found her heart; that the love she had held for one who could be nothing more to her might be soon rooted out by the hand of forgetfulness.

When he arose from his kneeling, he wiped a single tear from his cheek; and when he again took up the light, the look of stern coldness had come back to his face. He passed out from the chapel, and having closed the door behind him he started to retrace his steps. He had passed out from the tower, and had just reached a point where the corridor came to an abrupt angle, when he came upon a human form that had met him from the opposite direction. It was the Benedictine.

"Who and what are you?" asked the duke, not a little startled by this sudden appearance.

The presence seemed for the moment to hesitate; but, without speaking, it slowly raised its head until the rays of the light fell upon its face.

"Great God of heaven!" gasped Don Philip, starting back aghast, and letting the candle drop from his hands.

In an instant it was dark as the closed tomb. The nobleman spoke, but no answer came back to him; he felt along the passage, but the presence was gone. Slowly he groped his way back to his study, where he had left a heavy lamp burning. Great drops of sweat stood upon his brow, and his face was pale as marble. As he sat down in his chair, he closed his hands upon his eyes, but he could not shut out the sight he had seen; he sought his bed, and he slept, but it was only to see that same pale presence in his restless dreams.

CHAPTER VII.

THINGS LOOK SUSPICIOUS.

NANDON DU CHASTEL had been gone an hour when Don Philip arose from his bed. The old nobleman was very pale, but a few turns in the open court revived him, and restored him to his wonted vigor. After this he went to the room of the warden, and got a bunch of keys, and with these in his hand he went to the chapel where he prayed the night before. In the corridor he found the candle that he had dropped, and he trembled when he stooped to pick it up; but he soon overcame the emotion, and with a firm step he moved on. In the chapel he remained only a few moments, for he seemed to have forgotten something that he needed, and he turned back again. It was a torch that he wanted, and having procured it he once more returned to the chapel. Near the sacristy there was a huge iron door, and this door he opened. It required all his strength to move the ponderous mass upon its creaking hinges, but he succeeded in opening a way wide enough for his own admittance, and holding the torch above his head he passed through and began to descend the stone steps that led down into the vaults beneath the chapel.

It was a dark, damp, dismal place, and the struggling beams of the torch showed it to be the place of sepulchre. Carefully Don Philip groped his way along to where a large marble

mausoleum arose to catch the lurid glare of the torch, and here he stopped, and then walked around the tomb and examined it in all its parts. It bore upon a slab in front the name of GIROLAMO, and seemed to be the resting-place of one who had been high in power.

At length Don Philip moved slowly away from the spot, and re-ascended to the chapel. He closed the great iron door, and having locked it he returned the keys to the warden, and then sought the chamber of the duchess. He found his wife with a manuscript book in her hand, but she laid it aside when he entered, and bade him a good morning. For a while the duke kept an uneasy silence, and he seemed half inclined not to carry out the object of his visit; but the eyes of the duchess were keen enough to read the trouble in his face, and she asked him the cause of it.

"Ianthé," he said, after a few moments of deliberation, "I saw something last night that well nigh froze my blood. I was in the corridor that leads to the chapel, and the time was past midnight. I was met by a dark presence; and I spoke to it, but it gave me no answer. It slowly raised its head, and I saw the pale, wan features of Girolamo!"

"Of Girolamo!" uttered the duchess, trembling violently.

"Ay—it was the noble lord himself."

"But he sleeps in the mausoleum, beneath the tower," murmured the lady.

"So he should," returned Don Philip, with a shudder, "but he surely walked about the castle last night. I noted his every feature, even to the wild, dark light of his eyes."

"But whither went he? Did you not follow him?"

"No—in my first startled astoundment I dropped my light, and he glided away from me in the darkness."

For a long while the duchess remained in profound thought. As she reflected upon the strange subject of her husband's words, her face grew a shade paler, and her hands trembled as they lay upon her brow. At length she said, in a careful tone:

"May he not be disturbed by some plan that is on foot in the castle? I can hardly believe that spirits are wont to burst forth from the tomb, as some people say—but I am not prepared to disbelieve when a thing becomes so palpable."

Don Philip was silent, and gazed vacantly upon the floor. He seemed troubled with the thoughts that came crowding upon him, for his brow was bent, and his lip quivered.

"Perhaps," continued the duchess, seeing that her husband did not speak, "the spirit of Girolamo comes thus to warn us of some danger at hand; he never liked the house of Du Chastel."

"Stop, stop, lady!" quickly interrupted Don Philip, while his face grew stern and cold. "No more of that! I know the wherefore of what I do, and what I have planned must come to pass. Let not your words dwell upon that subject again. It is sure I saw Girolamo, but his coming boded nothing touching that. If it did, let him come again and speak."

Just as Don Philip ceased speaking, there came a loud rap upon the door.

"Enter," said the duke.

"My lord," said a servant, "there is a man in the hall who would speak with you."

"Tell him I will be with him in a moment."

The servant withdrew, and then the duke turned to his wife.

"Let your thoughts not be troubled by this thing which I have told you," he continued, "for it can be nothing to you. Perhaps I ought not to have told you of this, for it may help to shatter your too sensitive nerves."

"No, no, fear not for me," returned the duchess.

Don Philip saw that her nerves were quiet, and that she had not been shocked by what she had heard. He may have thought that she already suffered too deeply in sympathy with her child to have this affect her as it otherwise might. But, be that as it may, he said no more on the subject; he only kissed his wife, and then left the apartment. When he reached the hall, he found the old pilgrim there.

"Ah, sir pilgrim, is it you who seek me?" he asked, keeping both hands folded so that the old wayfarer might not touch them.

"Yes, my lord; I have come to ask of you where I may find Henry la Nuit."

"And what can you want with him?" asked the nobleman, a little moved by the subject thus broached.

"It cannot matter to you, my lord, what I want of him; but I must find him."

Don Philip was inclined to be angry at first, but he soon overcame the emotion, though his face grew more stern as he gazed upon the man before him.

"I know not where the youth has gone," he said. "He went away from here without leaving a word for me, save a single farewell. I did not see him, and he sought not my advice; nor did he seek my aid."

Don Philip's eye grew moist as he spoke, but he kept his feelings to himself.

"I must find him," resumed the pilgrim, "and he must not leave Navarre. I think I may seek him at Pampeluna. You do not think there is any one in the castle who would know of his whereabouts?"

"I think not. You might see old Pedro, however. It was he who brought me the youth's farewell. You will not tell me why you seek him?"

"I cannot now."

The pilgrim turned away, and the duke went to his study.

Adjoining the rough barracks, in which the men-at-arms found their quarters, was the workshop of the armorer; and he was there, leaning upon his hammer. He had just finished putting the steel head upon a halbert, when he was accosted by the pilgrim.

"Oho, you seek my young master—God bless him!" uttered Pedro, after the pilgrim had stated his errand.

"Yes—and I would have you tell me something of him, if you can."

"Well, as I don't know you, I might not speak all I know."

"Perhaps Henry confided in you," said the pilgrim, not at all offended by the armorer's manner.

"He may have done so; and if he did it was because he knew I might be trusted. He was always free with me, for he knew that I loved him. I wish all the nobles in Navarre were as noble as he is—or even half of them."

The pilgrim leaned upon his staff, and gazed into the armorer's face. He seemed to read the old man's whole character in that look, for when he spoke again it was with a sort of calm assurance that must have been the result of some good reason.

"You say you loved the youth?"

"Ay, sir pilgrim—as though he had been of my own blood."

"And he would trust you with his most holy secret?"

"He would have no fear."

"Then I have a mind to tell thee why I seek him. I shall not tell you all, but you shall know enough to make you willing to help me. I have some work to do, and I may not be able to do it all alone. You will lend me a hand in anything that can benefit the youth?"

"Yes—even my own life."

The pilgrim showed his gratitude by his looks, and drawing the armorer to one corner of the shop, he told him what he dared to tell. It was not all he knew, but it was enough to make old Pedro stare and start, and clasp his hands with anxious desire; and when he had heard all, he grasped the pilgrim's hand and blessed him. He did not hesitate then to take that hand.

Now, close by the spot where the two old men had stood, there was a small window, and this window was open. It was shaded with a screen

to keep out the sun. It so happened that just as the pilgrim ceased speaking, Sir Nandon du Chastel moved away from that window. Did he happen there accidentally?—or had he seen the pilgrim enter, and so moved up there to hear what was going on? At all events, he had heard enough to move him with strange emotions, for his face was as dark as the cloud that portends the storm; and when he left the spot, he crept stealthily away, so that no one should see him. He entered the castle by the postern, and quickly sought the duke.

"What, not stop to dinner?" uttered Don Philip, after Du Chastel had told his errand.

"No, my good lord. Sudden and unexpected business calls me away."

"Why, you have but just returned from business, and the groom told me that you had ordered your horse to be taken care of for the day."

"So I did," stammered Du Chastel; "but I forgot this most important matter that has just come to my mind."

"It must be important," returned Don Philip, "for it moves you most wondrously."

"Does it?"

"Indeed, it does."

"Well—perhaps 'tis natural that it should. But," he added, with a lighter tone, at the invention that had come into his mind, "I am most moved to think that I should have forgotten it. The matter in itself is light, but only becomes serious in neglect."

Don Philip seemed satisfied with this, and he bade the knight a cordial adieu. Then Du Chastel ordered out his horse, and, in a few moments more, he was dashing swiftly away towards the capital.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SECRET ENEMY.

WHEN Henry la Nuit left the castle of Estel-la, he went directly to Pampeluna, where he found lodgings with an old knight, named Gomez Garliz, with whom he had been in several engagements. Garliz was now very lame from a severe wound he had received in his last battle; but he was pleased to see his brave young comrade, and they enjoyed several days of pure sociality. The old knight tried very hard to find out what it was that made his young friend so sad, and what made him sometimes shed tears, but Henry would not divulge the secret. He did not deceive his comrade, for he plainly told him that he had cause for sorrow, but he begged of him not to ask more, and at length the old man consented to drop the matter. Perhaps he divined the cause he sought, for gradually his face assumed an intelligent look, and he more than once hinted about young hearts and young heads, at the same time deprecating the law of Navarre that made a legal distinction between the worth of merit and the worth of noble blood.

Garliz and Henry had just finished their dinner, and the latter was setting aside his cup, when an officer entered the apartment and informed our hero that the king wished to see him. The young man was startled by the announcement, but he had no occasion for fear, and, in a few moments, he was ready to accompany the

messenger. When he reached the palace, he found the king alone. Alfonso was weak from present illness, but his eye was bright, and he bore himself with that same degree of dignity that had so entranced the nobles who usually surrounded him.

"Ah, Sir Henry," the monarch uttered, as the young man approached him, and knelt, "we are glad you are here, for your services are much needed. You have well earned your spurs, and now it suits our royal pleasure to afford you an opportunity to make them brighter. What say you to an adventure?"

"Lay your commands upon me, sire, and you shall find me happy in obeying them," returned our hero, rising to his feet, and gazing gratefully upon the monarch.

"Well spoken, Sir Henry. Now you are young, but we have reason to know of your bravery, and hence have you been chosen to carry out a plan that I would not trust to many an older head. You have probably heard of Morillo, the terrible bandit."

"Yes, sire," said the youth, deeply interested.

"Well, he is now on our northeastern frontier, and his deeds are growing more and more terrible every day. We have thus far used every means in our power to entrap him, but all has been in vain. He has a numerous band with

him, and a safe passage across the Pyrenees is next to impossible. Morillo robs and butchers without mercy. A messenger arrived here this morning from Saint Jean Pied de Port, and Morillo was in that town yesterday, and he is now probably lodged in some of the strong passes of the Pyrenees. We have set apart a hundred men, and to you we give the command. They are all of them well-trying and faithful, and most of them you have seen in battle. It is our wish that you should set off this very night, and by good riding you can reach Saint Jean before daylight to-morrow morning. You can then secrete your men if you wish; but all that we leave with you. If you bring us back the head of Morillo to Pampeluna, you shall be accounted our bravest knight. What say you?"

"I say yes, sire, with my whole heart," immediately answered Henry, who was much pleased with the consideration thus bestowed upon him.

"And can you be ready to set out to-night?"

"Yes, sire. My arms are all at hand, and my horse will be fresh and strong."

"Then your men shall be in readiness. Report yourself here at the setting of the sun."

Henry bowed and withdrew. In the antechamber he met Nandon du Chastel. It was on that very morning that the latter had left the castle of Estella in such a strange hurry. As he met our hero he passed a seemingly cordial greeting, and then went on to the chamber of the king.

"By my faith, Du Chastel, I thank you for having recommended that youth to my notice," said the monarch, as Sir Nandon approached him. "I am glad you returned just as you did, for this morning I was in doubt whom to place at the head of that mission."

"Ay, your majesty," returned Du Chastel, "I knew that La Nuit was a brave youth, and I am inclined to think that on such emergencies, the hot blood of ambitious youth is better than the cooler blood of more experience."

"Perhaps you are right, Du Chastel; but this is a dangerous mission, and I hope the youth will come back in safety."

"O, so do I—upon my soul I do!" responded Du Chastel, with a look in which exultation was blended with subtle cunning.

In due time, Henry la Nuit made his appearance, and the king complimented him on his noble bearing. The young man little dreamed of the cause that lay at the bottom of his present preferment; he knew not that he had an

enemy in the world; and for the present, perhaps, it was well he did not—for could he have read the meaning that lay lurking in Du Chastel's face, he would not have set forth on his work with so good a heart.

Henry saw his men assembled in the king's court, and he was well pleased with their appearance. Most of them he knew personally, and he knew they were men not used to fear. They, too, seemed pleased with the commander who had been given to them, and with one voice they pledged themselves to stand faithfully by him. It was nearly dusk when the party set out, but they all had strong horses, and they started off in good spirits. The distance to Saint Jean Pied de Port was not over twenty miles, and La Nuit reached that place about an hour after midnight. He had an order from the king to the seneschal of the town, so his troop was at once provided for.

With the first streak of dawn our hero was astir, and his first movement was to see that none of his men exposed themselves to observation, for he had reasons for keeping their presence a secret. For an hour after he arose he was closeted with the seneschal, and from that official he learned that some of the brigands had been seen near the town on the afternoon of the previous day; so there was little doubt that Morillo was somewhere on the Spanish side of the mountains. He learned the nature of the haunts that the brigands frequented, and with this information, seeing it was all he could get, he resolved to set at work. He was determined first to go among the mountains alone, and reconnoitre, for he knew that if he ventured among the rough fastnesses with his troop, he might be taken by surprise, and at a disadvantage. There were many of the passes of Saint Jean where a dozen men could hold at bay his full force. After he had made up his mind upon this point, he called one of his men to him. It was a young man, who possessed a face of more than ordinary intelligence.

"Francisco," he said, addressing his man, "I think you paint some."

"I have been accounted a painter, Sir Henry."

"So I have heard. Do you think you could paint a face well?"

"I can paint one, and then you shall be the judge," returned Francisco. "After we get over this brigand business, if we are both alive, I will try my hand, and then you shall see for yourself."

"Ay, but I want this done now," resumed La Nuit; "and it is my own face that I want painted."

"Your portrait?"

"No, no—my face. Now do you think you could so paint my face—my own individual face, I mean—that it would look like the face of a very old man?—so that a very close scrutiny would not detect the cheat?"

"If I had the materials I could certainly do it," returned Francisco, with astonishment.

"I can get the materials of the seneschal. I see you look puzzled, Francisco, and I will at once tell you what I mean to do. It will not answer to take our whole troop among the mountain passes at a venture, and before we can set out with any hopes of success it is absolutely necessary that I should know towards which point to turn. That information I cannot gain here in Saint Jean, and I am going to find it for myself. The seneschal will supply me with the necessary articles for disguising everything but my features, and this latter is a desideratum that you must supply."

"But, my dear master," began Francisco, "you are running into danger which you—"

But La Nuit stopped him, and bade him do as he desired.

"Very well," said the soldier-painter, at

length. "Bring me the materials and I will set at work. Put on the disguise you mean to wear, and I will paint you a face to suit it."

La Nuit was not long in preparing for the trial of Francisco's skill. The disguise that he obtained of the seneschal, he carefully adjusted. It was a pilgrim's dress, consisting of a long, brown gown, considerably soiled and worn; a pair of old sandals, and a well-fitting white wig; and he had also obtained the necessary paints for finishing his work. Francisco went at it, and, in the course of half an hour, he had so transformed the young man's face that the closest observer would have given his age the benefit of sixty years, at least. La Nuit looked into the burnished mirror, and expressed himself more than satisfied. He went out into the small court, where his men were assembled, and they greeted him with reverence; he walked around amongst them, and they craved his blessing. Not one of them knew him. Assured now that his plan was feasible, he revealed himself to his followers, and, as soon as their astonishment was somewhat subsided, he told them of his plan. At first, some of them remonstrated, out of fear for their commander's safety; but they all saw the excellence of the plan, and they promised to remain under cover until he returned.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MOUNTAIN BATTLE.

It was yet morning when Henry la Nuit set forth upon his dangerous mission. He was acquainted with some of the passes of Saint Jean Pied de Port, and of the nature of others he had learned of the seneschal. He walked very carefully when there was a chance of his movements being watched, but when he was where no prying eye could reach him, he walked on far more rapidly than the age he so well represented would seem to warrant. In his hand he carried a stout staff, and the only other weapon he had was a short dagger that he had concealed beneath his robe.

An hour's walk brought him to the first real pass of the mountains, and from this point the way was rough and tedious. The young man had toiled up many a hard way, and was beginning to despair, when he suddenly came upon a piece of wide table-rock, where the narrow mule-path was lost for a while in open spaces. For a few moments he stood on this spot, and gazed about him. On all hands the mountain peaks towered above him, bereft of everything like vegetation, and he was half lost in the wild grandeur of the scene, when he was accosted by a human voice. He turned and saw a man standing only a few feet from him, and he knew him at once, by his garb and arms, to be one of the brigands.

"By Saint John," uttered the brigand, "you are taking a toilsome way, good sir pilgrim. What leads you here?"

"Alas, my son, I have lost my way," returned La Nuit, leaning heavily upon his staff.

"And whither would you go?"

"I would find the town of Navarretta," said La Nuit.

"Then, it seems to me, you are taking a strange course to find it. Have you not just ascended the mountain?"

"Yes, my son."

"Then you must have known that you were travelling directly away from the place you seek."

"Ay," returned the seeming pilgrim, without hesitation, "I know that; but I got lost in the intricate windings below, and I toiled up here in hopes of seeing my way. All night long have I been on the stretch. I am hungry and weary. If you have food I pray you to give me some."

The brigand hesitated a while, but at length he bade our hero follow him. He struck off into a narrow defile that led between two huge cliffs, and several times he turned back to spur his follower up, but the pilgrim professed to be too old and weary to walk faster, and, with a few slight growls, the guide lagged on. At length the latter stopped, and bade the pilgrim wait

there while he went to see if he could find something in the shape of food for him. La Nuit waited some fifteen minutes, and, at the end of that time, the brigand returned, and again bade him follow on.

The distance now was short, for the guide soon reached a place where there was a deep cavern in the rock, and where there were half a dozen men, all well-armed, sitting about. They spoke with the pilgrim, but had no idea of doubting him. They looked upon him as a feeble old man, and though they did not seem to be overburdened with the spirit of hospitality, yet they did not wish to turn the applicant away empty-handed. The man, who had brought him hither, soon gave him some bread and wine, and after this he brought him some goat-skins, upon which to sleep. La Nuit thanked the fellow for his kindness, and then laid himself down and prepared to watch all that went on about him. He counterfeited sleep so well that little notice was taken of him, save once in a while to come and see if he yet slumbered, and, as they thought he did, they seemed to rest at their ease.

At length—it may have been half an hour after La Nuit laid down—there came a heavy tramping of feet along the defile, and, shortly afterwards, a body of men, some fifty in number, came towards the great open cavern. They were led by a man whom La Nuit at once knew, from the descriptions he had received, to be Morillo, and was a powerfully-built fellow, somewhere in the middle age of life, and looking the very picture of what he really was—dark, frowning and fierce, with a short, thick neck, and a broad, thick head. His hands were even now bloody, and a look at the articles which his followers bore would tell that he had just come from the doing of one of his guilty deeds.

"How now, Maldiz," he cried, as his eye rested first upon the pilgrim, and then upon the brigand, who had conducted the old man thither.

"What means this?"

"Ah, captain," returned Maldiz, with a slight trembling, "he is a poor pilgrim, whom I found faint and weary in the great pass, and as he begged so hard for food and rest, I brought him hither. He had lost his way, and had been wandering about all night."

"How long has he slept?"

"Not over half an hour, captain."

Morillo approached the spot where our hero lay, and touched him lightly with his foot; but La Nuit did not betray the least sign of con-

sciousness; he seemed to be sleeping a hard, sound sleep. The brigand watched him for a few moments, and then turned towards Maldiz, to whom he said:

"You should have known better than to have brought that old man here. He may not do us any damage, for by to-morrow we shall leave this place, but you know it is against our laws. Never do it again, even though it were your own mother who asked it at your hands."

Maldiz offered some apology, but Morillo cut him short, with an assurance that if harm came of this, his head should be the forfeit.

For nearly two hours Henry la Nuit lay there, and all the while he pretended to be asleep. When he at length arose to his feet, he was confronted by Morillo himself.

"Do you feel like pursuing your journey?" asked the brigand.

"Yes, my son, I am much refreshed. If your leader would let one of his men set me upon the right road, I shall have still more occasion for thanks."

Morillo hesitated for some moments ere he spoke. At first he seemed inclined to administer some terrible admonition, but he finally concluded to keep it to himself, for he called one of his men, and bade him conduct the pilgrim to the great pass, and point out to him his road.

"Let me thank you once more for your kindness," said our hero, as he was turning away.

"Never mind that," returned Morillo, with a dark look. "Let me advise you, however, to keep a quiet tongue in your head, after this. I've known men to die from a slight exposure on these mountains!"

La Nuit knew very well what the brigand meant, but he bowed in acknowledgment of the token without trepidation, and then followed his conductor from the spot.

It was near nightfall when La Nuit reached the town of Saint Jean Pied de Port, and he found that he had arrived just in time, for in half an hour more his men would have been up the mountains after him. As soon as he was in the court, they crowded anxiously about him to learn of his success.

"I think I have them," was his reply to the men's inquiry. "I can lead you to their very nest, and I believe you will help me do the rest."

A simultaneous "Yes," burst from the lips of the men. All they wanted was to be led to the conflict.

The moon was to rise that night at about

eleven o'clock, and La Nuit made up his mind that he would start about ten, so that he might reach the cover of the deep passes before the night became light enough to prove dangerous. Accordingly the party supped at the expense of the seneschal once more, and at the appointed time they set off. They reached the mountain just as the first pale beams of the moon came glimmering over the scene—so they had sufficient light to enable them to pick their way slowly along up the rugged path. La Nuit bade each man tread as lightly as possible, and after they got well up, ~~he said~~ all talking of whatever kind.

At length they reached a narrow place, where not more than two could walk abreast, and here La Nuit bade his followers remain while he went ahead to reconnoitre. He took Francisco with him, and, with noiseless steps, he moved along through the narrow defile.

"I expect to find a sentinel only a short distance ahead," he whispered to Francisco, "and he must be disposed of without noise. If you see him first, be careful and utter no exclamation that can betray us."

Francisco promised obedience, and then the two moved on again. It was not many minutes before La Nuit reached the opening of the "Great Pass," as he had heard it called,—the wide table, where he had met the brigand,—and he had reason to believe that a sentinel was kept posted there. Here he stopped Francisco again, and then crept forward to the pass. The moonbeams fell upon full half of the open space, and, after some watching, our hero discovered a man standing within the shade, some thirty feet from him. He crept back to where Francisco had stopped.

"—sh!" he whispered, "I have seen him. Let me take the club, and you remain here till I call for you. Move not under any circumstances, unless I call your name."

It was a short, heavy club, which he had prepared on purpose, and, as soon as La Nuit received it, he went back to his post. The brigand was now walking up and down the further part of the table, and humming a tune while he walked. Our hero might easily have rushed upon him and overcome him, but that would not answer his purpose. Had he been sure that he could have brought the whole band of robbers to an engagement in this pass, he might have run the risk, rather than wait too long; but of this he could not be certain, and he knew that if he

could but reach the cavern with his men, he could be sure of a fair conflict, at least.

For full fifteen minutes La Nuit waited there, and he was almost upon the verge of despair, when the sentinel slowly approached the very spot where he lay. The knight crouched as low down as possible, and the brigand cast his eyes down the defile without seeing him, and then passed on. This was the moment for our hero, and balancing the club carefully in his hand, he gave one leap, and, on the same instant, his blow fell with such unerring aim and force that the sentinel fell with it, without so much as a groan. A single blow of the dagger made the work sure, and then he hastened back down the defile. His men were quickly called up and arranged, and ere long they stood in the open pass, where the sentry had been slain.

"Now, my men," said La Nuit, speaking in low, quick tones, "the work is fairly before us. It must be a hand-to-hand battle now, and the best men must win. Draw your swords and follow me as silently as possible."

La Nuit took the same way through which he had been led on the previous morning, taking care to avoid the moonbeams as much as possible, and ere long he entered upon the open space in front of the cavern.

This cavern was but a broad, deep hole in the face of a perpendicular rock. The entrance was as ample as the interior, so that a person upon the outside could command a full view of the inner surface. It only served as a shelter from the rains and heavy dews. As soon as our hero's men were close behind him, he entered the open space, and, at the same moment, there was a loud shout from some one who had discovered them. This shout was answered by at least a dozen voices from the cavern, and, in a moment more, the aroused brigands came rushing out.

"Now, my men," shouted La Nuit, "let your blows be quick and strong. On! in the name of God and our king!"

The moon now shone full into the place, and the fight went on with almost as much certainty as though it had been broad day. The brigands had all rallied, but yet they were taken at a disadvantage. The soldiers not only outnumbered them, but they also had the advantage of the first blow, and that was not a little.

"This is the work of that accursed pilgrim!" cried Morillo, as he sprang into the midst of the conflict.

"Then it is the holiest work he ever did!" shouted La Nuit, in return.

"Ha! say ye so? Now prove it!"

Morillo had singled out the knight, and with a quick bound he stood before him. Other men fought wherever they could fetch a blow, but these two fought alone, and they fought, too, with all the coolness and tact that long practice can give. The one fought for his life, and the other for a boon full as dear. La Nuit had forgotten now that HONOR could be nothing more to him; he felt that the trust of his king was upon his shoulders—that the eyes of all the knights in Navarre would be upon him for this; and he fought for more than life.

"You have experience," said Morillo, as his favorite stroke was parried for the sixth time, "but you will soon find the need of strength."

"Wait till that need comes," said La Nuit, as he gave a thrust which came nigh the brigand's heart.

Our hero soon found that he must resort to the only trick of arms he had left, and to this end he moved back a pace, and then made a feint at the brigand's breast. The thrust was parried, but as La Nuit had not intended to drive his sword home, the cross stroke only took it upon the point, and, quick as lightning, he changed the direction of his weapon, and drove it clear through the brigand's sword-arm, at the elbow. As Morillo's arm fell to his side, La Nuit withdrew his sword with a powerful effort,

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and then fetched his adversary a blow upon the temple with its pommel, that settled him to the ground.

When the fight ended, there were only six of the brigands alive, and they cried for quarters. Forty-two of their comrades in crime lay dead about them, and they saw that their chief was bound and made prisoner. La Nuit found that he had lost twenty men. It was a loss, but then the loss was slight when compared with the good that had been done in thus ridding the country of a scourge that had been so long levying upon its fairest lives and fortunes.

"O, that accursed pilgrim!" hissed the brigand and chieftain.

"Don't trouble yourself any more about him," said La Nuit, in reply, "for," he added, assuming the voice he had used when under the disguise, "I am the very person, and now I have still more occasion than ever for thanks!"

Morillo started as though he had been struck by a javelin. He gazed for a few moments into the moonlit features of the young man, and then he ground his teeth in fury.

"O," he hissed, "I wish I had known it!"

"Still, I am thankful as it is!" returned La Nuit.

As he spoke, he turned to his men, and ere long afterwards the prisoners were placed under safe guidance, and then the party began to descend the mountain.

CHAPTER X.

THE BENEDICTINE'S WARNING.

It was with some difficulty that the seneschal of Saint Jean Pied de Port could be persuaded to believe that Morillo was captured alive, and it was with equal difficulty that he could be persuaded to go into the room where the dreaded brigand was; but at length he did so, and though he trembled exceedingly, yet he got a full view of the terrible man.

"So we've got you, at last," ventured the seneschal, coming as near the prisoner as he dared.

Morillo looked up, and ground his teeth, and the poor seneschal shrank away behind La Nuit, and expressed a desire that the fellow might be removed as soon as possible.

This could not be done, however, until La Nuit had received additional force from the seneschal, and brought the bodies of the slain, and the booty of the brigands, from the mountains. The force was easily raised, and, by the middle of the afternoon, our hero was once more back again beneath the roof of the timid seneschal. Of course, he could not think now of returning to Pampeluna before the next morning, so he took additional measures for the safety of the prisoners, and then saw to the disposition of those who needed burial.

For two nights La Nuit had had no sleep, and as soon as he could get clear of his pressing duties, he sought his bed, determined to catch a

slight rest before supper. The bed felt most grateful to his weary limbs, and in a very few moments he was fast asleep. When he awoke, it was fairly dark, and, on descending to the hall, he found that all his men had eaten their suppers, and gone to bed, the prisoners being under a guard provided by the seneschal. He was somewhat surprised to find that it was near ten o'clock, but when he came to realize how much refreshed he felt, both in body and mind, he did not wonder that he had slept five hours. He sat and talked with the seneschal until that worthy functionary began to nod and doze in his chair; so at eleven o'clock he gave up that companionship, and went to where the prisoners were confined. Having seen that all was safe there, and given a few words of charge to the guard, he threw on his surcoat and passed out into the street. The first sound that struck his ear was the loud murmuring of the Nive, and he at once bent his steps towards the bank of the river. By the time he reached it, the moon began to lift its bright face above the mountains, and he promised himself a pleasant walk.

About half a mile up the river, La Nuit had noticed a little cot that was shut in by trees. He had seen it when on his way to the mountains, and he determined to bend his steps thither. He had no particular object in view, save to en-

joy a walk by himself, and to have that walk as quiet as possible. Is it a wonder that his thoughts now wandered back to the old castle of Estella? The name of the gentle being, whom he so fondly loved, dwelt softly upon his lips, and the excitement of the past day was forgotten. He forgot the new honors that were gathering about him; he forgot the shouts of thanks that were awaiting him; he forgot all but that one tear-wet face he had last seen in the corridor of the old castle.

Thus wandering, and thus pondering, he came close upon the little cot, and he was aroused from his meditations by the approach of some one who had come from the ivy-bound porch. La Nuit would have avoided the stranger, but he could not do so without making his way through a thick hedge of mulberries, and this he cared not to do. The moon now shone full upon the path, and La Nuit saw that the coming person was habited in the garb of a Benedictine. At length they met, and our hero saw the pale features before him as they were lit up by the moonbeams. The Benedictine stopped, and La Nuit started back with horror.

"Who are you?" he uttered, gazing breathlessly upon the pallid features of the hooded apparition.

"One who knows you, Henry la Nuit!" returned the monk, in a tone that made the young man quiver.

"Ay—but who are you?" he whispered.

"It matters not, so long as I am one who wishes you well. Go on, La Nuit, and win your way to honor and fame!"

"O, this is some phantasy that has seized upon me!" exclaimed La Nuit, paying little heed to the Benedictine's words. "Speak to me! Art thou flesh and blood, like me, or art thou but the seeming of solid life—the airy phantom of my imagination? And yet I should know you well! Those features are not—"

Who has not, in the midst of some terrible dream, felt sure that the brain was being played upon by phantasy, and so sought to awaken from the uneasy slumber?—half asleep, yet dreaming of horror, and wishing to awake. So La Nuit stopped short in his speech, and shook himself. He wondered if he were not still on the bed where he had thrown himself that afternoon, and if all this were not a lively dream; he rubbed his eyes, and gazed about him, and he was convinced that he was awake.

"GIROLAMO!" he uttered, gazing again upon the Benedictine.

"Then you, too, know me."

"If thou art Girolamo, I did know thee once. But I saw thee buried beneath the old castle of Estella."

"I have been beneath that castle, and I have seen the mausoleum that tells where Girolamo once slept. But seek no more of that. I have a right to walk the earth, and I will walk it to some purpose. Let me whisper a word in your ear. Start not, for it is not with me to do thee harm. But beware of Nandon du Chastel!"

"Ha! Du Chastel?"

"Yes—beware of him!"

"But wherefore?" asked the youth, his mind at once turned into a new channel, but yet keeping sight of the old one.

"Because there is need of it, and that is all I can tell you—for it is all I know."

"One moment!" cried La Nuit; but he spoke in vain, for the Benedictine moved off, nor would he stop. The young man gazed after him so long as his dark form was in sight, and then he started on his way back towards the town.

La Nuit had plenty to think of now besides the gentle lady, Isabella, but his thoughts were not very firmly settled upon any given point. When he reached the dwelling of the seneschal, he went to the room where the prisoners were confined, and, having assured himself that all was well, he once more sought his own chamber. In the morning he sought the seneschal, and asked him if he knew who lived in the little cot down upon the bank of the Nive.

"I know there is a woman lives there, and that she is very old," returned the seneschal.

"And do you not know her name?"

"No. She lives there by herself, and I have had no chance to find her out. I do not even know whether she has any relatives living or not."

"And have you ever seen a Benedictine about the cot?"

"No. But why do you ask?" continued the seneschal, as he noticed that La Nuit trembled.

"O, nothing—only I was down that way last night, and I thought I saw one come out of the cot. But I may have been mistaken. Then you know nothing about this woman?"

"No," said the seneschal; and he was upon the point of going off into a string of questions in turn, when Francisco put his head in at the door, and informed the knight that all was ready

for setting off. This cut off further conversation on the subject of the cot by the river, and, having thanked his host for all his kindness and assistance, La Nuit went out into the court where his men were drawn up in waiting for him.

The prisoners were mounted upon animals which had belonged to some of the poor fellows who had fallen in the mountain battle, and our hero took care that they were well guarded. Morillo's arm had been dressed, but the wound still gave its owner some pain, though it was almost forgotten beneath the bitter chagrin of his captivity.

It was just noon when the party arrived at Pampeluna, and the news spread like wildfire that the terrible Morillo was captured. The streets were thronged with anxious gazers, and the loud shouts of the people went up in praise of the noble knight who had done them such service. It was with great difficulty that La Nuit reached the royal palace, but when once he was admitted to the court, the thronging populace was shut out, and he made his way quickly to the king.

Alfonso had been sitting all the morning in one of his private apartments, and Nandon du Chastel had been in attendance upon him. The monarch was down-hearted and sad, but as he was often subject to such fits, his attendants had given only a passing notice to his present mood. He was sitting thus, when a messenger announced Sir Henry la Nuit.

"Let him come in," said the king, starting back to himself. "Ah, Sir Henry," he continued, as our hero entered, "back again?"

"Yes, sire," returned the youth, kneeling before his monarch.

"And as bootless as you went, I opine," said Du Chastel.

Henry sprang to his feet, and gazed into Du Chastel's face. In an instant he caught the venom of that voice; he saw the darting look of the dark knight; and he remembered what he had been so mysteriously told the night before.

"How is it, Henry?" asked the monarch.

"Morillo is at your service, sire!"

"What!" exclaimed Alfonso, starting from his seat. "Do you mean that you have him—alive?"

"Yes, sire. He is now in the court, and six of his men are with him. Forty-two others we slew in the mountains."

The monarch hastened forward, and embraced the youthful knight.

"Now, by our royal diadem, thou shalt be rewarded for this," the glad king exclaimed, "for thou art truly our best knight."

"O, no, sire—not your best."

"It is our humor to call thee so, at least. But go bring this Morillo to the great hall, and we will go there and see him."

La Nuit bowed, and turned towards the door, but before he did so he noticed the look that dwelt upon the face of Nandon du Chastel. It was a look of dark, deadly malice, and the young knight wondered what could have caused it. It puzzled him much; but he at length made up his mind that it must be envy. He little dreamed of what was passing in the world of fate.

CHAPTER XI.

PREMONITIONS.

"WHAT do you mean, Pedro?"

"Why, I mean, my lord, that Morillo has been taken, and that his whole gang are either killed or made prisoners."

"Thank God for that, if 'tis true," ejaculated the duke.

"O, but I know it's true."

"And who did it?"

"Sir Henry la Nuit!" returned the old armorer. A quick flush moved upon the stern face of Don Philip.

"Do you know this to be true, Pedro?"

"Yes, my lord—the servant who came here this morning with Sir Nandon du Chastel, told me all about it." And thereupon, Pedro went on and related to the duke all the particulars as he had heard them; and, so far as he related them, they were very correct.

Don Philip turned away from his armorer, and entered the castle. "He is a noble boy," he murmured to himself, as he walked slowly across the great hall. "I wish he were noble by blood as well as by nature."

That was all the duke said; but it was enough to show how his heart beat. His face, however, was not moved by his thoughts, for now, as always, those features gave no token of what the heart felt. At the extremity of the hall he met Du Chastel, who had evidently come to seek him.

"Sir Nandon," said the duke, after they had reached the study, "you did not tell me that Morillo had been taken."

"Ah—no, my lord," stammered Du Chastel.

"But, is it so?"

"O, yes."

"And who did it?"

"Well—let me see," replied the knight, with some hesitation; "I think Henry la Nuit was of the party."

"Ay; and who led it?"

"Well; it must have been La Nuit."

Don Philip at once saw through the aim of Du Chastel. He did not see through that knight's whole aim, for if he had he would have spurned him from his halls; but he saw enough to satisfy him that Du Chastel was moved somewhat by a spirit of envy; so he let the matter drop. After a silence of some moments, Sir Nandon said:

"I have thought, Don Philip, that perhaps we might as well come to an understanding at once, and have our business arranged."

"Ay, he is a noble youth—a right noble youth."

"I spoke of our business, my lord," said Du Chastel, somewhat disconcerted.

"O,—ay," uttered the duke, starting out of

the reverie into which he had fallen. "Proceed, sir."

"I said, my lord, that perhaps we might as well come to an understanding of our business."

"I thought it all understood now," returned the duke. "The king is to settle upon you the estates of Navarretta, and I am to give you my daughter in marriage."

"But that, you know, is still indefinite. I would have the time set."

"It shall be when the king pleases."

"Ah—I thank you, my lord," pursued Du Chastel, with a sparkling eye. "I have conferred with the king, and he is anxious that the matter should be consummated as soon as possible."

"Then I will see the king myself," said Don Philip; "and between us we will make due arrangements. I care not, Du Chastel, how soon this business is completed."

"And when will you go?"

"This very day."

"Then I will ride with you."

"No; you may remain here, and take care of the castle."

"Very well," responded the knight; and, on the whole, the idea of remaining seemed to suit him full as well.

At noon, the duke set off for Pampeluna, and, shortly afterwards, Isabella walked out into the garden, back of the castle. She walked very slowly, for her thoughts were heavy and sad. She had heard of the noble exploit of Henry la Nuit, and it had carried her mind back to a subject that could be entertained only with pain. She had been weeping, but the tears were dried from her eyes now. She had only taken a few turns among the vines which her own hands had trained,—just enough to soothe her somewhat troubled spirit,—when she was met by Nandon du Chastel. She stopped suddenly when she saw the dark man, and a cold shudder ran through her frame.

"I have been looking for you," said the knight, as he reached her side. "Your father has left me, and I was becoming lonesome. Ah, lady, did I not know your love of solitude, I might almost be inclined to think that you shunned me."

"Should you?" returned Isabella.

"Indeed, I should."

"Then if you would make me happy, sir, I wish you would act upon that belief."

"What belief, fair lady?"

"That I wish to shun you!"

"Ah, but I don't believe it. No, no, lady. Even your own assertion to that effect would fail to convince me. No, no, Isabella—I know you would not shun me. I love you too well; I held you too dear. Ah, 'tis not our nature to shun those that love us. Come, come, throw off that look of shyness, and join me with a spirit that will better become you. I am not much used to flattery—I am too plain spoken for that; but yet I hope I can please you. If I do not it shall not be my fault."

Du Chastel did not speak this with that brilliant, off-hand manner that would naturally mark the man he wished to pass for, but it was stiff and studied. Isabella read it all, and she felt a tinge of loathing added to the dislike she already felt. Yet she dared not speak as she felt, for she knew that she must marry with the man, for her father had so willed it; and she knew, too, that her father had even now gone to make arrangements for the ceremony. Her first impulse was to spurn the knight from her; but this she dared not do. Her next step was to burst into tears; but this she refrained from. The next was, to bear his company with the best grace possible. It was a hard alternative, but she set her will toward the deed, and she hoped to accomplish it.

"When we are married," resumed Du Chastel, "we will be happy. Every moment," he continued, after studying some time to get the idea into a poetical shape, "shall come to us upon golden wings, laden with some new love. Shall it not be so, lady?"

In a moment, Isabella's dark eyes flashed with indignation; but she soon calmed herself, and, in a cold tone, she answered:

"All talk of love is lost upon me, sir. You know this marriage is a mere matter of business, and in which my wishes have not been consulted. If I ever love you, it will be the result of your actions, and not of your words."

Du Chastel shrank beneath this cool reply; but he soon rallied again, and Isabella was not relieved of his presence until the call came for dinner.

Towards the latter part of the afternoon, a courier drove up to the castle, and demanded to speak with Sir Nandon du Chastel. He was requested to come into the hall, but he refused, and so the knight was sent for. Sir Nandon went out into the court, and at the end of a somewhat earnest conversation, the messenger gave him a letter, and then rode off. The knight returned to the hall, where he read the letter,

and then, with a well-satisfied air, he went up to his room.

The duke did not return that night, so at an earlier hour than usual, Du Chastel retired. It must have been near midnight. Sir Nandon was sleeping soundly, when again there was a noiseless movement at the wall near the head of his bed, and directly afterwards a dark object came into the dim starlight of the window. It crossed over to where the knight's garments lay, and after crouching down, and listening for a moment, it opened a small lantern, and again the

pale features of the Benedictine were revealed! The pockets were searched, the papers removed, and then the dark presence moved back, and was lost somewhere in the thick wall. At the end of half an hour, the Benedictine returned. The papers were put back from whence they had been taken, and noiselessly the mysterious intruder glided away again.

Nandon du Chastel may have dreamed that night of a spirit; but if his dream was anything near the truth, then he could not have wished to dream it over again.

CHAPTER XII.

A STARTLING ADVENTURE.

HENRY LA NUIT still remained beneath the roof of Gomez Garliz. Several times since his bold achievement in the mountains, he had been tempted to visit the old castle of Estella; but he knew if he went he must see Isabella, and he dared not trust himself to such an ordeal. The feelings which he entertained towards that fair being were, even now, sometimes wild and heart-rending, and he knew that to see her again, would not make them any more bearable. All he now sought was, to seize the first opportunity to join some band of Crusaders for the Holy Land—there to forget his grief, or throw away his life, where his Saviour died.

He was in the house of his old friend one morning, revolving this project over in his mind as he paced up and down the floor, when he was interrupted by the entrance of the same old pilgrim whom he had seen once before at the castle. At the sight of that man, Henry stopped, and, in an instant, his thoughts were all changed, for the idea still dwelt with him that the pilgrim knew something of his infancy.

"Well, Sir Henry," said the old devotee, "how do you feel this morning?"

"Strong enough, sir pilgrim."

"Strong enough to take a walk with me?" asked the pilgrim.

"That depends upon circumstances," was La

Nuit's reply. "Where will you walk, and for what?"

"I shall walk towards the confines of Biscay; and for what you shall know when we reach our destination."

"I am willing to walk with you, sir pilgrim; but you can hardly expect a ready assent while I am in ignorance of the object in view."

The pilgrim sat down and looked upon the young knight for some moments without speaking. He seemed to be studying over some plan he had in his mind, for his eyes wandered from the knight to the floor with restless glances. At length he said:

"I wish you would go with me, sir, for I would take you to one who wishes to see you. I pray that you will go, and yet all that I can tell you is that it has to do with a question you once asked me at the castle."

"With my birth—my parentage?" uttered La Nuit, laying his hand nervously upon the old man's arm.

"Yes. Now if you will go with me, ask no more."

It was not in Henry's power now to refuse. He had no reason to believe that he was being deceived, and he could read character well enough to see that the pilgrim was a man not to be easily turned from his purpose. As the young

knight moved as if to prepare himself, his visitor remarked:

"You had better take your horse, Sir Henry, for the distance is long."

"And how will you go?"

"O, I can easily walk by your side."

"If you can walk I can," returned La Nuit, as he took his sword down from a peg, and buckled it about him.

The pilgrim offered no further suggestions, and ere long our hero was ready to set out. He left word for Garliz that he might not be at home that day, and then he set out. The pilgrim took the road that led to the westward, and until after they had cleared the city of Pampeluna, neither of them spoke.

"I think we have been watched," said the pilgrim, as he brought his stout oaken staff down, by way of emphasis.

"Watched!" repeated La Nuit. "Who should watch us, and for what?"

"Perhaps by those who are curious to know why you are walking off into the country with me."

As the pilgrim spoke there came the sound of horses' hoofs behind them. They turned and saw two horsemen riding after them, and directly a third came in sight. They were at full gallop, and, of course, seemed to be upon some urgent errand.

"Perhaps they are messengers, after me," said La Nuit, stopping by the side of the road.

"Who from?"

"May be the king."

"He would not have been likely to send three messengers, when one would have done as well."

The horsemen were now so near that Henry made no reply to the last remark of his companion. He moved further towards the side of the road as they came up; but they did not stop, nor did they even nod. One of them our hero thought he had seen before, but where he could not call to mind. The other two were entire strangers. All three of them were well armed, and mounted upon powerful beasts.

"Perhaps they are bound to Guidez," said La Nuit. "There is a detachment there."

"Perhaps they are," responded the pilgrim, with a slight shake of the head.

If there was anything concealed in the old man's reply, Henry did not notice it, and he came up into the road again and walked on. They had now entered upon a wild, rugged scene, where huge cliffs of rock hung frowning

over the road, and where the way sometimes ran over deep chasms that seemed yawning to swallow up all above them. Small streams that came rushing down from the Santillanos, grew to fearful torrents by the time they reached the passes that let them under the road, and their roaring was almost deafening. Yet, amid all this, Henry la Nuit did not for a moment forget the thoughts that were called up by the strange mission upon which he was bound. Once, after they had crossed one of these streams, he asked his companion to tell him the nature of the business he had in hand; but the only answer he received was a shake of the head, and he resolved to ask no more questions till he had some more tangible subject to query upon.

They had now been upon the road nearly four hours, and had entered a small, open space that lay between the cliffs and the wide wood. The bridle-path was through the centre of this clearing, while a wider road ran around upon the edge. The pedestrians took the former way, and had passed half way across, when La Nuit thought he saw a horseman in the edge of the wood ahead of him, and he mentioned the circumstance to his companion. They both stopped a few moments, but as they saw nothing, and as La Nuit was not sure that he had been correct, they moved on again.

"We shall not have to go far beyond these woods," said the pilgrim; "so you shall soon know why you have come with me."

La Nuit gazed up into the old man's face, but he asked no question. The remark had served to spur up the interest he had at heart, but he would not lay himself open to any more refusals.

At length they reached the wood, and here they struck into the market road again. They had only taken a few steps when La Nuit was confident that he heard the neighing of a horse. The pilgrim heard it, too, and they both stopped and looked at each other.

"The presence of a horse here in these woods is no uncommon thing," said the old man; "but yet I have a faint suspicion that in the present case all is not right. I think we had better be prepared for any emergency that may turn up," he added.

For a moment, there flashed upon the mind of our hero a feeling of distrust towards the pilgrim. It was faint and shapeless, but yet he thought he had reason for it. His being led off thus without any clearly expressed purpose, and the unwillingness of his companion to explain his

meaning, now began to appear questionable; but he said nothing of his doubts, being determined to await some further development.

"By the holy cross of Jerusalem!" uttered the old devotee, "there are those three horsemen. If they mean us harm we must defend ourselves."

"Ay, so we must," responded our hero, as he looked and saw the horses some little distance ahead. Then, turning to his companion, he added, with a slight tinge of derision in his manner, "But you do not seem to be overstocked with the means of defence."

"Never mind," said the old man, with something almost like a smile breaking over his features. "This staff has served me in some hard places ere now. To be sure, I am getting somewhat old, but my limbs are kept pretty well tuned to exertion. Keep your eyes open, Sir Henry, for I feel sure that those fellows mean us mischief."

The horsemen were now not more than twenty rods distant, and were slowly approaching the two pedestrians. They seemed to be consulting with each other on some important matter. At length one of them drew his sword, and, turning to his companions, he said, loud enough to be heard by La Nuit:

"I'll take the old one, and you must look out for the other. Make no blunders, now!"

"Did you hear that?" asked the pilgrim.

"Yes," retorted La Nuit, while his heart beat quickly in his bosom. He looked hard at the old man as he spoke, but he could see nothing in his countenance to confirm the suspicion he had entertained. The pilgrim had grasped his staff firmly in his hand, and his eyes were sparkling with the fire of youth.

But La Nuit had not time for an extended observation. The horsemen were upon him, and he drew his heavy sword from its scabbard.

"Hold!" he cried, as he moved slightly aside. "What want ye here?"

"We want Henry la Nuit, the foundling!" answered the foremost of the horsemen.

Our hero had time to see one of the fellows aim a sword-stroke at the head of the pilgrim; he saw the sword fall—not upon the old man's head, but upon the oaken staff. Then he saw that staff whirl rapidly in the air, and the horseman came to the ground. All this had passed in a moment's time, and it was sufficient to nerve Henry's arm with new power. He sprang

aside in time to avoid the blow that was aimed at his own head, and, with a quick stroke, he cut the nearest horse a terrible wound upon the nose. The animal reared and plunged furiously beneath the smart of the gash, and our hero leaped upon the other side of him just in time to avoid a blow from the second horseman. The fellow upon the wounded horse was now called upon to look to his own safety from being thrown from his saddle, and La Nuit found little difficulty in giving him a thrust that fetched him to the ground. By the time this feat was accomplished, the young knight was prepared for his other enemy, but on that score he was saved all trouble, for that enemy had just fallen beneath the weight of the old man's staff.

"Look out!" cried La Nuit, as his quick eye caught the movements of the still plunging horse.

The old man sprang aside just in time to avoid being crushed by the furious animal; but he could not prevent the horse from dashing his heavy foot upon the head of the last rider he had fallen.

"I am sorry for that," said the old man, "for I hoped to have made that fellow confess what this all meant."

La Nuit did not reply; but he went to the side of the fallen man, and found that the horse had really killed him—the iron shoe had penetrated the skull. The first man the pilgrim had made sure work of after he had fallen, and the one who had received our hero's sword, was dead past all redemption, so there was none left to tell the secret that lay beneath this deadly assault. For some time the two travellers stood and gazed upon the work they had done.

"My old staff is not worthless yet!" at length said the old man.

La Nuit looked up into his face, and the first emotion was admiration of the prowess the pilgrim had shown, and the next was to blame himself for the suspicion he had entertained. Then he went off into a wonder about the circumstance that had just transpired.

"I would give much to know what this means," he at length said, half to himself.

"Why, it must mean that either you or I have enemies—and perhaps both of us. Have you any idea of any such?"

"I have no reason to doubt the good faith of any one, save Nandon du Chastel."

"Ha! Du Chastel!" uttered the pilgrim, with

a quick gleam of intelligence. "He it is who has been promised the hand of the Lady Isabella de la Carra."

Henry la Nuit started as though a dagger had pierced his heart, and a deadly pallor overspread his features.

"Ha! Du Chastel! The hand of Isabella! O, impossible!"

A gleam of light shone across the features of the old man.

"You love her, then?" he said.

"It has been my secret, sir pilgrim," bitterly returned Henry; "but 'tis true. I do love her; but—"

"But you are not noble enough," added the old man.

La Nuit groaned, but said nothing.

"Come, come, Sir Henry, you are too brave a man to give way thus. 'Tis true that Du Chas-

tel has been promised the hand of the Lady Isabella, but if she cannot be yours, why should you grieve to see her another's?"

"But it is not her choice," cried the young man.

"The noble daughters of Navarre are seldom left to their own choice in such matters. But come, we have a mission still unperformed ahead of us. There will still be time to turn your attention to Nandon du Chastel, after that."

"But these bodies?"

"Let them remain here until we return, and if they are not removed before that by some passer-by, we will send for them from Pampeluna."

Henry la Nuit made no further remark, but with his heart throbbing more wildly than ever he followed his strange guide on through the wood.

CHAPTER XIII.

A TIE TO EARTH.

HALF an hour's walk brought the two travelers to the extremity of the wood, and here the pilgrim turned out from the road, and entered a narrow path that led up to the right, towards the mountains. This path lay through a low growth of bushes, with here and there clumps of trees, and, in some places, craggy rocks. At length a small cot was brought in sight. It was by the bank of a little stream, and some orange trees grew in front of it. When they reached the little enclosure that surrounded it, the pilgrim beckoned for La Nuit to stop. There was an oppressive weight upon the youth's heart—a something that hushed its tumultuous beatings, and made his blood flow more slowly through his veins. It was not the thoughts of what had passed, for those things dwelt not now in his mind.

"Sir Henry," said the pilgrim, in a low tone, "put on all your fortitude now, and be calm."

"But what is it? Tell me!"

"Follow me, and you shall see."

As the old man spoke, he moved on towards the low door. There was a strange stillness about the place—a death-like stillness, thought the young man, as he followed on. In a few moments more he stood within the cot. There was only one apartment below, and in that there was a bed. At the head of the bed there was a

small latticed window, about which clustered a mass of running flowers, and through which the soft, balmy breeze was now coming. The bed was soft and clean, and upon it reclined a female form. She was a woman in the middle age of life, and though very pale, yet there were left upon her countenance traces of great beauty. Her brow was painfully white, and the veins were traced upon it in dark, clear lines. Her hair was dark where its natural color was left, but the frost-touch was upon it, and the silvery streaks were sprinkled plentifully over it. She raised her eyes as the pilgrim entered, and they were large and dark, and when contrasted with the whiteness of the brow and temples, they seemed almost ebon in their hue. There was a female in attendance, but at a sign from the old man she withdrew. The invalid raised herself upon her elbow, and gazed earnestly upon those who had entered, and with a supplicating movement, she raised her thin, white hand towards the pilgrim.

Henry la Nuit gazed upon that pale form until he had almost ceased to breathe. The oppressiveness about his heart had increased, and at that moment a child might have laid him prostrate. Instinctively he moved nearer to the bed, and still more earnestly he gazed upon its occupant. What was that impulse which was

gaining life in his soul? What was that voice which whispered so softly to him? What meant that halo which seemed to gather so brightly about the head of her upon whom he gazed?

"Henry," spoke the pilgrim, in a tone that seemed to come from some distant spot, "does not your own heart tell you why I have brought you here?"

The youth looked not upon the pilgrim, but he still looked upon the form that had entranced him, nor could he move his gaze from it. A film seemed to be gathering over his eyes when he saw her lips move. He bent eagerly forward to catch the first sound that should come forth. It came—and it was like the music that sounds o'er the placid lake.

"O, my child! my child! Come to illumine my death-way, and make joyous my last hours of life! O, my child! my dear, dear child!"

One moment the youth listened while these words rang through his soul, and then he moved to the bedside, and sank down upon his knees.

"My mother!" he murmured. "My mother!"

How quietly the truth had found its way to his understanding? Had he at that instant been left alone on earth, he would have known that he had seen the mother who bore him. The assurance of the weary pilgrim who lays down his life at the foot of the Cross, is not more strong than was his. Within the providence of God there is a language between the mother and her child which the heart alone can hear, and which the soul alone can speak. It is a spirit-voice, low and soft, but yet all-powerful in its heavenly music.

La Nuit bent further over the bed, and felt two trembling arms twined about his neck, and again those words were spoken in his soul:

"O, my child! my child!"

The old pilgrim had sat down in a chair, and he was wiping the big tears from his sun-burned cheeks.

"You are not deceived, Henry," he said, as the youth looked towards him. "She is, in truth, your mother. You need not fear to let the whole truth into your soul, for there is no shade of shame in it."

There were some wild murmurings, some hushed responses, some tumultuous heart-beatings, and then La Nuit sat down by the bedside, and gazed more calmly into the face of his mother. O, how holy looked that sweet countenance to him. It was all beaming with soul and intellect, and seemed like the presence of an

angel. It caused no pang to own such for a parent.

"And why have I been kept from you?" asked the youth, as he held both of his mother's hands in his own. "Why have you not ere this given me to know that my mother lived?"

"Alas! my child, it was not in my power."

"But you knew that I lived?"

"Yes," replied the woman, while her eye burned with a holy light. "Yes, my child, and that knowledge has kept me in this vale of tears. God has let me live to see this moment, and I thank him."

"Ah, and you shall live to see many more such. You shall live to see how kind your son can be."

A shadow of pain passed over the pale face of the invalid, and she drew the hands of her child closer to her bosom.

"I must not deceive myself," she said. "For long and weary years, the hand of the destroyer has been upon me, and his work is almost done. But I could not die without once more seeing you. I begged of this old man that he would grant me that boon, and he consented. I can die now in peace."

"But you shall not die. Let my presence bring life back to you. Live! live! O, for my sake, live!"

Again that dark shade passed over the woman's features, and she closed her eyes. La Nuit turned an imploring glance upon the pilgrim.

"You need not give up all hope," said the old man, in a low tone.

"Ah," interrupted the woman, opening her eyes, "do not give hopes that are only to be crushed. You know the lamp of my life burns lower and lower. Would to God I could live for my son, but I cannot."

Some moments elapsed, during which La Nuit gazed tearfully into the face of his mother. At length she seemed to slumber, and the youth turned towards the pilgrim. His features were moved by a strong emotion, and they had a prayerful, imploring cast.

"O, sir pilgrim," he whispered, "tell me of my father."

But the old man only shook his head, and looked towards the couch.

"Yes, yes," pursued La Nuit, "tell me of my father now. Keep me not here upon such thorns of anxiety."

The invalid caught the words, and she opened her eyes.

"Hush!" she said, while for an instant there came a glow upon her face. "You have no father. If you love me, speak not of that again. O, boy, you must be your own parent, soon! A father's heart never beat for you—a father's smile never beamed upon you!"

"Stop! stop!" softly cried the pilgrim. "You may go too far! Let me explain to him all that he need know."

The woman gave a look of assent, and, turning to La Nuit, the old man continued:

"In a few words I can tell you all that can be told, and on one condition will I tell it. You shall ask neither me, nor your mother, any question beyond the information I give you. Will you promise this?"

La Nuit hesitated, but an imploring look from his mother resolved him, and he answered in the affirmative.

"Then, listen," said the pilgrim. "When you were an infant, your mother was left helpless and alone. On the whole wide earth she had but one friend, and that friend was of no relation to her. You were alone the tie that bound her to earth, and yet she dared not keep you. She had but the choice of two evils, and the least of these evils was to give you up to her friend. She heard that the Duchess of Salva had just lost an infant son. She knew the duchess, by reputation, and she believed that if you were left at the castle, the heart of that bereaved mother would lead her to love you. She gathered the thought from her own heart's love, and she was not deceived. You were left at the porter's lodge, and you were taken in and cared for. You know the rest."

"And this friend?" murmured La Nuit.

"I may tell you that—it was myself. I found a safe asylum for your mother and yourself—made her promise that she would never try to see you, and then I went upon a weary pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Now ask me no more. For your mother's sake, and for your own, I hold you to your promise."

La Nuit had given his word, and he would not break it, so he tried to keep back the eager promptings of his over-wrought curiosity. He had found a mother; he had found one being about whom his love could cling; and he turned back towards the bed, and knelt down by that mother's side.

"Live! live!" he murmured. "O, live, and let me bless you!"

"Hush! my lady," said the pilgrim, as the

woman was about to speak. "You must not think of dying now. I would rather bid thee hope. You may have other things to live for."

The woman started up in her bed, and her thin hands were extended towards the speaker.

"You will not trifle with me now," she said, as she sank back upon her pillow.

"Have I not brought thee thy son?"

"Yes, yes; O, yes."

"Then I will not trifle with thee now. Take heart, and live!"

She would have asked more, but the pilgrim silenced her by a premonitory shake of the head, and shortly afterwards she turned her attention to her son.

The old man went to a cupboard in one corner of the room, where he found bread and wine. This he placed upon a table, and both he and La Nuit ate. The invalid took a little wine, but she had no appetite for food. After the men had finished their repast, the pilgrim replaced the things as he had found them, and then he sat down by the bedside, and took the invalid's hand. It was now near dusk, and, after conversing awhile with the woman, the old man arose and proposed to La Nuit that they should walk out into the open air. The youth acceded to the proposal, and shortly after they had passed out from the cot, the woman, whom they had found there on their arrival, and who had gone out to give them room, re-entered, to keep the invalid company.

"Do you think my mother will live?" asked La Nuit, as they walked along by the bank of the little stream.

"I hope she will," returned the pilgrim. "There is no fatal disease upon her; it is only the hand of trouble that bows her down."

"I must stay with her till she is stronger."

"You must go in the morning, La Nuit. Do not ask to stay longer now, for it might be dangerous—dangerous to your mother as well as to yourself. Ah, now I see you are going to become inquisitive again. Remember your promise."

"I will remember it," said the youth, in a dejected tone; "but I wish I could forget it."

"I would clear you from it—relieve you of its burden—if you could on the other hand give up all the knowledge you have gained from me. Promise me that you will never see your mother again; that you will forget that she lives, and that you will look to me for no more aid in life; and I will in return take the bandage from your

tongue, and let you ask as many questions as you please."

These words, pronounced in tones of deep meaning, had the effect of opening our hero's eyes. He saw how deep was his dependence upon the will of the strange man, who had led him to his mother, and he frankly confessed his fault.

"I can appreciate your feelings," said the pilgrim, "and I can sympathize with you. The time may come when you shall know all that you would ask, and, if it does, then you will also understand why my speech must now be limited."

It was quite late when the two men returned to the cot; and, after Henry had sat for an hour by the side of his mother, the pilgrim conducted

him to the place where he was to sleep. It was in a sort of porch, which made out back of the cot, and there were two beds in it. After La Nuit had retired the old man returned to the apartment where the invalid lay, and our hero heard him talking, but his words were so low that they did not reach the little porch till after their forms had been lost. He could hear his mother's voice, too, sometimes low and mournful, and again bright and hopeful. He might have gone to the door and listened, but his soul shrank from such betrayal of confidence, and he contented himself with the indistinct hum that fell upon his ear. It was the soft, sweet tone of his mother's voice that hung melodiously about his soul after he had fallen asleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PLOT THICKENS.

In the morning, La Nuit was stirring betimes. He dressed himself, and having passed out from the porch, by the small door that led to the back garden, he went to the stream and performed his morning ablutions. He had just concluded the grateful task, when he was met by the pilgrim, who had arisen and gone out before him.

"Have you seen my mother this morn'g?" was the youth's first question; and his face showed some uneasiness as he asked it.

"Yes; I have just come from her. You can spend a short time with her, and then we must return."

La Nuit followed the old man to the cot, and again he stood in the presence of his mother. He kneeled down by her side, and kissed her, and then breathed a blessing upon her. She looked far better than she did the night before; her eye was brighter, and her cheeks had taken to themselves a slight glow of more active life; and then there was not so much pain upon her features. La Nuit noticed it, and with a hopeful countenance he turned towards the pilgrim. The latter seemed to understand the silent appeal, for he instantly said:

"She is better, Henry—much better. You need have no fear but that you shall see her again and often."

"Yes, my child," added the invalid, "I am indeed better. I feel it through my whole system. I may yet live to be blessed by your love."

This filled the youth's soul with new joy, and the conversation was more bright, more hopeful. At length the pilgrim arose to go.

"You will bring him to me again, soon," said the mother, still holding the hand of her son.

"Yes: as soon as I can," returned the pilgrim; "and, in the meantime, you must keep up a good heart."

There was a warm kiss, a blessing, a love adieu, and then the young knight followed the pilgrim from the cot. As long as the little dwelling was in sight, he often turned back to gaze upon it; but when a turn in the path at length shut it out, he moved on more quickly.

When they reached the spot where the battle of the day before had taken place, they found quite a crowd gathered about the dead men, and much excitement was prevailing.

"Henry," said the pilgrim, drawing the young man one side, "you must take the explanation of this matter upon your shoulders, for I have reasons for not wishing to appear in it."

Our hero promised to do so, and on his return to the place where the three dead men had been placed side by side, he was fortunate enough to

find a citizen of Pampeluna, who knew him well. To him he explained how the men had come by their death.

"Now by Saint John!" cried the citizen, after he had heard the young knight's story, "I knew one of these rascals well. This one," he continued, placing his foot upon the body of him who had first attacked the pilgrim, "was a street brawler and libertine. I complained of him once, and he would have been punished; but a noble knight, high in favor with the king, obtained his pardon."

"Ah, what knight was it?" asked La Nuit.

"Sir Nandon du Chastel."

A quick look of intelligence passed between the young knight and the pilgrim.

"I think it would be better," pursued the citizen, "if noble gentlemen would let justice be in the hands of the proper officers. However, the fellow has got his just deserts now."

At this juncture a civil officer came up to our hero, and asked what should be done.

"Let the bodies be taken to Pampeluna," answered La Nuit, "and I will make explanation to the king."

La Nuit was on the point of turning away when the crowd, who had heard his name, gathered about him, and began to throw up their caps. They knew that he was the knight who had captured the terrible Morillo, and he had to wait and receive their homely praises before he could get clear. But this circumstance was gratifying to him, and the honest praises of those humble people left a bright spot in his memory.

"Now, sir pilgrim, we must hasten on," said La Nuit, as soon as he could get clear of the crowd, "for I must reach Pampeluna before those people get there. I feel sure that I shall find Du Chastel with the king, and then I will know whether he had anything to do with this outrage. If he is present, and knows aught of this, he cannot hide it from me in his countenance."

"And yet, Sir Henry," returned the old man, "I should advise you not to show any signs of the knowledge you gain. Be careful how you let that man into your secrets. If he means harm to you, he must know some things he ought not to know. I very much fear that he overheard a conversation I once held at the castle, for when I came out immediately afterwards, I saw him just walking off. If he has an enmity towards you, it is a deadly one, so beware of him. I think you can be shrewd enough for

Nandon du Chastel, especially if you find out the bent of his inclination. But beware of him, and move cautiously."

There may have been some strange, undefinable light breaking in upon the youth's mind, for he asked no questions; but he pondered deeply upon what he had heard. It may, however, have been only the promise he had made that prevented him from making further inquiries. At any rate, during the rest of the walk he was very thoughtful, and, by the time he reached the city, it seemed to him as though the knowledge he had gained during the past four-and-twenty hours, had been in his possession for years.

It was near the middle of the afternoon when the pilgrim left our hero, having first promised, however, to call upon him within a few days.

"Remember, you are not to speak a word that shall induce the king to call me before him. But, if you have to mention your travelling companion, you can say he was a poor pilgrim, and that he has left the city."

These were the old man's last words; and as they were spoken he walked quickly away. Henry la Nuit went at once to the palace, and was conducted directly to the king's chamber. As he had expected, Nandon du Chastel was there. The dark knight started when our hero entered, and a quick curse dropped from his lips.

"Did you speak, Du Chastel?" asked the king. "No, sire," stammered the attendant. "Only a twinge in my foot."

But La Nuit had caught the expression as he knelt before the monarch, and he kept it to himself. He bowed to Sir Nandon as he arose, and the keenest observer could have detected nothing but the emotion of a casual recognition in his countenance.

"Now, Sir Henry," said Alfonso, with a gracious smile, "what brings thee into our presence?"

"I have come, sire, to make you acquainted with a little circumstance that happened to me yesterday. I had business on the road to Guidez, and took company with an old pilgrim, who served me both as a guide and companion. In the woods, some five leagues from here, we were attacked by three armed men. They gave no cause for the assault, only that they meant to kill me."

The king uttered an exclamation of horror, and Du Chastel turned pale. La Nuit's quick eye caught the expression upon the face of the dark knight, and then he continued:

"But they were foiled, sire. We killed them all three!"

"And did you not learn from either of them what they meant? Did you not find out the cause of this dastardly outrage?" asked Alfonso.

La Nuit cast a glance at Du Chastel, and found that knight leaning forward with the most intense anxiety depicted upon his face.

"No, sire," La Nuit returned. "I was in hopes that one of them would have lived to have cleared up the mystery, and I meant to have saved his life for that purpose; but a plunging horse leaped upon his head, and the work of death was finished."

Du Chastel breathed freer.

"Now, Sir Nandon," cried the king, turning to the dark knight, "what do you think of this?"

"I think it is an outrage, most foul," returned Du Chastel, not having wholly overcome his perturbation.

"Ay, so it is. I see it has moved you as much as it has me."

"Yes, sire; such things must move any one who has the good of your kingdom at heart."

"True, true—most true, Du Chastel," said the king, with a thankful look. "I believe you will suffer with me when such things are done."

"Indeed I shall, sire," resumed Du Chastel; and then, with a sudden gleam of relief, he added: "But a thought has struck me. May not these fellows have been some straggling members of Morillo's band, who thought thus to revenge their leader's capture?"

"By the cross! Sir Nandon, you must have hit the truth—that must be it."

"No doubt of it, sire," said the dark knight, now perfectly re-assured.

"And what has become of the bodies, Sir Henry?" asked the monarch.

"I have ordered them to be brought to the city, sire; and I expect they are even now on their way."

"Then we will see them."

"Let this business rest with me, sire," urged Du Chastel, with considerable eagerness. "You are not strong enough to bear much excitement."

"Excitement! Sir Nandon! By my faith, I am strong enough to bear the excitement of kingly duty. If I am not, I had better die. And I think, too, that excitement will do me good."

"I know that, sire," deceitfully replied Du Chastel; "but your duty does not compel you to dive into this broil. Let me handle it. I will see these bodies when they come, and if the thing is to be solved I will solve it; though I think we shall find them but three brigands. Come, let your faithful servant do this work for you."

"Well, well, Du Chastel, be it as you will, only be sure and see through it before you leave it."

Nandon du Chastel had accomplished his present object, and he felt satisfied. He seemed to study hard upon the features of Sir Henry la Nuit, but he could find nothing there to make him uneasy, and he hastened away to attend to the business he had taken upon himself. Shortly afterwards, La Nuit took his leave, and returned to the house of Gomez Garlia.

Surely, the plot was thickening about him, for now he had another thought to add to his stock of mysteries. He now knew what he had before suspected—that Nandon du Chastel was his enemy, and he felt morally sure that it was he who had set the three assassins upon him. Why was all this? Ah! there the youth was lost. He was held by a chain, and beyond its length he could not go.

CHAPTER XV.

SOMETHING IS BEING DONE.

THE bodies of the three men who had been slain by La Nuit and his companion, arrived in the city late in the afternoon, and Nandon du Chastel was ready to receive them. He had them privately conveyed to the place of burial, and then he went and told the king that two of them, at least, were brigands, and that the other was a fellow who had been seen lurking about the city lately, and who might also be one of them. The first excitement had passed away, and the king let the matter pass upon Du Chastel's statement. Among the people the affair became connected with the capture of Morillo, and so it passed into a subject of wonder for the time, and was then forgotten.

As soon as this matter was off his hands, Du Chastel paid another visit to the castle of Estella. The time had been set for his marriage with the Lady Isabella, and it was to be in one month from the time of his present visit. Alfonso had been anxious that the ceremony should take place as soon as that, and the duke had agreed.

"But, my good cousin of Salva," said the king, after the matter had been arranged, "you seem to treat this matter coldly." By my faith, you should be pleased to be thus happily fit of the business. Those estates of Navarra will offset well against the lady's portion.

"I know all that, sire," returned the duke,

in a low, moody tone; "but if I had not passed my word to you that my daughter's hand should be at your disposal, all the estates of Navarre should not fit Nandon du Chastel for my child's husband."

"Come, come, cousin; you speak hotly now."

"Am I not cool?"

"Ay—too cool, my good duke. But, really, you do Sir Nandon injustice; he is a faithful fellow. He has served me now for many a year, and 'tis but right he should be rewarded, and surely he can find no fault with the reward I am about to give him, for there is not a fairer maiden in all Navarre, than the Lady Isabella. By my soul! she is fit for a royal—"

The king stopped, for he saw that the duke was impatient.

"Let it pass, sire," said Don Philip. "I gave you the bestowal of my child's hand, and I have no fault to find. All I can hope is, that Du Chastel will make a good husband."

"My word for it," cried Alfonso, with much assurance. "You may hold me responsible. But, by the way, Philip, what has made that protégé of yours run away from you?"

"Run away, sire?" repeated the duke, while a shade of sadness swept across his features.

"Yes—he is here in the city, now."

"He chose to see something of city life," returned the duke, after a pause.

"But he is a noble fellow. He wants to go to Palestine, but, by my faith, I shall not spare him. After Du Chastel is married, I think I shall put the youth in his place, and then I'll see if he'll run away from me."

The monarch spoke in a light, merry tone, but the subject was one that cut the duke to the soul. He did not show all he felt; but he made an excuse to cut the intercourse short; and when he left the royal presence, the king once more told him he would be responsible that Du Chastel should make an excellent husband.

"I hope he will," was the duke's answer, as he turned thoughtfully away.

The duke had returned to his castle, and Nandon du Chastel was there with them. It was midnight, and the city of Pampeluna was wrapped in almost impenetrable darkness. There were a few places in the sky where an occasional solitary star peeped out, but it seemed more like some dying spark of exhausted flame than a gem of light. The sentinels who were stationed at the street corners, had relaxed from their usual vigilance, for everything was quiet through the sleeping city. Shortly after the hour of midnight had passed the last struggling star was eclipsed by the black cloud-mantle that had fallen over the town, and then large drops of rain began to fall. The sentinels felt sure that all was safe, and they crept into their respective boxes, and crouched away from the coming storm. The wind now came from the Pyrenees, and it was strong and chilly. It whistled about the street corners, and it drove the rain-drops furiously about. The sentinels crouched further away, and the city was left to take care of itself.

It was at this time that a dark figure was moving stealthily along through one of the narrow streets that led to the great square, where stood the royal palace. At a low window stood a burning lamp,—perhaps 'twas where some sick person lay,—and as the dusky form moved past, the struggling rays fell upon his face, and revealed the weather-worn features of the old pilgrim; but he quickly passed into the darkness again, and soon he gained the square. He seemed to take little heed of the rain, save to fold his mantle closely across his bosom, but with steady and cautious steps, he moved on across the plane, keeping as far as possible from the places where he knew the sentinels were wont to be stationed. At length he reached the

opposite side, and when he stopped, it was in front of the dwelling of Nandon du Chastel. A narrow court led up on one side of the building, and into this the pilgrim made his way. He groped his way along until he came to a postern, and this he opened with a key, and passed into the building. Of course, all this had taken some time, for the old man had had to depend solely upon his sense of feeling, the little court being as dark as a closed cavern.

After he had closed the postern behind him, without noise, he stood a few moments to let the rain drip off; then he removed his sandals, and this being done he threw back his dark robe, and drew forth a small lantern. He was now in a narrow hall, with a flight of stairs running up on either hand; he listened a few moments more to assure himself that all was quiet, and then he took the stairs that led up to the right. These brought him to a long, narrow corridor, at the extremity of which he came to another flight of steps, which he also ascended. He had now come to a kind of hall, which, in daytime, was lighted from the roof, it being surrounded on all hands by other apartments. One of the doors that opened out from this hall was larger and heavier than its companions, and seemed made to resist invasion. It was studded with metal bolt-heads, and its look was massive. It was to this very door that the pilgrim turned his attention. He set the lantern down upon the floor, and then from his bosom he drew a bunch of iron keys, one of which he applied to the lock.

"Well, well," he muttered to himself, as the bolt flew back beneath the pressure of the key: "this key does its wonted duty, even though I have no longer legal authority to use it. But the end must justify the means. We shall see, Sir Nandon."

While he was speaking, he had picked up the lantern, and now passed into the room beyond, noiselessly closing the door after him. The apartment was quite a spacious one, with painted ceiling and walls, and elaborately carved wainscottings. The furniture consisted of a large table, some half-dozen great carved chairs, and two cabinets, one of them seeming to have been fashioned as a part of the original building, for it was joined firmly to the wall, and its carved mouldings agreed exactly with the windows and wainscoting.

A dark smile passed across the face of the old pilgrim, as he stood and gazed upon this stout cabinet, with its quaint carvings starting dimly

out into the feeble light of the lantern-lamp. He seemed to be resting upon times that had gone, for he murmured lowly to himself, and various shades of feeling flitted over his countenance. At length, however, he aroused himself, and with the lamp, now removed from its thin case of horn, he examined the different doors of the cabinet. They were all of them locked, but that seemed to offer him no obstacle. In one corner he found a secret depository, that was opened by displacing in regular succession several pieces of the carved work, and in this place he found a bunch of small keys. An exclamation of satisfaction dropped from his lips as he made this discovery, and without more ado he set about opening the various doors and drawers that had thus become obedient to his will. Bundle after bundle of papers he took down and examined—every nook and corner of the place had passed the most thorough examination, and yet the object of his visit seemed unaccomplished. Nearly two hours had been consumed in this way, when the pilgrim sank back into a chair, and leaned his head upon his hand.

When he arose, his lips were compressed, and his eye had lost much of the exultation that had before beamed there; but yet he was not wholly disheartened. He commenced the search anew, and this time he moved more cautiously than before. At length he came, for the second time,

to a small department that contained only a few rough sketches of military plans, upon parchment, and a small book, in which some trifling private memoranda were noted down. The pilgrim had handled this book over before, but seeing that it was only one of common use, he had paid it little attention. Now, however, he noticed that the parchment covers had a peculiar feeling, and, with a quickly-beating heart, he went to the large table and sat down. The covers were tied to the book with pieces of ribbon, so they were easily removed. They were formed of a long strip of parchment, with the two ends folded in so as to meet in the centre, the edges being nicely sewed up. When they were upon the book, the place where the two ends met was hidden by its back, but now that they were removed this place was open, and the old man drew therefrom a number of nicely folded papers. He examined them, and his hands trembled with delight. These papers he carefully put away in his bosom, and the book he fixed as he found it, save the abstraction of the aforesaid papers.

Once more the old pilgrim stood in the narrow court. The rain had ceased falling, but it was still dark; he listened for a moment, and finding everything quiet he moved away towards that part of the city from whence he had come a few hours before.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DARK PLOT.

A week had passed away. At the castle things move on rather gloomily. The duke is more stern and cold than ever before, and he has not been seen to smile for many days. He sits most of the time in his study; and when he walks, he walks alone—sometimes in the open court, but oftener along the dusky corridors and unused halls. He often mutters to himself, and his hands are often pressed upon his brow, as though the thoughts that moved there were painful to him.

The duchess Ianthe has a faculty of concealing much of her real feeling. She moves slowly about through the vaulted apartments, and she, too, murmured with herself. Sometimes she sits with her child and weeps, and sometimes she tries to whisper words of comfort. But it would seem that recent events had operated harshly upon her nervous system, for sometimes she shuts herself up in her chamber, and will see no one but her old serving woman, Katrina. At such times, Katrina carries numerous bowls of medicated beverage to her mistress, and shakes her finger warningly to those who tread too heavily in the corridor that leads past her lady's chamber. "Ah," she ejaculated, with a dubious shake of her head, "these things must work hard upon my poor, dear lady."

Isabella is growing pale and melancholy. She has tried hard to reconcile herself to the fate that had laid its hand upon her, and she has so far succeeded that she does not weep now; her sorrow is all locked up in her own bosom, and there it lays, a bitter, burning, though silent companion. The only thoughts that can quicken into life a brighter feeling are of the love of her mother, and of that love which was once all in all to her. When she is all alone, the name of Henry la Nuit often dwells upon her lips, but even then she does not weep—she only clasps her hands more closely upon her bosom, and prays more fervently for strength to support her under her trials.

And from everywhere in that old castle joy has taken its departure. The hundred men-at-arms lounge moodily about the court, and their weapons hang rusting upon the walls of their apartments. The youth who has been wont to marshal them upon parade, and lead them amidst scenes of pleasure and of strife, has gone from them. They have heard of his freshly-won laurels, but they were not there to help him win them. They miss his joyous smile, and his soul-stirring words, and they will be long in learning to feel wonted to his absence.

Henry la Nuit and the old pilgrim have been

twice to the small cot on the Guidez road, and the youth's love for his mother grew stronger and stronger, for he has found her to be a very angel in thought and feeling. His presence has worked wonderful changes in his mother's bodily condition. She has grown stronger, and her brow and cheeks are tinged with a healthier glow.

It was early in the morning, and Nandon du Chastel sat in the very room where stood the great cabinet that we have seen the pilgrim so busy about. At length he became tired of sitting, and he got up from his chair and began to walk up and down the apartment. He stopped often, and gazed down upon the floor, as though he would quell the anxiety that worked within him, and when he would start on to walk again, he would clasp his hands together and mutter to himself. Du Chastel had been thus walking some fifteen minutes, when he heard footsteps in the hall outside, and, in a moment more, there came a knock upon the door; he went and opened it, and gave entrance to a man whom he had been expecting.

The new comer was a dark-looking, short, thick-set fellow, with a superabundance of gray beard upon his face, and a needless quantity of dirt upon his garments. He had passed the meridian of life, and his looks pretty plainly showed that the field of crime was one in which he had travelled much.

"How now, Matteo!" said Du Chastel, after he had closed the door, "you are late."

"Early enough," returned the other, with much independence. "You've been nervous, that's what makes it seem late to you."

"Just remember whom you are addressing," said the knight, with some asperity, as he sat down in his great high-backed chair.

"O, yes, I shall remember all that; so don't trouble yourself on that point. I generally take men as I find 'em, and when I come into business where I have all the work to do, why, I feel kind of responsible and independent. Now, let's come down to business."

Nandon du Chastel was made angry by this; but he contrived to overcome it, and after biting his fingers for a while, he said:

"Then you have done something in the way of the work I spoke of?"

"Yes; I found the old pilgrim, and the young knight was with him."

"And did you track them?"

"Yes; I followed them on the road to Guidez, for several leagues. They passed through the

woods at the foot of the Yaldo; and, at a short distance beyond there, they turned off towards the little stream that comes down from the mountain, and stopped at a small cot."

"It is a retired place, then?"

"You may say that, and not be very far from the truth, either, Sir Nandon. By San Jago, I should never have found it, if I hadn't have kept well upon the heels of the pilgrim and his young companion."

"Did you get a chance to look into the cot?" asked Du Chastel, who had become deeply interested.

"No—so soon as the two men went in, there was a woman came out, and went away."

"Ha! A woman?"

"Dressed like a woman."

"But how did she look?"

"Not over and above handsome."

"Time may have changed her."

"She can't have seen much time, for she is not very old."

"How old?"

"Perhaps five and twenty."

Du Chastel uttered an exclamation of disappointment.

"That's not her, then," he at length said.

"Did you learn nothing more?"

"O, yes. After the woman had gone, I went up under a little window on the head of the cot, and there I stood and listened at them talking within, and I heard the pilgrim say a woman; and I heard the young man call that woman mother."

"Did you hear that?" cried the knight, half springing from his chair.

"Ay, and I heard her call him her son. I didn't wait to hear much more, for I was afraid of being seen, so I came quietly away, and here I am."

Nandon du Chastel sat back in his chair, and gazed up at the quaint carving upon his cabinet. His face was worked upon by strong emotions, and his hands were folded up and rested firmly upon his knees; his eyes wandered from the cabinet to the face of his companion, and then back again. At length he moved his chair up nearer to where Matteo sat, and spoke. His voice was low, and extremely hoarse and uneven.

"Matteo," he said, "you have but just begun your work. That woman has no right to live! Do you understand me?"

"Yes," replied the fellow, with a nod of the head.

Du Chastel gazed up again at the carved images on the volutes of the cabinet, and Matteo watched him, with a dark smile playing about the corners of his mouth. At length the knight came back to the subject, and braced himself as though he were ready for carrying through whatever business might be on his hands.

"Matteo," he said, "you must kill this woman for me."

"I suppose it could be easily done," returned the fellow, without the least sign of distaste for the business.

"Of course it can. It will take but the blow of a knife, and you are used to the work."

"Now by the red hand of Montarrago! Sir Nandon, you would make me out a downright cut-throat!"

"Well, every man has his business, and he may call it by what name he chooses, though I wouldn't call you a cut-throat more than many others. The king hires me and my companions to go out and cut the throats of our enemies, and we do it. If he suspects a man will do him harm, why, he wants that man killed, and I am as ready to do it as any one."

"Ay, I'd kill men till my hands were as red as Montarrago's; but to kill a helpless woman, is a different thing. Hadn't you better try your hand at it?"

"I should do it, I should, at least, save a hundred pistoles."

"Ah," said Matteo, starting up and returning his companion's gaze with more interest; "how would you save that?"

"It is the sum I had intended to pay you for doing the work," coolly replied the knight.

"Now that puts a new face on the matter, Sir Nandon. By San Jago! I think I'll do it for that sum."

"It shall be yours as soon as I have evidence

that the job is done; and, in the meanwhile, I would have you keep an eye on that pilgrim."

"Anything you please," returned Matteo, with considerable animation. "A hundred pistoles! By the sword of Montarrago! how the wine shall flow!"

"You use the name of Montarrago with a keen relish," said Du Chastel, with a slight shudder.

"Ay, for he was the bloodiest man in all Navarre. My soul, with what enchanting grace he would remove the head from a man's shoulders!"

"Or from a woman's, either," added Sir Nandon, with a keen look at the other.

"That was just as it happened, and the luck has now come round to me; but I am equal to it with the pistoles. Now when will you have the work done?"

"At once. Let her life go out with this day's sun, and I will wait for you here till midnight."

"It shall be as you wish. I am off at once."

"But be sure that you take the right one."

"Never fear. I will make sure of that, so long as I am sure of the hundred pistoles!"

"They shall be yours to-night, if you bring me evidence that the mother of La Nuit is dead."

"And what evidence will you want?" asked Matteo, stopping, after he had arisen from his seat.

"Bring me one of her ears!"

"No, no, Sir Nandon," directly returned the fellow. "That is even below me. I can't do that."

"Well, well—your word will do," resumed the dark knight, a little cut by the direct retort of Matteo, but not daring to resent it.

The hired assassin withdrew, and Nandon du Chastel was left alone. He was not so happy as some men, nor was he so well-satisfied as he could wish to be; but he tried to feel gratified with what he thought he had gained.

CHAPTER XVII.

A STRANGE DENOUEMENT.

It was not until near noon that Matteo set out on his mission. He took a roundabout way, and did not strike into the Guides road until he had left the city nearly a league behind him. After this he walked leisurely along, some of the time humming snatches of bacchanalian songs, and anon remaining a silent spectator of things about him. No one would have thought, to have looked into his face, that he was upon an errand of death, for he seemed to enjoy the wild scenery, and his countenance was far from being moody or anxious. Yet, occasionally, when he came to some spot where the voice of the cataract was hushed, and where all else was silent, he would walk more slowly, and his thoughts seemed to be heavier and more deep.

"Now I wonder what this woman can be to him," he muttered to himself, after he had reached the wood where La Nuit and the pilgrim had been attacked by the three assassins; and he stopped as he spoke, as if he expected an answer from some of the stout trees about him. But no answer came, and he walked on. "Who can she be?" he continued, in a deeply thoughtful mood. "The mother of Henry la Nuit. And who can he be? Zounds! this is a dark subject, to say the least. I never killed a woman, yet and I've often bragged on't, but 'twont be my theme after this. But why should I fear to kill a wo-

man more than a man? O, I hope she'll give me battle, and get my blood up! One hundred pistoles! Well, well, that is to the purpose, at all events," he continued.

It was now quite dusk, and Matteo moved on more quickly. He had made up his mind to do the deed, and that, too, with as little delay as possible. When he reached the cot, he saw the faint beams of a candle shining out through the little front window, and as he came nearer he heard the sound of a voice. It was a female's. He stopped to listen, and he soon convinced himself that there were two females within the cot. He naturally supposed that one of them was the woman whom he had seen leave the place when he had followed the pilgrim thither. Here was an emergency he had not been thinking of, though if he had had his thoughts about him, he might have expected not to have found his victim alone.

For some time the fellow stood and pondered upon the subject. He had no desire to kill two women instead of one, but he must either do it, or else get one of them out of the way by stratagem. At length he hit upon an expedient. He moved back a few paces from the door, and having thrown himself upon the ground, he began to groan most piteously. Directly the door of the cot was carefully opened, but instantly shut

again. Then Matteo groaned louder than before, and there was evidently a consultation going on inside. Ere long the door was opened again, and this time a lighted candle was held out.

"Who's there?" asked a female, who stood in the doorway.

"Help! mercy! O, for Heaven's sake, help!" groaned Matteo, apparently in great distress.

The woman ventured further out, and then asked what was the matter.

"I have been thrown from my horse. O, help! help!"

The woman went back into the cot once more, and conversed a while with her companion; but she soon returned, and, having set her candle down upon the threshold, she came out to where the man lay.

"What can I do for you?" she asked, with tremulous sympathy.

"Help me into your cot, and let me have some water." And he groaned again.

The woman stooped down, and by dint of great exertion she succeeded in helping the man to his feet, and leaning heavily upon her, he walked into the dwelling. There was a woman upon the bed, and the disposition of things about the apartment showed that she had just retired. The man was assisted to a chair, and then his conductress asked him how she could help him.

"Ah," he returned, after he had drank some of the water which the woman held to his lips, and speaking as though he were suffering the most intense torture, "I don't know how you can assist me unless you can procure help. My horse threw me a short distance from here; my shoulder is broken, and the bone of my right leg must be fractured. O, for pity's sake, get me help if you can!"

"But we have no neighbors, and the nearest help I can get is nearly a league distant."

"And what sort of help is that?"

"A poor peasant, but a good man."

"Then go and get him. In the name of mercy, go!"

"But the distance," said the woman, casting her eyes anxiously towards the bed. "You will suffer much before that help can come."

"Not so much as I should to be without it. O, go, go!"

Again the woman cast her eyes towards the bed.

"Go, go, Blanche," said the invalid; "I can remain with the poor man while you are

gone, and if he wants anything I shall be strong enough to get it for him. Give him some wine, and let him have a pillow, and then go."

"But you are not strong enough—"

"Hush, Blanche; I am strong enough to assist those who suffer more than I do. Have no fears on my account. Perhaps you have on your own."

"No, no, my lady."

"Then give him the wine and go."

Blanche gave the man some wine, and having thrown on a light scarf, which she drew up over her head, she quitted the cot, upon her mission.

Did Matteo feel any compunctions after all this kindness? If he did the feeling was quickly hushed, for he gazed about him with only the intent to make himself sure that she upon the bed was the woman he was to kill, and then to do the work as quickly as possible, and be off.

"We are two sick people," he said, as soon as Blanche was out of hearing.

"Most assuredly, we are," returned the woman.

"This locality or rather the road that runs this way," resumed Matteo, with his eyes cast towards the bed, so as to catch every movement of the occupant, "seems to be a most unfortunate one. Only a short time since three men were killed in the wood just back of here. Perhaps you heard of it."

"Yes," replied the invalid, moving uneasily in her bed. "I heard something about it."

"And then," resumed Matteo, "only a day or two since there was another sad disaster. An old pilgrim, accompanied by a young man, named Henry la Nuit, was passing through that same wood, towards Pantpeluna,—O, my shoulder!—they were attacked, and the young man was—O, my poor bones!"

"But the young man—Henry la Nuit—what of him?" eagerly cried the woman, all her mother's affection coming at once to her soul.

"O, nothing in particular," returned Matteo, quickly arising from his chair. "You are his mother!"

The poor woman started up in her bed, and uttered a quick cry of alarm. She gazed upon the man before her, and she saw that he was sound and strong.

"Mercy! mercy!" she ejaculated.

"There is no mercy here!" said the assassin.

"If you were a man you should not live to ask it; but you are a woman, and you may pray Just ask God to bless you—that's all!"

The woman sank back upon her pillow, and covered her face with her hands, and while she did so, Matteo moved the candle upon the shelf at his back, where its rays could shine into her face, but not into his own.

"O," she murmured, "this hour has haunted me for years. I had better have died *then*, for I was prepared for it. But strike, sir! Do your work of blood! You can do what Montarrago left undone! I have prayed."

She raised herself half up as she ceased speaking, and the rays of the candle fell upon her pale features. Matteo took one step forward, and the knife fell from his hand.

"Just. God!" he uttered, while every limb seemed fixed as iron.

The woman started further up, and gazed upon him, but she could not see his dark features. Matteo moved nearer to the bedside, and looked more searchingly into those pale features.

"Will you kill me?" the woman asked, in a faint, whispering tone.

"O, God! no!" gasped the assassin; and as he spoke, he sank down upon his knees; "I would rather bless you. Tremble no more, for I would sooner lose my own right hand, than do you a breath of harm!"

"But you were sent here to kill me," the woman said, still speaking in a whisper, for she was very faint.

"Yes; but I will not do it. When your waiting-woman returns, tell her that I was better, and went away. Do not tell her why I came."

As he spoke, he arose to his feet, and turned toward the door, to leave the cot.

"But, my son!" urged the invalid, extending her hands towards the man.

"He is safe; I did that only to be sure that you were the person I sought."

"And did you not know whom you were to kill?"

"Only that you were the mother of the young knight. But ask me no more, for I cannot answer. Yet I will ask you one question. There has been an old pilgrim here?"

"Yes."

"Is he your friend?"

"I think he is."

"Then I will place him on his guard, if I can find him; or, I will give your son the hint; that will be better still. God bless you!"

Without waiting to hear the woman's murmur of thanks, Matteo picked up his knife, and hastened from the house. He stopped for a moment outside to look back upon the cot, and then, with long, quick strides, he hastened away.

The smiling stars looked down upon that humble cot with their twinkling light, and the gentle zephyrs of heaven moved about it with soft whisperings of hope, while within there was a woman upon her knees, with her thin, white hands clasped upon her bosom, and with her pale face turned heavenward, giving thanks to God.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE STORY OF A MOTHER.

It was midnight, and Nandon du Chastel was leaning back in his high-backed chair, gazing vacantly up at the serpents' heads that formed the points of the volutes upon his great cabinet. A large waxen taper burned upon the table at his side, and its light was just sufficient to make the grim heads look hideous as they peered out from the dusky background. Sometimes the knight nodded beneath the influence of insinuating slumber, and sometimes he would start up, and instinctively shudder as he found the serpents gazing down at him, as though they meant to spring upon him when he slept again. He was far from being comfortable; he had sought comfort in the hope of succeeding in the work he had upon his hands, but when that hope shone fully upon him he was very far from anything like comfort. He did, however, feel a sort of savage satisfaction in view of the consummation of his plans, but that satisfaction was very fitful, for his plans were not yet consummated.

At length he was aroused by the abrupt entrance of Matteo. Du Chastel sprang from his chair, but when he saw who it was he sat down again, and waited for the new comer to be also seated. Matteo was very deliberate in his movements, and before he sat down he quietly loosened the knife, which he carried in his bosom, so that it could be quickly grasped; but he did it

in such a way that his companion did not detect the movement.

"Now, Matteo," began the knight, with great anxiety, "what word do you bring back to me?"

"I found the cot, Sir Nandon," calmly replied the fellow.

"And did you find the woman?"

"Yes."

"The mother of La Nuit?"

"Yes."

"Ha! Then you killed her?"

"No, Sir Nandon, I did not."

"Did not kill her!" uttered the knight, starting up and looking furious.

"Sit down, sit down, Sir Nandon," quietly said Matteo.

"But what could have prevented you from doing the work after you had found her?" resumed Du Chastel, sitting back into his chair.

"Was not the way clear?"

"The woman and myself were alone in the cot. She was weak and sick—I was stout and strong; but I did not kill her."

"Why, fool! What madness is this? Has the sight of a sick woman overturned your brain? Have ye become a coward?—a child?—a trembling, fearing suckling? O, out upon thee! You swore to me that you would kill her!"

"Nay, Sir Nandon, I did not swear," replied

Matteo, not at all moved by the taunts of his employer; or, if he was moved, he did not show it. "I did not swear; but even if I had I would have broken my oath."

"By the mass! sirrah, you must have had some motive in this. Perhaps you mean to make me pay a heavier sum for the job. You like the color of gold."

"You hit wide of the truth, sir," said Matteo; "and, since you are not likely to guess it, I will tell it to you."

"Do so, if you please; and no doubt 'twill be a marvellous affair," responded Du Chastel, with bitter sarcasm.

"Just listen to me, Du Chastel," resumed Matteo, in a deep, serious tone. "Many years ago I had a mother."

"But that woman is not your mother?" uttered the knight, starting up.

"Listen to me," sternly pursued the other.

"I once had a mother. She may not have been so mild and moral as some mothers; but I loved her, for she was all I had on earth to love; and she loved me, too. Some said I was the child of shame, but I felt no shame in loving my mother, nor did she feel shame in owning me. Our home was in the mountains, and there I first learned to be the wild and reckless man I have since proved myself. But it was not my mother's work. She tried to make me better, and I have seen her cry; I have seen great tears roll down her cheeks, when the fear was upon her that I should be a great villain."

"But what of all this?" impatiently exclaimed Du Chastel. "I would know why you did not kill this woman. I care not for your mother."

"Patience, Sir Nandon, and you shall know what it has to do with the work I have left undone," resumed Matteo, exhibiting for the first time a slight degree of anger. "My mother's cot was beyond the great pass of Saint Jean Pied de Port, and at that time a strong party of brigands infested those wonderful fastnesses. Some of them often sought shelter beneath my mother's roof. She did not invite them there, nor had she the courage to turn them away, and yet she would have given the half of her little property to have been well rid of them, for she found that they were leading me into a love of their mode of life. I began to neglect her flocks, and weeds grew up in her garden."

"One night, when I came home from the mountains, I found my mother weeping most bitterly; and when I asked her why she wept,

she told me that, through my neglect, some of her best goats had been lost. I pulled a handful of gold from my pocket, and I thought that would comfort her; but I was mistaken. She knew where I got the gold, and she wept more than before; and upon her knees she begged of me to give over the evil life upon which I had entered—"

"A curse upon both thee and thy mother!" bitterly interrupted Du Chastel.

"Curse me, sir!" hoarsely whispered Matteo, trembling from head to foot; "but beware how you use the name of my mother!"

"But what is all this tirade to me?" continued the knight, in a lower key.

"I mean simply to show you that my mother was not to blame that I am a villain. It has been a long while since I have spoken of her; but now the theme is opened, and I must speak."

"Then speak briefly, and spare me the hearing of that which does not interest me. I would know why you did not kill the woman."

"And you shall know it, directly," resumed Matteo. "For a while after the loss of the goats, I remained at home; but the brigands came again. I drank and sang with them, and then went away with them again. My mother begged of them to come to her cot no more, but they only laughed at her, and made her take gold for the shelter she did not willingly give them. At length, one night when they were carousing at our cot, a company of soldiers came and captured them, and my mother was taken with them, and so was I."

"My mother was convicted of being connected with them, both as an entertainer and receiver of their booty, and she was sentenced to die with them. I escaped from the strong prison, and I tried to effect the escape of my mother, but it was in vain. I disguised myself, and went to the place where she was to be executed, still faintly hoping that something might turn up to assist me in the accomplishment of my purpose. But my hopes were all gone when I saw my poor mother led forth to die an ignominious death. But she did not die. A dark-eyed maiden sprang through the crowd, and rushed to the spot where my mother was bound. I was so overcome that I saw but little more; but I soon knew that my mother was pardoned, and faint and giddy I moved away from the spot. When I saw my mother again, she told me that the dark-eyed maiden had saved her life."

"I shall soon be done, Sir Nandon. My mother is now dead, but amidst all the thorns and weeds that have grown so rankly in my bosom, I have not forgotten the love she bore me, nor have I forgotten to worship the gentle being who saved her life. That dark-eyed maiden, now grown into the fading of life's bloom, I saw in the cot I visited this evening. Nandon du Chastel, all the gold in Navarre could not tempt me to do her harm!"

The dark knight started up from his chair, and then sank heavily back again. His face was ashy pale, and he trembled at every joint.

"Matteo," he at length said, in a hoarse voice, "was she the woman you were to have killed?"

"Yes."

"Then you know her?"

"I know that she saved my mother's life."

"Ay; but do you know more of her?"

"Yes—I know all!"

For a few moments, Du Chastel sat still. His trembling had ceased, and the blood had come once more to his face.

"Matteo, you know too much!" he hissed between his clenched teeth; and as he spoke, he seized his dagger and sprang upon his companion.

But Matteo had anticipated this movement from the first, for his knife was in his hand in an instant, and he sprang quickly aside in time to avoid Du Chastel's blow.

"You are quick, Sir Nandon!" he muttered; "but I am ready for you. I gave you credit for this, and so prepared for it."

The knight struck again, but Matteo caught his arm and wrenched the dagger from him; then, with one mighty effort, he hurled him to the floor, and held him there.

"Now, Sir Nandon," said Matteo, with his knee upon the fallen man's bosom, "you are in my power; but I will not betray you. You know me not if you think I would do that thing."

"Will you swear to keep the living of that woman a secret?" gasped the prostrate knight, having given over his struggles to free himself from the iron weight and grip of his companion.

"On one condition I will give you the oath," returned Matteo.

"What is it?"

"Swear to me first that you will not seek to do her more harm."

Du Chastel hesitated.

"It is but oath for oath," continued Matteo.

"Swear it to me, and I will keep your secret inviolate."

"Well, I swear, then, that I will not do her more harm," said the knight.

"I do not trust you, Sir Nandon," said Matteo, with scorn, "for I think you would as lief break an oath as not; but I promise you in return that I will keep your secret. Now, get up."

As Matteo spoke, he arose and turned towards the door. He turned back once to look at Du Chastel, but he did not speak; he only shook his finger menacingly at him, and then left the apartment.

Nandon du Chastel sat down once more in his chair. The waxen taper had burned down till there was nothing left of it, and the black wick toppled over with a flickering glare, and then all was dark as the grave—the room was as dark as was the heart of him who sat trembling within its gloom.

CHAPTER XIX.

IT GROWS DARK.

IN one of the most out-of-the-way places of Pampeluna, the old pilgrim had found an abiding-place. It was a small room that he occupied, in the second story of an old building, and his single window overlooked the river. One evening he was aroused by the stopping of a boat under his window, and, as the occurrence was an unusual one, he went and looked out. There was a new moon just riding above the house-tops, and as its pale beams fell aslant the water, they revealed a small boat just under the window, in which was a single man.

"What do you seek?" asked the old man, as he leaned over the balustrade, and looked down.

"An old pilgrim, who lately came to Pampeluna," returned the boatman.

The pilgrim hesitated a moment, for he had some fear of danger.

"What do you wish of him?" he at length asked.

"I will tell that to him," was the response.

"Well," said the old man, "I am the pilgrim. Now, what do you seek?"

"You have lately been to visit a woman, near Guide."

"How do you know?"

"I tracked you there."

The old man trembled with apprehension.

"But you need not fear for me," returned the

boatman; "I have come to place you on your guard. That woman is in danger; the wolf has found her. If you would save her life you had better move her as soon as possible, and be secret about it, too. Now I have done my duty, and you must do the rest."

The reader will, of course, recognize Matteo in the boatman; and thus had he endeavored to protect the helpless woman from the wiles of the destroyer. He did not stop to hear what answer the old devotee had to make; but as soon as he had spoken, he dipped his oars into the water, and moved away quickly out of sight.

The pilgrim went back into his room, and though the circumstance was one of mystery to him, yet he was not long in making up his mind as to the course he should pursue. As soon as the moon had sunk out of sight, he went out of the house, and glided along; as secretly as possible, out of the city. By midnight, he reached the little cot where we have seen him before. He rapped at the door, but there was no response; he rapped more loudly, but he awoke only a dull echo. His heart sank within him as he pushed at the door and found it gave beneath his touch; he entered, but all was darkness within; he called out, but no one answered him; he went to the bed, and ran his hands over its surface, but no human form met his touch.

For a while the old man stood there in the darkness, and deep groans fell from his lips. When he moved it was towards the spot where he knew a box of tinder was usually kept. He found it, and he also found the flint and steel that belonged with it; he struck a light, and by the glare of the match he found a candle. This he lighted, and then he began to search about the room. There were no signs of confusion, but he soon knew that he was alone—that she whom he sought had gone. He went out of doors, and examined everything about the cot, but he could find no clue to the lost. Then he went back into the tenantless apartment and sank down into a chair. His brain was tortured by a fear for which he had good grounds, and he groaned in agony.

"O," he murmured, "and are these long years of hopes and fears to end now in darkness! My expiation is nipped upon the very eve of its consummation!"

There was a sound of creeping footsteps near the door, but the old man heard it not; there were a pair of eyes peering in at the little window, but the pilgrim did not see them. Those eyes gleamed tiger-like upon him, but he sat there with his head bowed upon his broad palms, and he thought he was all alone.

* * * * *

We must go back a few hours, and visit again the old house upon the edge of the river. The pilgrim was not the only one who had heard the warning of the boatman. Henry la Nuit had that very night set out to seek the old man, for he had strange misgivings that there was danger lurking about the cot where his mother dwelt. He had a vague suspicion that when he and the pilgrim last visited there, they had been followed. It may have only been a dim, dreamy thought at first, but fear had given it form, and now he was moved by it to seek a rest for his fears. He would have gone alone to the cot, but he had pledged himself that he would not, so he sought the pilgrim; he did not know exactly how to find the house, although he had once been there; but he knew the locality, and he set off upon the search.

As fortune would have it, the young man got upon the wrong side of the river, and being guided only by a tall spire that stood in the neighborhood, he came opposite to the old man's window just as Matteo had pulled his boat up there. He plainly heard the warning of the boatman, as he stood upon a little piece that jutted

out into the water, and as soon as the pilgrim's window was closed, he sprang for the nearest boat, not caring to take time to cross by the bridge. The first boat he came to was fast, and all his strength was not sufficient to break it loose. Another and another he tried with like success, and at length, all wrought with anxiety, he was forced to take to the bridge. He flew thither as fast as possible, and ere long he was hastening through the narrow streets on the other side. But an evil genius seemed to guide him, for he missed his way, and he knew not how to find it. In a state of frenzy, bordering on insanity, he flew through the dark passages, and at length, at the end of an hour, he was sure he had found the house where he had once come with his strange friend. He stopped not to knock, for he knew his way now, and with quick steps he hastened to the old man's room. He found it, but it was empty.

"Of course, he has gone on," uttered the youth, and without stopping to inquire of any of the inmates of the other rooms, he retraced his steps and flew on towards the Guidez road.

It was now late; the moon had been gone a long time, and the way was dark and toilsome; but the youthful knight heeded not the lesser obstacles that lay in his way. Once, near the wild bridge that spanned a deep chasm, through which the mountain torrent rushed, he stopped to rest, for he was more fatigued than he had thought. He blamed himself for not having taken his horse, for he saw now that he should have gained time in the end by borrowing a little to begin with. But it was too late to repine, and after a few moments of rest he hurried on again. At length he reached the wood, and just as he had gained the further edge of it, he heard the steps of a horse ahead of him. The tramp was coming towards him, and soon he saw the dusky outlines of the animal and its rider. He did not think of hiding himself, but he only turned out sufficiently to allow the horse to pass. In this, however, he was disappointed, for the rider pulled up and hailed him:

"Hollo—who is this?"

Henry started as though a thunderbolt had broken at his feet, for he recognized the voice of Nandon du Chastel. A dart of pain shot to his soul, for in an instant he coupled the dark knight with the warning he had heard the boatman give to the pilgrim.

"Who are you?" again cried Sir Nandon, urging his horse nearer to where our hero stood.

"You know me well enough!"

"Ha!—La Nuit, upon my soul!" exclaimed Sir Nandon, with a mixture of surprise and quick satisfaction in his tone.

"Let me pass, Sir Nandon," said Henry, in an anxious tone.

The rider hesitated a moment, as though he were consulting with himself. Then he reined his horse still more into the youth's way, and in a strangely sounding tone,—it was so low, and yet so intensely earnest,—he said:

"Tell me, first, what you are doing here?"

"It matters not. Let me pass."

"But it does matter, youngster," retorted Sir Nandon, in a voice still hushed, though rage evidently was working in it. "It looks suspicious to find one like you in this place, at this time, and in this plight. Do you flee from the commission of crime?"

"Of crime!" repeated La Nuit, with a quivering lip. "Look to yourself, Nandon du Chastel!"

"By my soul! now you mock me! Beware! Henry la Nuit, for I am not one to brook insolence! Now tell me whither thou goest. As constable of Navarre, I demand your answer."

For a moment the youth trembled with a new apprehension. He knew that Du Chastel was the constable of the kingdom, and as such his powers were almost unlimited. He had the right, *ex officio*, to arrest whom he pleased, with or without provocation. But the young knight's previous fear came back to him, and with it came the suspicions he had entertained against Sir Nandon. Perhaps his mother was even now in the hands of her captors, and perhaps she might be dead! This last thought drove our hero to frenzy, and he forgot the power of the man who confronted him.

"Let me pass!" uttered La Nuit, through his clenched teeth.

"Now I'll teach thee, unmannerly boy!" yelled Sir Nandon; and, as he spoke, his sword flew from its scabbard.

Sometimes calm, clear thoughts come through

the brain like lightning, and so it was with Henry la Nuit. On the instant the thought flashed upon him that Sir Nandon meant to kill him; that he had meant it from the first, and that he had provoked a quarrel only to gain ground for the onset. And then that other thought came, too—that thought wherein Sir Nandon had been before suspected. All this thought-flash gleamed through the youth's brain, even while the rider's sword was whirling in the air; and as our hero dodged the blow, he drew his own weapon. He spoke not, for his soul was set, and with him it was vastly more than life or death—for in the dim thought-distance he had a mother!

Nandon du Chastel uttered a fierce oath when he saw that La Nuit's sword was out, and he pressed upon the youth severely. But La Nuit had one decided advantage, independent of his personal prowess. The elevated position of Sir Nandon made all his motions conspicuous, while our hero, being upon the ground, was more in the dark to his antagonist. At the third stroke, La Nuit caught the sword of his antagonist by a lock in the guard, and sent it whirling through the air to the distant bushes. Then he struck the horse a smart blow upon the flank with the flat of his own heavy sword. The animal plunged furiously, and in a moment more he threw his rider upon the ground.

La Nuit did not stop to see whether Sir Nandon was badly hurt, but with a quick step, he turned and hastened away. Once, only, he stopped to look back, but it was so dark that he could see nothing of his enemy, though he could just make out the upper outlines of the horse, the animal not having moved since he had thrown off his load.

The nearer the youth came to the cot the more nervous he grew; and when, at length, he could distinguish the roof against the starry sky, his heart beat so heavily that his breathing seemed oppressed. It was a strange fear that had come over him—a fear that seemed so dark and dismal that his own footfall sounded like a knell in his ear.

CHAPTER XX.

A THUNDERBOLT.

WHEN our hero reached the open space before the cot, he saw the rays of a light shining out through the little window, and for a moment he took courage. He stopped to listen when he reached the door-stone, but he could hear nothing save the moaning of the night-wind, and the murmuring of the stream. He knocked at the door—he knocked again—and again; but he heard nothing, only the wind and the quick-moving water. He pushed at the door, and it yielded to his touch; and his heart grew faint again as he entered.

A candle, burned half down, stood upon the table, and its flickering blaze gathered moodily around the black, unsnuffed wick, threw a dull, fitful glare about the room. La Nuit's first movement was towards the bed, and a deep groan escaped him when he found it empty. He called aloud for his mother, but he only heard the dull echo that came back from his own tones.

"Mother! mother!" he cried, clasping his hands upon his heart, and then stretching them out into the gloomy light. "Mother! it is your boy who calls! O, answer him, if you can hear his voice! He will not harm thee, but his stout arm will protect thee! Fear not, fear not, for it is I who call upon thee! Mother! mother!—All alone! Gone!"

The youth sank down upon the bed, and for

some minutes he remained there in a sort of stupor; but gradually he came back to himself, and once more he stood upon his feet. He had turned to move towards the little porch; his head was bowed, and his thoughts were wandering, when a dark object upon the floor met his gaze. He started with a terrible shudder, for that object bore a semblance to the human form. He went to the table and took the candle, and having removed the superabundant wick with his fingers, he went back and stooped down over the thing he had seen. It was a man. La Nuit laid his hand upon the shoulder, and turned the face upward, and he saw the features of the old pilgrim. A dark pool of blood was upon the floor near where the old man lay, and at a short distance towards the bed there was another pool that was spattered and coagulated.

La Nuit was nearly overcome now by the gigantic emotions that had been raging in his bosom. It was not the presence of the dead that made him weak—it was the absence of one who might be dead; the fear that came to him from things not seen, that made him weak. But it was not his nature to remain long inactive, while sense remained, and as soon as the first shock was past, he turned his attention once more to the gory form beside him. He found that the old man had been cut severely upon the right

arm, and when tearing away the dark robe from the bosom, he found a deep stab upon the left breast. The body was still warm, and La Nuit knew that the deed could not have long since been done. He shook the blood-stained form, and he halloed in its ear, but there were no signs of life. He still knelt there, with the candle in his hand, when he heard footsteps behind him, and on starting up, he found himself face to face with Nandon du Chastel! There was a look of fiendish exultation upon the face of the dark knight, and like a flash our hero comprehended its meaning.

"Ah! Sir Henry la Nuit," said the constable, "I have found you again."

"Ay, Nandon du Chastel, you have found me," returned the youth, his bosom swelling as he spoke, and his hands clutching nervously together.

"And—ah! what's this? A dead man! Bleeding—stabbed—his body warm! By my soul! Sir Henry, you have been well employed! Your hands look well!"

La Nuit's hands were all covered with blood, for the garments he had handled in moving the body of the old man, were saturated with the purple tide. He looked at them, and then turning to his enemy, he said:

"I know what you mean, Nandon du Chastel. You mean that I have done this murder."

"Surely, I believe my own eyes," replied the constable, with a sneering look.

"Do you? Ah, Sir Nandon, it would be well for you if there were no God to see all that you have seen to-night!"

"What do you mean now?"

"O, you need not look upon me with that coward look! I am calm—let me see you calm."

"I am calm; only the astoundment that leaps to my brain at the sight of this most atrocious deed. You may well be calm, La Nuit, for perhaps you have gained some important end in the death of this old man."

"Out upon thee, dark-faced villain!" uttered the youth, as he set the candle down upon the table, and then took a step nearer to where the constable stood. "I came here after I left you in the wood, and I found this old man lying here in his blood. You—you, Nandon du Chastel, know who did this deed. It is stamped in your face; its black record is lettered on your heart, and you cannot wash it out." Du Chastel's right hand flew to his hip, but his sword was not there. It still lay among the bushes, and

he had not been able to find it. He started back a pace when he found himself swordless, and in a hissing tone, he said:

"Thou shalt know the penalty of crime and insolence, for by all the gods of heaven, thou didst this deed, and if I had my sword, I'd rid the earth of such a murderer!"

"I thank thee, surely," retorted La Nuit, with a bitter sarcasm. "But I have a question to ask. What has become of the woman you found here?"

"I found no woman here."

"When?"

"Never! I have not been here till now."

"Lie on, villain!—but while you lie, remember there is a just God!"

Du Chastel trembled—but, perhaps, 'twas only anger that moved him.

"Rail on," he said, as soon as he could compose himself, "for you are armed, and I am not. But the time shall come when you shall tremble before me!"

"Ay, with indignation!" quickly replied La Nuit.

"Yes, and with fear, too."

"Then it will be such fear as one might feel of an asp; such fear as the stoutest heart may feel when a deadly viper has folded itself upon his arm. I should have no other fear of thee, thou villain!"

Again Sir Nandon's hand sought the place where his sword-hilt was wont to rest. He took a step forward—then stopped. Then he gazed into the young man's face, and shaking his finger slowly towards him, he uttered:

"It were well for you, Henry la Nuit, if there were no laws in Navarre!"

These words were spoken very slowly, and in a deep, meaning tone, and, as he spoke them, he turned quickly upon his heel, and left the cot.

Shortly afterwards La Nuit heard the prancing of a horse, and then the footfall of the animal in quick trot fell upon his ear. He listened until the sound was lost in the distance, and then he sank down upon the edge of the bed, and buried his face in his hands. It would be difficult to analyze the emotions or thoughts that moved him for the next ten minutes; his mind was like a kaleidoscope in the hands of a child, ever turning, and the images no sooner formed than their shapes were changed without so much as leaving an idea of what they had done.

When he arose from the bed, he went once more to the spot where the body of the pilgrim

lay; and as he stooped down, and laid his hand upon the pale brow, he murmured:

"O, I think Du Chastel did this. Poor old man! thou art gone, and thy secret is lost with thee. O, would to heaven that I knew all that death has looked up in its cold embrace!—I would that I could read the knowledge that dwelt with thee in life! If you could but tell me of my mother. God send some kind angel to open your lips, that you may tell me where she is gone! Alas! cold—silent—dead!"

He started with a quick shudder as the last words fell from his lips, for the candle, which had been long burning, had become exhausted, and it went out, leaving the place enveloped in darkness.

The youth stood for a few moments there, in the darkness, and then he sank upon his knees and prayed. When he again arose, he was more calm, and his thoughts were easily called together; he knew that there must be help somewhere, and that he must seek from others what he could not do himself. Perhaps he might gain some clue of his mother. At least, he was determined to try. Just then, he thought he heard a movement in the room. He bent his head to listen, but the sound was not repeated. It might only have been a rustling of the rose leaves at the window. At least, so thought the youth, and without waiting to hear if the sound would be repeated, he left the cot. He closed the door after him, and then having washed his hands at the brook, he hastened away towards Guides.

For two long, weary hours our hero wandered about without coming across a human habitation, and at the end of that time he had worked about by such devious ways that he found himself upon a spot which he knew to be not more than half a mile from the cot. It was daylight now, and after resting a while, he made up his mind to return to the cot, and place the body of his old friend in a decent position, and then consider further upon what course he should pursue. As soon as he had become settled upon this plan, he started back, and when he reached the cot he was not a little startled at finding the door open. He was sure he had shut it when he left. With a quicker step he hastened forward; he stood for one instant upon the threshold, and then he entered. The body of the pilgrim was gone! La Nuit saw where feet had tracked in his blood, and he traced the red-marked footprints to the door, and from thence out to the brook, and there they were lost. He returned and sat down once more upon the bed; he was weak and faint, and ere long a dizzy sensation came over him, and he fell back upon the pillow and sank into a deep slumber.

Several times he was startled out of his sleep by the phantoms of his own dreams, and once he sprang out upon the floor and drew his sword. But he was alone, and hardly realizing his real situation, he sank again upon the bed; he heard strange noises in his dreams, and he saw strange sights, but he slept on without starting again with fright.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SERPENT.

THE king of Navarre was in one of his own private apartments, and an attendant had just brought him a bowl of hot wine, and a few dried grapes and nuts, and of this Alfonso was to make his breakfast. He was blowing the steaming beverage to make it cool, when Nandon du Chastel made his appearance.

"Ah, Du Chastel," said the monarch, setting the bowl down, "you are stirring betimes this morning."

"Yes, sire; it behooves your loyal subjects to move early on such times."

"Ay, so it does," returned the monarch, with a light laugh, "for I have heard that the rosy god sometimes loses his smiles as he grows old."

"Sire."

"O,—ah—yes, I see. You think your god will smile longer. Well, I hope you may find it so. And love makes you rise early, eh?"

"Love, sire?"

"Ay, my lord constable—I mean the very love that is even now making a fool of you. Do you think I haven't noted your looks of late? Ha, ha, Du Chastel, I know how you feel. I have seen your eyes move quickly about, and your countenance change, and your lip tremble, and your cheek pale. Bah! don't let love make such a fool of you."

"Sire, you mistake me."

"Mistake you! Why, by my soul! you look as pale now as a frightened girl. Is it anything but love now?"

"Alas! sire, it must be deeds of dreadful note that can make me appear thus. Did I not love you and my country, they might not thus affect me."

"By Saint Peter!" cried the king, setting down the wine-bowl, which he had again taken up, "there must be something here of more than common note. Out with it."

Du Chastel sat down and bent his eyes to the floor, and for a while he seemed to be studying how to put his communication into the best possible shape.

"Sire," he said, raising his eyes to the face of the king, "crime is not a thing to be judged of by itself alone. The overt act, independent of other circumstances, does not constitute the crime; and that act which is by circumstances made a crime, must take somewhat of its coloring from the character of the person who does it. Thus, a man upon whom you had lavished every kindness, would be more guilty in breaking your laws than one who was totally ignorant of yourself and your munificence, even though you might love the former, and his punishment cause you a bitter pang, while for the latter you might care nothing."

"And what is all this coming at?" asked Alfonso, now grown sober with undefinable fear.

"Ah, sire, I can hardly give myself the heart to tell you. I will wait and think the matter over."

"Not so, my lord constable. By my soul! if you have anything to tell, let me hear it now."

"Well, sire, I will tell it, even though it wrench my heartstrings in the relation. 'Tis a sad tale and I would give the half of my possessions if I could forget it all before it passed my lips."

"Come, come, Du Chastel," cried the now excited king, forgetting his breakfast in the interest of the time, "do not beat the covert in that fashion, but come out with the game. Let's hear it at once."

"Last night, sire, business called me to Guidez."

"What business at Guidez?"

"Ah,—it was—a—private business, your majesty."

"O, very well," returned Alfonso, not seeming to have noticed the knight's hesitation. "I didn't know but what there might be trouble in the garrison there."

"No, sire," resumed Sir Nandon, having recovered his composure; "it was only a small matter of private business relating to my own household. I had gone to Guidez, and was returning. I think it must have been past midnight, for the moon had been long down. I had just entered a piece of wood, when I saw a human figure crouching away by the bushes at the roadside. I hailed it, and you may judge of my surprise when I found it to be none other than Henry la Nuit!"

"Stop! stop! Sir Nandon; you do not mean to breathe anything against the character of Henry la Nuit."

"You shall see, sire. I asked him why he was there, and he refused to tell me. That was in itself suspicious. I liked not the looks of his being there at that time, and I requested him to return with me, and as I attempted to enforce my wish, he drew his sword, and made furiously at me. Not wishing to hurt him I stood on the defensive, and was rather lax at that; he knocked my sword from my grasp, and then gave my horse a cut. I was thrown from my saddle, and considerably stunned by the fall. I do not know exactly how long I lay there, but as soon as I came to myself, I determined to follow after him. At length I came to a small cot where I saw a

light burning, and some unseen power urged me to stop there. I alighted from my horse, and entered. Ah, sire, I can hardly tell you the rest."

"Go on, go on, 'Sir Nandon," said Alfonso, in much agitation.

"Ah, I wish I had let it be. I wish I had not thought of telling you."

"So do I; but now that you have begun you must finish. Go on."

"Then listen. In that cot I saw Henry la Nuit—his hands all covered with blood—his teeth set and gritting; and at his feet lay an old man, dying. The warm blood was flowing profusely from a deep sword-gash upon the bosom—a gash that must have reached the heart. La Nuit turned fiercely upon me as I went in, and for the moment I feared him."

The monarch had turned pale during the latter part of Sir Nandon's recital; and as he closed, he started from his seat, and laid his hand upon the knight's shoulder.

"Now, my lord constable, beware how you speak, for by my halidom! I shall be slow to believe aught against him of whom you tell me."

"Alas! sire, would to God I had no reason myself to believe it. O, it has struck more anguish to my soul than could the death of a dozen of my dearest friends! But there it is; I will say no more."

"But you must say more," uttered Alfonso as he sank back into his seat. "You must tell me all you know."

"That is nearly told. All I know further is, that he threatened my own life if I did not beware—of exposing him, he must have meant."

"But this old man?"

"It was the same old pilgrim who was with him when he said he was attacked in the woods by the three brigands. They may have had some altercation; but to me, I am grieved to say, it appears as though the deed must have been committed in cold blood. His creeping so stealthily away from the city; his going without a horse, and at that time; and then his desire to avoid me. I heard a loud voice, as if of some one supplicating, just before I reached the cot; but I was too late to stop the dreadful deed. I wish I had not seen it."

"This is terrible!" groaned Alfonso, bowing his head upon his hands. "I loved that youth, for he was my best knight, and I meant to have given him your place in my confidence when you were married."

Sir Nandon started, and a black, fiendish expression swept like a thunder-cloud over his face; but Alfonso did not see it.

"But this makes wreck of it all," pursued Alfonso. "If what you have told me be true, then he is not the man I thought him."

"And do you doubt me, sire?—me, who have always been faithful; always—"

"No, no, Sir Nandon, I do not doubt you; I wish I could, for then I might not feel so utterly miserable as I now feel. O, La Nuit, how you have deceived me!"

"I pray you, sire, do not let this thing move you too much, or I shall blame myself for having told it to you; but had I known that it would have so affected you, I should certainly have kept it to myself."

"I am glad you have told me, Sir Nandon, for I am a wiser man, now. But, O, God! what pangs must our wisdom cost us. Were I to live my life over again, and could commence with the experience I now have, I would not put trust in a human being."

"Not in me, sire?"

"No! I would trust no one; I would live in myself, alone; I would seek no friendships, no loves, no confidence from one of my kind. The world is all false—all!"

"Ah, sire," interposed Sir Nandon, bowing most reverently, and speaking in a tone of well-assumed pain, "you do some of your friends great wrong now. I have always been true to you. O, I wish I could tear out my heart, and let you see it!"

Alfonso cast a mournful glance upon the speaker, and his head shook dubiously.

"Ah, my lord constable," he said, "you have never failed to flatter me."

"But I have ever told you the truth."

"And you have been a raven, to croak unwelcome tidings into my ear."

"Alas! sire, and is this the pay for all my devotion?—is this the reward for long years of service I have devoted to you?"

"I am not happy, Sir Nandon."

"Then there is Philip de la Carra," pursued Sir Nandon, hoping to call Alfonso's mind back to some pleasing topic, "is not he your friend?"

"Ay, by my halidom! he is," cried Alfonso, with sudden energy. "He is the only man in all my kingdom that has had the friendship to tell me my faults; he is in truth a friend."

Sir Nandon shrank before the look that was now upon him; and he looked like what he really was—a guilty man. But he was saved the pain of studying up a reply, for the monarch immediately continued:

"You may leave me now, Sir Nandon, for I have not breakfasted yet."

"But Henry la Nuit, sire?"

A shade of pain swept across the face of Alfonso, and for a moment he hesitated.

"I think you have told me the truth in this Sir Nandon," he at length said.

"You wrong me, sire, if there is a doubt in your mind."

"I do not doubt you. Go, and if you find Henry la Nuit, you may arrest him."

Nandon du Chastel bowed low down before the monarch, and when he turned to go away his dark features were all set in a look of more than fiendish exultation.

CHAPTER XXII.

A SEARCH FOR THE LOST ONE.

HENRY LA NUIT slept long and soundly after the first frenzy of his fatigued dreams was over, and when he was awakened it was by a heavy footfall in the room. He started up and found the warm sun shining down through the latticed window upon his bed; he closed his eyes, and rubbed them, and then he seemed to recollect that something extraneous had aroused him from his slumber. He started up again, and he saw a man standing near his bed, and gazing down upon the blood that lay so darkly upon the floor; he was a stout, healthy, middle-aged man, with a countenance of considerable intelligence, and habited in the garb of a peasant.

"Ah," he uttered, as soon as he noticed that the youth was awake, "there seems to have been strange doings here. I wonder how you can sleep."

"What has become of the body?" was La Nuit's first utterance, as he slid from the bed.

"What body?" asked the stranger, eyeing our hero with dubious looks.

"The body of him that was foully murdered here—an old man, a poor pilgrim."

"Lord's my life!" ejaculated the peasant, starting back from the blood-pool, and clasping his hands in horror. "Do you mean that old man that used to come here sometimes from Pampeluna?"

"Yes; it was he who was murdered here."

"Your hands look bloody, sir," said the stranger, with a dubious nod of the head.

"Bloody!" repeated La Nuit, holding up his hands, and finding that in the darkness he had not more than half washed them. "Ay, so they might be bloody. I came here last night,—it was after midnight,—and I found that old man, in this very room, weltering in his blood. I turned him over, and tore the clothing from his bosom to find the wound, and so his blood clung to my hands. I came here for a woman—a poor woman, who was in danger; I came to save her from an enemy, and for that same purpose the old man must have come before me; but she was gone, and he lay here dead. I went for help; I lost my way when I came back his body was gone; and weary, and faint, and borne down by a frenzy of agony, I sank upon the bed. Do you know of this? Do you know where his body is? Do you know where she has gone? Speak, sir. Don't stand there and gaze at me as though I were a madman! but speak, and tell me what you know."

"Well," returned the peasant, overcoming the suspicious fear that had crept upon him, "I don't know as I can tell you much. Who are you?"

"My name is Henry la Nuit; and I am not

ashamed to own it in the face of the world. There is no guilt here, sir, so you need not fear to speak."

"Sir Henry la Nuit," said the peasant, with much reverence. "Lord's my life, sir, I know your name well, for you have done our mountain herdsmen a service that can never be paid. You freed us from our terrible enemy, Morillo. I am at your service."

"Then tell me of this poor old man," said our hero, much gratified by this little turn in affairs. "What has been done with his body?"

"That is more than I can tell, sir. I know nothing of this affair only what you have told me. I came here now to see the woman who has lived here, for I have been in the habit of bringing her little delicacies. This morning I gathered these grapes—the earliest kind in the country,—and I meant that she should have them; and so I brought them here, expecting of course to find her. I found you, but not her."

Henry looked and saw the fresh grapes upon the table, and in an instant his heart turned gratefully towards the donor, for there was kindness to his mother.

"And have you no idea where the woman has gone?"

"Not in the least."

"Perhaps we could find her."

The peasant looked down to the floor, and seemed to hesitate.

"O, let us make the search, at any rate," continued the youth. "We may find her. I will reward you, sir."

"But I don't know," replied the peasant, dubiously, "how she would like it; she didn't want every one to know of her whereabouts. Even should you find her, she might not wish to see you."

"I'll answer for that!"

The peasant shook his head.

"Why, who do you think I am?" suddenly asked the youth, advancing a step, and looking the man in the eye.

"I don't know, only that you are Sir Henry la—Lord's my life! but you do look wonderfully like her."

"And well I might. I can trust you, for you were her friend—she is my mother."

"Heaven bless me!"

"I speak the truth. Now be a friend to her still, and help a child to find her."

The peasant considered a few moments, and during that time his eyes were wandering to and

fro, from the floor to the face of the youth. At length he said:

"I can't doubt you, sir, and I will help you hunt for her. I don't know where she is, but I know most every place hereabouts where she could have thought of going; but you need something to strengthen you first. Here, take the grapes. O, don't refuse, for I have more for her. Eat them, and I will find you some wine."

Henry felt the need of food, and he set down to the repast which the kind peasant set before him. A small loaf of dry bread and a bottle of wine were found, and ere long Henry arose from the table, feeling much the better for the refreshment.

"Now, come on," said the peasant, "but don't be too sure of finding her. I'll do the best I can."

As he spoke, he led the way out into the yard. The sun was more than half way to its meridian, and it was shining down hot and clear. Henry's head ached with a sharp pain, and he felt that his limbs were stiffer than usual, but he gave it only a passing heed.

"I should like to know when she went," he said, while the peasant was closing the door.

"She must have gone since yesterday morning, Sir Henry, for I was here very early, and brought her some fruit. She was here then; but I think she must have been preparing to go away, though I did not suspect so at the time. She must have gone sometime yesterday, so she can't have gone far."

"Unless she was carried away," said La Nuit, with a painful shudder.

"I hope not," returned the peasant, and as he spoke, he led the way towards the stream.

"Do you go this way?" asked the youth, in some surprise.

"Certainly; she wouldn't have taken the road to Guidex. If she sought her friends she would have come this way."

They crossed the stream by stepping from rock to rock above the shallow water, and after turning the angle formed by a jutting cliff, our hero found himself in a path, the existence of which he had never before suspected. It was narrow, running through a thick growth of bushes, but yet very plain and easy. For near two miles they travelled on without speaking, save now and then to make a passing remark on some subject which the bold scenery suggested. At the end of that distance, they came to an open

space at the foot of a rocky cliff, and upon the side of which stood a small thatched cot.]

"You'd better not show yourself here," said the peasant. "We will strike into a by-path, and I will leave you and go and inquire alone."

"But why should not I go, too?" asked La Nuit, with some little surprise.

"Because these folks don't know you, and they might not be willing to tell anything about the woman in your presence, even if they knew anything. They are friends to her, and will undoubtedly keep her place a secret from strangers."

"Then she has always been on her guard, here?"

"Bless you, yes. We don't exactly understand her misfortune, but, of course, you know all about it."

"Alas! mention it not," uttered La Nuit; and the words, whether meant to mislead the honest peasant or not, had the effect of preventing him from asking questions on the subject. "Go on to the cot, and make all haste."

The man went, and ere many minutes he returned, and our hero saw, from the sparkle of his eye, that he had gained some intelligence.

"We are on the right track," he said. "She passed here about noon, yesterday; and the woman, Blanche, was with her."

"But did you learn whither she was going, and for why?"

"She did not say where she should go, but she had left her cot because there was danger there. That is all I could learn; but we shall come to another dwelling, less than half a league from here. She took this path."

La Nuit's head still ached, and his limbs were weak, but he thought not of failing now; he bore up, and tried to think that he was strong. The food that he had taken before starting, and which for the moment had seemed to invigorate him, now lay painfully upon him, and in every portion of his system he felt the hand of disease; he did not dare to own it, even to himself. Yet he kept up with his guide, and at the end of half an hour, they came to another cot; and here, as before, the peasant requested La Nuit to remain out of sight.

When the peasant returned, he again had a sparkle of intelligence in his eye; but this time there was an accompanying cloud upon his brow.

"What is the fortune?" anxiously inquired our hero.

"She's gone on," returned the guide.

"And where?"

"I don't exactly know. She was weak when she left here, and I think she must have gone to a little cot, at the foot of yonder mountain. She has been there before. It is a secluded spot, and I think it's very likely she has gone there now. If she was as weak as they tell for, she couldn't have gone any further."

"Then let us on, in Heaven's name!" cried La Nuit.

After walking a short distance, our hero noticed that his companion wore a very thoughtful look, and he asked its cause.

"O, it's nothing," replied the peasant; "nothing of any consequence."

"I know better than that. What is it?"

"It's nothing to be alarmed at; only I thought it kind of strange, that's all."

"And what is it you thought was so strange?"

"Why, the old woman back here; she lives with her son, and he is away in the mountains, after game. She was alone last night, and she said, sometime in the night there were some men passed the house, and took this very path. She could not tell how many, for she could not see very plainly. She don't know whether it was after midnight or before; but let us hurry on—we shall soon know what it means."

Henry made no reply, for he felt his brain reeling. He stopped a moment, and leaned upon the arm of his companion; and when the fit had passed, he moved on again. The distance to the foot of the mountain was not far; they reached it in less than half an hour from the last stopping-place, and there in a wild, out-of-the-way place, they found a small hut. There were numerous tracks about the little gravelly spot by the door, and in one or two places the pebbles and small stones had been kicked about more than seemed the natural result of walking over them.

"There's been some one here," said Henry, in a weak, trembling tone.

"Yes," said the peasant, looking carefully down at the foot-tracks.

Our hero followed the direction of the man's gaze, and he, too, noticed the disarrangement of the stones; he saw where feet had sunk deeply into the loose dirt, and where they had twisted about as though in a struggle. He laid his hand upon his companion's arm, and while a sickening sensation came over him, he said:

"There has been trouble here, for see where

those foot-marks have scraped and twisted there. What is it?"

"Let us go in and see," returned the guide, evidently trying to hide his greatest fear. "If we do not find her here, we shall have to go back."

The door of the hut was closed, but not latched. The peasant pushed it open and entered, and Henry followed him. There was but one apartment in the place, and there was no living thing there save the two men who had just entered. There was a broken table, a straw cot, and an old chair there, and across the chair hung a scarf. The young man recognized it at once as a scarf which he had seen about his mother's neck; he had just taken it in his hand, when he was startled by an exclamation from the peasant.

"The Lord's my life! what's this?"

"Where? where?"

"Here—upon the floor."

Henry looked, and it was blood!—a dark, coagulated pool. He looked upon the scarf, which felt stiff in his hand, and upon that, too, were great spots of clotted blood; he looked again upon the floor, where the dark spot was, and then again upon the gory scarf. Then he turned his glaring, glazing eyes upon his companion.

"There's been foul work here," said the peasant, as he moved forward to look upon the scarf. "Dark, cruel work," he added, in a lower key, and in a husky voice.

But Henry la Nuit did not hear him. The youth's power had held out to its last spark of life, and he sank heavily down upon the floor, close by the spot where the dark gore was lifting up its silent voice of horror.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

At the old castle of Estella time was flying swiftly away, and the day that had been set apart for the marriage of Isabella was only separated from the present by a single night. It was in the afternoon that a gorgeous cavalcade rode up the hill and entered the great court. The duke led the party, and following him came the king and Nandon du Chastel, and after them a number of nobles and gentlemen. Alfonso had come to spend the night, so as to be on hand on the morrow to honor the nuptials, for he felt that the coming marriage was partly a work of his own doing.

In the great hall the long table was set, and late in the afternoon the party sat down to dinner. The king claimed a seat for Isabella by the side of himself, and his eye sparkled as he beheld how beautiful she was. At first, he did not notice how pale she looked, for he had not seen her quick decline. When she faltered in her speech, and only murmured in reply to his well-wishes, he thought she was only coy and timid. But she could not wholly resist the charm of the monarch's kind playfulness towards her, and at length she looked up into his face, and smiled.

At an early hour, the duchess arose from the table, and plead indisposition as a reason for leaving. The duke would have stopped her, but

he saw that she looked pale and trembling. He would have accompanied her, but he could not gallantly leave his guests.

"Now," cried the monarch, after the hour had waxed late, and candles had been brought, "let us drink to the health of the fair bride. It shall be our last bowl, for too much wine makes us fools. Come, fill up! You will drink this, my fair cousin."

This last remark was addressed to Isabella. She suffered the monarch to fill her silver goblet, but when all the rest had drank, her wine remained untouched.

"You have not drank, lady," said Alfonso, as he sat his own cup down. "Fere heaven, but you should sip, at least, to your own weal."

A bright tear-drop glistened upon the maiden's long lashes, and in a moment more, it fell into her wine-cup. The monarch saw it, but he kept back the words that had formed themselves within his mind; but when the guests arose from the table, he took the fair girl by the hand and led her away.

"Isabella," said he, as soon as they were out of the hearing of other ears, "I think you do not seem overjoyed at the prospect that is before you."

"I am resigned, sire, for I know it's my fate."

"Resigned! and is that all? Why, what can

be the matter? Your husband, that is to be, is one of my best nobles. I have been sure that you would be all happiness."

"I shall try to be happy, sire," returned Isabella, but in a tone so sad that it at once negated her assertion.

The monarch was not blind, nor was he slow of perception when left to his own reason. If he had a weakness, it was that of credulity. He started slightly beneath the new idea that had come to his mind, and he soon had it in fair shape for communication.

"Ah, my fair cousin," he said, in a low tone, "I think I have your secret. You have given your heart where you cannot give your hand."

Isabella trembled, and hung down her head.

"I see it," pursued Alfonso, with a bluntness peculiar to his friendly feeling moments; "you have given your heart to the youth who has but lately left your father's roof—to Henry la Nuit. Is it not so?"

The maiden could not speak; she had resolved to be calm, but she could not keep back the tears that now came to her eyes. If Alfonso had let the matter drop where it was, he would have done very well; but he thought to tell Isabella something which would cause her to forget her love for La Nuit, so he said to her:

"I thought so, my fair cousin; but you may consider yourself fortunate that you escaped the snare in time. Henry la Nuit is not the man for such as you to love."

"Because he is not of noble lineage," said Isabella, in a very low tone, but yet distinct enough to show the bitterness with which she spoke.

"Ah, that is not all, though I wish it were. He is a criminal," replied the monarch.

"Stop! stop! Beware! sire. O, there is no need that you should seek such means to alienate me, for I have given up all hopes!"

The king was startled by the maiden's vehemence; but as soon as he recovered himself, he said:

"I tell you the truth, cousin. He has done a great crime; he has—"

"What?"

"Committed a murder!—and that, too, upon a poor, defenceless old man."

"O, how false!" cried Isabella, every nerve in her system being strung with more than its wonted strength. "I know that is false!"

"But how do you know, sweet cousin?"

"As I know that the stars which are now

shining are not all eben black," she answered, energetically.

"Have you seen them for the last ten minutes?"

"No."

"Then you do not know but they may be all black now."

Isabella looked up into the king's face with a wondering look. "Ah, lady," he continued, in a half sad tone, "I would not trust the sun even for its rising to-morrow. I will never trust anything again!"

"Nothing but Heaven, if Henry la Nuit is false!" murmured Isabella.

"I hope I may trust that."

"And I will trust them both."

Alfonso looked into the upturned features of his companion, and he could not find it in his heart to say more against the youthful knight. So he merely wished her a blessing, and then led her back to the hall. But he had said enough to add to her misery, for when she was at length alone in her own chamber, she wept as she had not wept before for many days.

At length—it was past midnight—all the people had retired save the king and the duke, and they were left alone in the large closet that joined the hall.

"Hark!" said the duke, suddenly raising his head, "I thought I heard the footfall of a horse."

"Only some of the restive ones in the stable, I ween," returned the king, listening and hearing nothing.

"It may be so. But now of this matter in hand. The estates of Navaretta are settled upon Du Chastel."

"They will be the moment they are married, for so I have chosen to make it; and let me hope, my noble cousin, that you have become more attached to your son-in-law expectant."

"I must own, sire, that I think I have done him wrong. I have conversed with him much of late, and he is either a good man, or else one who has a surprising power of hiding himself behind falsehood; but I think it is the former."

"I know you will find it so, my lord duke."

"But, sire," returned Don Philip, shaking his head and smiling, "I would not take thy word for it, for you are by far too credulous. You believe too many things without examination."

"You are blunt, cousin," said the king, also smiling.

"And truthful, too," retorted Don Philip.

"But come, we will go to my study, where we may find pen and ink, and fix the papers. Let's have everything done before morning."

Alfonso gave his assent, and the duke took up the taper and prepared to lead the way. They entered the hall, and passed across to the great staircase, but instead of going up that way, Don Philip kept on to the right, intending to go by a back way so as not to disturb those of the guests who had chambers facing on the other route. They had entered a narrow corridor, and had proceeded half way through it, when the king suddenly called out, in a quick whisper:

"Philip! —sh! Hold a moment! There is a dark figure crouched away in the passage just behind us! Who is it?"

The passage alluded to was only an outlet from the corridor communicating with a window. Don Philip stopped and turned back; he held the light into the passage, and he saw the object that had attracted the king's attention; he moved nearer to it, and it moved quickly away towards the window; but there its progress was cut off. Don Philip still approached it, but he stopped when he saw it was the Benedictine!

"It is Girolamo, again!" he uttered, trembling, and turning towards the king.

"Girolamo!" repeated Alfonso. "Why, you are mad, Philip!"

"No, no, sire—I have seen him before, and in this very place."

"And what did he want?"

"I know not—I did not speak to him."

"Then, in faith, we'll speak to him now, and find out what he means, for from this time I am determined to investigate everything I see or hear. Give me the light!"

The monarch took the light, and boldly approached the Benedictine, and Don Philip could not resist the temptation to follow. The form raised its head, and Alfonso started; but quickly recovering himself, he said:

"Excuse me, whoever or whatever thou art; but I must know why you are thus uneasily wandering about when you should be resting beneath the mausoleum which your mourning friends provided for you. What's your business? Come, speak to me, if you can?"

A moment the figure crouched away, and then a low voice broke from its lips:

"Let me go—do not detain me!"

"Now by the Holy Cross! I know that voice!" cried Alfonso, moving nearer to the dark figure, and placing his hand upon its shoulder.

Don Philip seemed to have recognized it, too, for he started quickly forward, and his trembling became more violent as he stood by the side of the monarch.

"Don Philip," said Alfonso, turning to the duke, while a strange look of intelligence beamed out upon his features, "I think you had better take charge of this spirit yourself, for if it is not our noble cousin—your own fair wife—then I'll never investigate again!"

"Ilanthe!" gasped Don Philip.

"O, my husband! let me go! Let me go to my chamber!" murmured the duchess, starting forward, and laying her head upon his bosom.

Philip de la Carra could not speak, but the monarch was not so dumb.

"No, no, my noble cousin," he said, in a mild, but firm tone, "you must tell us this secret, for I know that your husband is wonder-struck, and I am all inquisitiveness."

"Yes, Ianthe," added Don Philip, in a husky whisper. "Come to my study; I will not command it, but most earnestly do I entreat you."

As he spoke, he turned back towards the corridor, leading his wife with him. She walked reluctantly, but she did not refuse to go. The king now carried the light, and led the way. He knew the cabinet door, and ere long they were seated within the room. The duchess was very pale, and as she threw the dark cowl back from her head, the duke was startled by a new emotion, for she looked almost ghastly in her ashy pallor.

"For Heaven's sake, Ianthe!" he ejaculated, "what does this mean? Where have you been?"

"I have been to Pampeluna."

"To Pampeluna!" uttered the astonished husband.

"Yes. Sometime ago, an old man asked me to assist him in a work that lay so near his heart that his whole future happiness depended upon its consummation. I could not refuse him, and to do this it was necessary that I should disguise myself, though I had not the most remote idea that I should be mistaken for my dead brother."

"But you do resemble him most marvellously in feature," said the monarch.

"I know it," resumed the duchess, in a low, sad tone; "and to that fact do I owe the fortune of not having once before been discovered by my husband. I have done some things which the old man asked, but I know not to what they can amount. I was to have seen him again ere this, and I went to Pampeluna for that purpose; but

I could not find him—I only learned that he was dead!"

"But that is not all," said the king. "Come, what was this all about? Let us hear the whole, now."

"You must excuse me, sire; and you, too, my husband. I ought not to tell it now; I have no moral right to reveal it; it might do great wrong to an innocent person. Trust to my judgment in this. At some time, when the tale can pass harmlessly by, I will tell you all. Do not ask me now. I am faint and weak, my husband. Let me go to my chamber."

It was not in the duke's heart to refuse; nor did the king object; so the duchess was allowed to depart. For a long while after she was gone, the two men sat there in silence. At length, Alfonso started up, and said:

"Strange!"

"It is!" responded the duke.

"Unaccountable!" added the king.

"So it is," said Philip, with an emphatic shake of the head.

Again there was a long silence, at the end of which Alfonso said:

"But this will not prevent the doing of our business. It is late; let's have the ink."

The ink and papers were procured, and the king and duke prepared for their work; but ever and anon they would start and look vacantly at each other, as though the contents of those papers was not the subject uppermost in their minds.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ARREST.

HENRY LA NUIT's sickness was not very severe. It was only the result of an overtaking of both mind and body—a relaxation of the physical and mental functions. He had no fever. When he came to himself, he found that he had been conveyed by the kind peasant, who had been his guide to the cot of the mountain hunter, to the same cot where they had last sought for information on the night of the search. By a few days of careful nursing, his strength all came back to him; but even during this time he was not idle. He still searched for some clue to his mother's fate, and his new-found friends helped him, but it was all in vain. Not a word could they hear, nor a trace could they find beyond the mountain hut where the blood-mark was found.

At the end of a week, with his hopes all crushed, Henry took his way back to Pampeluna. It was dark when he arrived there, and rather than disturb old Garlix, he sought a place of public entertainment. After eating a light supper, he retired so as to avoid the questions of the inquisitive guests, and in the morning he requested his breakfast might be served in his own room.

He was in the midst of his repast, when two officers unceremoniously entered his apartment. At first he thought they might have missed their

way; but then, as he knew them both, he thought perhaps, that they had merely come to find out where he had been for the past week.

"Ah, De Condon," he said, arising and addressing the foremost of the officers, "I give you welcome. Will you break your fast with me?"

"No, Sir Henry," replied the officer, with much hesitancy in his manner. "We have come to you on business."

"Business! De Condon," uttered Henry, not yet suspecting the truth that was to come upon him. "And what business have you with me? Does the king want me?"

"No, Sir Henry—it is the seneschal who wants you."

"The seneschal!—the judge of Pampeluna?"

"Yes."

"And for what?"

"Come with us, and you shall see."

"But I may finish my breakfast first?"

"O, certainly." And as the officer spoke, both he and his companion took seats.

Our hero now began to notice that they were restless and uneasy, and that they sometimes glanced at him, and then at each other, as though they had thoughts which they would not speak. Then the thought came to him, how strange it was that the seneschal should want him. But his repast was soon ended, and then rising and

attending for a moment to his toilet, he signified his readiness to go.

"This is uncommon," he said, after they had reached the street. "What can the seneschal want with me?"

"I don't know as I can tell you," returned De Condon; but La Nuit saw that his manner was evasive, and he asked no more questions.

Once or twice our hero thought that the people looked pityingly upon him as he passed; but perhaps that was only because he might look pale and worn. He had now a faint glimmering of the truth, but it was not of a shape that he could lay hold upon. At length he reached the place of his destination, and was ushered into the presence of the seneschal. This latter person was an old knight, and acted both as civil and military judge in Pampeluna. He was a hard-featured man, displaying as much iron sternness as one in his office could possibly need. He was already upon his bench, and his official regalia was upon his shoulders. He nodded to the officers as they entered, and then called upon our hero to approach.

"Henry la Nuit," he said, in a very impressive tone, "you are charged with a great crime!"

"Me! Crime!" uttered the youth. He gazed for a moment into the face of the judge; and then he bowed his head, for the truth had come upon him.

"Yes, Henry la Nuit; and now answer me a few questions. About a week ago, you went from this city towards Guidex, near the middle of the night?"

"Yes—I did."

"And an old pilgrim accompanied you?"

"Nay—not so, sir. I went to find that pilgrim—I went all alone."

"Very well—that matters not—though it has been so set down. But you were found beside that old man, with your hands and garments bloody, and he just dying from a deep stab to the heart."

"Yes, sir, that is true, save that he was already dead when I was found by his side; and he was dead, too, when I found him. I know, most honored sir, whence this has arisen, and I will tell you it is all a base lie."

There were several knights standing about in the hall who had been attracted there by the arrest of the young man, and they shook their heads as though they feared his plea would not avail him. Yet they looked sympathizingly upon him, and it was plainly to be seen from their countenances, that they still honored him.

"I am afraid, Sir Henry," resumed the seneschal, with a dubious shake of the head, "that your word will not pass so easily as you could wish. It has become my duty to cause your arrest, and under the circumstances I must order your confinement."

"But who has ordered my arrest?"

"The king!"

Henry started, and for a moment the color forsook his cheeks; but he recovered himself quickly, and stepping nearer to the bench, he said, in a bold, firm tone:

"One thing is at least left to me. Who is my accuser?"

"Sir Nundon du Chastel."

"I thought so, my lord," returned the youth, while the rich blood mounted to his cheeks and temples. "Now, sir, where is he?"

"I think he is at the castle of Estella. He went there yesterday."

Again La Nuit started, and his emotion was more lasting and powerful than before. When he again spoke, his lips were compressed and colorless; his hands were clutched over his bosom, and his dark eyes burned with a fire so deep that his whole soul seemed in flames.

"My lord judge," he said, "I claim the right which belongs to every knight of Navarre. Let me face my accuser, and he shall maintain his truth by his sword, or he shall fall with the lie in his mouth!"

"I must hesitate in this," said the seneschal, "for Du Chastel's away, and you are in custody."

"Then in the name of justice, I demand a parole. I will meet the man and make him eat his words. You cannot deny me this!"

"It is impossible to let you go without a hostage in your place, for you are already under arrest."

"Then," cried La Nuit, looking about him, "I know there is some knight here who will take my place, for, by my soul of souls! my cause is just! Ah! De Rosem, you do not doubt me?"

"No!" said the knight, thus addressed, stepping forward. "Go, Sir Henry, and I will be your surety."

"Bless you! De Rosem—bless you!" uttered the young man, as he shook the hand of his friend warmly. And then turning to the judge, he continued: "I may go now?"

"Beware that your cause is a just one," admonished the judge.

"Before God it is!"

"Then go; and I pray that you may prove your words to be true!"

CHAPTER XXV.

ON THE BACK.

MORNING had dawned upon the old castle of Estella. The noble knights and gentlemen were astir in the open court, and the king and Don Philip walked apart in the great hall. Isabella and her mother were in one of the large chambers, and the bridal robes lay close at hand. The maiden was perfectly calm; but she was very pale; and about her eyes there were dark marks where the tears had last struggled. Her hands were folded upon her bosom, and she was gazing vacantly upon the distant mountain landscape. The duchess was as pale as her child; but she was not so calm, for ever and anon she would start and struggle with herself, as though she suffered from a cause which she dared not make known.

"Mother," at length said Isabella, looking up into the face of her parent with a faint, sad smile, "it will soon be over. You must not be so sad while I am calm."

"But you are going to leave me, my child, and then who shall make me happy? But I am calm, Isabella! Don't you think I look calm?"

"O, you must be calm all this, is all passed. I shall not stand it if you fail. But I am going to be happy, mother," continued the maiden, as she noticed a shade more painful than usual pass over the face of her parent; "I shall try to be happy, and I shall come and see you very often

—very often. You will love to see me, won't you?"

The maiden pillowed her head upon the bosom of her mother as she spoke, and the duchess wound her arms about her without daring to give utterance to her thoughts. She knew that her child spoke not as she felt; she knew that she only spoke of happiness as a veil with which to cover the misery that really lay in her soul.

"Come, mother, you must let me see you smile. I shall be happier if you do."

The mother did smile, but her eyes swam with tears while she did so. Before she could speak, Katrina entered the room. She had come to help her young mistress dress.

Two hours later, and the party were all assembled in the great hall. Du Chastel was there, smiling upon all about him, but yet with an evil look lurking like a scorpion amongst his smiles. Isabella was there in her bridal robes. She did not try to smile now,—she only tried not to weep or sob, and she succeeded, for she was very calm. The duke was there, in his ermine robes, and he looked stern and cold. The king was there, but he seemed not so happy as on the previous night, for his gaze dwelt upon the pale face of Isabella, and he knew that she was not happy. Since he had come to the determination to investigate things for himself, he had

had his eyes opened wonderfully, and he almost wished that he had not put aside his credulity. But things had gone too far now, and he contented himself by inwardly praying that all might end well.

"Courage!" he whispered, approaching the maiden's side, and taking her hand. "You are soon to be mistress of one of the finest estates in Navarre."

"I am very happy, sire, I am sure."

Ah! the monarch would have been happier if she had said something else, for the very words—so resigned, so heavenly meek—cut him to the soul. He saw her whole heart in that short sentence, and the look which accompanied it. He had no chance now to encourage her, for her words plainly told him that she was prepared.

"Come, come," the monarch cried, leaving the maiden's side, and advancing to the centre of the hall, "the nuptial feast will await us if we do not haste. Let us to the chapel. The good bishop shall lead the way, and we will follow. My lord duke, bring you the bride, and I will escort the duchess. Come, my lords and gentlemen, fall in, fall in!"

There was a general movement in the hall—a hurrying to and fro,—and as soon as all were ready for the chapel, the monarch sought the side of the duchess.

"Now, my fair cousin," he said, "we will join the party. What! unhappy?"

"Let us go, sire—it is past now, I am not happy, but I can bear it."

Alfonse himself began to look unhappy, too; but he struggled hard to throw off the feeling, and with a smile that cost him somewhat of an effort, he gave his arm to the duchess, and joined the throng.

The aged bishop led the way out into the courtyard, for it had been arranged that they should enter the chapel by the outer doors. The great gates had been thrown wide open, and the people of Estella had begun to collect in the outer court, and as the party emerged from the castle, they threw up their caps and shouted for joy.

The procession had reached the centre of the court, when a horse, at a furious gallop, came thundering up the hill and crossed the drawbridge. The people in the outer court started aside as the sweat-streaming animal dashed among them, and in a moment more, a young knight, all covered with dust, sprang from the saddle, and sank upon his knees at the feet of Alfonso.

"Henry la Nuit!" uttered the monarch.

"Henry! Henry!" cried the duchess, springing forward and extending both her arms towards the youth.

"Back! back! my lady," said the young man, as he motioned her away, and at the same time rising to his feet, "I cannot take your hand now. I stand accused of a most accursed crime, and until that imputation is wiped from my name, I will never take an honest hand again. Sire," he continued, turning to the monarch, while the duchess stood back, "I have been accused of murdering an old man, and I have come here to seek my accuser. He is Nandon du Chastel. Before God and my king! I challenge him now to single combat, and as the battle shall fall, so shall my honor be. You cannot deny me this, for it is a right you gave me when you made me a knight of Navarre."

Alfonso was not surprised, but for a few moments he was very thoughtful.

"Henry," he said, at length, with a kind look, "you must beware, for Du Chastel is a strong man."

"Then so much the more shall my honor be vindicated! If there is a suspicion to rest so ever lightly upon me, let me die! Sire, I demand the right to challenge him!"

"It is yours, Henry. By my soul! I do not believe you guilty!"

"And yet you ordered my arrest?"

"Yes, I was credulous then, but I have considered since." And turning to the startled crowd, the monarch continued: "Attention, my lords and gentlemen. I like not to break in upon an occasion like this, but here is something to which I cannot say nay. Sir Nandon du Chastel, you have accused Henry la Nuit of a murder most foul, and your word alone supports the accusation! He demands a knightly trial!"

"Not now! not now!" gasped the dark knight, trembling at every joint. "Let the marriage go on!"

"No, coward!" cried La Nuit, advancing towards Du Chastel, and flinging his gauntlet upon the ground. "The husband of that pure being I would not fight, even though I died in shame. You shall not escape your responsibility thus. I challenge you to mortal combat, and if I fall—"

At this moment the youth was interrupted by the approach of Isabella. The maiden had broken from the hold of her father, and with a wild cry upon her lips, she had darted forward.

"Henry! Henry!" she cried.

The youth started back, and it took all his power to control himself; but with one convulsive effort he put back the bounding soul of his love, and in quick, husky tones, he said:

"No, no, Isabella! come not to this bosom now! It is pure, but there is a cloud hanging upon it. When I can stand forth free from the false charge that has been brought upon me, then will I bless thee. Come on! Nandon du Chastel! Before God and man, you are a base liar!"

And yet, even beneath that word, the false knight cowered; but he could not escape the ordeal. The monarch had given word for the combat, and the duke had led his wife and child away.

"God will not let the innocent fall!" said Alfonso, as he gazed first upon his constable, and then upon Henry la Nuit. "Let the combat go on!"

Henry drew his sword, and, as he did so, he caught a kind expression from Don Philip. It was like a ray from heaven to him, for he knew now that he was not friendless. Nandon du Chastel came to the list with a pale face, and his hand trembled when he drew his sword.

"Are you a coward, as well as a liar?" uttered La Nuit, with contempt.

The words had the intended effect, for Du Chastel sprang to the conflict. The two swords crossed with a sharp clash, and for a few moments, La Nuit made no thrust at his antagonist, while on the other hand, Sir Nandon thrust most hotly at him.

"Beware!" cried the monarch, as he saw La Nuit's sword above his head, while the point of his enemy's weapon was almost at his breast.

But even as he spoke, La Nuit sprang nimbly aside, and the point passed harmlessly by him. Then, with all his might, he fetched a blow that struck Du Chastel's sword close upon the guard, and the weapon was dashed from its owner's hand to the ground. In an instant, La Nuit stooped and picked it up. A moment he gazed into the lurid face of his unarmed accuser, and then he turned and walked to where stood the monarch.

"Sire," he said, extending the hilt of the weapon he had taken from his enemy, "here is my accuser's sword. Do what you please with it, but God forbid that I should take his life!"

The monarch took the sword, and plunging

the keen blade deep into the ground, he placed his foot upon the pommel and snapped the weapon in twain. Then he turned towards the youthful victor, and extended his arms.

"Henry," he cried, "God be thanked for this!"

"And am I free from this charge?"

"Ay—as free as the infant yet upon its mother's bosom!"

"Give me your hand, Henry!" murmured Don Philip.

During all this time, Nandon du Chastel had been hard at work with himself, and he had put the demon away out of sight. He now advanced slowly towards the monarch, and knelt at his feet.

"Sire," he said, "I made that charge in good faith, but now I will retract it. God has saved the innocent! Now may not the marriage proceed?"

"By heavens! Du Chastel, I begin to doubt you," uttered Alfonso, with a darkening brow.

"Doubt me, sire?" repeated Du Chastel, arising to his feet, and looking reproachfully upon his king. "Then, if you doubt me—you, whom I have served so long—you, who should know my very heart—you, for whom my life has been ready for the sacrifice for years—if you doubt me, then let me go and never claim the love of man again!"

Alfonso was moved, and he hesitated. He had turned to Don Philip for counsel, when he was called from the subject by an exclamation of startling surprise from one of the nobles who stood near at hand.

"What is it, my lord?"

"Look there, sire. There comes some strange party to grace the wedding."

Alfonso looked in the direction now pointed out, and he saw a body of peasants toiling up the hill, bearing upon their shoulders a large litter.

"Come, come, sire!" urged Du Chastel, his face now deadly pale, "let the marriage go on!"

But before Alfonso could reply, Henry la Nuit had approached and laid a trembling hand upon his arm. The young man had seen the strange thing that was being borne up the hill, and a wild hope had sprang up in his bosom.

"Sire," said he, in quick nervous tones, "ere another thing be done, wait till those peasants arrive."

"I will, Henry."

"But, sire!" gasped Du Chastel.

"Silence!" interrupted Alfonso, looking upon his constable with a strange expression of countenance. "You, who are so innocent—so loyal—so devoted—can surely have nothing to fear!"

The dark knight shrank cowering back just as the duchess and her child came out into the court. Isabella sought the side of her father, and he drew his stout arm about her.

"He is innocent!" she murmured.

"Yes, my child."

"And I—I—"

"Speak, my love."

"Shall not wed that dark, bad man!"

"Hush! there is some strange thing at hand. Remain with your mother, Isabella."

As Don Philip spoke, the toil-worn, dust-covered peasant entered the court, and the litter which they bore they set down near where stood the king of Navarre. Henry looked for his mother, but he looked in vain.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CLOAK FALLS FROM THE PILGRIM'S SHOULDERS.

"Now, fellows," cried Alfonso, "what have ye here?"

"We have brought hither a man who will speak for himself, sire," said one of the peasants, bowing down before his monarch. "We know not his business, but we could not refuse his earnest prayers."

And so speaking, the peasant arose and turned towards the litter. He removed the light covering, and the sunbeams fell upon the form of the pilgrim; he was pale and wan, and his features were all fallen away to a mere shadow of what he had been; he was assisted to a sitting posture, but he groaned with pain during the operation. Henry started forward and grasped the old man by the hand.

"Alive! alive!" he uttered. "O, what a wondrous blessing is this!"

"Yes, Henry," returned the pilgrim, in a hollow tone; "I am alive, and that is all. Don't grasp me too hard, for it pains me!"

"And my mother?" whispered the youth, hardly daring to listen for the answer.

"She is safe!"

Henry la Nuit pressed the pilgrim's hand to his bosom, and raised his eyes to heaven. His prayer, whatever it may have been, was a silent one; but the sudden access of joy made him for the moment weak. There was one other

person who sprang towards the litter—it was the duchess. She gazed into the old pilgrim's face, and then asked him, in a whisper, if he had done all that he promised.

"Lady," he said, while a faint smile broke over his features, "rest you in peace. God has not forsaken the right!"

Ianthe de la Carra sought the side of her child, but no questions were asked or answered. All attention was now called to Nandon du Chastel. That knight had uttered a low cry of horror when the covering was first raised from the form of the pilgrim, and he now stood with his teeth closed, his hands clutched, his face fearfully livid, and great drops of sweat starting coldly from his brow.

"Now, what means all this?" cried the king, whose whole soul was wrought up with excitement. He had seen the emotions of Henry la Nuit; he had seen the movement of the duchess; and he had noticed, too, the startling effects upon Nandon du Chastel. "Who can solve this riddle?" he continued.

"Sire," said La Nuit, "this is the old man whom I was accused of having murdered. Now let his own lips be the witness!"

"Ha!" cried Alfonso, bracing himself up like a man who is about to commence some heavy

task. "This is the finger of some power higher than ours! We will hear him speak."

The monarch had started to move towards the litter, when Du Chastel approached, and pulled him by the sleeve.

"Sire," said he, "let the marriage go on first. Listen not now to the tale of this crazy old man."

"Why, Sir Nandon, you look half dead! Upon my soul, you are not fit to be married in such a plight! You may recover by the time this story is told.—No, no, you need not urge me, for, by the heavens above me, this thing shall be cleared up before anything else is done. Stand back!"

The dark knight said no more, but like a man who feels the iron grasp of death upon him, he tottered back.

"Now, old man," continued Alfonso, approaching the litter, "let me hear your story. Some one has attempted your life?"

"Yes, sire," returned the pilgrim, his eye brightening as he spoke; "and the attempt has proved successful, for I know that my life is fast ebbing away."

"And do you know who did it?"

"Yes, sire,—I know too well. If you will listen I will tell you."

"I have come to listen. Now, go on."

"Near the mountains, towards Guidez," commenced the old man, "there lived a poor woman—an acquaintance of my earlier days,—and I was wont to go to her cot to comfort and cheer her. But that woman, poor as she was, had enemies. One night, I received from a mysterious source, the intelligence that her life was in danger, and, of course, I set off at once to avert the blow if possible, for I had a suspicion from whence it was to come. I reached there at midnight, but I found the woman gone. I feared the worst. I sat down, for I was weak with fear and fatigue, and while I was thus buried in my painful meditations, I heard a footstep behind me. I looked up, and saw Nandon du Chastel! He asked me where was the woman who had been there, and I told him I did not know. He swore that I had secreted her; and then he swore that my life should pay the penalty. I started up to seize my staff, but before I could reach it, he struck at me with his sword, and cut my arm. Then he made a lunge at me, and his sword pierced my bosom. I sank down, and soon all was dark about me."

"Will you listen to such a tale, sire?" asked

Du Chastel, with the look of one who tries to draw a barbed arrow from his heart.

"Yes!" returned the king, motioning him back; "I am prepared now to listen to anything. But you have nothing to fear, Du Chastel—you, who are so pure and loyal, so devoted and innocent! Go on, old man."

"After that, sire, I knew nothing more until I heard my name pronounced by Henry la Nuit. I knew that he was kneeling by my side, but I could give no motion of life. My every physical function was suspended. I tried to speak; I tried to move a finger, even, but I could not. Then I was aware that Nandon du Chastel came back, and he found La Nuit still by my side. I heard him accuse the young man of having done the murder, and then he went away again. The next thing that I knew was that La Nuit was leaving me. With one mighty force of my will, I tried to call him back, for I feared I should die if left alone. I did move my body, and the sound attracted his attention, but he did not divine its cause, for again he turned, and I was then left alone."

"And is that all?" asked the excited monarch, as the old man hesitated and pressed his hand upon his bosom.

"No, sire."

"Then go on.—Hold! Stop, there! Sir Nandon du Chastel. One so devoted as you should not leave his king in an emergency like this! Here, my Lord de la Barde, and you, De Cande, hold the constable in custody!"

"And this is the pay for all my services?" groaned Du Chastel, still struggling to appear an injured man.

But the king only cast upon him a bitter, withering look, and then turned again to the pilgrim.

"What I have to tell now, sire," resumed the old man, "is mostly for the benefit of Henry la Nuit. Shortly after he had gone, two hunters entered the cot, and by that time I had become so far revived that I could speak. They told me that the woman of whom I was in search, had fled, and that she had sent them there to watch if any one came to see her. They were stout men, and they bound up my wounds, and took me upon their shoulders, and in this way they bore me to the mountain where the woman had taken refuge. Here they fixed my wound again, for it was bleeding freely, and as soon as I felt stronger, they proposed that we should go with them to their hunting cave up the mountain."

The woman staunch the blood from my bosom with her own scarf, and told me that she should feel safer in the mountain. So I was borne up there, and there I remained until yesterday, for I was not able to be moved before."

The whole party had gathered about the resting-place of the old man, and all, save the Duke of Salva, were gazing fixedly upon him. But the duke was gazing upon Henry la Nuit; and while he gazed there was a look of startling import overspreading his features; he trembled, and clasped his hands nervously together, and once or twice some inaudible murmurings were upon his lips. That look partook somewhat of astonishment, and somewhat of hope, and somewhat, too, of puzzled doubt.

"Henry," said the pilgrim, "I have heard of your search after me, and you now know what has before been a source of puzzle to you." The old man gave the youth a quick look of admonition, for he saw that he was about to ask a question; and then he added: "Look down the road and see if any one is coming."

La Nuit looked, and away in the distance, upon the brow of a hill, he saw two horses; but he could not distinguish the characters of the riders. He told the old man what he saw.

"It is well," said the pilgrim. "I think they are friends of mine."

"And now, who are you?" asked the monarch.

The old man now raised himself further up, and for a moment, a dark shadow, as if of pain, swept across his features. At length he said:

"Ah, sire, your eyes are less keen than the duke's, for he recognized me when first he saw me."

"Ay, but you are sadly altered since then," said Don Philip. "Don't you know him, sire?"

For the first time there shot a gleam of light athwart the countenance of the monarch. He gazed a moment longer into the sunken features of the pilgrim, and then his brow grew as black as night; he trembled, his lips turned colorless, and he started as one who had just awakened from some terrible dream, with the fear-phantom still before him.

"Out, fiend!" he shrieked. "Why hast thou dragged thy gory body before me? Look at thy hands! O, Montarrago! I thought the grave had swallowed thee long ago!"

"Montarrago!" burst from the lips of half the people present.

"Ay," responded the old man with a shudder, "the *Headsmen of Navarre*! I am he who once shed blood as though it were water!—but I did it at the will of another, at the command of one more mighty than I. I was but the executioner—*Alfonso of Navarre was the judge*!"

"Stop! stop!" groaned the monarch. "I am glad you were not murdered, but get thee from my sight! Get thee hence!" he continued, with increasing vehemence, "and if you ever stand in my presence again, I'll—"

"Hush! sire," spoke the old executioner, raising his trembling hands towards the king. "For long years I have done all in my power to atone for the past. I have been a weary pilgrimage to the Holy City, and many a long, dark night have I lain upon the mount of Calvary, and prayed that God would wash the blood from my hands. My heart had sickened at the work my hands had done, and I fled from the place where my name had become a living curse. Men swore by the red hand of your executioner, and villains, even, shuddered when they heard his name. Sire, I have suffered enough!—will you not take my hand, and—"

"No! no!—never!" cried the king, starting back as though he feared the old man would touch him.

"Then, sire, I will tell you one thing more, and then I am done. In Palestine, I watched by the side of a pilgrim, and I held his head in my lap while he breathed his last; but before he died, he told me a strange story. You must hear it."

"Then tell it quickly," returned Alfonso, still pale and excited.

"I must tell it quickly, or I shall not tell it at all," murmured the old man, "for Du Chastel's steel has found my life."

He motioned to his friends,—to those who had brought him thither,—and they came forward and raised him higher up; he thanked them with a grateful look—then he bowed his head a moment, as if in deep pain—and then he raised his weakening eyes once more to the face of the trembling monarch.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

MONTARRAGO had been once the headsman of Navarre—the public executioner. He had served for two kings, and during the term of that service he had been called upon to do many a work of blood; his name had indeed become a curse. No wonder, then, that the people in the castle-court gathered eagerly about him, for it had been many years now since he had been heard of in the kingdom, and he was thought to be dead. The old man cast his eyes for a few moments about him, and then he turned them once more upon the king.

"Sire," he began, with a strange solemnity in his tone and manner, "years ago there was a man in Navarre who took to himself a wife. That wife was the fairest daughter of the kingdom. Others had loved her beside the man who made her wife. Well, she was married; and for a while all went on well; but at length, in an evil hour, a devil began to whisper in the husband's ear. At first, he listened not; but the devil whispered on, and the husband began to listen. That angel wife was accused of infidelity—she spurned the base insinuation—but her protestations availed her not. Time rolled on, and she bare to her husband a child; but with that husband the devil had done his work. He believed that his wife was criminal, and that his child—"

"Hold! hold! old man," shrieked the king; and then, while his voice sank to a hoarse whisper, and his hands worked nervously upon his bosom, he added: "Who was that husband?"

"Never mind, sire; hear my story first; don't interrupt me. That father never smiled upon his infant, for he believed that it was not his child; his heart was all turned to the gall of bitterness, and he was as miserable as a man could well be, for he yet loved his wife.—Are you listening, sire?"

"O, great God!" groaned the king.

"But I will not dwell here," resumed the old man. "That husband had listened too long to the words which the incarnate fiend had whispered to him, and he resolved to put from his sight forever those two beings whom he thought to be the living evidence of his own shame. He sought the executioner—it was me. I was the blood-master, the death-man of Navarre. He told me that I must take his wife and child, and slay them! That wife, who had been as faithful to him as Heaven itself, he put away—he gave her to the bloody headsman, and from that time he looked not upon her again!"

"Old man!" gasped the king, with a most frightful expression, "you have lied to me most foully! That wife was guilty! She was black as the grave with crime!"

"Listen, sire, till I have finished," said Montarrago.

"But do not lie to me!" whispered the monarch, grasping the old man by the arm.

Those who stood around were startled by the terrible look of their king. They were riveted to the spot, and not a movement told that they breathed, save that their eyes wandered anxiously from one to the other of the actors in the strange scene.

"Sire," resumed the old man, as soon as the king had let go of his arm, "after this deed was done, even the king cursed me—the boys in the streets shrank from me, and men trembled when they met me. At length I began to tremble at myself. The ghosts of a hundred headless men haunted me; and, sick at heart of the bloody life I had led, I gave up my gory office, and started on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and there I meant to have ended my days in prayer and penitence. But fate ordered it otherwise. I there came across a pilgrim like myself. For several years we kept company there, and he had sought that holy spot to wash away a crime; but I knew not what it was until death came to snatch him away. While he lay dying upon my knee, he poured into my ear the story of his crime. He had come from Navarre, and the scene of his story lay in Pampeluna. It ran in this wise:

"A certain man in Navarre had become the husband of a most beautiful girl; but there was another man who loved that girl, and she had scornfully rejected him. The rejected lover vowed revenge. He was a young man—a very young man,—but he was of noble blood, and that blood was hot and fierce. He gained a place of trust by the side of the husband, and then began to whisper against the fair fame of the wife—but his own word was not enough. Near the town of Saint Jean Pied de Port, there lived a young hunter who often came to the home of the husband with game. He was a handsome man, and once or twice the young wife had smiled upon the youthful hunter, and bestowed her bounty upon him. The rejected lover saw this, and he resolved to profit by it; he sought that hunter, and by the payment of large sums of gold, he gained him to his purpose. It was arranged by the noble plotter that the hunter should be found in the wife's chamber, and with much difficulty the thing was accomplished; but the wife was not there, nor did she know of the circumstance. Next, forged letters

were written. The base plotter obtained a sample of the ill-fated wife's writing, and from this he forged letters, purporting to be from the wife to the hunter. And thus the infernal game went on, until at length the unhappy husband believed all that was told him. He believed that his wife was false to him—that she loved the handsome hunter—and that the child which nestled upon her bosom was of a plebeian father. Then it was that he became mad, and gave his wife and child to the executioner.

"Sire, that hunter fled from Navarre; it was he who died in my arms in Palestine. But before he died, he confessed to me all that I have told to you, and more. That base plotter had written him some letters, which he was ordered to destroy; but he did not destroy them. When he found that he must flee—that the work he had helped to do was likely to bring death to himself—he gave the papers into the hand of his mother, and then left his native country forever. As soon as I had seen him buried, I determined to come back to Pampeluna. When I arrived here, I found that the husband still lived, and that the plotter was still by his side, and I also found that the mother of the hunter was still living.

"It was now necessary that I should have some one to assist me; but to whom should I apply? I dared not go to Saint Jean to see the hunter's mother, nor could I watch the movements of that man whose wickedness I wished to expose. At length I hit upon a novel expedient. I found that the noble Duchess of Salva was no friend to the villain, and that she would willingly do anything honorable that could hurl him from a new plan he was upon the eve of consummating. I sought her, but only revealed to her that I suspected that man to have been guilty of the blackest crimes, and also told her that an old woman at Saint Jean had the papers in her possession which would prove it. She promised to watch the villain, and get the papers if she could. She did get them, sire—and, as I had requested, she did not read them, but gave them to me on the very next morning. And now, sire, I have other papers, too—papers which the villain kept in his own cabinet, and which he sometimes read to keep his revenge alive. Even after his victim was married, he wrote to her and begged of her to love him, and these are the answers which she returned to him. Here they are, sire, read them:

As the old man spoke, he drew a small parcel

from his bosom, and handed it to the king. Alfonso was pale as death, but he had ceased from trembling. His every nerve was set, and his eyes were like glass. He opened one of the papers, and read it.

"This is from Nandon du Chastel!" he whispered, as he leaned half forward and gazed into the old man's face, like one who is awaiting the death-sentence.

"Yes," said Montarrago; "and here are the papers which the duchess obtained of the dead pilgrim's mother."

The king took them, and he read them. One was a bond for the payment of a hundred pistoles, on condition that the receiver would suffer himself to be found in the chamber of Joanna of Navarre. Another was a note directing the hunter how to escape if he were attacked, and also promising to liberate him if he was imprisoned. The others were of the same tone, and they were all signed by Nandon du Chastel. When Alfonso had read them, he let them fall at his feet, and then clasping his hands over his eyes, he sobbed as though his heart were broken.

"O, great God of mercy!" he ejaculated, "she was innocent! As pure as the virgin-snow upon the untrodden mountain-peak!—and yet I—I—O, Heaven! have mercy on me now!"

For a moment, the stricken monarch bowed down in his agony, and then he started up. He was changed now; his brow was crimsoned, and his eyes gleamed fearfully, and he turned and looked upon the cowering form of Du Chastel. Then he drew his sword, and sprang to the spot where that black villain stood. The lords De la Barde and De Cande let go of their charge, and the king grasped him by the throat.

"Du Chastel!" said Alfonso, in a tone that made the people tremble, "dare you deny one word of this?"

"I dare do anything, Alfonso of Navarre," replied the dark knight, gathering himself up like one who has gained the power of nerve to face death boldly. "Poor, weak fool! how I have toyed with you! You snatched the first bud of my love from me, and—"

These were the last words Nandon du Chastel ever spoke, for before he could finish his sentence, the sword of the king had passed through his heart!

* * * * *

"Henry," said the old pilgrim, raising himself painfully up, "have not those people come yet?"

"Yes—they are even now at the gate; and they have stopped."

"It is your mother, Henry. Go and tell her that she may come."

A little while after, and La Nuit led a woman into the court—and it was his mother. She trembled violently, and leaned heavily upon the arm of her child.

"Alfonso of Navarre," spoke the pilgrim, "look upon that woman!—the executioner was more merciful than the king!"

The monarch looked into the pale, beautiful face of the woman. There were some words upon his lips, but none could understand them. He moved towards her, and with his hands half extended, he murmured the name of that being who had been so basely wronged—that being whom he had thought dead years ago. She spoke not; but she caught the look that beamed upon her, and with one low murmur she broke from the arms of her son, and sought a resting-place upon the bosom of the king.

"O, Joanna! My wife—my wronged, my injured, my angel wife—can you love me yet? Can you forgive me?"

"Love thee!" murmured the weeping wife, as she raised her streaming eyes to her husband's face, and placed her hand upon his shoulder; "O, forever!"

A little while—a short heaven of happy bliss,—and the king remembered that there was another thing on earth beside his wife.

"Fear not, sire," said the old pilgrim, as he saw that Alfonso had started towards Henry la Nuit. "When you gave your wife and child into my hands, I could not kill them. The wife I hid away among the mountains, and the child I left at the porter's lodge of this castle. That youth—that brave young knight—is the son of your own blood—the offspring of your own life!"

It was a bewildering moment for our hero. He hardly gave credit to the evidence of his own senses until he felt himself clasped within the monarch's arms, and heard the murmured blessings of his father sounding in his ear. Then he realized the heavenly truth that had burst upon his life-page.

And do you think that those three—the father, the mother, and the son—were all that wept with joy? Nay,—hundreds wept,—all within the spacious court—lords, knights, gentlemen, men-at-arms, and peasants,—all, all wept!

"Now, Isabella."

The maiden looked up, and met Henry's gaze.

"I am stainless, now."

At this moment, the old pilgrim spoke:

"Sire, give me your hand, now."

"O, yes! yes!" uttered the happy monarch.

"And my blessing be upon you!"

"And you, Don Philip?"

"Ay, Montarrago," returned the old duke, "I'll give thee my hand, now."

"Where is the bishop?" asked the old man, in a weaker tone. "O, let him come, and pray for me! Henry—Joanna—you will bless me, I know! O, I have done some little work on earth of which I am not ashamed. And those honest peasants, who have protected their queen,—though they knew her not,—you must be kind to them, sire. Where is the bishop?"

The old prelate came, and knelt by the side of that couch. As he prayed, the people gathered reverently around. There was a smile upon the face of the pilgrim, and his hands were clasped upon his bosom. When the bishop arose to his feet, he asked the old man if he could now die in peace; but there was no answer. Henry moved up nearer, and again took the pilgrim's hand; but it was cold and lead-like. The pilgrimage of life was over, and the weary man had yielded up his soul to the God from whom he hoped for forgiveness.

* * * * *

On the next morning the castle was alive at an early hour. Henry walked out into the court. He had gone there in hopes to be alone; but in this he was disappointed, for a hundred men-at-arms crowded about him, and he had to take a hundred hands. Well, he was happy, even though he could not be alone.

In the hall walked the king and queen. They had been weeping, for their cheeks were wet.

"And I am forgiven, Joanna—all forgiven?"

"O, my husband, ask me not that again! Only let me know that you love me still, and I shall forget the past!"

"Love thee!—ah! my wife, all I fear is that I may forget there is any other heaven save in my love for thee!—Ah, here is my noble boy! God bless you on this fair morning, my son!"

In another place sat the duchess and her daughter. They, too, had been weeping; and by them, stood the duke. His face was no longer stern; his brow was no longer dark; but the

morning sun shone upon his countenance, and the joy-beams were dancing there.

An hour later, and the friends of the day before had just arisen from the breakfast table.

"Stop, stop, my good bishop," cried Alfonso.

"Where now?"

"Business calls me to the city, sire," returned the prelate.

"Not yet, not yet; for, by my faith, I will hold my good cousin, the duke, to his promise. Don Philip, you gave me the hand of the Lady Isabella to dispose of as I pleased. God forgive me if I came near doing her an injury. But I will make amends for it now. You will not refuse me, cousin?"

"No, sire," said Don Philip.

"Then she shall yet wed with one whom I shall choose. Henry, my son, come hither. Isabella—your hand. There." He placed their hands together, and then looked into the maiden's face.

"Will you be happy, now?" he asked, while a rich smile played over his features.

Isabella bowed her head, and wept—but it was upon Henry's bosom she bowed, and her tears were but the joyful answer she could not speak in words.

So the bishop stopped; and this time the bridal party went to the chapel without interruption. The ceremony was performed, and when the party came again into the court, the soldiers and the peasants shouted for joy. They blessed their king and queen, and they blessed the prince and his blushing, happy bride; and then they shouted for the duke and the duchess. In short, they shouted for every conceivable sort of joy, for the occasion was big with joyous events.

The king, now happy with his long-lost wife, forgot not the honest mountain peasants; nor did he forget the old widowed mother of the hunter. Blanche found a place of honor by the restored queen. A criminal was pardoned and fashioned into a noble soldier—it was Matteo.

There was one humble grave in Navarre, where people sometimes stopped to pronounce a blessing. The king visited it, and the queen went with him; and Henry and Isabella bore them company. They planted a marble cross there, and Joanna of Navarre dropped a tear while they did it. It was the last resting-place of all that was mortal of the old PILGRIM.

THE END.

[FROM "THE FLAG OF OUR UNION."]

THE HEROINE OF CUMBERLAND VALLEY.

BY MRS. M. E. ROBINSON.

For nearly twelve years the bold and courageous inhabitants of Cumberland Valley had been subjected to constant attacks—many of them of long duration and attended with disastrous consequences—from various Indian tribes in that part of Tennessee. The Creeks and Cherokees, particularly, persevered in hostile demonstrations, and were indefatigable in their endeavors to exterminate the settlers, who were regarded as intruders upon the rights of the red men. At the time of which we write, the population had increased to about seven thousand persons; one thousand men being in arms to protect the rest from savage fury.

Naturally feeling desirous to bring about an amicable understanding with the Indians, Gov. Blount, in the year 1792, held a "peace talk" with several influential chiefs of both nations. They professed a willingness to live on friendly terms with their white neighbors, and a treaty of reconciliation was effected without much trouble; being brought about principally by two Cherokee warriors of distinction, who were so earnest in their protestations of amity that the settlers were completely deceived. The latter were overjoyed at the pacific termination of the interview. Those who had been accustomed to going out only in large bodies, now walked

abroad more boldly, with but a tithe of their former watchfulness, rejoicing greatly that the long night of war, with its attendant horrors, was about to be dispelled, and the bright sun of peace was arising upon them with healing in his wings. There were, however, among the dwellers in Cumberland Valley, a few old men whom long experience had rendered familiar with Indian character; and these persons were wise enough to distrust present appearances, and to place but little reliance on the rumors concerning the pacific intentions of the savages, which daily reached their ears. They shook their heads gravely, and averred to many an incredulous listener that the Cherokees and Creeks manifested too much eagerness to spread and confirm the report of their friendly intentions towards the whites.

"It's my opinion," said one of these veterans, whose name was Wilson, on the day when the orders of Gov. Blount for disbanding the rangers reached the valley, "it's my opinion the governor doesn't understand the nature of the Cherokees; and if my experience is worth any thing—and you know I've been acquainted with the habits of the red-skins for a long time—it won't be a great while afore he'll be sensible of the mistake which he has made."

"I am fully of your opinion," replied Major Buchanan, to whom these words were addressed. "Gov. Blount has been fatally deceived, as the inhabitants of this peaceful valley may too soon learn to their cost. Look around you, Mr. Wilson, and tell me what you see."

The old man's eye wandered over the valley for a few moments in silence.

"I see," he answered, "many cabins, and the smoke curling quietly from their roofs; but that isn't all. I see also many half-cultivated fields, with men and boys busily at work in them without any thought of danger, and as though peace had come in real earnest. Now if Providence doesn't stretch forth its hand to avert the danger, there won't be many of them cabins standing in a month's time."

"You express exactly my own feelings," replied the major; "and I confess that my mind is painfully agitated. The fighting men are now on their way to their homes at the different stations, scattered over Davidson and Sumner counties. Our station, which is nearest the point of danger is left unprotected. The country is lalled into a fatal apathy by the pleasing lullaby sung by our wily enemies."

The conversation was interrupted at this point by the appearance of a very fine looking woman. In person she was rather above the ordinary proportions of her sex, but her remarkable symmetry of form amply indemnified her for this peculiarity, providing it were in any manner considered unfriendly to the highest development of feminine grace. Her face could not perhaps be considered so handsome as others less strongly marked with the indices of a resolute character; but if ruddy cheeks, black eyes, and an expression of calm, quiet good humor could impart any degree of beauty, that beauty was undeniably hers. This lady was Major Buchanan's wife.

The conversation which we have already given, it should be remarked, took place near the gate of what was then known as Buchanan's station, which the recent order of Gov. Blount had deprived of its defenders. The good lady had evidently heard a portion of what had been said, for she approached the parties, and remarked:

"Do not speak your fears, Mr. Wilson, in the ears of the more timid among us; for to increase their fears would be to decrease our chances of escape. There is one thing that can save us, sir."

"If you know one thing that can save us, you know more than I do, and I'm now going on to my sixty-fifth year, and have seen all kinds of troubles with the Cherokees, Creeks, Shawnees and other kinds of painted creatures. Now, ma'am, without meanin' no disrespect to you or the major, I'd like to be informed what that one thing is that can save us."

"Well, my good neighbor, I will tell you; and depend upon it, it has saved more than one station from destruction. It is *courage*, friend Wilson," returned Mrs. Buchanan.

"Yes, that's an excellent thing where there's danger, but you see that the idea prevails here in the valley that it isn't greatly needed at present," added Wilson.

"There is something else that you did not mention in connection with courage," said the major to his wife; "and that is *prudence*."

"True courage is always marked by prudence," she replied.

"You are right there, Mrs. Buchanan!" exclaimed the old man. "The real generative courage is none of your headlong, harum scarum sort, allers a runnin' into danger with no thought how to get out of it."

"Come," added Buchanan, "here are three of us; let us hold a council of war."

"War indeed, when there's nobody to fight," rejoined Wilson.

"The rangers have gone home, it is true, but you know there are several men left in the neighborhood who can handle a rifle with skill," said Mrs. Buchanan.

"If we could only induce them to see things in the right light," replied the major; "but they will not, and that danger is the greatest which approaches without being suspected or feared."

"I am well aware of that, husband, and therefore there is more need of effort and discretion on our part. You see that our friends now begin to go out alone, without caution, and most of them design taking their wives and children from the station to their cabins, so great is their faith in the protestations of John Watts, Anacate and others—savage leaders in pay of the Spanish governor of Pensacola—whose asseverations are as hollow as the winds. The station must not be abandoned. The women and children in this part of the valley must not pass a single night outside of the sheltering walls of the fort, for soon we shall hear the war-cry all along the border. I have thought of an expedient that may perhaps avert in a measure the force of the

blow that is destined to fall upon the white settlers. On various pretexts I shall invite all the men capable of bearing arms to spend a few days at the station, and endeavor to keep them here until the designs of our foes become fully developed, and the country is again thoroughly alarmed. I am now going out among the neighbors to put my plan in practice."

With these words Mrs. Buchanan walked away from the station in fulfilment of her benevolent design, with the full approval of her husband, whom she had previously consulted in relation to the course to be pursued. At the distance of half a mile from the fort, there was a small stream flowing from the adjacent hills, upon one side of which was a thicket of alders, while on the other there was a dense growth of maple, oak and elms. The stream was rendered passable by a rough bridge of logs. Mrs. Buchanan had just crossed it and was hurrying forward, when, from the wood alluded to, there suddenly emerged a savage figure. Our heroine, who sustained an undoubted reputation for courage, was, notwithstanding, much alarmed. She suspected that concealed close at hand was an army of their red enemies, waiting only a signal from their leader to pounce upon the defenceless inhabitants of Cumberland Valley. She thought of her own children and loved ones, and for a moment stood paralyzed with an agony of fear which none but mothers may feel. The Indian advanced, and thus addressed her:

"I am called White Otter, and the white woman need not fear. I have not come to do you mischief—if I had, I should have come at the head of a great army; but no army is near. I see you look to the woods as though Indians were hidden there ready to rush with their tomahawks and destroy you. No, no! White Otter no come for that."

"Then why are you here?" asked Mrs. Buchanan, recovering her presence of mind.

"The Cherokees have had a big council, and John Watts and Anacate were there, wearing gifts from the Spanish governor. They talked much, and made speeches about the people of this valley."

"Have they so soon forgotten their promises to Washington?" exclaimed our heroine, very indignantly.

"Bad man's memory short," said the Otter, laconically.

"False knaves! they have broken their faith

even while they wear the medals which Washington gave them."

"I said so to Anacate, and he took off his and stamped it into the earth. The great war-council have planned a secret expedition, and mean to cut off all the whites at a single blow," resumed the chief.

"But where were you? Are you not a chief in the councils of the nation? Did you not also receive honors and title from the president?" resumed the lady, with warmth.

White Otter opened his hunting-shirt and displayed a medal, covered with various significant and characteristic devices.

"For shame!" cried Mrs. Buchanan, "to wear that and be called a General," (for Washington had bestowed upon White Otter the title of General); "and then prove a traitor to the trust placed in you by Washington!"

The red man frowned.

"My white sister," he said, "does me injustice. I spoke in the council and reproached the leaders of the expedition for their hypocrisy; for the Great Spirit is not pleased with deceit. I taunted them till they were angry and called me the white man's friend. Since the council broke up I have been watched, and it has been with great trouble that I could come here without being suspected. Anacate and John Watts are cunning as foxes, and it was chiefly through their means that these deceitful peace rumors have spread over the country, deceiving the governor and causing him to send away the rangers. I have come to warn you of the danger, for I have heard of the brave white woman, and did not wish her to perish. Do not betray me. I have no more to say."

"I thank you, White Otter, and the warning shall not be lost. I have heard that you scorned to kill women and children, and now I believe it. In time to come the name of White Otter shall be spoken with reverence by descendants of the white nation; for do you not perceive that this vast country will finally pass into the hands of the pale faces?"

"Yes, white woman, yes," said the chief, with a sigh. "Everything I see and hear tells me so. The various tribes of red men will be scattered as the winds scatter the dried leaves. The name of the Cherokee will pass away as a cloud, before the rising sun of the white man's prosperity; the Great Spirit has willed it so. Only their fame will remain, and even that will perish after a season."

Mrs. Buchanan made no immediate rejoinder, for she perceived that the Indian's chest was heaving, and his feelings were touched.

"When will the army under Anacate and Watts attack us?" she asked, at length, in a more respectful tone.

"Don't know—don't know," he rejoined, almost fiercely. "I am no traitor, white woman. Go and provide for your safety as best you can. I can do no more for you."

Mrs. Buchanan was turning away, when he called to her.

"Stop! here—take this, and when you see the men who carry hatchets and knives, show it, and it will, perhaps, save your life."

While the Otter was speaking, he took a belt of wampum from his waist, and cast it at her feet.

"No, I will not take your wampum. I will run my risk with my friends and neighbors," she replied, heroically.

A scowl of displeasure passed over the face of the Indian.

"You have children," he said, folding his arms upon his chest.

"O yes, I will give it to my little daughter, and tell her the humane chief,—White Otter—the man who is faithful to Washington—sent it to her."

"I can stay no longer; betray me not, lest my name be remembered with contempt by my people. When you look out from your cabin and see Cumberland Valley in a red blaze, recall what I have said."

The chieftain turned and disappeared. Mrs. Buchanan picked up the wampum, and sped on her mission.

She discovered, however, that her task was not an easy one. The settlers, wearied out with previous alarms and fighting, and earnestly desiring peace, were quite ready to imagine that it had already come, and that halcyon days were now really before them. It may be asked why Mrs. Buchanan did not tell them what had passed between herself and the chief. We answer, because the effect would have been quite different from what she wanted to produce—for each, seeing there was no organized force among them, would consider destruction inevitable, and attempt to fly to some other part of the country for safety. Such a general, helter-skelter flight would have been as fatal as the descent of the enemy in its results, inasmuch as they could easily be slain by their watchful foes, and that without any resistance.

The major, knowing the prevailing feeling among the inhabitants, did not deem it wise to alarm them, and so, with his wife's co-operation, resolved upon the plan which has been named. Both labored hard to man the fort, but only succeeded to a very limited extent; for after the expiration of three days spent in constant exertion, a dozen men were all they could muster; and they were intending to stay but a few days, being almost wholly ignorant of the major's suspicions, and of the dangers that menaced them.

Beside the men mentioned, there were about a dozen women and children gathered at the station. Anxious nights were those which followed, to the brave Mrs. Buchanan. Sentinels were posted, and three persons waited with feverish anxiety to hear the war-cry of the Creek and Cherokee.

That night, feeling restless and anxious, the major and his wife remained up, walking about the fort, examining the arms and casting searching glances through the port-holes.

While thus employed, Mrs. Buchanan's eyes fell upon an old blunderbuss of ample size, quite rusty, and evidently long out of use; this she loaded with her own hand, putting in a handful of rifle balls. Just after midnight, when the sentinels were getting sleepy, the horses were heard clattering in a great panic to the fort; the Indians were driving them in for the purpose of deluding the whites with the idea that only a small party of horse stealers were at hand. At that moment the sentinel fired and rushed in with the cry that the savages were in sight. Now ensued a scene of terror that would have proved fatal to all at the station, had it not been for the major and his heroic wife, who succeeded in arousing them to activity by their own fearless bearing, and encouraging words.

The blows of the enemy, already falling on the gate, admonished them to action. Springing to the port-holes, every one who could level a gun, greeted the assailants with a shot. While encouraging the men, Mrs. Buchanan saw that the blunderbuss she had loaded had not been discharged, and giving it to a stout Irishman, bade him fire it at those trying to cut down the gate. He did so with excellent effect, and loaded again, pulling trigger with mechanical precision when the others did; but unluckily it missed fire, notwithstanding which the innocent Hibernian continued to load, putting one charge upon another, going on in this manner until Mrs. B. came round again.

"Here, Patrick," she said, pointing to a cluster of Indians, making another desperate sally upon the gate; "here is a capital chance for you to display your skill."

"And Pat O'Connor is the boy that'll do the right thing, ma'am. Now by the piper that played afore the ark, I'll show ye how they do it in the ould cuntry."

And sure enough honest Patrick showed how it was done, for the carbine went off, and he was sent to the opposite side of the fort, flat on his back.

"Ah, that is a smart gun," said Pat, scrambling to his feet, "for it kills at both ends."

But his shot told well upon the enemy, for the next morning John Watts was found leaning against the gate pierced by many bullets, stark and cold, having probably received his death from the blunderbuss.

The settlers fought with undaunted courage

until the bullets began to fail; and then a murmur of despair was heard. At that crisis our heroine appeared with a fresh supply, and was greeted with cheers of enthusiasm. She had cast them by the aid of several other women, during the fight. The spirits of the men soon revived, and they poured forth their destructive volleys with such rapidity, that after two hours and a half of hard fighting, the enemy retired with a yell of disappointment; and thus was Cumberland Valley saved from utter destruction. Had Buchanan's station been taken, all that part of the country would have been given to the hatchet and the devouring flame. The attack was most disastrous to the Creeks and Cherokees, for they left many of their best warriors on the field. When they learned the number of persons constituting the garrison, they could scarcely credit it, and were greatly mortified.

THE END.

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