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In Memoriam

Ruth Candler Lovett

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CRICHTON.

BY W. HARRISON AINSWORTH, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "ROOKWOOD."

Ergo, flos juvenum, Scotiæ spes, Palladis ingena,
Ereptumque decus Musarum e dulcibus ulnis,
Te, quamvis sileant alii, Crichtone, poetæ,
Teque, tuamque necem nunquam mea Musa silebit.

ABERNETHY. *Musa Campestris.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THOMAS CURSON HANSARD, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

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CRICHTON.

Epoch the First.

The First Night.—CONTINUED.

THE FIRST NIGHT,

(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER VII.

THE BEZOAR.

Maffio. Oh ! l'on conte des choses bien étranges de ces soupers de Borgia !

Ascanio. Ce sont des débauches effrénées, assaisonnées d'empoisonnemens.

VICTOR HUGO. *Lucrèce Borgia.*

THE thick folds of the magnificent crimson hangings, heightened with arabesques and fleur-de-lys of gold, which served in lieu of folding doors to separate the chief banquetting hall from the grand saloon, had meanwhile, at a signal from the major-domo, been drawn aside; and the long and glittering board, arrayed with all the costly appliances of the

royal feast, was suddenly exhibited to the view of the assemblage.

The coup d'œil was charming. Far as the eye could reach appeared walls festooned with flowers fragrant and blooming as if the season had been latest spring. Mirrors, wreathed with Provençal roses, reflected the lustre of a thousand flambeaux, and multiplied the gleaming plate and star-like crystal with which the board was loaded. But the object on which the eye chiefly rested—not merely because it was the principal feature of attraction to the expectant guests, but by reason of its proud pre-eminence—was the table itself. It was a fitting place for the celebration of the combined rites of Ceres and Bacchus. Reared upon a massive platform—six feet at least above the floor—approached by a triple flight of steps—covered, both as to its mimic stairs and summit, with cloths of dazzling whiteness (*fort mignonement damassé*, as we learn from a contemporary authority)—this mighty table, extending the whole length of the vast hall,

looked like a mountain of snow, or, perhaps, to vary the simile, like a prodigious frosted cake baked in the oven of Gargantua by the skilful *Fouaciers de Lerné*, the culminating point of which cake or mountain was formed by a cloudy representation of Olympus, in which Henri and his favourites figured as presiding divinities.

A nearer approach to the table showed that the surface of its damask covering was, according to the fashion of the court, ribbed in fanciful and waving plaits, so as to resemble the current of a stream crisped by a passing breeze. This stream bore upon its bosom a proud array of argent and golden vases, crystal goblets, urns, and cups, all of rarest workmanship, and many wrought by the hand of the matchless Benvenuto Cellini during his visit to Francis the First at Fontainebleau. In the words of brave Ben Jonson there were

Dishes of agate set in gold, and studded
With emeralds, sapphires, hyacinths, and rubies.

Nothing could exceed the gorgeous and regal magnificence of the repast.

The material of the feast was worthy of Apicius or Lucullus. Every dainty that the most consummate epicure of 1579 (an era by no means despicable, as we shall presently have occasion to show in the annals of gastronomy) could require, was to be met with in profusion. Fancy ran riot amid the countless covers, and the endless varieties of piquant viands, which were displayed on their removal. Pyramids of confectionary—piles of choicest fruit appeared at intervals; while, scented from afar like the aromatic groves of Lebanon, appeared antique-shaped urns steaming with the rich produce of the vines of Crete, Cyprus, or Syracuse. In passing, we may remark that the wines were then, for the most part, drunk heated and sophisticate—an Italian custom introduced into the court of France by Catherine de Medicis. Here and there might be seen the ushers and chamberlains with their fleur-de-lys-covered wands

of office—butlers with embossed flagons and salvers—troops of valets and pages—and, distributed at certain stations of the board, servitors, each with a napkin on his shoulder, and an enormous knife in hand, seemingly impatient for the signal of attack.

Amid loud fanfares of trumpets, blended with the gentler notes of the hautboy and viol, and ceremoniously preceded by Du Halde, Henri, accompanied by Esclairmonde, led the way to the banquet. The Monarch, however, tarried not within the hall we have described. His orgies were held in a smaller and more retired *salle-à-manger*, opening from the grand festal chamber, and separated from it by an arched door-way; within which was placed a line of high gilded railing, an unequivocal evidence of exclusiveness on the part of the monarch, that called forth much sarcastic remark from his subjects; and amongst other pasquinades, gave rise to the following quatrain affixed to the offensive partition—

Puisqu' Henri Roi des François
N'en aime que quatre ou trois,
Il faut que ses trois ou quatre
Allent ses ennemis combatre.

To the King's private table his favourites only, and *their* favourites, were admitted. Ushers of the feast were stationed at the door with a list of the guests expected. No others were allowed to pass. Towards this room Henri now repaired, followed by a jocund troop of dames and revelers. He was in the most buoyant spirits, and descanted with the greatest animation on all that passed. A singular change seemed to have been wrought in the demeanour of Esclairmonde. She replied to Henri's lover-like assiduities with a vivacity bordering almost upon levity, which a nicer observer might have imputed to the half-frantic flashes of distraction and despair, but from which Henri drew the most favourable augury. Her cheek was flushed, and her eye shone with unwonted lustre. Once, only, as she passed through the oval chamber, of which some rumours had reached even *her* ears, she started, and a slight

shiver ran through her frame. But she instantly recovered herself.

The oval chamber was a retreat fitted for a voluptuary. Heavy with perfume, the atmosphere struck upon the senses of the guests as they entered, producing a soft intoxicating effect. Pages, equipped in fanciful attire, sustained torches, the odorous wax of which shed a warm light upon the richly painted arras, charged with the glowing legends of antiquity; in which, in the guise of nymphs and goddesses of old, were represented the chief beauties who had bloomed within the atmosphere of the Louvre. In this suit of tapestry the lovely Diane de Poitiers was represented, as the goddess her namesake, disporting after the chace with her nymphs—the artist having contrived to furnish the peeping satyr with the prominent features of Francis the First:—in that, Venus Anadyomene sparkled from the sea-foam in the shape and lineaments of La Belle Féronnière—the gallant Francis, blowing his wreathed conch

as an attendant Triton. Here the fascinating Françoise de Foix bloomed as Egeria, Francis appearing for the third time as Numa—there the captivating Marie Touchet, whose anagram, “*Je charme tout*,” so well describes her, was given as Callirhœe; her lover, Charles IX., being drawn as the hunter Eurimedon; while in the last compartment figured our bon Henri, who was represented strangely enough as Ulysses surrendering himself to the blandishments of Circe, the features of the enchantress bearing evident resemblance to those of his first mistress, la belle Châteauneuf. Upon the frescoed ceiling were depicted the silver fountains and dragon-watched fruit of the enchanted bowers of the Hesperides.

The supper to which Henri sat down was the triumph of his *chef*—the inimitable Berini—a cook, whose name deserves to be associated with that of Luther, Calvin, Knox, and other great reformers of the sixteenth century, the spirit of which stirring age he represents as strongly as the great Ude stamps the

character of our own time. The signal revolution which took place in the science of cookery at this remarkable epoch may be clearly traced to the unwearied efforts of Berini. Comprehending the growing wants of his species, with the prescience of a true philosopher, he saw that a change must be effected—and he accomplished it. He overthrew many old and tough abuses—and if he increased the demand for good cheer, he diminished not the supply. To him, amongst a thousand other gifts, mankind is indebted for the fricandeau—a discovery which his biographer judiciously remarks, required *une grande force de tête!* He projected sauces so savoury, that terms of alchemy were required to express their stimulative effects upon the system. These sauces, however, we regret to say, modern science has pronounced injurious. And, finally, he trampled down popular prejudices which still remained in favour of the fingers, and introduced the fork; for which

service he deserves the thanks of all fashionable novelists whatever.

The only stain attached to the memory of Berini is, that he was an instrument of Catherine de Medicis—in other words, that he occasionally mingled other compounds with his sauces than were prescribed by the recipes of his art. For the sake of so great a professor of so great a science, we hope this is mere scandal. No wonder, with dishes so exquisite placed before him, that a great man should occasionally die from indigestion; but surely the cook is not to be blamed for an occurrence so very natural. Rather let us look to the goblet as the origin of ill. We have mentioned that the wines were at this time generally drunk mulled and spiced—a practice which, while it presented abundant facilities for the insidious admixture of poisonous drugs, completely baffled all precautions of the drinker. Leaning, therefore, to the side of genius, we are inclined to discredit this

charge against the gifted Berini, and impute the criminality of these transactions to Catherine's cup-bearer, whose name is deservedly buried in oblivion.

The repast, we have said, was Berini's triumph. In conception—in execution it was perfect. The eye of the gourmand Marquis de Willequier glistened as he gazed upon the dainty fare. Ronsard insinuated that with such ragouts before him, it was easy to understand how Vitellius and Heliogabalus exhausted an empire; a remark, which luckily for the poet, did not reach the ears of the King. Henri, in fact, was too much engrossed by Esclairmonde to attend to the pleasantries of his guests. So soon as his Majesty and the Demoiselle, whom he honoured with his smiles, were served, the Monarch graciously expressed his pleasure that the company, whom etiquette had hitherto kept upon their feet, should be seated.

The carouse now began in earnest. The guests were few in number, consisting merely

of some half dozen of Henri's favourites, the Dames of Honour of Marguerite de Valois, one or two of Catherine's prettiest attendants, the Abbé de Brantôme, and, as we have just hinted, the poet Ronsard. The latter, who was by no means indifferent to good cheer, as his gout testified, was transported into a seventh heaven of delight with a ragout of ortolans with which the considerate Abbé had loaded his plate; Villequier had fallen to with equal industry and zeal. Esclairmonde was placed at his Majesty's right hand. On his left, two seats remained unoccupied.

Behind the royal chair stood Chicot, and next to him another buffoon, whom we have hitherto omitted to notice: a strange malicious wight, yclept Siblot, infinitely more disliked by the courtiers than his companion in folly, Chicot, inasmuch as his jests were chiefly practical ones, and his *hits* for the most part made with his marotte. In face—in figure, and in agility, he so much resembled an ape, as to make it matter of

doubt whether he were not really one of the simious tribe. His head was clothed with sleek, sable, shining hair, like the skin upon a mole's back. His nature was so snarling and malignant, that, when seized, he would snap and bite like an enraged-cur, and even severest chastisement was found ineffectual to change or restrain his mischievous propensities. It was no easy matter, moreover, to catch him. His agility often stood him in excellent stead, and his light brains were not unfrequently indebted for their preservation to his lighter heels. Siblot's costume was precisely like that of his brother buffoon, save that it differed in its hues. Embroidered on the front and at the back with the royal blazon, the surcoat was of sable, slashed with white : his marotte was of ebony. Siblot was a favourite with Henri, who being a genuine lover of mischief, was diverted with his monkey-like freaks ; and he would often laugh till the tears suffused his eyes at the confusion created by the buffoon amongst the grave ambassadors, the

scarlet-capped ecclesiastics, and stately cavaliers, who attended his audiences. Henri's gratification was the more enhanced, as, by a sort of instinct, this wild, half-witted creature always, even in his maddest gambols, held sacred his own peculiar person.

Meanwhile the feast proceeded. Henri continued unremitting in his attentions to Esclairmonde, who, though she could not be prevailed upon by all his importunities to partake of the banquet, maintained an exterior of perfect calmness and composure. He, who had looked deeper, would perchance have perceived, that beneath that mask of smiles was hidden acute suffering, if not a breaking heart. The Demoiselle was, however, an object of envy to the other dames of the party, who attributed her indifference to the Monarch's gallant regard to mere coquetry.

“By my faith, monsieur le Vicomte,” said the gay Torigni to Joyeuse, who was placed on her right hand, “the Demoiselle Esclairmonde is a finished coquette. Her coyness is

the most naturally assumed I ever beheld in the most practised of our sex. Where she can have acquired such arts I cannot imagine. But some people are born with a genius for their vocation—and conquest is her's I suppose. She would have the king believe she has a perfect horror of his freedoms. I need not tell you that I have had some experience in the art of entanglement, and I declare upon my reputation, I could not have played the part better myself."

"I am quite sure of it," replied Joyeuse, "because I think his Majesty's attentions are not so perfectly to her taste as you might conceive they would be to yours. Her thoughts, I suspect, are wandering upon Crichton."

"Poh!" rejoined La Torigni, "no such thing. She is not such a simpleton. Why should her love for Crichton prevent her bestowing an occasional smile elsewhere? He is not a mirror of constancy, whatever he may

be of chivalry; nor wholly insensible, as you know, to the supreme attractions of our royal mistress. The thing is quite natural."

"Your reasoning is perfectly convincing, Demoiselle."

"The Chevalier Crichton is very well in his way—but a king, you know—"

"Is irresistible. You have found it so, Demoiselle."

"You are impertinent, Monsieur le Vicomte."

"A la bonne heure. You have prodigiously fine eyes, Demoiselle. Italy boasts the darkest eyes in the world—Florence the darkest eyes of Italy, and the lovely Torigni the darkest eyes of Florence. I pledge them in a bumper of Cyprus."

"Your France is a nation of courtiers," rejoined La Torigni, laughing, "and the Vicomte de Joyeuse the most finished courtier in France. I return your pledge, Monseigneur. After all," continued the lively Florentine, in a tone

half jest, half earnest, "I should not object to be in Esclairmonde's situation."

"Indeed!" replied Chicot, who happened to overhear this latter exclamation—"stranger things have come to pass."

At this moment Marguerite de Valois entered the room. Some slight ceremony was observed at her appearance, but the fair Queen took her place at Henri's left hand without attracting his notice.

"Your Majesty suffers from some sudden indisposition," observed Brantôme, in a tone of sympathy, remarking the haggard looks of the Queen.

"No—no," returned Marguerite, "I am well, my Lord Abbé, perfectly well."

"I may not discredit your assertion, Madame," returned Brantôme; "but pardon me if I venture to assert that your looks agree not with your words."

"Will your Highness allow me to recommend this coulis à la Cardinal to your atten-

tion," said Villequier. "Ronsard pronounces it thoroughly Catholic—you would not well—and I were an heretic to doubt him. Suffer me, Madame—"

Marguerite declined the tempting offer of the Marquis, and suffered her eyes to stray over the company. Crichton was not amongst the number.

"Thank Heaven, he is not here!" exclaimed the Queen, giving involuntary utterance to her thoughts, and sighing deeply as if some heavy oppression had been removed from her bosom.

"Who is not here?" asked Henri, turning quickly round at the exclamation.

Chicot stepped suddenly forward.

"Methinks," said he, familiarly placing his hand upon the King's shoulder—"methinks, notre oncle, you are in need of some excitement—you lack somewhat to give a fillip to your spirits—a spice to your wine—what can we direct you to?—Shall it be a song?—I

have a rare charivari on a Madame the Duchess D'Usez's third espousals — a Pantagruelian legend on Pope Joan's confinement before the conclave—or a ditty on the devil's exploit at Pope Feagueland—at your service. Or if you like not this, shall I bid my gossip Siblot smack the rosy lips of all the coyest dames at table, beginning with the Demoiselle Torigni, and afterwards cut a lavolta on the board itself to the blithe accompaniment of ringing gláss? Or if a gayer mood possess you, will it please you to command Maître Samson, to bring forth that quaint drinking cup, the merry devices and playful grotesques whereof are wont to excite so much amusement, and such mirthful exclamations from our dames of honour,—and which cup, moreover, is so much to the fancy of our grave and discreet gossip, Pierre de Bourdeille? ”*

* It would appear so from the account given of a certain '*fort belle coupe d'argent doré*' in the '*Dames Galantes*,' to which we do *not* refer the reader.

“Cousin of Brantôme,” said Henri, smiling, “our Jester libels you.”

“Nay,” replied Brantôme, laughing, “I care not to own that the goblet of which the knave speaks has afforded me amusement, though I must, on the score of propriety, venture to oppose its introduction upon the present occasion.”

“Propriety!” echoed Chicot, derisively—“Propriety sounds well in the lips of the Abbé de Brantôme—ha—ha—which of the three shall it be, gossip—the song—the kiss—or the cup?”

“A song,” returned Henri, “and see that thy strains lack not spice, gossip—or look for no hippocras from the hands of Samson as thy meed.”

“Spice!” repeated Chicot, with a droll grimace—“my strains shall smack of pimento itself.” And assuming the air of an improvisatore, the Jester delivered himself as follows:—

All-spice, or a Spice of All.

THE people endure all,
 The men-at-arms cure all,
 The favourites sway all,
 Their reverences flay all,
 The citizens pay all,
 Our good King affirms all,
 The Senate confirms all,
 The Chancellor seals all,
 Queen Catherine conceals all,
 Queen Louise instructs all,
 Queen Margot conducts all,
 The Leaguers contrive all,
 The Jacobins shrive all,
 The Lutherans doubt all,
 The Zuinglians scout all,
 The Jesuits flout all,
 The Sorbonnists rout all,
 Brother Henri believes all,*
 Pierre de Gondy receives all,†
 Ruggieri defiles all,
 Mad Siblot reviles all,

* In 1574, Henri attended a procession of the Battus at Avignon, and elected himself of the brotherhood.

† Bishop of Paris.

The bilboquets please all,
 The sarbacanes tease all,
 The Duc de Guise tries all,
 Rare Crichton outvies all,
 Abbé Brantôme retails all,
 Bussy D'Amboise assails all,
 Old Ronsard recants all,
 Young Jodelle enchants all,
 Fat Villequier crams all,
 His Holiness damns all,
 Esclairmonde bright outshines all,
 And wisely declines all,
 La Rebours will bless all,
 La Fosseuse confess all,
 La Guyol will fly all,
 Torigni deny all,
 John Calvin misguide all,
 Wise Chicot deride all,
 Spanish Philip* may crave all,
 The Béarnais † brave all,
THE DEVIL WILL HAVE ALL!

“Gramercy,” said Henri, as Chicot came
 to a pause—more, it would appear, from want

* Phillip II.

† Henri of Navarre, afterward Henri IV.

of breath than from lack of material for the continuance of his strains—"thou hast fairly earned thy hippocras, were it only for the justice rendered to the lovely Esclairmonde, who, as thou truly sayest, outshines all. But, by our Lady, Messeigneurs, we must not neglect the service of Bacchus for that of Apollo. Samson, thy choicest Cyprus—a health!"

Every glass was raised—every eye bent upon the King.

"To her," continued Henri, draining his goblet, "who in her own person combines all the perfections of her sex—la belle Esclairmonde!"

"La belle Esclairmonde!" echoed each guest, enthusiastically clashing his glass against that of his neighbour.

Amidst the confusion incident to this ceremony, Crichton entered the room. For an instant his gaze rested upon that of the Demoiselle; and, momentary as was that glance, a world of sad and passionate emotion was con-

veyed to the hearts of both. He then took the seat which had been reserved for him, by the side of Marguerite de Valois. Conversation in the meantime proceeded.

“ I would fain enquire from your Majesty,” said Brantôme, in a tone which showed that the Cyprus he had quaffed had not been without its effect upon his brain, “ what are the precise notions which you entertain respecting beauty. For with a due appreciation of diaphonous orbs and hyacinthine tresses, I cannot entirely”—and here the Abbé cast a look, inebriate as that of Septimius on Acme, upon Marguerite de Valois—“ I cannot, I say, admit their supremacy over eyes black as night, and locks dark as the raven’s wing. Both styles have merit, no doubt: but surely your Majesty cannot be aware of the ‘ thirty requisites,’ or you would never have assigned the palm of perfect beauty to a blonde.”

“ Thou art a heretic, cousin,” replied Henri, laughing; “ but we plead ignorance as to thy ‘ thirty requisites.’ Let us hear them

—we shall then see how far our own opinions correspond with thine.”

“ I had them from a fair doña of Toledo,” replied Brantôme, “ a city where there are many gracious dames; and though I have never, except in one instance,” added he, again glancing at Marguerite—“ met with a combined assemblage of such excellencies, yet I may fairly enough assert that I have encountered them all in detail.”

“ Thy requisites, cousin!” said Henri, impatiently.

“ Your Majesty will excuse my rhymes,” replied the Abbé, with becoming modesty. “ I am no poet, like Monsieur de Ronsard. Thus then run—

The Thirty Requisites.*

THIRTY points of perfection each judge understands,
The Standard of feminine Beauty demands.
Three white :—and, without further prelude, we know
That the skin, hands, and teeth should be pearly as snow.

* These verses are imitated from a *trentaine of beaux Sis*,

Three black :—and our Standard departure forbids
 From dark eyes, darksome tresses, and darkly-fringed lids.
 Three red :—and the lover of comeliness seeks
 For the hue of the rose in the lips, nails, and cheeks.
 Three long :—and of this you, no doubt, are aware ?
 Long the body should be, long the hands, long the hair.
 Three short :—and herein nicest beauty appears—
 Feet short as a fairy's, short teeth, and short ears.
 Three large :—and remember this rule, as to size,
 Embraces the shoulders, the forehead, the eyes.
 Three narrow :—a maxim to every man's taste—
 Circumference small in mouth, ancle, and waist.
 Three round :—and in this I see infinite charms—
 Rounded fulness apparent in leg, hip, and arms.
 Three fine :—and can aught the enchantment eclipse,
 Of fine tapering fingers, fine tresses, fine lips ?
 Three small :—and my thirty essentials are told—
 Small head, nose, and bosom compact in its mould.

recorded in the *Dames Galantes*. Brantôme gives them in Spanish prose from the lips of a fair Toledan, as mentioned in the text ; they are, however, to be met with in an old French work anterior to our chronicler, entitled *De la Louange et Beauté des Dames*. The same maxims have been turned into Latin hexameters by François Corniger (an ominous name for a writer on such a subject), and into Italian verse by Vincentio Calmeta.

Now the dame who comprises attractions like these,
Will need not the cestus of Venus to please :
While he who has met with an union so rare,
Has had better luck than has fall'n to *my* share."

Brantôme's song was exceedingly well received, inasmuch as it enabled the gallants to offer various compliments, direct and indirect, to the fascinations of their fair companions. Neither did Henri fail to take advantage of the plea it afforded him, of scrutinizing with libertine gaze, the charms of Esclairmonde, as the individual features of beauty passed in array before the Abbé.

Crichton looked sternly on. His blood boiled within his veins, and we know not to what extremities his indignation might have carried him, had not Esclairmonde's imploring looks restrained him.

Amidst the laughter and acclamations of the guests, Marguerite's voice sounded hollowly in his ear.

" I have watched your glances, Crichton.

In your kindling eyes I read your thoughts. Your minion is wholly in Henri's power. You *cannot* deliver her."

"By Saint Andrew, I know not that!" exclaimed Crichton, fiercely.

"Your word binds you," said the Queen, smiling bitterly.

"True—true," returned Crichton, relapsing into his former gloom.

"Renounce her—and I save her," continued Marguerite.

"By what means?" demanded Crichton, incredulously.

"No matter—I will do it!—I will do more. Have I your oath?"

At this moment a low sigh reached his ears. The sound was the same as that which had warned him of the peril he had incurred when he rashly pledged his vow to Henri. Raising his eyes, he perceived the gaze of Esclairmonde fixed upon him. Her look could not be mistaken.

“Swear!” said Marguerite, sternly, who had witnessed, and could easily interpret the glance of intelligence which had passed between the lovers. “Swear!” continued she, renewing her former adjuration.

“Never,” replied Crichton.

“’Tis well—” retorted Marguerite. “I have warned you.—I was assured,” murmured she, with an expression of anguish, “that this would prove a day of ill. No sinister occurrence ever happened to me, but I had some foreknowledge of the event,

De mon bien, de mon mal, mon esprit m’est oracle.”

Further speech was interrupted by a wild scream of laughter proceeding from the buffoon Siblot, who, regardless of the confusion he created, or the risk which the costly vessels on the board might incur from his antics, suddenly whirled himself into the very centre of the table, taking up a position on the cover of a vase supported on three feet, upon the knob of which he described various

rapid circles with the dexterity and ease of the most practised posture-master. No sooner was this feat accomplished, amidst the laughter and astonishment of the guests, than bounding—without injury to the economy of the banquet—over enamelled dish and plate, with a velocity that left little time for consideration, he brushed with his shaggy beard the fair cheeks of every dame he passed, not excepting even Marguerite de Valois, and only paused when he arrived at last before Esclairmonde. He then chuckled and nodded at Henri as if consulting his inclinations, as to whether the Demoiselle should be submitted to the same disgusting ordeal as the others, but receiving no signs of encouragement from the monarch, he retreated to his vase, where, like a priestess of Apollo upon her tripod, after a brief prelude of gyrations, with a rapidity of utterance almost as bewildering as his antic mazes, and an infinitude of grotesque gesticulations, he burst into the following amphigouri:—

The Temptation of St. Anthony.*

I.

SAINT ANTHONY weary
 Of hermit cell dreary,
 Of penance, and praying,
 Of orison saying,
 Of mortification,
 And fleshly vexation,
 By good sprites forsaken,
 By sin overtaken,
 On flinty couch lying,
 For death, like Job, crying,
 Was suddenly shrouded
 By thick mists, that clouded
 All objects with vapour,
 And through them, like taper,
 A single star shimmered,
 And with blue flame glimmered.

* See Callot's magnificent piece of *diablerie*, upon this subject, and the less extravagant, but not less admirable picture of Teniers; and what will well bear comparison with either, Retzch's illustration of the Walpurgis Night Revels of Goethe.

II.

What spell then was muttered
May never be uttered ;
Saint Anthony prayed not—
Saint Anthony stayed not—
But down—down descending
Through caverns unending,
Whose labyrinths travel
May never unravel,
By thundering torrent,
By toppling crag horrent,
All perils unheeding,
As levin swift speeding,
Habakkuk out-vying
On seraph-wing flying,
Was borne on fiend's pinion
To Hell's dark dominion.

III.

Oh ! rare is the revelry
Of Tartarus' devilry !
Above him—around him—
On all sides surround him
With wildest grimaces

Fantastical faces !
 Here huge bats are twittering,
 Strange winged mice fluttering,
 Great horned owls hooting,
 Pale hissing stars shooting,
 Red fire-drakes careering
 With harpies are fleeing.
 Shapes whizzing and whirling,
 Weird Sabbath-dance twirling,
 Round bearded goat scowling,
 Their wild refrain howling—
 “ *Allegremonos Alegremos*
*Quegente nue ba tenemos** ”

IV.

Here Lemures, Lares,
 Trolls, foliots, fairies,
 Nymph, gnome, salamander,
 In frolic groups wander.
 Fearful shapes there are rising,
 Of aspect surprising,

* According to Delancre, the usual *refrain* of the Sorcerers' Sabbath-song. See his “Description of the Inconstancy of Evil Angels and Demons,” “Delancre's description of the Witches' Sabbath,” observes the amusing author of *Monsieur Oufle*, “is so very ample and particular, that I don't believe I should be better informed concerning it if I had been there myself.”

Phantasmata Stygia,
Spectra, Prodigia !
Of aspect horrific,
Of gesture terrific.
Where cauldrons are seething,
Lithe serpents are wreathing,
And wizards are gloating
On pois'nous scum floating,
While scull and bone placed out
In circle are traced out.
Here witches air-gliding
On broomsticks are riding.
A hag a fawn chases,
A nun Pan embraces ;
With loathly caresses,
A corpse a monk presses.
Here mimic fights waging,
Hell's warriors are raging ;
Each legion commanding
A chief is seen standing.
Béelzebub gleaming,
Like Gentile god seeming—
Proud Belial advancing,
With awful ire glancing ;
Asmodeus the cunning,
Abaddon, light shunning,

Dark Moloch deceiving,
His subtle webs weaving ;
Meresin air-dwelling,
Red Mammon gold telling.

V.

The Fiend, then dissembling,
Addressed the saint trembling :
“ These are thine if down bowing,
Unto me thy soul vowing,
Thy worship thou’lt offer.”

“ Back, Tempter, thy proffer
With scorn is rejected.”

“ Unto me thou’rt subjected,
For thy doubts, by the Eternal !”
Laughed the Spirit Infernal.

At his word then compelling,
Forth rushed from her dwelling
A shape so inviting,
Enticing, delighting,
With lips of such witchery,
Tongue of such treachery,
(That sin-luring smile is
The torment of Lilis,)

Like Eve in her Eden,
Our Father misleading.
With locks so wide-flowing,
Limbs so bright-glowing,
That Hell hath bewrayed him,
If Heaven do not aid him.

“ Her charms are surrendered
If worship is rendered.”

“ Sathan, get thee behind me !
My sins no more blind me—
By Jesu’s temptation !
By lost man’s salvation !
Be this vision banished !”

And straight Hell vanished.

And suiting the action to the phrase, at the conclusion of his song, Siblot threw himself head over heels from the table, and vanished likewise. Acclamations were heard on all sides. Whatever the festive assemblage might think of the Jester’s song, they were infinitely amused by his summersault. By this time, too,

the generous wines, with which each goblet was constantly replenished, had begun to do their duty. Every eye grew bright—every tongue loud—and a greater degree of licence reigned throughout. Crichton alone partook not of the festivities.

“ Par la Mort-Dieu, Mon brave Ecossois,” said Henri, with a smile of exultation, “ you are not in your usual spirits to night. You have not a smile for a fair dame—you do but indifferent justice to Berini’s supper, (and Villequier, or your brother bard, Ronsard, will tell you it has merit)—and you wholly neglect Samson’s goblets, though this Syracuse hath potency enough to turn the blood to flame. Try it, I pray of you.—Your thoughtful visage assorts ill with our sprightly associates. Let your spirits sparkle like our wine—like the eyes around us—and drown your despondency in the flowing bowl.”

“ An excellent proposal, Sire,” said D’Epernon—“ Crichton is either in love or jealous—

perhaps both—he eats not, talks not, drinks not, signs infallible.”

“ Pshaw,” replied Joyeuse—“ he has lost a favourite hawk, or a horse, or a thousand pistoles at play—or—”

“ He thinks of his duel with the Mask,” added Saint Luc—“ he has confessed and received the Holy Communion, and the priest has enjoined a night of fasting and repentance.”

“ He has lost a supper, then, which, like Brantôme’s beauty, has every requisite,” said Villequier, with his mouth full of march-pane—“ I pity him.”

“ Or his appetite,” said Ronsard, “ without which even a supper at the Louvre would be thrown away.”

“ Or a rhyme,” said Torigni; “ a loss to make a bard look sad—eh, Monsieur de Ronsard?”

“ Or a sarbacane,” said Chicot.

“ Or a bilboquet,” cried Siblot.

“ Or a toy of less moment than either,” hiccuped Brantôme—“ a mistress.”

Here a loud laugh was raised.

“ A truce to raillery,” said Henri, laughing with the rest—“ Crichton is a little out of sorts—fatigued, naturally enough, with his disputation of the morning, and his exertions in the ball-room—however, we trust he has not entirely lost his voice, but that he will favour us with one of those exquisite chansons-à-boire, with which, of old, he was wont to enliven our waissalry.”

“ A song!—a song!” echoed all the symposiacs, laughing louder than ever.

“ My strains will scarcely harmonize with your revel, Sire,” returned Crichton, gloomily—“ my livelier thoughts desert me.”

“ No matter,” replied Henri, “ be they sad as those of Erebus—’twill give a sharper edge to our festivity.”

In a voice then which, as he proceeded, gradually hushed all disposition to mirth, Crichton sang :—

The Three Orgies.

I.

IN banquet hall, beside the King,
 Sat proud Thyestes revelling.
 The festal board was covered fair,
 The festal meats were rich and rare ;
 Thyestes ate full daintily,
 Thyestes laughed full lustily ;
 But soon his haughty visage fell—
 A dish was brought—and, wo to tell !
 A gory head that charger bore !
 An infant's look the features wore !
 Thyestes shrieked—King Atreus smiled—
 The Father had devoured his child !

*Fill the goblet—fill it high—
 To Thyestes' revelry.
 Of blood-red wines the brightest choose,
 The glorious grape of Syracuse !*

II.

For a victory obtained
 O'er the savage Getæ chained,
 In his grand Cæsarean hall
 Domitian holds high festival.

To a solemn feast* besought
Thither are the Senate brought.
As he joins the stately crowd,
Smiles each grave Patrician proud.
One by one each guest is led
Where Domitian's feast is spread ;
Each, recoiling, stares aghast
At the ominous repast :—
Round abacus of blackest shade
Black triclinia are laid,
Sable vases deck the board
With dark-coloured viands stored ;
Shaped like tombs, on either hand,
Rows of dusky pillars stand ;
O'er each pillar in a line,
Pale sepulchral lychni shine ;
Cinerary urns are seen,
Carved each with a name, I ween.
By the sickly radiance shown
Every guest may read his own !
Forth then issue swarthy slaves,
Each a torch and dagger waves ;

* For an account of what Sir Thomas Brown, in his *Bibliotheca Abscondita*, terms 'Domitian's dismal Supper and strange Entertain,' the reader is referred to the details of the Historian Dion Cassius.

Some like Manes habited,
 Figures ghastly as the dead !
 Some as Lemures attired,
 Larvæ some, with vengeance fired.
 See the throat of every guest
 By a murderous gripe is prest !
 While the wretch, with horror dumb,
 Thinks his latest hour is come !
 Loud then laugh'd Domitian,
 Thus his solemn feast began.

Fill the goblet—fill it high—

To Domitian's revelry.

Let our glowing goblet be

Crown'd with wine of Sicily !

III.

Borgia* holds a papal fête,
 And Zizime, with heart elate,

* Pope Alexander VI., of the family of Lenzuoli, but who assumed, previous to his Pontificate, the name of Borgia, a name rendered infamous, as well by his own crimes and vices, as by those of the monster-offspring, Cæsar and Lucrezia, whom he had by the courtesan Vanozza, according to Gordon, instigated to the murder of Zizime or Djem, son of Mahomet II., by a reward of 300,000 ducats, promised by Bajazet, brother to the ill-fated Othman Prince.

With his chiefs Barbarian
Seeks the gorgeous Vatican.
'Tis a wondrous sight to see
In Christian hall that company !
But the Othman warriors soon
Scout the precepts of Mahoun.
Wines of Sicily and Spain,
Joyously those Paynims drain ;
While Borgia's words their laughter stir,
“ *Bibimus Papaliter !*”
At a signal—pages three,
With gold goblets, bend the knee :
Borgia pours the purple stream
Till beads upon its surface gleam.
“ Do us reason, noble guest,”
Thus Zizime, the Pontiff prest :
“ By our triple-crown there lies,
In that wine-cup Paradise !”
High Zizime the goblet raised—
Loud Zizime the Cyprus praised—
To each guest in order slow,
Next the felon pages go.
Each in turn the Cyprus quaffs,
Like Zizime, each wildly laughs,—
Laughter horrible and strange !
Quick ensues, a fearful change,

Stifled soon is every cry,
 Azrael is standing by.
 Glared Zizime—but spake no more :
 Borgia's fatal feast was o'er !

*Fill the goblet—fill it high—
 With the wines of Italy ;
 Borgia's words our laughter stir—
 Bibimus Papaliter !*

“ *Bibamus Regaliter !*” exclaimed Henri, as Crichton's song concluded. “ Dieu Merci ! we have no dread of such a consummation at our orgies. A reveller might well stand in awe of the bowl, if after his nocturnal banquet he should awaken in Elysium. You must now perforce pledge us, mon Ecossois, or we shall think you hold our feasts in the same horror as those of Borgia—a cup of Cyprus—you will not refuse us ?”

“ He will not refuse *me*,” said Marguerite de Valois. “ Give me a goblet, Loisel.”

A page approached with a flagon of gold.

“ Fill for me,” said the Queen.

And the wine was poured out.

“To our re-union,” whispered she, drinking. “La forza d’amore non risguarda al delitto.”

“I pledge you, Madame,” answered Crichton, raising the goblet.

Marguerite’s eyes were fixed upon him. All trace of colour had deserted her cheeks.

“How is this?” exclaimed Crichton, laying down the goblet untasted. “Poison!—Do Borgia’s drugs find entrance here?”

“Poison!” echoed all, rising in astonishment and dismay.

“Ay—poison!” reiterated Crichton. “See the ruddy bezoar in this ring has become pale as opal. This wine is poisoned.”

“I have drunk of it,” said Marguerite, with a withering look. “Your own faint heart misgives you.”

“Some poisons have their antidotes, Madame,” observed Crichton, sternly. “The knife of Parysades was anointed on one side only.”

“Bring Venetian glass,” cried Henri, “that

will remove or confirm your suspicions. Sangdieu! Chevalier Crichton, if this interruption be groundless, you shall bitterly repent it."

"Give me the Venice glass," said Crichton, "I will abide the issue."

A glass was brought, bell-shaped—light—clear as crystal. Crichton took it and poured within it the contents of his own goblet.

For a second no change was observed. The wine then suddenly hissed and foamed. The glass shivered into a thousand pieces.

All eyes were now turned on the Queen of Navarre. She had fainted.

"Let her be cared for," said Henri, affecting indifference, "Miron must attend her—he will understand—" and the King whispered a few words to Du Halde. "Fair dames, and you Messieurs," added he to the guests, who looked on aghast, "this incident must not interrupt our revel. Samson, we appoint thee our taster—wine—wine."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE JESTER.

Le Marchant. Vous estes, ce croy-je le joyeux du Roy?

Panurge. Voire.

Le March. Fourchez là.

RABELAIS. *Pantagruel. Liv. IV. Ch. VI.*

THE effect of the occurrence, just detailed, was visible in the altered complexion and demeanour of the dames, and it required all the gallantry and attention of the cavaliers, in any degree, to restore their gaiety. Conversation, however, soon became more free and discursive. Each galliard boasted, in his turn, of his prowess in arms—of his dexterity in horsemanship—of his unerring aim with the pistol—of his fatal stroke with the poignard—of his ability with the rapier—in short,

of his perfect acquaintance with the whole "theoric and practic" of the duello—a subject which necessarily involved the discussion of Crichton's approaching combat. The discourse began to take a very animated turn, many speculations being hazarded as to the rank and name of the challenger, a subject upon which the dames appeared singularly curious, and even Esclairmonde manifested anxiety; when, as if brought thither to gratify their wishes, the subject of their converse (the sable Mask) suddenly presented himself at the entrance of the banquet-chamber.

Henri instantly commanded admittance to be given to him, and the Unknown was, in consequence, ushered to the seat which Marguerite de Valois had abandoned, thus bringing him into immediate contact with his adversary Crichton. Their situation appeared to be agreeable to neither party; but it was now too late to remedy the mistake, and Henri laughed it off in the best way he could.

“Nothing can be further from my intention than to interrupt the harmony of your Majesty’s table,” said the Mask, in reply to the King’s apology, “and, I trust, I shall not incur the censure of your brave gentlemen, by offering a second offence to one, whom I have already defied to the combat. I am no faith-breaker, Sire. But I crave your pardon for trespassing on your patience. — I came not hither to join your revels. My errand hath no relation to festivity.”

“’Fore Heaven, then, mon cousin!” replied Henri, regarding the Mask with some astonishment, “if not to festivity, unto what hath your visit relation—to what fortunate chance are we indebted for your presence?”

The Mask looked with some anxiety towards Crichton.

The Scot instantly rose.

“I am in the way, Sire,” said he. “Your counsels will be more securely carried on if I quit the banquet.”

“No, by our Lady!” cried Henri, rising, and with great courtesy motioning to Crichton to resume his seat—“this shall never be. If any one *must* suffer inconvenience at our revels, it shall be ourself. We are at your service, mon cousin,—though we must need say you have chosen a strange season for an audience.”

Saying which, the Monarch reluctantly led the way towards an embrasure—“Chicot,” said he, in an under tone as he passed, “do thou assume our seat for the nonce. We must not attend to the interests of others to the entire exclusion of our own—that were scarce king-like—and hark ye, gossip, as you value your ears, suffer not a syllable to pass between Crichton and our mignonne, Esclairmonde—you understand.”

With a mock dignity infinitely diverting to the guests, Chicot instantly installed himself in Henri’s vacant chair. His first proceeding was, to place his marotte between the

lovers, which he laughingly termed "his ambassador's sword, whereby they were to understand they could only speak by proxy." His next was to call upon Ronsard for a song. The bard would willingly have declined the Jester's invitation, but the voices of the revellers were against him, and he was necessitated to promise compliance.

"Fool," muttered Crichton, sternly, who had already taken advantage of the King's absence to hazard a whisper to Esclairmonde -- "wilt thou mar this opportunity afforded us by chance of devising means for her escape? Why should she not fly now? I alone will withstand every attempt at pursuit."

"And who would then be the fool?" replied Chicot. "No--no, my addle pate hath hatched a scheme worth two of yours. Set yourself at ease. Procure his sarbacane from the Vicomte de Joyeuse on any plea you like; and meanwhile suffer the "law-giver of Parnassus," as his flatterers term him, to proceed with his roundelay. See you not that it diverts the attention of the guests,

and leaves *us* at liberty.—Fool, quotha!—recant that appellation, brother.”

“ I cry thee mercy, gossip,” rejoined Crichton—“ thou art indeed a very miracle of wit. Joyeuse,” added he, addressing the Vicomte, “ I prithee, favour me with thy sarbacane.”

“ To dispatch a billet to some distant fair one in the outer banquet-hall : ah!—galliard—here ’tis :” saying which, Joyeuse sent his page with the long and costly tube of chased silver resting by his side, to the Scot.

Ronsard, meanwhile, commenced his song, which, if it should not be found to equal in merit the accredited lyrics of the bard, “ *qui, en françois, parla grec et latin,*” its failure must be attributed to the supper he had eaten, and the Cyprus he had swallowed, (both, according to his former patron, Charles IX., unfavourable to the Muse), and in some degree to the quaintness of the measure he selected. Thus, however, ran his strain :—

The Legend of Valdez.

I.

'Tis night!—forth Valdez, in disguise,

Hies;

And his visage, as he glides,

Hides.

Goes he to yon church to pray?

Eh!

No, that fane a secret path

Hath,

Leading to a neighbouring pile's

Aisles;

Where Nuns lurk—by priests cajoled

Old.

Thither doth Don Valdez go—

Oh!

Thither vestal lips to taste

Haste.

II.

'Neath yon arch, why doth he stand?

And

Haps it that he lingers now

How?

Suddenly cowl'd priests appear

Here.

Voices chant a dirge-like dim

Hymn :

Mutes a sable coffin drear

Rear ;

Where a monument doth lie

High.

Scutcheons proud Death's dark parade

Aid.

Valdez sees, with fresh alarms,

Arms,

Which his own—(gules cross and star !)—

Are.

III.

An hour—and yet he hath not gone

On ;

Neither can he strength to speak

Eke.

Hark ! he cries, in fear and doubt,

Out,

“ Whom inter ye in that tomb ?

Whom ?—”

“ Valdez !—He'll be, 'ere twelve hours,

Ours !—

Wait we for his funeral
All ! ”

IV.

“ Monk ! thou bring’st, if this be truth,
Ruth ! ”

Valdez his own fate with dread
Read.

Question none he uttered more ;—
O’er

’Twas ;—and he doth peacefully
Lie

In the tomb he saw, thus crazed,
Raised.

L’Entoy.

Memento Mori !—Life’s a stale
Tale.

During the progress of Ronsard’s song, the Jester had not remained idle. Amidst a thousand absurd grimaces, intended for the amusement of the company, he had contrived in various ways to intimate what was the nature of his intentions respecting Esclairmonde’s de-

liverance to Crichton, and the latter, struck apparently with the feasibility of his plan, traced a hurried line or two on the paper-covering of a dragée which he took from a pile of confectionary before him, and then applying the sarbacane to his lips, winged with dexterous aim the sugared missive into the lap of the Demoiselle Torigni. This incident, if it attracted any notice at all, passed for a mere piece of gallantry, a supposition which was abundantly confirmed by the conduct of the fair Florentine, whose sparkling eyes and throbbing bosom, as she perused the paper, as well as her nod of acquiescence, while she finally crushed it within her hands, sufficiently attested the nature of her feelings. Brantôme who was her neighbour, hemmed significantly. Torigni crimsoned to the temples—nothing more was said upon the matter.

“ Bravo ! ” exclaimed Crichton, who flushed with the anticipated success of his scheme, had now entirely recovered his tranquillity, and joined enthusiastically in the applauses be-

stowed upon Ronsard's performance—though we suspect from the warmth of his praises, that not a word of the song had reached his ears. “Bravo!” cried he, with well-feigned rapture—“the strains to which we have listened are worthy of him who has won for himself the proud title of the “*Poète François, par Excellence*” of him who will enjoy a kindred immortality with the Teian and Mæonian bards ; of him whom beauty has worshipped, and sages honoured ; and to whom one fairer than the fairest nymph of antiquity—the loveliest pearl of Scotia's diadem hath inscribed her priceless gift

A RONSARD l'Appollon de la source des Muses.

Happy bard ! upon whom such a Queen hath smiled. Not Alain Chartier, upon whose melodious lips, when closed in sleep, Margaret of Scotland impressed a burning kiss ; not Marot, the aspiring lover of Diane de Poitiers, and of the royal Marguerite was so much to be envied. Happy !—happy bard ! upon whom all lovely things smile.”

“ Except the lovely Torigni,” interrupted Chicot—“ and she alone, who smiles on all, frowns upon him. For my part I have the bad taste to prefer my own verses, or those of Mellin de Saint Gelais, our “ French Ovid,” or the elegies of my cousin Philippe Desportes (our “ Tibullus,” if Ronsard is to be our “ Anacreon ”—bah !), *his* sonnets are worth all the erotic poesy indited

“ By Ronsard on those ladies three,
Cassandra, Helen, or Marie.”—

“ Peace !” said the Scot, “ and to confound thee and all such unbelievers I will, if my memory serves me, recite an ode recently written by the bard thou hast traduced, worthy to be classed with the most fervid strains ever poured out by him who sang of old, of love, and of the vine. Attend !” And addressing the poet, whose handsome countenance glowed with satisfaction, and who acknowledged the compliment (for your bards are not insensible to flattery) by kissing his

wine-cup, Crichton, with the grace and fervour of an Alcibiades, delivered himself of the following ode—the spirit of which, we fear, may have wholly evaporated in translation.

Anacreontic.*

I.

WHEN Bacchus' gift assails my brain,
 Care flies, and all her gloomy train ;
 My pulses throb, my youth returns,
 With its old fire my bosom burns ;
 Before my kindling vision rise
 A thousand glorious phantasies !
 Sudden my empty coffers swell,
 With riches inconsumable ;
 And mightier treasures 'round me spring
 Than Cræsus owned, or Phrygia's king.

II.

Nought seek I in that frenzied hour,
 Save love's intoxicating power ;

* Paraphrased from Ronsard's Ode.—*Lorsque Bacchus entre chez moi, &c.*

An arm to guide me in the dance,
 An eye to thrill me with its glance,
 A lip impassioned words to breathe,
 A hand my temples to enwreath:—
 Rank, honour, wealth, and worldly weal,
 Scornful, I crush beneath my heel.

III.

Then fill the chalice till it shine
 Bright as a gem incarnadine !
 Fill!—till its fumes have freed me wholly
 From the black phantom—Melancholy !
 Better inebriate 'tis to lie,
 And dying live, than living die !

“Trinquons, mon cher,” cried Ronsard, holding out his goblet as Crichton concluded, “my verses acquire a grace from you, such as they never possessed before.”

“Forget not the rhymes of the good Pantagruel,” said Chicot—

“Et veu qu'il est de cerveau phanaticque,
 Ce me seroit acte de trop picqueur,
Penser mocquer ung si noble trincqueur.”

At this moment the Vicomte de Joyeuse slightly coughed, and directing a glance of intelligence at Crichton, volunteered and executed with much vivacity and spirit, the following—

Dirge of Bourbon.

I.

WHEN the good Count of Nassau
Saw Bourbon lie dead,
“By Saint Barbe and Saint Nicholas !
Forward ! ” he said.

II.

“Mutter never prayer o’er him,
For litter ne’er halt ;
But sound loud the trumpet—
Sound, sound to assault !

III.

“Bring engine,—bring ladder,
Yon old walls to scale ;
All Rome, by Saint Peter !
For Bourbon shall wail.”

We will now follow the footsteps of the King and his masked visitant, requesting the reader to bear in mind that our drama, at this moment, proceeds with a double action, or in other words, that the discourse we are about to recount, and the incidents we have just described, occurred at one and the same moment.

“ We would willingly serve you in this enlèvement of the Gelosa,” said Henri, continuing a conversation with the Unknown—the earlier part of which we deem it unnecessary to repeat—“ willingly—but shall we own to you our weakness?—we have apprehensions—”

“ Of Crichton ?” asked the Mask, scarcely able to repress his scorn.

“ Of our Mother, *caro mio*—we hold it a rule never to interfere with *her* plans, unless they interfere with our own, and in this instance we see not how our interests can be mixed up with your wishes. Besides, to speak plainly, we have an affair on hand at

this moment which may not improbably excite her displeasure; and we are unwilling to hazard aught that may occasion serious grounds of difference between us. Why not tarry till to-morrow?"

"Because—but I have already stated my reasons for this urgency—it *must* be to-night—"

"You have as little reliance on Ruggieri as we have, mon cousin," laughed the King.

"I am as little accustomed to balk my inclinations, as your Majesty," replied the Mask, impatiently—"The prey is stricken.—Shall I hesitate to seize it?—By Saint Paul, no. I detain you, Sire. Suffer me to quit the presence. Since you decline giving me your authority I will act upon my own responsibility."

"Stay," replied the King, vacillating between the awe in which he stood of Catherine's resentment, and his anxiety to serve the Mask, "the guard stationed round the

Hôtel de Soissons refused you admittance, you say. This ring will obtain it for you.— Take it, and take the girl, and Ruggieri too, if you list. So that you rid us, and our good city of Paris of him and his accursed waxen images, we care not. If you encounter our Mother, we leave you to make your own excuses. Take care not to compromise us in the matter. You need fear no interruption on the part of Crichton. He is safe within this chamber, and we will give instant orders that the doors of the Louvre be closed till dawn.”

“ In an hour that caution will be needless,” exclaimed the Mask, triumphantly. “ Ere that space be past, my views will be accomplished.”

And with a haughty salutation the Unknown departed.

The King remained an instant to confer with Du Halde. Chicot, who, upon the departure of the Mask, had vacated his seat,

approached them. Our Jester had a strong penchant for eves-dropping.

“ Let the portals of the Louvre be instantly closed,” said Henri—“ not a guest must go forth till dawn—above all the Chevalier Crichton.”

The chief Valet bowed.

“ I have further commands for thee,” continued the King, lowering his tone—“ at my wonted signal thou wilt extinguish the lights.”

A scarcely-perceptible smile played upon Du Halde’s courtier-like countenance.

“ Ha! runs it so,” said Chicot, drawing nearer to the group.

And here we leave him to return to the lovers.

“ Esclairmonde,” whispered the Scot, as the buffoon quitted the table, “ place your trust unhesitatingly in that man—he is your safeguard—he will deliver you—confide in him-- and fear nothing.”

“ I do not fear, Chevalier Crichton,” re-

plied the Demoiselle, in the same low tone. "In my extremity I have one friend who will not fail me—the good Florent Chrétien."

"You have one who will perish *for* you, or *with* you," returned Crichton. "We shall meet again?"

"Perhaps," answered Esclairmonde; "and yet I know not—the future is a gulf into which I dare not gaze.—If possible I will quit this palace—this city—on the morrow; one tie alone can detain me, if I am free from this hateful bondage."

"And that is——?"

"Henri de Valois," rejoined a voice.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SARBACANE.

Je dis, et je le sçai que le Roy ayant pris une merveilleuse frayeur de ces choses, dès le tems de la *Sarbacane*, devint enfin si peureux qu'il trembloit à la vûë du moindre éclair.

CONFESSION DE SANCY.

THE King, whose quick ear caught the last words of their conversation, had approached the lovers unperceived. In vain had the Jester attempted to warn them by slightly coughing. Henri was too rapid in his movements to allow him to proceed, and he was fearful of awakening suspicion by any overt display of his sympathy with their situation. "Chevalier Crichton," said the Monarch, angrily regarding the Scot, "we would not have to remind you a *second time* of your plighted word. Take heed how you rouse our choler— we have something of the Medicis in our composition, though it may not often manifest itself."

“ And I,” returned the Scot, fiercely—

“ Le monde est un bouffon, l’homme une comedie,
L’un porte la marotte, et l’autre est la Folie.”

chanted Chicot, adding in a whisper to Crichton, “ Your intemperate Scotch blood will ruin all—bethink you what you do.”

“ You talk boldly, Chevalier,” said Henri, “ and we trust you will demean yourself as stoutly on the morrow with your sword. Your adversary of the Mask threatens to rob you of your laurels, and to put a stain upon the spotless order, with which we have invested you. This must not be, Sir.”

“ The modest precepts of chivalry teach us, Sire,” replied Crichton, “ that to vaunt is not to vanquish—

“ Un Chevalier, n’en doutez pas,
Doit féir haut, et parler bas.”

I shall abide the issue—content to rely upon a sword which hath never yet failed me, and a cause which I avouch to be the right.”

“ Enough,” replied Henri, whose petulance

was readily dissipated. “ We have bidden Du Halde give orders for the proclamation of the jousts at noon upon the morrow, within the lesser gardens of the Louvre, and we bid ye all, fair dames and puissant knights—to grace it with your presence—

“ Servans d’amours, regardez doucement
Aux eschaffaux anges de Paradis :
Lors jousterez fort et joyeusement
Et vous serez honorez et chéris.”

As Henri sung this refrain of an old ballad of the Tourney by Eustache Deschamps with much taste and some feeling, his features assumed, for a moment, the expression which might have animated them, when, flushed with the promise of a glorious manhood, his youthful valour had achieved the victory of Montcontour. —“ Ah, Crichton !” sighed he, as he concluded, “ the days of Tannegui Du-Chatel, and Gaston de Foix are past. With our brave father, Henri de Valois, chivalry expired !”

“ Say not so, Sire,” replied Crichton,

“ while yourself can yet wield a lance, and while a Joyeuse, a D’Épernon, and a Saint-Luc yet live to raise their banners.”

“ To say nothing of a Crichton,” interrupted Henri, “ whose name will gild our reign hereafter, when others are forgotten.—With the Béarnais in the field—the Balafre coquetting with our crown, and our brother of Anjou in open revolt against us, we have need of loyal hearts and true. Joyeuse, *mon enfant*, I heard thy voice just now—hast thou not some stirring strain of knightly days, to chime with the chord which chance has struck within our breast?”

“ If such be your pleasure, my gracious liege,” replied Joyeuse, “ you shall have the lay of the truest knight that ever served monarch of your realm—the valiant Constable, Bertrand Du Guesclin.”

With a fire and spirit which evinced how completely the glorious prowess of the warrior whose brave deeds he celebrated was in unison with his own ardent aspirations after

chivalrous renown, Joyeuse then sang, in a rich melodious voice, the following

*Ditty of Du Guesclin.**

A SILVER shield the squire did wield, charged with an eagle black,
 With talon red, and two-fold head, who followed on the track
 Of the best knight that ere in fight hurled mace, or couched the lance,
 Du Guesclin named, who truncheon claimed as Constable of France.

* The above lines are a free version of an 'olde gentil' Breton lay of the age of Charles V. of France, a stanza of which we subjoin, that the reader may have a taste of its freshness and simplicity. The ballad, we may observe, has remained wholly inedited until the recent publication by M. Crapelet of the golden Manuscript of the *Combat des Trentes*, extracted from the *Bibliothèque du Roi*. The following is the stanza alluded to. We need not do more than quote it to enlist the reader's admiration in its behalf.

Le Distic de Mons. Bertran De Glasquin

Lescu d'argent a . x . egle de sable
 A . ij . testes et . x . roge baston
 Pourtoist li preux le ballant connestable
 Qui de Glasquin Bertran auoist a nom
 A bron fu nes le chevalier breton
 Preux et hardi courageux come . x . tor
 Qui tant serui de louial cuer et de bon
 Lescu d'azur a . iij . flours de lis do

In Brittany, where Rennes * doth lie, Du Guesclin first
 drew breath ;
 Born for emprise—in counsel wise, brave, loyal unto
 death.
 With hand and sword, with heart and word, served
 well this Baron bold
 The azure scutcheon that displayed three fleurs-de-lis
 of gold.†

II.

Like Guesclin bold of warriors old in prowess there
 was none,
 'Mid peers that stood 'round Arthur good, Baldwin or
 brave Bouillon ;
 Nor, as I wecn, hath knighthood seen a chief more
 puissantly
 With staff advance the flower of France 'gainst hostile
 chivalry.
 —Guesclin is dead ! and with him fled the bravest and
 the best,
 That ever yet, by foe beset, maintained fair Gallia's
 crest !

* The Chateau de la Motte-Broon, near Rennes.

† The royal arms of France.

His soul God shrive!—were he alive, his spear were
 couched again
 To guard the three gold lilies from the white cross of
 Lorrain!*

“God rest the soul of the valiant Constable!” sighed Henri, as Joyeuse brought his ballad to a close. “Would he were living now!—but wherefore,” he added, glancing affectionately at the Vicomte, “should we indulge such a wish while thou, my gallant D’Arques, remainest to us?—With thee by our side,” continued he, smiling, “we need have little anticipation of the third crown with which Madame la Duchesse de Montpensier promises to adorn our brow—Poland’s diadem we have

* The cognizance of the house of Guise. The double Cross of Lorrain was adopted as an ensign by the Leaguers, of whom the Duke of Guise, as all the world knows, was the prime mover;—a circumstance which gave rise to the following sarcastic and somewhat irreverent quatrain, quite in the spirit of the times:—

Mais, dites moi, que signifie
 Que les Ligueurs ont double croix?—
 C’est qu’en la Ligue on crucifie
 Jesus-Christ encore une fois.

already borne—that of France we now possess—but the Monk's tonsure—”

“ Will become her brother the Balafre better than you, my gracious Liege,” interrupted Joyeuse—“ to Ades with the felon Cross of Lorraine and its supporters.”

“ Ah! Joyeuse—my brother,” said Henri, smiling affectionately, “ thou art indeed as brave as Du Guesclin, as loyal as Bayard.”

“ Bayard!” exclaimed Crichton, “ My heart leaps up at that name, as at the clarion's call. Would that my life might be like Bayard's, and ” added he fervently, “ my life's close likewise!”

“ To that prayer I cry amen with my whole soul,” said Joyeuse. “ But while our hearts are warmed with the thoughts kindled by such glorious recollections, prithee, Crichton, clothe somewhat of their gallant deeds in thine inspiring verse. Thou art a minstrel worthy of Bayard. Even my friend Philippe Desportes must yield the palm of song to thee.”

“ Joyeuse is in the right,” said Henri. “ A

nobler subject for the bard could not be found, nor better bard to rehearse such subject. Three well-beneficed abbeys were the meed of as many sonnets from Desportes.—We know not how we shall requite your performance, *mon cher.*”

“ Bestow not such unmerited praise on me, I beseech your Majesty,” replied Crichton, “ or I shall scarce adventure my lay upon a theme on which I own I cannot dwell without deepest emotion.”

“ First let us pledge the memory of the reproachless Chevalier,” said Henri, “ and then embalm his deeds in song.”

The goblets were filled — and drained. Crichton pronounced his pledge with devotion, and quaffed the sparkling contents of his wine-cup to the dregs.

In a tone, then, which showed how deeply his own sympathy was enlisted in the subject-matter of his strains, — with an unstudied simplicity of manner perfectly in unison with the minstrel measure he had chosen, and with

much knightly fervour, he sang the following ballad:—

The Sword of Bayard.

I.

“ A BOON I crave, my Bayard brave:”—’twas thus
King Francis spoke ;

“ The field is won, the battle done,* yet deal one
other stroke.

For by this light, to dub us knight, none worthy is as
thou,

Whom nor reproach, nor fear approach, of prince or
peer we trow.”

“ Sire!” said the knight, “ you judge not right, who
owns a kingdom fair,

’Neath his command all knights do stand—no service
can he share.”

“ Nay! by our fay!” the King did say, “ lo! at thy
feet we kneel,

Let silken rules sway tiltyard schools, *our* laws are
here of steel.”

* The famous engagement with the Swiss, near Milan, in which Francis the First came off victorious. Fleuranges places the ceremony of the King’s knighthood *before* the battle. The “ Loyal Servant,” however, states that it occurred, as is most probable, after the conflict.

II.

With gracious mien did Bayard then, his sword draw
from his side ;

“ By God ! Saint Michael ! and Saint George ! I dub
thee knight ! ” he cried.

“ Arise, good King ! weal may this bring—such grace
on thee confer,

As erst from blow of Charles did flow, Roland or
Oliver ! ”

With belted blade the King arrayed—the knight the
spur applied,

And then his neck with chain did deck—and accolade
supplied—

“ Do thy devoir at ghostly choir—maintain high
courtesie,

And from the fray in war’s array, God grant thou
never flee ! ”

III.

“ Certes, good blade,”* then Bayard said, his own
sword waving high,

“ Thou shalt, perdie, as relic be preserved full
carefully !

* “ Tu es bien heureuse d’avoir aujourd’hui, à un si beau et si puissant Roi, donné l’ordre de chevalerie. Certes, ma bonne épée, vous serez comme reliques gardée, et sur tout autre honorée ! ” *Precis de la Chevalerie.*

Right fortunate art thou, good sword, a King so brave
to knight!

And with strong love, all arms above, rest honoured in
my sight.

And never more, as heretofore, by Christian chivalry,
My trenchant blade, shalt thou be rayed, or e'er en-
dangered be!

For Paynim foes reserve thy blows—the Saracen and
Moor

Thine edge shall smite in bitter fight, or merciless
estour!”*

IV.

Years since that day have rolled away, and Bayard
hurt to death,

'Neath gray Rebecco's walls outstretch'd, exhales his
latest breath.

On Heaven he cried or ere he died—but cross had
none, I wist,

Save that good sword-hilt cruciform, which with pale
lips he kissed.†

* Estour—a grand mêlée.

† “ This sword has been lost. Charles Emanuel, Duke of Savoy, requested it of Bayard's heirs. One of them, Charles Du Motet, Lord of Cbichiliane, sent him, in default of it, the battle-axe of which Bayard made use. The Duke told the

Knight! whom reproach could ne'er approach, no
 name like unto thine,
 With honour bright, unsullied, white, on Fame's proud
 scroll shall shine!
 But were it not to mortal lot denied by grace divine,
 Should Bayard's breath, and Bayard's death, and his
 good sword be mine!

“ Bravo!” exclaimed Joyeuse—“ may the
 same spirit which animated Bayard animate
 you on the morrow!

A bien jouter gardez votre querelle
 Et vous serez honorez et chéris,

as runs the old refrain. ‘ *Souviens-toi* ’ (as
 the pursuivants-at-arms are wont to cheer us
 at the tourney) ‘ *de qui tu es fils, et ne for-
 ligne pas.* ’ ”

“ My father's sword will, I trust, be grasped

Dauphinese gentleman, when he wrote to thank him for the
 present, “ That in the midst of the pleasure he felt at behold-
 ing this weapon placed in the worthiest part of his gallery, he
 could scarce choose but regret, that it was not in such good
 hands as of its original owner ”—*Champier*.—See also the
 account of Bayard's death in the *Chronicle of the Loyal
 Servant*.

by no degenerate hand," replied Crichton, smiling, "and prove as fortunate in my hand as Orlando's resistless blade Durandal, or thy namesake Joyeuse, the trenchant weapon of Charlemagne. I shall neither forget of what worthy gentleman I am the son, nor," added he, glancing at Esclairmonde, "of what fair dame, the servant."

"Will not the dame you serve," asked the Vicomte, smiling "in accordance with the good old practice of chivalry, too much neglected, I grieve to say, now-a-days, bestow some token or favour upon you? The Dame de Fluxas gave her sleeve to Bayard, when he gained the prize of the tourney at Carignan."

"I have no other token but this to bestow," said Esclairmonde, crimsoning to the temples, and detaching a knot of ribands from her hair, "which I now give to the Chevalier Crichton, and pray him to wear for my sake."

Crichton took the gage, and pressing it to his lips, exclaimed with fervour—"I will

bear it upon my lance; and if my adversary boast like token of his lady's favour, I trust to lay it as an offering at your feet."

"No more," interrupted Henri impatiently, "we ourselves will break a lance in your behoof, belle Esclairmonde, and here appoint you Queen of the Lists—remember, Messieurs, the heralds will proclaim the joust tomorrow—we ourselves will enter the barriers which we will have appointed with more than usual magnificence. Thus much we owe to our combatants. Do thou, Joyeuse, array fourteen of thy followers in white scarves, and thou D'Épernon the like number of thy Quarante-cinq in yellow. We will have our courses à la foule take place by torchlight, as was the custom of our chivalrous father—at which time also we will make trial of our Spanish jennets in the new Balet des Chevaux, devised by our chief equerry. Par la Mort-dieu! if our reign be remembered for nothing else, it shall be referred to for its ceaseless festivities."

“ And now,” added he gallantly, “ that we have listened to the lay of *preux chevalier*, we trust the response of gentle dame will not be denied us. Our fair Torigni, we know, hath a witching skill upon the lyre, but the voice we chiefly desire to hear is that of our lovely neighbour. Nay, fair *Demoiselle*, by our crown we are peremptory, and will take no refusal. She whose lightest tones are music, cannot be held excused on plea of want of skill. You need but link your voice with the words of some simple legend, and we will engage that your performance shall exceed in attraction the most finished effort of our choicest Italian *cantatrice*, even though your opponent should be, (with a glance at Crichton) the divine *Gelosa* herself, whose notes attracted all our good citizens to the *Hôtel de Bourbon*.”

Aware that remonstrance would be unavailing, with the best grace she could assume, and in a voice, the tones of which, as Henri justly remarked, were perfectly musical, *Esclairmonde*, without hesitation complied with

the King's request; and with much natural and touching pathos, executed the following Romance :—

*Yusef and Zorayda.**

I.

THROUGH the Vega of Granada, where the silver
 Darro glides—
 From his tower within the Alpuxar — swift — swift
 Prince Yusef rides
 To her who holds his heart in thrall—a captive
 Christian maid—
 On wings of fear and doubt he flies, of sore mischance
 afraid.
 For ah! full well doth Yusef know with what relent-
 less ire,
 His love for one of adverse faith is noted by his sire :
 “ Zorayda mine!” he cries aloud—on—on his courser
 strains—
 “ Zorayda mine!—thine Yusef comes!”—the Alham-
 bra walls he gains.

* The incidents of this Ballad are, with some slight variation, derived from those of the exquisite French Romance *Flore et Blancheflor*; the date of which may be referred to the Thirteenth Century, and which unquestionably, as its recent Editor, M. Paulin, Paris, supposes, is of Spanish or Moorish origin.

II.

Through the marble Court of Lions—to the stately
Tocador—

To Lindaraxa's bower he goes—the Queen he stands
before ;

Her maidens round his mother group—but not a word
she speaks.

In vain amid that lovely throng one lovelier form he
seeks ;

In vain he tries mid orient eyes orbs darker far to
meet ;

No form so light, no eyes so bright, as her's his
vision greet.

“ Zorayda mine—Zorayda mine!—ah whither art thou
fled?”

A low, low wail returns his cry—a wail as for the
dead.

III.

No answer made his mother, but her hand gave to her
son—

To the garden of the Generalif together are they gone ;
Where gushing fountains cool the air—where scents
the citron pale,

Where nightingales in concert fond rehearse their
love-lorn tale,

Where roses link'd with myrtles make green woof
 against the sky,
Half hidden by their verdant screen a sepulchre doth lie;
“ Zorayda mine—Zorayda mine!—ah! wherefore art
 thou flown,
To gather flowers in Yemen's bowers while I am left
 alone?”

IV.

Upon the ground kneels Yusef—his heart is like to
 break ;
In vain the Queen would comfort him—no comfort
 will he take.
His blinded gaze he turns upon that sculptured marble
 fair,
Embossed with gems, and glistening with coloured
 pebbles rare ;
Red stones of Ind—black, vermeil, green, their mingled
 hues combine,
With jacinth, sapphire, amethyst, and diamond of the
 mine.
“ Zorayda mine — Zorayda mine!”—thus ran sad
 Yusef's cry,
“ Zorayda mine, within this tomb, ah! sweet one! dost
 thou lie?”

V.

Upon that costly sepulchre, two radiant forms are
seen

In sparkling alabaster carv'd, like crystal in its
sheen ;

The one as Yusef fashioned, a golden crescent bears,
The other, as Zorayda wrought, a silver crosslet wears.
And ever as soft zephyr sighs, the pair his breath obey,
And meet within each other's arms like infants in their
play.*

“ Zorayda fair—Zorayda fair—” thus golden letters
tell—

“ A Christian maid lies buried here—by Moslem loved
too well.”

* This circumstance is exquisitely depicted in the French
Romance. We despair of giving the reader any notion of it
by translation.

En la tombe ot quatre tuiaus
Aus quatre cors bien fait et biaux
Es quiex li quatre vent féroient
Chascuns, ainsi com il ventoient.
Quant li vens les enfans tochoit,
L'un beisoit l'autre et accoloit ;
Si disoient, par nigromance
De tout lor bon, de lor enfance.

FLORE ET BLANCHEFLOR.

VI.

Three times those golden letters with grief sad Yusef
reads,
To tears and frantic agony a fearful calm succeeds—
“ Ah! wo is me! Zorayda mine—ah! would the
self-same blow
That laid thee 'neath this mocking tomb, had laid thy
lover low!
Two faithful hearts, like ours, in vain stern death may
strive to sever—
A moment more, the pang is o'er, the grave unites us
ever.
Zorayda mine—Zorayda mine!—this dagger sets me
free—
Zorayda mine—look down—look down—thus—thus I
come to thee!”

VII.

“ Hold! Yusef, hold!” a voice exclaims, “ thy loved
Zorayda lives—
Thy constancy is well approved—thy sire his son for-
gives.

Thine ardent passion doubting long—thy truth I thus
have tried,

Behold her whom thy faith hath won!—receive her as
thy bride!”

In Yusef's arms—to Yusef's heart, Zorayda close is
press'd,

Half stifled by a flood of joy, these words escape his
breast:—

“ Zorayda mine—Zorayda mine!—ah! doubly dear
thou art!—

Uninterrupted bliss be ours, whom death has fail'd to
part!”

The Monarch's loud applauses at the close of the song were reiterated to the echo by the assemblage. Crimsoning with shame, Esclairmonde ventured a glance towards her lover, whose silent admiration was of more value in her eyes than the courtly compliments which were so freely lavished upon her efforts.

“ And now for the lay of the belle Torigni,” said HENRI, “ her songs are wont to be of a

more sprightly description—ah! Signorina mia! Shall we sue in vain?”

Torigni needed little pressing; but with much archness and spirit, complied with the King’s request in the following madrigal:—

Yolande.*

A GOLDEN flower embroidering,
 A lay of love low murmuring;
 Secluded in the eastern tower
 Sits fair Yolande within her bower:
 Fair—fair Yolande!

Suddenly a voice austere,
 With sharp reproof breaks on her ear:—
 Her mother ’tis who silently
 Has stolen upon her privacy—
 Ah! fair Yolande!

* This song is a very free adaptation of a sparkling little romance by *Audefroy-le-Bastard* to be found in the *Romancero François*, entitled *Bele Yolans*. Much liberty has been taken with the concluding stanza—indeed the song altogether bears but slight resemblance to its original.

“ Mother! why that angry look?—
 Mother! why that sharp rebuke?
 Is it that I while away
 My solitude with amorous lay?
 Or, is it that my thread of gold
 Idly I weave, that thus you scold
 Your own Yolande—your own Yolande?”

II.

“ It is not that you while away
 Your solitude with amorous lay,
 It is not that your thread of gold
 Idly you weave, that thus I scold
 My fair Yolande!
 Your want of caution 'tis I chide:—
 The Baron fancies that you hide,
 Beneath the cushion on your knee,
 A letter from the Count Mahi:—
 Ah! fair Yolande!
 Busy tongues have filled his brain
 With jealousy and frantic pain;
 Hither hastes he with his train!—
 And *if* a letter there should be
 Concealed 'neath your embroidery?
 Say no more. But give it me,
 My own Yolande—my own Yolande!”

“ By our Lady ! ” exclaimed Henri, laughing, “ that ditty likes us well. Samson, a cup of Syracuse—Messeigneurs, we pledge our fair minstrels—Ah!—par la Mort dieu!—we have a feeling of such únwonted exhilaration in our heart, that we must perforce give vent to it in song. Our Hippocrene is this fiery wine—our inspiration the lovely Esclairmonde.”

This gracious intimation, on the part of his Majesty, was received, as might be anticipated, coming from such a quarter, with acclamations.

“ Henri is certainly drunk, Abbé,” observed Joyeuse.

“ Beyond a doubt,” returned Brantôme, shaking his head, and perfectly unconscious of his own condition, “ wine speedily assaults *his* brain—ha—ha.—But dont you perceive, my dear Vicomte, that the banquet draws to a close ? ”

“ Do you think so ? ” asked Torigni—“ my heart flutters very unaccountably,—Monsieur le Vicomte, bid your page give me the least

possible drop of Cyprus; I have not entirely recovered the shock her Majesty of Navarre gave me.”

“ Or the effects of Crichton’s billet,” returned Brantôme, hemming significantly.

“ His Majesty’s song,” interposed Joyeuse.

With a taste and skill that showed how highly cultivated had been such musical talent as he possessed, Henri then gave the following rondel, which we shall name after her whose charms furnished the Monarch with a theme :—

Esclairmonde.

I.

The crown is proud
 That decks our brow ;
 The laugh is loud—
 That glads us now.
 The sounds that fall
 Around—above
 Are laden all
 With love—with love—
 With love—with love.

II.

Heaven cannot show,
 'Mid all its sheen
 Orbs of such glow
 As here are seen.
 And monarch ne'er
 Exulting own'd,
 Queen might compare
 With Esclairmonde—
 With Esclairmonde.

III.

From Bacchus' fount,
 Deep draughts we drain ;
 Their spirits mount,
 And fire our brain ;
 But in our heart
 Of hearts enthroned,
 From all apart,
 Rests Esclairmonde—
 Rests Esclairmonde.

“ Perfect ! ” exclaimed Ronsard—

“ Perfect ! ” repeated every voice.

“ His late Majesty Charles IX. never im-

provised strains more delightful," continued the bard.

"Never," replied Chicot, "Charles's unpremeditated strains being generally understood to be *your* composition, Monsieur de Ronsard. I think nothing of them. Mediocrity is the prerogative of royalty. A good king must be a bad poet. But you have all praised his Majesty's performance, now listen to the moral of the story—though morality I must own, is a little out of fashion in the Louvre." And mimicking, so far as he dared, the looks and tones of the King, the Jester commenced his parody as follows :—

The crown is proud,

But brings it peace ?

The laugh is loud—

Full soon 'twill cease.

The sounds that fall

From lightest breath,

Are laden all

With death—with death.

With death—with death.

“ Enough, and too much,” interrupted Henri, “ we will not have our flow of spirits checked by thy raven croaking. Be prepared,” whispered he, “ with the signal; and now Messieurs,” continued the King, “ the night wears—the music sounds again—the new masque of ‘ Circe and her nymphs ’ awaits you.—Nay, mignonne,” added he, in a low empassioned tone, and forcibly detaining Esclairmonde, “ you must remain with me.”

At this hint from the monarch the guests arose; and each gallant taking a dame under his arm, left the banquet-hall. Crichton and Torigni were the last to quit the room. A significant look passed between the Scot and Chicot as he lingered for an instant at the door-way, the meaning of which the latter appeared clearly to comprehend, for waving his hand, as if in obedience to the royal command, the perfumed torches were suddenly (as at a preconcerted signal) extinguished. Page, valet, usher, and buffoon disappeared—the tapestry was swiftly drawn

together—the valves were closed—and Henri was left in darkness with the Demoiselle.

All this was the work of a moment. The King was taken a little by surprise. Chicot had given the signal sooner than he intended.

Concluding himself alone with Esclairmonde, Henri addressed a passionate exclamation to her, at the same time endeavouring to obtain possession of her hand. The Demoiselle, however, with a cry of terror, eluded his grasp, and fled, so far as she was able to determine in the obscurity in which all was wrapped, towards the door.

“ Ah!—ah! fair bird!—you cannot escape me now,” exclaimed Henri exultingly, following in pursuit.

And as he spoke, with outstretched hands he grasped at something which, in the darkness, appeared to be the flying figure of the damsel. The sudden prostration of his royal person, and the subsequent loud jingle of falling glass, mixed with the clatter of plate, soon, however, convinced him of his error; while a

stified laugh, proceeding, as he concluded, from the Demoiselle, completed his mortification.

The King arose, but said nothing, and, suspending his own respiration, listened intently. For a moment not a sound was heard. Henri then thought he detected a light step stealing towards the other side of the room, and directed his attention to that quarter. A noise as of arras being raised, followed by a faint creak, such as might be produced by a sliding panel, was just audible.

“ Diable ! — the secret door — can she have discovered that ? ” — ejaculated Henri, rushing in the direction of the sound — “ she may elude me after all . ”

A frolic laugh, however, issuing from a different part of the chamber, and which questionless originated with his innamorata, satisfied him that she was still in the room ! Gliding noiselessly forward, guided by the sound, ere another instant he had grasped a

small soft hand, which he covered with a thousand kisses, and which, strange to say, rather warmly returned his pressure.

Henri was in positive raptures.

“How much one may be deceived!” exclaimed the enamoured monarch. “This delightful gloom makes all the difference in the world. I was quite right to have the torches extinguished. You, fair Esclairmonde, who, a few minutes ago, were all coyness and reserve,—a very “*belle dame sans merci*,”—are as amiable and complaisant as—(whom shall we say?) as the obliging Torigni.”

“Ah, Sire!” murmured a low voice.

“I’ faith, fair Demoiselle,” continued the delighted Henri, “so charming do we find you, that we are half tempted to become a heretic ourselves. On those lips we could embrace any faith proposed to us—”

At this moment a hollow voice breathed in the very portals of his ear, these words—“VILAIN HERODES.”—an anagram, we may

remark, framed by the Jacobins upon his own name—Henri de Valois.

The King started, and trembled.

We have before stated, that he was bigoted and superstitious to the last degree. His hand now shook so much, that he could scarcely retain the fair fingers he held within his grasp.

“ Did *you* speak, Demoiselle ?” asked he, after an instant’s pause.

“ Not a syllable, Sire,” replied his companion.

“ Your voice appears strangely altered,” returned Henri. “ I scarcely recognise its tones as those of Esclairmonde.”

“ Your Majesty’s hearing deceives you,” returned the Lady.

“ So much so,” replied Henry, “ that I could almost fancy I had heard your voice under similar circumstances before. This shows how one may be mistaken.”

“ It does indeed,” replied the Lady, “ but

perhaps your Majesty found the voice to which you allude more agreeable than mine."

"By no means," replied Henri.

"You would not then have me change places with any other?" asked the lady, timidly.

"Not for our kingdom," exclaimed Henri, "would we have any one else in your place! She of whom I spoke was very different from you, ma mie."

"Are you quite sure of that, Sire?"

"As of my salvation," replied Henri passionately.

"Of which thou art by no means assured," breathed the deep sepulchral voice in his ears.

"There—again — did you hear nothing, Demoiselle?" asked the King, in new alarm.

"Nothing whatever," rejoined the Lady. "What odd fancies you must have, Sire!"

"Odd, indeed!" answered Henri, trembling. "I begin to think I acted wrongly in loving a Huguenot. — Par la Saint-Barthelemy! you must reform your faith, Demoiselle."

“ ’Tis *thou*, Henri de Valois, who must reform,” returned the sepulchral voice, “ or thy days are numbered.”

“ *Averte faciem tuam à peccatis meis!*” exclaimed the terrified King, dropping on his knees, “ *et omnes iniquitates meas dele!*”

“ What ails your Majesty?” asked his companion.

“ Hence—hence—fair delusion!” exclaimed Henri—“ avoid thee!—*Docebo iniquos vias tuas, Domine!*”

“ Trouble not the virtuous Huguenot,” continued the voice.

“ *In peccatis concepit me mater,*” continued Henri.

“ True,” replied the voice, “ or the memory of Fernelius hath been scandalously calumniated.”

“ Fernelius!” echoed Henri, scarcely comprehending what was said to him, and fancying in his terror that the voice had acknowledged itself to belong to the shade of his mother’s departed physician—“ Art thou

the spirit of Fernelius arisen from purgatory to torment me?"

"Even so," was the solemn response.

"I will have nightly masses said for the repose of thy soul, unhappy Fernelius," continued the King—"so thou wilt no more perplex me—*In Paradisam deducant te Angeli! Suscipiant Martyres!*"

"Thou must do more," returned the voice.

"I will do any thing—every thing you enjoy, gracious Fernelius," said the King.

"Cherish thy Jester Chicot," continued the voice.

"As my brother," answered the King.

"Not as thy brother—but as thyself," returned the shade of Fernelius.

"I will—I will," replied Henri—"what more?"

"Abandon this vain quest of the virtuous Esclairmonde, and return to her whom thou hast abandoned."

"Whom mean you?" asked the King, somewhat perplexed—"to whom have your words

especial reference, most excellent Fernelius—to my Queen Louise?”

“To the Demoiselle Torigni,” rejoined the voice.

“Torigni!” echoed Henri, despairingly—
“any of my former paramours were preferable to *her*. Is there no other alternative?”

“None whatever,” sternly answered the spectre.

“Sooner then,” replied Henri, “will I incur—ha!—diable!—a ghost indulge in merriment—this is some trick—” exclaimed he, suddenly recovering his confidence, and starting to his feet, while, with his right hand, he grasped at some object near him.—“We have traitors here,” continued he, as steps were heard retreating.—“This is no ghost—no Fernelius—”

“What in the name of wonder has your Majesty been talking about all this time?” asked the lady with affected astonishment.

“You shall hear anon.—’Fore Heaven, Demoiselle, you will have reason to repent

this conduct—and your accomplice likewise will rue his rashness. We can readily divine who is the author of this mistaken pleasantry. What ho! lights! lights!” And applying a whistle to his lips, the doors were instantly thrown open, and the attendants rushed in with flambeaux.

The torch-light fell upon the Monarch and his companion. Abashed probably at the presence of so many spectators, the lady covered her face with her hands.

“Look up, Demoiselle!” ejaculated Henri, angrily—“Nay, we will not spare your blushes, depend upon it. Our whole court shall learn the trick you would have put upon your sovereign:—our whole court shall witness your exposure. Look up, we say—if your effrontery could carry you thus far, it may bear you still further.—A few moments back the laugh was on *your* side, it is now on *ours*—ha!—ha!—Par dieu!—we would not spare you this infliction for our best Barony. Look up—look up, Demoiselle Esclairmonde—”

And forcibly withdrawing the hands of the Lady, her features were revealed to the general gaze.

They were those of Torigni!

Despite the presence in which they stood, the courtiers found it impossible to repress a titter.

“Diantre!” exclaimed Henri, pettishly—
“Duped!—deceived!—what—what has become of Esclairmonde?”

At this moment the crowd respectfully drew aside, and the Queen Louise stepped forward.

“The Demoiselle Esclairmonde has placed herself under my protection,” said she, approaching his Majesty.

“Under *your* protection, Louise!” said the Monarch, in amazement. “Do *you* afford sanctuary to a Huguenot? By the four Evangelists! Madame, we esteemed you too good a Catholic to hazard even the chance contamination of a heretic’s presence.”

“I trust I may sympathize with the dis-

tress of those whose opinions differ from my own without offence to Him who is in Himself all charity," replied Louise, mildly. "And in this case, where innocence and purity have sought refuge with me, I could lay little claim to the first of Christian virtues—Mercy—had I refused it. I have passed my word for her safety."

"You have done wisely—very wisely—I must say, Madame," exclaimed Henri, contemptuously, "and no doubt your Father Confessor will concur with your sentiments. We shall see. I shall not argue the point now. There is one person, however, with whom we *can* deal.—Where is the Demoiselle's loyal servant?—Where is Crichton?—*He* has not taken shelter under your wing likewise.—Your word, we conclude, is not passed for *him*."

"The Chevalier Crichton has quitted the Louvre, Henri," replied Louise.

"Impossible!" exclaimed the King—"the gates are closed by an express order."

“ He is gone nevertheless,” rejoined Torigni.

“ Gone!” echoed Henri—“ By your contrivance, Madame,” added he, looking angrily at the Queen.

“ No, Henri,” replied Louise, gently, “ neither had he a hand in Esclairmonde’s liberation. The Demoiselle sought me alone.”

“ How then did he contrive his flight?” demanded the King, turning to Torigni.

Torigni glanced towards the secret panel and nodded. Henri understood her.

“ Enough,” said he, “ I see it all, but where is *your* accomplice—the spectre?”

“ Here—Sire — here,” cried Siblot, dragging forth Chicot, whose feet he had detected peeping from under the table—“ here is—”

“ The Doctor Fernelius,” replied the Jester, with a look of droll contrition—“ pardon—pardon, Sire.”

“ Thou, Fernelius!” exclaimed Henri, who, notwithstanding his displeasure, could scarcely forbear laughing at Chicot’s grimaces. “ How didst thou produce those awful sounds, thou treacherous knave?”

“ By this tube,” replied Chicot, holding up the sarbacane of the Vicomte de Joyeuse. “ You must own I played my part with *spirit*.”

“ A sarbacane!” exclaimed Henri—“ henceforth we banish all tubes of this description from the Louvre, and thou mayst thank our clemency, deceitful varlet, that we banish not thee along with them.”

“ Surely your Majesty would not pass a sentence of self-exile,” returned the Jester. “ Recollect, Sire, you promised the worthy Fernelius to cherish me as yourself.”

“ Coquin,” cried Henri, “ we are half disposed to send thee to keep Fernelius company. But enough of this. Joyeuse,” added he, “ go with thy followers to the Hôtel de Soissons, and if thou encounterest this wayward Crichton or our Mask within its walls, place both under arrest till to-morrow. Lose not a moment on the way.

Madame, we attend you.”

CHAPTER X.

THE HÔTEL DE SOISSONS.

Voilà donc son exécration palais ! palais de la luxure, palais de la trahison, palais de tous les crimes !—

VICTOR HUGO.

QUITTING the Louvre, its festivities, and its enraged and discomfited monarch, we shall now descend into the gardens of the palace, and pursue the foot-steps of a masked Cavalier, who, wrapped in the folds of a sable domino, took his hasty way through its embowered walks and trim arcades.

The whole of the space now crowded by the courts and other buildings forming the offices of the Louvre was, at the period of our nar-

rative, disposed in noble alleys, bordered with exquisite shrubs—shadowed by tall trees—with here and there terraces and patches of the smoothest verdure—balustred with marble steps and low pillars—and watered by gushing fountains of the clearest crystal; anon diverging into labyrinths and bowers, in which gleamed Faunus or Diana, or haply some “nymph to the bath addressed,” and displaying throughout, the luxury and magnificence of the monarch (Francis I.), by whom this plaisance had been laid out.

The moon shone clear and cold in the highest heavens as the Cavalier hurried swiftly through this region of beauty. For one instant he paused to gaze at the wing of the Louvre fronting the spot on which he stood. The casements were brightly illuminated with the torches of the fête—the music resounded blithely from afar—but the Masker’s eye rested not upon these festive lights, nor did he listen to those gay symphonies. His eye was fixed upon a lamp shining like a star

from one of the higher towers (of the period of Philip-Augustus) that flanked the palace, and his ear was strained to catch the faint sound produced by the closing of a lattice. He then plunged into a dark avenue of clipped yews before him.

The plaisance we have described was bordered on the one hand by the waters of the Seine, across which river chains were drawn so as to cut off all approach in this quarter, while, on the other, it was defended by a turreted wall and external moat, which separated it from the encroaching buildings of the Rue du Coq. Emerging suddenly from the labyrinth in which he had disappeared, the Cavalier stood beneath the shade of a spreading elm, whose branches overtopped the wall upon which he gazed.

The figure of a man-at-arms, with arquebuss in hand, was seen slowly parading the rampart-walk, his helm and habergeon of steel gleaming in the pallid moonlight. To divest himself of his domino, underneath which ap-

peared a rich satin ball-room costume—to swathe the folds of the cloak around his left arm, and with his right hand to pluck his poignard from its sheathe, and strike it deeply into the bark of the tree, by which means he rapidly climbed it—to pass along its branches—to drop within a few paces of the astonished arquebusier—and swift as thought to place the weapon at his throat, was with the Cavalier, little more than the work of a moment.

So unexpected had been the assault, that the man-at-arms scarcely attempted any resistance, and was so closely griped, as to be unable to raise a cry: his arquebuss was wrested from his hold and hurled into the foss; while his antagonist, having apparently accomplished his purpose in disarming him, bounded over the parapet of the wall, and, clinging to the rough side of a buttress, descended with the utmost velocity and certainty to the very edge of the water, where, taking advantage of a projecting stone, he contrived to bring both feet together, and

with a single spring cleared the wide deep moat, and alighted in safety on the other side — disappearing instantly afterwards in the far-cast shadows of the gloomy Rue du Coq — and accomplishing what appeared in the eyes of the arquebusier, who had watched his efforts from above, a marvellous and almost superhuman feat.

“ Mille tonneres ! ” exclaimed the man-at-arms, who had made sure that the Cavalier would have fallen midway into the moat, rubbing his eyes in astonishment as he beheld him arrive on the opposite bank, “ it must be the fiend in person : ” whereupon he devoutly crossed himself, adding, “ no man of mortal mould, save one, perchance, could have taken that leap, and he who might have done it, the Scottish galliard Crichton, people say, *is* something more than mortal. I recollect seeing him leap five-and-twenty feet in the hall of arms, but that was nothing to this moat, which, if it be an inch, must span nine yards with scarcely a resting-place for

the point of a toe to spring from—to say nothing of a run. Tu-dieu!—if it *be* the Seigneur Crichton, and *he* be not the Devil, he has had a narrow escape of it to night, in more ways than one; for had he passed through any gate of the Louvre, instead of down that break-neck wall, he had encountered the dagger of Maurevert, or some of Madame Catherine's mouchards. Notre-Dame! if it be Crichton I am not sorry he has escaped, as we shall have the combat tomorrow in that case—but peste! why did he throw away my arquebuss?”

With his vain lamentation, and his vain search for his gun, we shall leave the man-at-arms, and once more track the steps of the Cavalier, who had no sooner gained the shelter of the houses, than he resumed his domino. Swiftly shaping his course through the deserted streets, he glided along like a phantom, without encountering so much as a stray sergeant of the *guet royal*, some of whom were, for the most part, to be met with at all hours in this

frequented quarter, when, at the very moment he passed it, the door of a small tavern, the Falcon, situate where the Rue Pelican turns from the Rue Saint-Honoré, was suddenly thrown open, and forth issued two roystering blades, members of the University, it would seem from their scholastic caps and garbs, who had evidently, from their gait, been indulging in copious libations, and were now in all probability, retreating to their place of rest for the night.

In figure, the one was tall, light, and not without a certain air of dignity in his deportment. Despite its uncertainty, his step was light and agile as that of a mountaineer, and about his shoulders light, long, yellow hair depended in great profusion. The second Scholar was more squarely and stoutly built, and moved forward as if urged into his present quick movement by the energy of his companion. A small square cap surmounted a head of rough brown curling hair, shading an open manly countenance, lighted up by a keen

gray eye, sparkling at this moment with unwonted fire. His whole appearance, while it betokened the possession of great personal strength, showed also that his vigour was united with a sluggish and inert temperament. With a step almost as heavy as that of his master, a huge dog plodded at his heels, bearing undoubted marks of his English origin. And if any doubts could be entertained as to what country either dog or master might belong, the Student settled that question by roaring at the top of a strenuous voice the following chaunt in a tongue, which requires no translation on our part to place it before the reader.

Alle and Sack.

I.

Your Gaul may tipple his thin, thin wine,
And prate of its hue, and its fragrance fine,
Shall never a drop pass throat of mine
 Again—again !

His claret is meagre (but let that pass),
 I can't say much for his hippocrass,
 And never more will I fill my glass
 With cold champaign.

II.

But froth me a flaggon of English ale,
 Stout, and old, and as amber pale,
 Which heart and head will alike assail—
 Ale—alc be mine !
 Or brew me a pottle of sturdy sack,
 Sherris and spice, with a toast to its back,
 And need shall be none to bid me attack
 That drink divine !

The reader will, we imagine, have been at no loss to discover in these Students our somewhat neglected friends Ogilvy and Blount. To the Cavalier also they would appear to be equally well known, for he instantly joined them, addressing the former by his name.

Ogilvy at once came to a halt, uttering an exclamation of delight and astonishment.

“ You are fortunately encountered, Jasper,” said the Cavalier ; “ you can serve me.”

“ Show me but how !” exclaimed Ogilvy—
“ my arm shall second your wishes.”

“ If your head have discretion enough to guide it, I am assured it will,” returned the Cavalier, “ but the enterprise on which I am bent requires coolness as well as courage, and you were better able to assist me had your libations been poured from the fountain rather than from the wine-flask.”

“ Our libations have been poured forth in honour of the victor of the University of Paris — of the Admirable Crichton,” returned Ogilvy, somewhat reproachfully — “ and if blame is to be attached to our carouse, he who is the cause of it must be content to bear the burthen. My pulse beats quick ’tis true, but my brain is calm enough—and if need be, I will plunge into the first well we encounter on our road.”

“ And I,” said Blount, “ have little to observe, noble Sir, except that I will follow

you wherever you list to lead me. The wines I have swallowed—as sour as Flemish beer, with (Heaven save the mark!) your honoured name upon my lips; and the stupifying *herbe à la reine*, as these Frenchmen call their tobacco leaves, which I have puffed away, may have muddled my intellects: but they have not extinguished my courage. I can, if need be, put some guard upon my tongue, having no great fancy for talking at any time. And I can still (I would fain hope) wield staff or sword, as occasion may require, to some purpose. But if I should fail in my devoir, there is a follower at my heels, whose brain is at all seasons as bright as my own; who is no toper; and who will serve you loyally, tooth and nail.—What ho, Druid!”

A deep-toned growl from the dog answered his master’s call.

“ Brave dog,” said the Cavalier, patting the animal’s leathern side, “ would thou couldst go with me !”

“ By Saint-Dunstan! he *shall* go with

you if you desire it, noble Sir," rejoined Blount.

"Will he leave, then, his master?" asked the Cavalier, incredulously.

"He will do aught he bids him," answered Blount. "Here, Sirrah," and stooping for an instant, he muttered somewhat in Druid's ear, accompanying his intimation with an emphatic gesture, perfectly intelligible, it would seem, to the dog, who instantly quitted his side and attached himself to that of the Cavalier. "He will not quit you now till I recal him," said Blount.—"Druid knows his duty as well as the most trusty retainer."

"His sagacity is indeed wonderful," said the Cavalier, "and I thank you for your confidence in trusting me with so valued a friend. But I pray you to recal your boon. The risk I run is imminent."

"I have given you my dog as a gage, noble Sir," returned Blount, firmly, "and I may as well throw my own life into the bargain, seeing that I would almost as soon part with

one as the other. I give you both, therefore, freely. Be the result of this adventure—whither tending, to what concerning, I know not—what it may, it matters not; my prayers are soon said; my tenure to this world is but slight; and I have never yet heard of the danger I would not confront: in which respect I am somewhat of honest Druid's opinion, who holds all antagonists unworthy of his teeth who will not rouse his ire; and who will not turn his back on any beast that ever walked.—Lead on, Sir. I have that within me that prompts me to be doing.”

“ And you, Jasper Ogilvy? ”——

A tight grasp of the Cavalier's hand was all Ogilvy's answer.

“ Enough,” said the Cavalier, hastening forward.

And as they proceeded with the same rapid pace as heretofore, the Mask briefly developed his project.

“ And so the Geloso, whom that assassin Spaniard stabbed, turns out to be a girl after

all," said Ogilvy.—“ By Saint Andrew! the interest I felt in her behalf is not so unaccountable as I conceived it to be. — Right gladly will I lend a hand to her deliverance from this cursed Astrologer’s roost, and from her persecutor. I marvelled much to see you in that mask and guise, but now ’tis all explained. — You are in the right to undertake her rescue; and were none other to be found, I would alone attempt it. A maiden! —by my troth ’tis passing strange!”

“ Not so strange, friend Jasper,” remarked the Englishman, laughing, “ as the change which this metamorphosis, in point of sex, appears to have wrought in thy sentiments. This morning thou hadst a holy horror, worthy of John Knox himself, of every thing savouring of a player. Now, when a pair of bright eyes stare thee in the face, thou carest not to avow thine errors.—Ah! I fear thou art fallen into the wiles of the enemy. Those dark looks and dark eyes are but snares, Jasper, and her calling is a vain one.”

“Tush,” returned Ogilvy, “my abomination of her calling is not a whit diminished. And if I have expressed any concern respecting her, it is because—”

“She finds favour in thine eyes—I am at no loss to perceive it,” rejoined the Englishman.

“No such thing,” answered Ogilvy, sharply, “and if you repeat that assertion Master Blount, I shall think you desire to put an intentional affront upon me. I repeat I care not for the girl. Of a verity she *hath* charms. But what of that? Marian Graham, to whom I plighted my troth, hath a far sweeter smile, though her eyes may not be so bright, or her tresses so near rival to the raven’s wing. I care not for her—nay, now I bethink me of her calling, were it not the pleasure of my patron and friend that I should accompany him upon this adventure, she might even tarry with Ruggieri in his tower, for any effort I would make to release her.”

“Your want of interest in her occasions some slight discrepancy in your sentiments,

Jasper," returned Blount, laughing. "But since you find the matter irksome, leave it to us, and return to the Ecossais. We will accomplish the adventure alone I warrant you."

"No!" exclaimed Ogilvy, impatiently, "it shall never be said—"

And he was proceeding with some warmth, when his speech was cut short by the Cavalier, who addressed him with some coolness—"It was not without reason, Jasper, that I told thee thy tongue was scarcely under the control of thy reason. I may not accept of thy assistance, if I am to purchase it at the hazard of failure."

Thus rebuked, the choleric Scot held his peace, and the party moved on for some moments in silence.

Arrived within the Rue des Deux-Ecus, at that time shadowed by the tall trees which formed the avenues and groves of Catherine's stately gardens, the Cavalier, pointing out the high belvidere, of vast Palladian structure, constituting the Hôtel de la Reine,

now distinctly defined against the fleecy clouds of the moon-lit sky, exclaimed—"you now behold the castle of the Enchantress. I have not disguised the peril you will incur by entering it. Will you go on?"

Both answers were in the affirmative. The party, therefore, turned the corner of the palace, and entering the adjoining Rue du Four, along one side of which its lofty walls ran, the principal front of the magnificent building, and its grand portal, erected by Bullan upon the model of the Farnese Palace at Caprarola (upon which an immense shield of marble displayed the blazon and cypher of the Queen-Mother), were at once brought into view. In that still hour, and in that mysterious light, there was something ominous in the appearance of the gigantic building which stood before them. Perhaps, in no instance was the superstition of Catherine's character more strongly evidenced, than in the construction of this proud but needless palace—needless, we say, because she had already expended vast

sums upon the erection of the Tuileries, having after her husband's death abandoned the Tournelles, when terrified by the predictions of her astrologers, who foretold that she would perish in some place bearing the name of Saint-Germain ; and the Tuileries unfortunately happening to be in the parish of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois — for this idle reason only did she abandon the glorious edifice of her own construction, and at an infinitude of trouble, accompanied by prodigious outlays, required when her exhausted funds could ill brook such wanton expenditure, together with the secularization of an Abbey and the overturning of a Nunnery (Les Filles Penitentes) for which purposes she had to procure bulls from the Pope ;—on this account alone, we say, did she proceed to cumber the ground with this huge structure—not a stone of which is now left standing, with the exception of the column or observatory attached to its courts, toward which building we are shortly about to repair, and shall then more particularly

describe. It may not, perhaps, be here altogether out of place to mention, as a sequel to the story, a circumstance which has been much dwelt upon by the supporters of judicial astrology, and which would almost seem to verify the prophecy of her soothsayer, viz : that Catherine, notwithstanding all her precautions, eventually expired in the arms of *Saint-Germain* Favyn, Bishop of Nazareth, chief confessor to her son Henri III.

Our party now approached the grand portal we have described, before which was arrayed a guard of some half dozen musketeers with their Sergeant at their head—the royal blazon upon their doublets glimmering in the moonlight—who placed their long musketoons in their rests and blew their lighted tow-matches as they drew nigh ; while the Sergeant, in a loud tone, commanded a halt.

A brief parley ensued. But perceiving the Queen's glove displayed upon the cap of the Cavalier, the Sergeant immediately drew

his men aside and suffered them to pass. The gate was unbarred at their summons, and as the porter somewhat slowly performed his office, the following exclamation from the Sergeant reached the ears of the Cavalier and his companions: “Ventre-bleu! Chopin—we have a strange night of it. We are set here to prevent Ruggieri’s escape, and it seems as if he had called all the fiends in Tartarus to his aid. First comes that Mask and seeks admittance: we refuse him. Anon he comes again with a crew of imps blacker than himself, demanding the deliverance of a player girl. Then, for a third time he appears, with the King’s signet, which we dare not disobey—and gains admission, with his comrades. Well! no sooner do we think we are rid of him, than, by Proteus! here he is again, with a couple of familiars in the shape of scholars, and a dog the like of which I never saw before. Le Diable m’emporte! if I can understand it. One thing is clear, he has got the Queen’s

licence, and so we must not say him nay, but he must have the devil's watch-word if he would return again, for, by Holy Peter! he comes not forth without a bullet to try the proof of his pourpoint."

"Heard you not that?" whispered the Cavalier—"Our foe is beforehand with us. Not a moment is to be lost."

The porter started as he beheld the Mask, and involuntarily placed his hand before his eyes to ascertain whether or not his vision deceived him. He bowed, however, to the ground as he recognized the ensign of the Queen-Mother, and the next moment the party found themselves within the court-yard of the palace.

Before them stretched a smooth parterre, in the midst of which, bathed in the moonlight, glimmered a lovely statue of the Queen of Love, the workmanship of the famous sculptor Jean Goujon, the restorer of the art in his own country, and surnamed the Phidias of France, who perished, it is said, by the hands

of Charles IX., at the Massacre of Saint-Barthelemy. But it was not to gaze on this miracle of art that the Cavalier now paused. Neither was it to admire the gorgeous and illuminated windows of Catherine's embowered chapel—the then wonder of Paris—to listen to the choral hymn resounding from its shrines, and breaking the midnight stillness around them—nor to note the majestic towers of Saint-Eustache which commanded the spot whereon they stood. Pointing out a tall column which might be discerned spiring from out a grove that skirted an extensive esplanade, and indicating the path that led to it through the gardens of the palace, the Cavalier was about to quit his companions, when Ogilvy's quick eye detected figures gliding at some distance from them amongst the trees. "They are yonder, by Saint Andrew!" exclaimed the Scot—"there is yet time."

Scarcely had the words escaped him ere the Cavalier disappeared; and the two Scholars instantly commenced a pursuit of the figures

they had descried. Druid regarded his master wistfully for a moment, but receiving a fresh command from him to that effect, put himself upon the track of the Cavalier.

The doors of the Hôtel were opened to the Cavalier's summons. Not a word was exchanged between him and the Ushers, from one of whom he received a torch. Alone he passed through a magnificent hall, the ceiling of which was decorated with exquisite frescoes—ascended a vast staircase of carved oak, and entered a long and glorious gallery crowded with trophies and panoplies collected by the chivalrous Henri II., and streaming with painted glass “blushing with blood of queens and kings.” This gallery he swiftly traversed, and finally reached a recess, within which, as Catherine had informed him, were placed three bronze statues. Touching the spear of the central figure, it yielded to his pressure, disclosing a dark and tortuous passage, into which the Cavalier unhesitatingly plunged.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LABORATORY.

Foresight. But I have travelled in the celestial spheres, know the signs, and the planets, and their names—can judge of motions direct and retrograde ; of sextiles, quadrates, trines, and oppositions, fiery trigons, and aquatical trigons.

CONGREVE. *Love for Love.*

LEAVING the Cavalier to pursue his subterranean path alone, we shall endeavour, in the meantime, to give the reader some idea of the singular scene that awaited his arrival in the laboratory of the Astrologer.

Let him picture to himself a high vaulted chamber, cylindrical in shape, massive in construction, dungeon-like in aspect. Let him darken its gray granite walls with smoke—erect within it four pilasters, and decorate the fluted shafts of each with crowns, fleurs-de-lis, broken mirrors, horns of abundance,

and with the letters **C.** and **H.** interlaced and surrounded with love-knots, devices emblematic of the widowhood and queenly state of the builder of the turret. Let him next place within each subdivision of the wall, created by these pillars, talismanic effigies of superstitious import, and lest his fancy should not be wild or extravagant enough to supply sculptures sufficiently grotesque, we will endeavour to give some direction to his fancy. In the first compartment, then, let him imagine “ a kingly and a crowned shape ” seated astride upon an eagle ; grasping in one hand a thunderbolt, and in the other a sceptre ; while a female figure, beaked like the Ibis, holds to his gaze an enchanted mirror. Let him surround this group with hieroglyphics and cabalistic characters, and engrave beneath it the word **Hagiel** : the intelligence of Saturn. In the next compartment let him place another female shape of rare beauty, with dishevelled hair, grasping in the right hand a serpent, and in the left a singularly formed knife—let him

encircle this medallion with Hebrew and Chaldaic sentences, and inscribe at the head **Kedemel**—the spirit of Venus; and at the feet **Asmodel**—one of the twelve angelic governors of the celestial signs. We may add also, that these talismans, esteemed of sovereign virtue, and of power to aid in the acquisition of mystical lore, were composed of divers metals, molten when the constellations presiding over the nativity of the Queen, by whose command they were fabricated, held sway; and were soldered together with human gore, and the blood of goats. The third compartment is occupied by a group yet more fantastical. Here may be seen an altar of ivory, against which is placed a crimson cushion sustaining a huge crucifix of silver inclosing a lesser cross of ebony. On either side stands a Satyr wrought in bronze, each supporting his rugged person with a club, and bearing upon his shoulder a vase of pure and shining crystal, containing certain unknown drugs, destined, it would appear, for some impious oblation to

the Evil One at the celebration of the Sorcerers' Sabbath.

Within the fourth and last compartment some mystery is evidently shrouded beneath the close-drawn folds of a thick and gloomy curtain.

Ruggieri's laboratory would have been incomplete had it wanted what, in the jargon of Hermetic philosophy, would be termed the Keeper of Secrets, the producer of Immortal Fire, the Athanor, or furnace. But it did *not* want this indispensable accompaniment to an Alchemist's study. Behold it!—in shape round, as directed by the formula of the science, capped and winged on either side with a thin tube, with door and window, brazen plate, mat-rass, and cucurbite complete. Upon the furnace door this profane application of the sacred text has been made—“*Quærite, quærite et invenietis, pulsate et aperietur vobis.*” Around the square pane of the little window is traced the following enigmatical inscription, the solution of which we shall leave to the reader's ingenuity:—

Nunc dimittis Super undamenta
 Fundamenta Super verba mea
 Verba mea Super diligam te
 Diligam te Super attendite.

Upon the tripod of Secrets within this philosophical Athanor is placed a gourd-shaped, bolt-headed glass vessel hermetically sealed, and filled with a red fluid, the label of which purports it to be *lac virginis*. Next to this stands another cucurbite plunged *in balneo* containing a specific prepared according to the recipes of Flamel, Artephius, Pontanus, and Zacharius for the cure of all astral diseases. Affixed to the copper vessel, denominated Saint Mary's Bath, in which this bolt-head is deposited, we find the following inscription:—

Maria mira sonat
 Quæ nobis talia donat
 Gummis cum binis
 Fugitivum fugit inimis
 Horis in trinis,
 Tria vinclat fortia finis
 Filia Plutonis
 Consortia jungit amoris.

On the floor near to the furnace is strewn all

the heterogeneous lumber proper to the retreat of an adept; to wit, earths, metals, "vitriol, sal-tartar, argaile, alkali," gums, oils, retorts, alembics, "crosslets, crucibles and cucurbites." Nor must we omit a slab of black marble, on which are deposited certain drugs and small phials, together with a vizard of glass, a circumstance sufficiently attesting the subtle and deadly nature of the tinctures sometimes extracted by the inmate of the chamber. Having thus put the reader in possession of the features of the room, we shall now place before him its occupants.

At a table, quaint and grotesque in its character as the rest of the furniture of the apartment, lighted by the dull red flame of a silver lamp, furnished with an hour glass and a scull, with a mystical scroll stretched out before him, and apparently buried in deep calculations in a high-backed oaken chair, wrought with the same bizarre devices as the table, sat an old man in a black velvet garb with flowing sleeves—whose livid countenance

and bald furrowed brow, clothed with a velvet scull-cap, proclaimed him to be the presiding influence of this weird abode, the adept, astrologer, and sorcerer Ruggieri. Beside the magician sat another stately figure, in whose haughty, imperious demeanour and proud brow the reader, we apprehend, will have no difficulty in recognizing the Queen-Mother. Catherine's was indeed a physiognomy not easily to be forgotten.

Even such a forehead did the Medici
Of Florence boast.*

Underneath the table, and almost appearing with his broad, hunched shoulders to lend it support, glared the dwarf Elberich; his red luminous eyes sparkling like phosphoric coruscations in the gloom. Nothing of the mannikin's swart and shapeless figure could be discerned in the obscurity, beyond the outline, which resembled that of a grisly bear. But his hand would seem to grasp the

* Ben Jonson.

wheel of some hidden machinery, serving to raise a trap-door, carefully contrived within the floor of the turret. At the dwarf's feet was rolled, what appeared to be a round furry ball, but which in reality was a small black cat, of the civet species: an animal held in great request by the ancient necromancers for the confection and perfection of various charms: a certain pebble lodged beneath its tongue being supposed to confer the gift of vaticination.

At the moment when we raise the curtain of this picture for the reader's inspection, the group we have portrayed was silent and motionless. Ruggieri pursued his calculations with earnest zeal; and the progress of his studies was watched with intense interest by the Queen-Mother. The dwarf remained immoveable as an ebon image. Nothing but the flashing of his eye-balls betokened animation.

Suddenly a sharp musical ring was heard

vibrating in the air like the sound produced by a glass vessel accidentally stricken. The Queen-Mother raised her eyes and fixed them upon a curiously-contrived astrological instrument, placed on a stand in her immediate vicinity. Framed according to the instructions delivered by the star-wise seers of antiquity, this machine represented seven figures—symbolical of the planets (whom Mercurius Trismegistus calls the Seven Governors of the World)—wrought with infinite labour and cost when each archetypal orb was in ascendance, of the most precious stones, earths, and metals, supposed to be under its especial influence. The figure upon which Catherine's gaze now turned was that of an armed man of ruddiest brass, mounted upon a lion of the same metal, grasping in his right hand a naked sword, and in his left a trunkless head, carved in a blood-stone. Upon the helm of this martial image flamed a beryl; and in its slow ascent, the weapon within its

grasp coming in contact with a bell-shaped glass above it, had given the alarm we have mentioned.

“The Mask comes not,” exclaimed Catherine, regarding the image with some dismay. “Bright Jove hath no more dominion, we are now under the rule of fiery Mavors — a planet of malignant aspect towards us.”

“True, my daughter,” returned the Astrologer. “And see the red orb ascends within the second face of Aries. Would he had arrived ere this conjunction had occurred! Our scheme will scarcely prosper.”

“Say not so, father,” replied Catherine confidently: “If Crichton perish we shall have achieved much towards its accomplishment. And when did thy tinctures, or Maurevert’s poignard fail us?”

“If the blow be dealt, or the potion swallowed, never, my daughter, but—”

“But what, father? — Why these misgivings?”

“ The heavenly configurations presage danger to this Scot, not death,” answered the Astrologer gravely. “ For, though in his horoscope the Giver of Life meets with the Interficient at this hour ; though the Lord of the Fourth House is in conjunction with the Lord of the Ascendant in Aries, within the orbs of a square of Saturn ; and Capricorn descends upon the cusp of the Eighth ; yet there are other strong and countervailing signs. —He may escape us, daughter.”

“ Ha !” exclaimed Catherine.

“ Methinks I see his star still shining in the heavens,” continued Ruggieri : “ Majestic and serene it traverses the skies. A halo of glory surrounds it. Malignant and cross aspects dart their baneful rays athwart its track. In vain they scowl. It still pursues its course in splendor undisturbed.”

“ Doth thine art tell thee this ?” demanded Catherine, impatiently.

“ My silent and unerring counsellors thus admonish me, my daughter,” replied

the Astrologer, " I am but their interpreter."

" Say on then," continued Catherine coldly.

" The star hath become a meteor," returned Ruggieri. " Its lustre is blinding."

" What more ?"

" I gaze again. The heavens are void and dark: the meteor that dazzled me has sunk—the star of Crichton set for ever."

" And when will this occur ?—"

" Ere half a lustre shall have elapsed, my daughter."

" So long! and how will his doom be accomplished ?"

" The sign is fiery, and Saturn the afflicting planet," returned the Astrologer. " Within his leaden sphere Hylech is cadent. The Native will perish by the edge of the sword."

" And if thy unerring counsellors tell thee thus much concerning this Scot, what import do they bring touching thine own fate ?"

" Shall I erect a scheme, my daughter ?"

" It were needless," returned the Queen-

Mother, sternly, " I will read it for thee. Thy destiny is linked with that of Crichton : or he or thou wilt perish. If he survive the night, the stake will be thy portion on the morrow ; I will not stretch forth my hand, as heretofore, to redeem thee from the wheel."

" My gracious Mistress!—"

" If the heavenly influences fail thee, wrest aid from darker powers. Summon to thy assistance by potent spells, such as thou boastest to have won from thy magical lore, a demon, like that which served the wise Cardan ; and bid him smite thine enemy. For, by my soul, if Crichton live to annihilate my projects, thy ashes shall be strewed by the winds over the place de Grève, ere night once again draw her veil over this city!"

" The gnome who served the wise physician* you have named," replied Ruggieri firmly,

* Of this remarkable individual, whose life, replete with incident and adventure, is in itself a romance of vivid interest ; whose claims to be ranked as a philosopher, or to be derided as a pretender, have never been fairly adjusted ; whose additions to the science of mathematics were large and

“ had not power over life. Jérôme Cardan could foresee, but not avert; and yet he was well versed in the language of the stars. When he foretold that your august spouse, Henri II., was menaced with a fearful and sudden death, he could not unfold the means of its avoidance; neither could his art turn aside the fatal lance of Montgomery. The end of the illustrious Monarch was decreed on high. And when my long communing with the celestial intelligences informs me that your own great career will close within the limits of Saint-Germain, I can do no more than point to the term of destiny. It is not

unquestionable; and whose genius and eccentricities afford abundant scope for metaphysical speculation, we are happy to state that an adequate Biography is on the eve of appearance. Emanating from the pen of an accomplished scholar (of whose peculiar ability to grapple with the difficulties, and to elucidate the subtleties of this subject; of whose learning to illustrate, fancy to decorate, and historical information to authenticate, his memoir, we might say more, did we think any eulogium necessary); this *Life and Times of Jérôme Cardan* will, we are assured, leave little to be desired. It remains only to add, that the authorship of the work rests with James Crossley, Esq., of Manchester.

enough, that your Majesty has abandoned the Tournelles and Tuileries ; nor that you abstain from setting foot within the district bearing that name ; your destiny will infallibly be accomplished, despite your precautions. I have promised you length of days, power, and dominion ; and my prognostications will be fulfilled. But the means of their fulfilment rests with myself. I have shown you how your dominion may be maintained, your power extended, and by what means length of days may be ensured. If I perish, your honours, your rule, your sway over the king, your power will depart from you, and moulder like a worm-eaten truncheon into dust. Deliver me to my enemies, and ere a week have elapsed, I predict that Louise de Vaudemont will have absolute sway over her husband's affections, Joyeuse will be in power, the League destroyed, Guise and his partizans, who indirectly aid your schemes, crushed, Henri of Navarre and the Huguenots will regain their strength in Paris ; and your Majesty will be

without a party, and perchance in exile with your son the Duc D'Alençon. These results, which I foresee, my skill enables me to avert; and when my dust whitens the pavement of the place de Grève, and your foes exult in your downfall, you will then call to mind my warning."

Catherine uttered a single exclamation of displeasure, but she offered no interruption to the Astrologer.

"To summon a spirit of darkness were matter of little difficulty," continued Ruggieri, who had entirely regained his confidence "to him who possesses the treasured hieroglyphics of Nicholas Flamel—who can draw the names of the evil angels from Holy Writ, as did the learned Hebrew Mecubals—who can search the ancient Chaldean sages for a genius in the rays of Sol or Luna—who understands the characters and seals of spirits, the kingly writing of the Malachim, that which is termed by the soothsayers of the east 'the passing of the river,'

and the Notariacon of the Cabalists. But a spirit invoked without due preparation, like the extraction by yon Athanor of the argent-vive, in which strange colours, called out of season, endanger the magisterium, may, in lieu of assistance, bring destruction. Nevertheless, if your Majesty desires it, I will prepare to raise a phantasm, proceeding according to the directions of Apollonius, Triphonius, Albertus, and Raimundus Lullius, and shall make use of the signs given by the wise Porphyrius in his occult treatise *De Responsis*."

"We do not desire such evidence of thy skill," returned Catherine, coldly.—"Choose some more convenient season for thy consultations with the powers of darkness. We would not have our own soul placed in jeopardy by such unhallowed intercourse. But if thou hast, in truth, a familiar spirit who serves thee, he should have guarded thee against thine enemy. Crichton should never have found entrance here."

“Crichton obtained admittance by stratagem, gracious Madame. I was at the moment engaged in tending the wounds of the Gelosa, and Elberich for the first time neglected his trust. The Scott had seized the image and the scroll ere I could prevent him, or destroy them.”

“And by his acquaintance with the character of that scroll, he is master of all our intrigues with the Guise and the Bourbon—of our communication with his Holiness, and above all, of the hidden purport of our mission to Mantua”—

“He is, Madame”—

“And he is aware of this Mask’s connection with our plot—of the part which he was destined to play in aiding our son, the Duc D’Alençon, to the throne of his brother Henri—all this thou hadst set down in thy accursed document.”

“It were vain to attempt to disguise my inadvertence from your Majesty—I had done so.”

“ And by consequence, he is acquainted with the name and rank of this Mask.”

“ Unquestionably, Madame.”

“ And does our name—mark me, Ruggieri—answer, and equivocate not,—does *our* name, we say, appear in connection with that of our son the Duc D’Alençon in the plot for Henri’s dethronement?”

“ No, Madame,” returned Ruggieri, boldly.

“ Art thou sure of this?”

“ As of my existence.”

“ Cosmo Ruggieri, thou hast sealed thine own fate.”

“ How, Madame?”

“ The King requires a victim. We must make a virtue of necessity. Justice must take its course upon the morrow.”

“ And your Majesty will surrender me to the tribunal?”

“ If Henri demand it I cannot offer resistance.”

“ Have you reflected on the consequences of

such a step, Madame?" returned Ruggieri, with sullen audacity.

"The consequences—ha!"

"The Question may enforce strange truths from me."

"Who will credit an accusation from *thee*—and against *us*—if written proof exist not."

The furrows upon Ruggieri's sallow brow were wrinkled into a bitter smile.

"But if written proof *should* exist, Madame—if I can produce your own despatches—subscribed with your proper hand—sealed with your proper signet?"

"Ha!"

"If I can exhibit your own confessions that you have poisoned two of your sons, and are now conspiring to dethrone a third—what appearance will the charge assume then, Madame?"

"Hast thou not destroyed our letters?" demanded Catherine, trembling with wrath—"but no—no—'tis false—thou triflest with us."

“ Behold them!” cried Ruggieri, drawing a packet from his bosom.

“ Traitor!” exclaimed Catherine, “ thou hast preserved those papers to betray me.”

“ No, Madame,” replied Ruggieri—“ but to protect myself. I have served your Majesty faithfully. I have betrayed no trust confided in me : and the rack shall tear me limb from limb ere it shall wrest word from me to your dishonour. Deliver me to Henri’s tribunal. Surrender me to the *Chambre Ardente*—and do so fearlessly. Here are your papers.”

“ I was indeed mistaken in thee, Ruggieri. While aught of power remains to me, not a hair of thy head shall be injured.”

“ I have ever found you a noble and a generous mistress,” replied the crafty Astrologer, respectfully kissing the hand which Catherine extended to him.

“ Commit this packet to the flames, my loyal servant,” said Catherine, “ it may fall into other and less loyal hands than thine.”

“ Before I do so, will it please your Majesty to examine its contents ?” returned Ruggieri.—“ There are certain papers which you may not choose to have destroyed.”

“ We know of nothing we should care to preserve,” said Catherine, musing ; “ Speak if there be aught we call not to mind, good father ?”

“ Amongst other matters, that packet contains the proofs of Esclairmonde’s birth, which may be needful, should your Majesty ever reinstate the fortunes of her house—or use her as a hostage against the Protestant party—”

“ True—true,” replied Catherine, “ give them to me—these proofs are needed now I must lay them before Henri. I must reveal to him the secret of her birth. I observed to night, that he looked with eyes of devotion upon the Demoiselle. Thy enchantments have wrought upon him in a quarter where ’twas least expected. I must caution him against further advances.”

“ Ahreman grant your caution come not too

late, Madame," said Ruggieri ; " his Majesty is greatly enamoured ; and he hath a rival moreover to give a spur to his passion."

" A rival !" exclaimed the Queen-Mother, " who has dared to approach our protégée in the character of a lover ? "

" He who dares every thing."

" Thou canst not allude to Crichton ?—"

" I have his Majesty's assurance that the accursed Scot is her favoured suitor," returned Ruggieri.

" Insolent !" exclaimed Catherine ; " and yet I might have guessed as much from Marguerite's vindictive ravings, with which I thought Esclairmonde's name was strangely coupled."

" His Majesty has, no doubt, carried his design into execution, and roused the suspicions of the Queen of Navarre," returned the Astrologer ; " he threatened as much in my hearing."

" Doubtless he hath done so," answered Catherine ; " and if jealousy befriend us with

Marguerite, little more is to be feared from Crichton. On that score we need entertain no further apprehension. Thy phial was entrusted to her—”

“ To Marguerite ! ” exclaimed Ruggieri, uneasily.

“ Upon a solemn pledge, which she dares not disobey. Be tranquil—Crichton will trouble us no more.”

“ A woman’s will may waver,” muttered Ruggieri—“ of all your sex, your Majesty is the only one I have met with, possessing firmness of purpose.”

At this instant a sound was heard within the wall of the apartment, as if a key turned within the wards of a lock.

“ He comes ! ” ejaculated Catherine joyfully—“ all is well.”

And the next moment a door, so carefully concealed within the masonry of the turret as to be wholly indistinguishable, was thrown open, and the masked cavalier stood before them. A huge dog followed at his heels.

CHAPTER XII.

THE INCANTATION.

Voulez-vous en être convaincu tout à l'heure (reprit le Comte) sans tant de façons? Je m'en vas faire venir les Sylphes de Cardan, vous entendrez de leur propre bouche ce qu'ils sont, et ce que je vous en ay appris.—

LE COMTE DE GABALIS. *Quatrième Entretien.*

A COURTEOUS greeting passed between the Cavalier and the Queen-Mother; but unequivocal symptoms of dissatisfaction were exhibited by the dwarf and his feline companion at Druid's intrusion into their domain. Bristling, spitting, and erecting her back, the cat, like an enraged virago, seemed prepared to attack the stranger with tooth and talon, while the dwarf, no less offended, searched about for some more formidable weapon of offence. Druid, however, taking up his po-

sition at the feet of his new master, treated these hostile demonstrations with disdain and indifference, keeping his glowing eyes fixed upon the movements of the Astrologer, in whom he appeared to recognize an enemy.

Catherine's first enquiries from the Cavalier were, whether he had been present at the royal supper; and receiving a reply in the affirmative, she continued her interrogations—"and your adversary was there likewise," asked she, "was he not?"

"He was, Madame," answered the Mask.

"Did he occupy the seat wont to be reserved for him by our daughter Marguerite?" demanded Catherine, eagerly.

"The Chevalier Crichton was placed next to the Queen of Navarre," returned the Mask.

"And she—she pledged him—did you observe so much, Signor?"

"I saw the wine poured out. I heard your daughter's whispered pledge. Crichton raised the cup to his lips—"

“ Now the Virgin be praised!” exclaimed Catherine, triumphantly—“ that draught has rendered him immortal. Ruggieri, the stars have deceived thee. Thine horoscope was false. Thy potion hath been swallowed. Our enemy is removed. Sir Mask, you are right welcome. You bring us glad tidings. We promised you you should learn more of Crichton’s fate when you came hither. That cup—”

“ Was poisoned,” rejoined the Mask. “ I know it, Madame.”

“ Ha!—was its effect so sudden?—Is he, then, dead?”

“ He lives.”

“ Lives!”

“ A jewel within his ring gave him timely warning of his danger. The deadly potion passed not his lips.”

“ Confusion!” exclaimed Catherine. “ But though the poison has failed, twenty poignards invest the Louvre — he cannot avoid them all.”

“Crichton *has* quitted the Louvre, and is yet in safety, returned the Mask. “He has baffled the vigilance of your spies.”

“Mine horoscope deceived me not, you find, good daughter,” said Ruggieri, who despite the ill success of their schemes could not repress his exultation at this supposed testimony to his astrological skill.—“My apprehensions were not groundless.”

“Peace!” cried the Queen-Mother—“When were requested your attendance here, Signor, it was to confer on matters of more moment than this Scot’s escape, and we crave your pardon if we dwell too much upon it. We are not accustomed to defeat. Mother of Heaven! it would not now surprise us if this minion of fortune deeming himself invincible, and puffed up by his success, should adventure hither and attempt the rescue of the Gelosa—as he vaunted he would do, in the presence of our son’s assembled court. Heaven grant he may carry his boast into execution. But no, even *his* audacity hath its limits.”

“Your desires may be gratified, Madame. Crichton, I doubt not, will fulfil his word—”

“To night?”

“To night. Are you sure he is not here already?”

“Signore!”

“Nay, Madame, the question is not irrelevant. He is aware of your appointment with myself—he quitted the Louvre in a disguise in all respects like my own—he has escaped your guard—he has vowed to attempt the Gelosa’s rescue—why should not I look for him here?”

“You forget, Signore, that you alone possess our glove. Your enemy may have the same masquerade attire in all respects; but without that passport, he could not gain entrance to our palace.”

“My enemy possesses the King’s signet, Madame,” returned the Mask—“which even *your* guard must respect.”

“Ha! doth he so?” exclaimed Catherine;

“ this is news indeed. Ruggieri, who waits without? What men-at-arms number we? Who waits, I say, below ? ”

“ Some half dozen trusty blades, with a Spaniard, and a son of Anak, whom I have taken this night into your Majesty’s service. Knaves who fear not to use the stiletto; and who have, moreover, a wrong to avenge upon this Scot, being somewhile students of the University.”

“ Enough—summon them to our presence.”

Ruggieri stamped upon the floor.

“ Madame,” said the Mask sternly, “ I am accustomed to meet my adversaries in the field—sword to sword. I cannot sit by and see murder done.”

“ Murder!” laughed Catherine derisively; “ that phrase suits not with the justice of a Queen. — What ho! Ruggieri, come they not ? ”

The words had scarcely escaped her lips, when several dark figures ascended from the

trap door, the bolts of which were withdrawn by the dwarf; and arranged themselves in silence before the Queen. Amongst them were the reader's acquaintances, the Spanish student Caravaja, and the giant Loupgarou. These desperadoes appeared to be now in their native element; and their fierce and reckless countenances well assorted with the nature of the occupation for which they were now apparently destined.

“Get behind yon carvings,” said Catherine, motioning to the darkling group; “yet stay—let him who has the surest dagger remain behind.”

“Por la vida del Rey! I claim that honour from your Majesty,” said Caravaja; “my dagger hath never failed me.”

“Let thy blow be dealt with more certainty, braggart, than was his, who this morn aimed at the same breast—that of the Chevalier Crichton.”

“Por l'alma de mi madre!” ejaculated

the Spaniard; "is it Crichton whom your Majesty—?"

"Ha! dost parley with us, knave? Take thy place above the trap-door—Strike as he ascends."

Caravaja drew his dagger, and took the position indicated by the Queen.

"He will not escape us now, methinks," exclaimed Catherine triumphantly.

"Is it possible, Madame, you can witness this slaughterous deed unmoved?"

"You shall yourself witness our calmness. You know us not, Signore."

"I hear a footstep," exclaimed Ruggieri; "he comes."

"Art ready?" asked the Queen of the Spaniard.

"My dagger thirsts for his blood," returned Caravaja; "I see the waving of a domino within the vaulted passage below; it is a masked figure, your Majesty— not Crichton."

"Be silent, fool, 'tis he."

“Madame,” exclaimed the Mask, firmly, “this must not be. No assassin’s blow shall be struck while I stand by.”

“Would you assist your enemy?” said Catherine scornfully: “An Italian and forgive!”

“I do not ask Crichton’s life of your Majesty; I see well you are relentless. I entreat you only to delay the stroke till you have confronted him with me. Seize him and stay his speech. But strike him not till I withdraw my Mask.”

A terrible smile played upon Catherine’s features.

“Though you begged this boon upon your bended knee,” said she; “though my own soul were set upon the issue, I would not delay my vengeance one second. Are you answered, Signore?”

“I am,” replied the Mask, sternly laying his hand upon his sword.

A profound silence ensued. Not a breath was drawn. There was something so appalling

in this momentarily-anticipated assassination, that the hearts of the spectators grew chill with horror, and even Ruggieri's livid cheek took a more ghastly hue. Catherine alone was superior to this weakness of humanity. Her countenance was lighted with a glance of triumph—and she listened intently for the approaching footsteps. The sounds drew nearer, and the points of a sable feather could now be discovered, emerging from the trap-door.

Catherine motioned to Caravaja : The latter raised his dagger and drew back to give more certainty to his stroke. The new comer slowly ascended, uttering an exclamation as his eye rested upon the Queen and her companions.

At this moment the Spaniard's weapon gleamed in the lamp-light ; but he struck not—his arm was disabled and pinioned by the teeth of Druid, and his poignard rolled upon the floor. The new-comer, whose attire and mask in all respects resembled that of the sable Cavalier, started and looked round irresolutely.

“Hence!” exclaimed the Cavalier, “your plans are foiled—your stratagem is discovered—your life endangered—hence!”

“My followers are within hearing,” returned the Mask, raising a call to his lips.

But ere sound could be emitted, the trap-door closed with a hollow clangour beneath his feet: the machinery having been suddenly turned, and the bolts shot into their sockets by the dwarf.

Catherine arose and fixed her piercing eyes upon the Cavalier.

“A moment ago we told you, Signore, that you knew us not. Take heed you purchase not that knowledge somewhat too dearly. We forgive this indiscretion on the score of your youth—but beware how you incur our displeasure a second time. The proverb would tell you that the offender writes in sand—the offended in marble. Our wrong is engraven in adamant.—This man hath defied us, and by our father’s head, he shall die the death.”

“What am I to understand from this,

Madame?" enquired the Mask, in a voice so exactly resembling that of the Cavalier, that the nicest ear could not detect a shade of difference in the intonation, and even Catherine started at the sound.

"Now, by our Lady of good Succour!" cried the Queen, addressing the Cavalier, "were I not assured of your identity, Signore, I should almost doubt the evidence of my senses—the delusion is wonderful."

"No delusion is practised on my part," returned the Mask, haughtily. "Your Majesty is the dupe of other artifice."

"You bear yourself boldly, Messire," returned Catherine, "but your confidence will not long avail you. Tear off his mask!"

At this command of the Queen, the men-at-arms, headed by Loupgarou, sprang from their concealment.

"Ha!—Saint Anthony to the rescue!—off!" cried the Mask fiercely, putting himself in a posture of defence. "He dies, who first advances."

“Soh!—you refuse to remove your vizard,” said the Queen, “you are self-convicted, Messire.”

“To you, Madame, I should not hesitate to reveal my features,” replied the Mask, “but before these rude assailants—never. You forget to whom you offer this indignity”

“By our soul, no—we forget it not,” returned Catherine, scornfully; “we offer it to one who hath openly defied our power—who threatened to snatch a captive maiden from our grasp, and who volunteered his own head as the price of his failure. He *has* failed, and think not we will omit the penalty.”

“Those were Crichton’s words, Madame.”

“And Crichton’s are the features we would unmask.”

“Then let your attendants tear off *his* vizard who stands beside you.”

“Insolent!”—exclaimed the Queen, “we trifle—upon him, varlets—strike first—we shall have leisure to peruse his lineaments afterwards.”

“ Hold, miscreants,” cried the Cavalier, drawing his sword and placing himself between the Mask and the assailants—“ hold or”—

“ Your blood be upon your own head,” ejaculated Catherine, impatiently. — “ We have already warned you.”

“ On one condition, Madame, will I sheathe my sword,” said the Cavalier.

“ If that condition be the life of Crichton, you will in vain propose it,” returned Catherine.

“ I do not ask Crichton’s life,” rejoined the Cavalier—“ I ask you only to defer your vengeance. Grant me a few minutes conference with your Majesty, and let the withdrawal of my mask be the signal to your executioners to assail their victim.”

“ Be it so,” replied Catherine.

And at a gesture from the Queen, ere he could offer any effectual resistance, the Mask was disarmed and secured by Loupgarou and his crew, and his arms bound together by the

leathern girdle of one of the men-at-arms. Caravaja by this time, not without the loss of much of his raiment, and somewhat of his skin, had liberated himself from Druid's teeth, and muttering deep execrations, retired crest-fallen amongst his comrades. "Por la oreja sagrada de Malchos!" growled he to Loupgarou—"that hound must certainly be a wizard! I may say, with old Cornelius Agrippa '*abi, perdita bestia, quæ me totum perdisti.*'"

"Hear me, Madame!" exclaimed the Mask, furiously, as soon as his choler allowed him utterance. "I repeat you are the dupe of artifice.—Let both vizards be removed, and you will then judge between us."

"We shall exercise our own pleasure upon that head, Messire," returned Catherine—"away with him, varlets, to the guard-room.—See that the doors are barred against his followers; and if rescue be attempted, tarry not for further orders."

“ We understand your Majesty,” replied Loupgarou, in a hoarse tone, inclining his enormous person towards the Queen in such manner as a tall cedar might be bent by the desert blast towards some tree of meaner growth—the giant, we may remark, had been incontinently chosen (such is the reverence in which brute force and stature are held by the vulgar) to the command of this bravo troop.—“ Have you any further commands, Madame?” asked the Titan, with a second obeisance.

The Cavalier again interposed.

“ Your Majesty will, I trust,” said he, “ issue your commands, that your captive be treated with the courtesy and respect to which his condition as a loyal and honourable Cavalier entitles him. I have your promise that he shall receive no injury till I withdraw my mask. But I will rather remove it now, and bring his fate to an instant issue, than expose a noble gentleman to the debasing taunts of a felon band like this; whose insults, were I in

his place, it would be more difficult to brook than their daggers' points."

"We see not wherefore we should respect *his* honour who regarded not *ours*, Signore," returned Catherine, sarcastically — "but be it as you desire. Remove the captive," continued she, addressing Loupgarou. "Treat him with all consideration consistent with his safe custody. It were well if he bestowed the few minutes of grace left him, in preparation for the eternity he will so soon encounter. Look to him well—the lives of all shall answer for his life."

"Madame!" exclaimed the Mask—"by my soul, you are deceived."

"Away," cried the Queen.

And without allowing him time for further speech, the Mask was hurried down the trap-door, and the iron valve instantly closed over him.

The dwarf expressed his satisfaction at his disappearance by a multitude of elfin gambols. Catherine clapped her hands — her custom

when greatly pleased—and turning to the Cavalier, said with a benignant smile, “We will now come to the subject nearest your heart, Signore, and speak of her whose deliverance this luckless Crichton was to have effected—the Gelosa. You may desire to behold her.”

“I came hither to that end, Madame,” replied the Cavalier.

The Queen motioned to Ruggieri. Followed by the dwarf, the Astrologer withdrew to that side of the chamber against which the curtains were drawn, and busied himself in describing certain lines with his Jacob’s staff upon the floor; while his companion proceeded to set fire to various spicy woods in a brasier, in which, from time to time, he cast other odoriferous ingredients, presently filling the chamber with a cloud of vapour.

“Hath a magical ceremonial to be performed previously to her appearance?” asked the Cavalier, in a tone of impatience.

“Said I not there was sorcery in the case?”

returned Ruggieri—"The girl is under the dominion of invisible but powerful essences, over whom these spells have control. You shall not only behold her in person, but learn by what charms she has so long held your soul in subjugation."

"It needs no conjuration to discover the nature of those allurements," returned the Cavalier impatiently. "She whose eyes shame the star Aldeboran in lustre, and whose form rivals that of the sylph Agla in lightness, need not resort to enchantment to hold her lover's heart in thralldom. I can divine whence her fascination arises without thine aid, good father."

"Can you likewise divine whence arises her repugnance towards your suit, noble Signore? Can you tell by what power she is enabled to resist your passionate suit?"

"By that power, over which no art or enticement, human or superhuman, can prevail—that of virtue," returned the Cavalier.

"Pish!" exclaimed Ruggieri, scornfully

shrugging his shoulders—"the honour of man and the faith of woman, like trinkets used to decorate apparel, are excellent embellishments to discourse, but of little real utility to the possessor. I understand not the advantage of such ornamental qualities—and have no strong belief in their existence. Virtue, however, has little to do with this girl's repugnance to you, Signore. She prefers another; and has been, moreover, in possession of a charm which, as I told you, I removed this morning from her neck. Take this key, Signore, I have plunged it in a collyrium of such efficacy, that it cannot fail to draw her love towards him who wears it. Her heart will no longer dwell upon Crichton, but upon you."

The Cavalier took the key and examined its curious workmanship attentively. Ruggieri withdrew to continue his mysterious rites.

"While our Astrologer is occupied with his suffumigations," said Catherine, assuming a confidential tone; "you shall learn the

secret we have to disclose to you—a secret which, as we have already observed, nearly concerns yourself.”

“ A secret which concerns *me*, Madame!” said the Cavalier, whose eye was still fixed upon the golden key he held : “ Does it relate in any way to the Gelosa ? ”

“ By our Lady!” exclaimed Catherine, scornfully, “ Ruggieri was not far from the truth, when he said you were bewitched by this girl. Your thoughts run on nought else. But do you imagine, fair Sir, we are equally the subject of her fascinations, that we should trouble ourself with the affairs of an actress ? ”

“ Your pardon, Madame. But I thought you had made some discovery touching the condition of this girl. There is an inscription graven upon this key, from which I gather somewhat of her history.”

“ Indeed ! ” said Catherine, “ what imports it ? ”

“ That she is the daughter of a dame of Mantua, of rank ; her name Ginevra.”

“How learn you this, noble Signore?” asked the Astrologer, anxiously returning towards him.

“From the handle of this key, upon which these characters, revealed by the powerful acid thou hast applied, have become apparent—‘Ginevra, daughter of Ginevra Malatesta—Mantua.’”

“Taphthartharath!” exclaimed the Astrologer, shaking as if a vision passed before him.

“What ails you, father?” enquired the Queen.

“Nothing, Madame—nothing,” stammered Ruggieri, desirous it would seem, to conceal the interest he took in the Cavalier’s discovery; “but there is more, is there not, noble Signore? Give me that key—why did I part with it from mine own keeping?”

“Of what avail had it been to thee,” said Catherine scornfully; “thy boasted art could not enable thee then to detect those hidden characters. But what mean those mystic let-

ters, and that figure? Can you unravel this farther mystery, Signor?"

"The figure is that of the planet Saturn, under whose dominion the metal of which this key is wrought, is placed by the disciples of occult philosophy. The letters are cabalistic characters, referring by numbers to those of the Hebrew alphabet; and forming, when placed together, a legend in that tongue, which may be thus interpreted:—

Gold! who wert a father's bane,
 Gold! who wert a mother's stain,
 Gold! be thou a daughter's chain
 Of purity.

Shield her breast from sword and fire,
 From intemperate desire;
 From a heaven-abandon'd sire,
 In charity!"

"A singular inscription!" exclaimed Catherine; "and by our faith, Signor, you have shown no little ingenuity in its elucidation. We question whether our captive

Crichton, who is said to be as well versed in the mysteries of Cabala as Picco di Mirandola, could have rendered it more felicitously. But love is quick-sighted."

"Suffer me to behold that inscription, noble Signore," said Ruggieri, trembling with agitation. "I would fain examine those characters with mine own eyes."

"Not now—not now, good father," interrupted Catherine, peremptorily: "this bauble has already offered too much interruption to our conference. What matters it to thee who was the sire, or who the mother of this girl?"

"Everything!" exclaimed the Astrologer, eagerly; but, correcting himself, he added—"that is, my charm would be more perfect if I possessed that talisman."

"'Tis plain thou didst not understand its use or virtue," returned the Queen.—"To thy task without more delay."

And Ruggieri, seeing opposition was useless, slowly withdrew, casting a lingering, longing glance upon the amulet which he had so

heedlessly abandoned to another, and which (now that he had parted with it) appeared to assume infinitely more importance in his eyes than it had done while it continued in his own possession.

“Your Majesty had a disclosure to make to me?” said the Cavalier, as soon as the Astrologer had retired—“may I venture to recal your attention to the subject?”

“We have a secret to communicate, not less singular than that you have just chanced upon,” said the Queen: “but before we unfold *our* mystery, we must enquire from you whether, amongst the beauties who thronged the Louvre to night, you noticed one who held the chief place among our dames of honour, and who was for some time the favoured object of the King our son’s regard?”

“Your Majesty cannot mean the Demoiselle Esclairmonde?” returned the Cavalier, starting. “Is it possible your communications can have reference to her?”

“ My disclosure *has* reference to Esclairmonde, Signore,” rejoined the Queen—“ you have heard, perhaps, that there is a mystery attached to her birth.”

“ I have heard, Madame, the court rumour, which runs that she is an orphan, the daughter of a Huguenot family of distinction, but that her real name is carefully concealed even from her own knowledge by your commands.”

“ The tale whispered abroad by my orders has reached your ears, we find,” replied Catherine, “ nor is it altogether wide of the truth. She is the daughter of a Huguenot leader—but that leader was Louis I. de Bourbon, Prince de Condé.”

For a moment the Cavalier appeared to be lost in astonishment. Uttering a single exclamation of surprise, he maintained a perfect silence, as if overwhelmed by the Queen's intelligence. Catherine regarded him fixedly.

“ Our news, we perceive,” said she, “ excites your admiration. You deemed not, that, in our unknown attendant Esclairmonde, you

beheld the daughter of a house illustrious as your own."

"I am indeed filled with wonder, Madame," faltered the Cavalier — "Esclairmonde a Princess of Condé!—can it be?"

"Look at those papers which authenticate her birth," returned Catherine, placing the packet, given to her by Ruggieri, before the Cavalier. "Read that despatch from Tavannes, the captor of the infant Princess—read those instructions from the Cardinal of Lorraine—that memorial of the guard who seized her—this credential of her attendant, and our own letters of authority written at the period. Let your own eye glance over these documents, and you will at once satisfy yourself of the truth of what we have asserted."

With a hand that trembled with eagerness, the Cavalier took the packet. His eye wandered rapidly over its contents. "I am satisfied, Madame," replied he, as his hasty scrutiny concluded. "And the secret

of Esclairmonde's birth is, of course, wholly unknown to the Prince her brother?"

"Henri de Bourbon believes that his sister perished in her infancy," returned the Queen. "We will briefly relate to you how she fell into our hands, and you will then perceive his grounds for that supposition. During Louis de Bourbon's flight from Noyers to Rochelle, an ambuscade, placed by our directions in the mountain passes near Sancerre for the purpose of intercepting the fugitives, surprised and attacked the litter in which the Princess and her infant charge were conveyed. By miracle she and her son escaped: But a fair child—a babe—scarce weaned, was borne off in triumph by the assailants. Condé, at the head of his Ritters, vainly sought to recover his treasure. His efforts were so desperate, that a stratagem was resorted to, to baffle his fury. A child, snatched from one of his household, was hurled beneath his horse's feet, and deceived by the outcries of his opponents—thinking that he had unwittingly

contributed to the destruction of his own offspring—the Prince in despair directed his attention to the preservation of his distracted consort, with whom, and with his son, he succeeded in effecting a secure retreat. From that day to the hour when his blood dyed the battle-field of Jarnac, Condé continued in ignorance of his child's existence. She was to him as she had been no more."

A deep sigh burst from the Cavalier's breast as Catherine paused for a moment to ascertain the impression she had produced. Apparently satisfied, she proceeded with her narrative.

"A month after the event I have described," continued the Queen, "a fair-haired infant was brought to us at the Louvre by a faithful emissary of Tavannes. 'The fawn is netted,' wrote the Maréchal in the letter now lying before you, 'the deer hath escaped our toils.' By the advice of the Cardinal of Lorraine, the wisest and most prescient of counsellors, the Princess was reared in entire seclusion,

and in ignorance of her rank—and by the Cardinal's advice also, the motives of which you will find there developed, she was secretly suffered to imbibe the Calvinistic principles of her family. Of late, in order the more effectually to mask our designs, we have given it out that we intend her for the cloister, and we have noted with satisfaction the effect which this announcement of our will has produced upon her. The period which the sage Cardinal foresaw is arrived. Anjou's plot is ripe. The Huguenots must be gained. With Esclairmonde, we have the means of winning over their leader. With her we have an earnest of Condé's fidelity should he league his arms with ours—with her we can paralyse his efforts should he declare against us."

"A refined and subtle scheme, Madame," replied the Cavalier, who had with difficulty repressed his indignation during the latter part of the Queen's recital, and whose vizard alone prevented the wrathful expression of his countenance from being perceived, "and worthy of a disciple of Nicolo Macchiavelli,

such as the Cardinal of Lorraine was known to be. But may I venture to ask, Madame, whether you now propose to restore the Princess to her brother?—And, furthermore, what may be your Majesty's motive in making me the depositary of so important a state secret as the mystery of her birth?"

"Your questions are somewhat abrupt, Signore;" replied Catherine with a slight expression of displeasure; "nevertheless we will answer them as freely as they are put. Your alliance with Anjou—your devotion towards ourself—entitle you to our confidence—nor will we withhold it. Why we have entrusted you with a secret so dear to us as that of Esclairmonde's birth will presently appear. Meantime we will answer your first enquiry at once, by saying that we do *not* propose to restore the Princess to her brother, till the full object of her detention shall be accomplished. We have other and more extended views respecting her. In a word, we have yet to dispose of her hand in marriage."

The Cavalier started.

“How?” exclaimed he, with some impatience—“Will your Majesty exercise the power which you have acquired over the destiny of this Princess, to give away her hand without the consent—without the knowledge—of her brother Henri de Bourbon?”

“Without his consent—without her own,” returned Catherine.—“Think you the Prince de Condé’s approval will be needed to ratify an alliance proposed and sanctioned by Catherine de Medicis? We shall bestow her upon him who serves us best, not on him who may please her fancy most, or that of Henri de Bourbon. The choice of the one might fall upon some hostile leader of the Protestant party—the election of the other, were she consulted, might be declared in favour of some such arrogant adventurer as the young Scot, whose life now hangs upon our breath; and who, as we learn from Ruggieri, hath already dared to offer his suit to her.”

“It must have been in ignorance, Madame,

of her real rank that he did so," returned the Cavalier, "for whatever opinion I may entertain of the scope and aim of Crichton's ambition, I cannot think that, had he been acquainted with Esclairmonde's exalted birth, he would have ventured to aspire to her hand."

"He has already aspired to the favours of our daughter, Marguerite de Valois," returned Catherine, frowning, "'and he who will dare to soar so high in gallantry' will scarce content himself with a lowly flight in love. You are mistaken in your estimate of this Scot's character, Signore. We read it more clearly than you do. His ruling passion is ambition. He aims at distinction in all things; and were we to free him from his fetters, and to entrust him with the secret we have just now communicated to you, the first use he would make of his liberty would be to renew his suit with redoubled ardour to the Princess—"

"There, I am assured, you wrong him, Madame."

“No matter,” interrupted Catherine, “we shall not afford him the opportunity. Crichton is of an order of men who must be crushed ere they attain a dangerous eminence. To elevate him would be to endanger our own power. Henri is ruled, as you well know, by his minions—the minions are ruled by Crichton. His mental acquirements—his bravery, and his various and unequalled accomplishments have already obtained complete ascendancy over a court, which, of all others, is most easily dazzled by such qualities.”

“And are these the only faults you can lay to Crichton’s charge, Madame?” asked the Cavalier.

“No,” replied Catherine, “he has yet a greater fault.”

“Beseech your Majesty, name it?”

“He is of incorruptible honesty,” rejoined Catherine—“had he been otherwise, he had been the fittest instrument we could have chosen for our purposes—as it is, he is only an obstacle—”

“Which will be speedily removed,” added the Cavalier, gravely. “Suffer me to change the subject and to return to that from which we have wandered?”

“The Princess of Condé—true,” replied Catherine, “you beheld her at the Louvre to-night, Signore—I would gladly learn what is your opinion of her attractions! Is her beauty equal to that of the dames of our native Italy think you?”

“It is without a peer in Italy or elsewhere,” sighed the Cavalier.

Catherine smiled complacently.

“Mary Stuart,” said she, “(whom Esclairmonde so much resembles) in the zenith of her youth and loveliness—when the walls of the Louvre resounded with the sighs of a thousand worshippers—and when the whole chivalry of Europe flocked to the Court of France to sun themselves in her smiles—was not so beautiful.”

“I can well believe it, Madame,” returned the Cavalier, in a tone of some despondency,—

“I have myself seen the unfortunate Queen of Scotland, and her charms of person, wondrous as they still are, cannot, I think, have equalled the matchless perfections of Esclairmonde.”

Catherine again smiled; and it was with some playfulness of manner that she now continued the conversation.

“She is indeed most lovely,” said the Queen,—“so lovely that, we think, if Anjou’s suit fail, as is not unlikely, with that experienced coquette, our *sister*, (as her years, as well as her regal dignity, entitle her to be termed) Elizabeth of England, we shall console him for his disappointment with the hand of the fairest Princess of her time. What he loses in power our son will gain in beauty. How say you, Signore?—Does this alliance meet with your approval?”

“Beseech you, Madame, press not that question upon me,” replied the Cavalier, in a troubled tone; “and to be frank with you, let me confess at once, that if the object of

your conference be the consideration of an alliance between the Duc D'Anjou and Esclairmonde, I am myself far too deeply interested in the fate of the fair Princess, to be able to offer an impartial opinion upon the policy or impolicy of the proposed union, and must, therefore, with your Majesty's permission, decline its further discussion. Esclairmonde's charms would alone entitle her to the hand of the proudest Prince in Europe, who might deem himself supremely blest in their possession."

"Say you so, Signore?" returned Catherine, gaily. "What if we change the title and designation of the bridegroom? What, if for François de Valois, Duc D'Anjou, we substitute that of Vincenzo di Gonzaga, Prince of Mantua,—will that alliance please you better?"

"Madame!" faltered the Cavalier.

"Have we not read your heart aright? Do you not love this maiden?"

"More than my life."

“She is yours, then—we give her to you—and moreover, we will enrich her with a dowery from our coffers, such as neither the D’Este nor the Farnese could bestow.”

A deep-drawn sigh was the only response made by the Cavalier. Putting her own construction upon his silence, the Queen continued :—

“Lend your aid with arm and counsel, to place Anjou upon his brother’s throne, and Esclairmonde is your reward.”

“And is the best blood of France,” returned the Cavalier, with bitterness, “to be bartered for treason.”

“These are strange words from you, Prince,” rejoined Catherine, “can we have been mistaken in you? Have we fostered a secret foe—are your own despatches—are those letters delusive? Answer me, Don Vincenzo. Do we address an ally of Anjou, or a secret foe of Henri—the friend of an aspiring Prince, or the tool of a falling Monarch?”

“You speak to one who thinks, acts, and

speaks freely and fearlessly, Madame ; who aspires to honour by honourable means— and who would hurl from his grasp the sceptre of France could it be attained only by treachery. Your plot against Henri, phrase it how you may, is treasonable.”

“ We will not quarrel with your terms, Prince,” replied Catherine, coldly. “ Words are to us the cloak ’neath which the sword is hidden, and the more honestly they *sound*, the less suspicion they are likely to awaken. You are welcome, therefore, to call our plot rebellious, so long as you enact the part of an arch-rebel yourself. But enough of this. You say you love the Princess of Condé. Assist Anjou in his (if you so please to phrase them) treasonable designs.—Place him upon the throne ; and she shall be the meed of your services.”

Catherine paused and fixed her eagle glance upon the Cavalier, awaiting his reply. But he spoke not. Contending emotions seemed to agitate his bosom.

“What means this?” exclaimed the Queen, rising in displeasure—“Do you reject our offer?”

“I may not embrace it, Madame.”

“Ha!”

“A fatal bar exists.”

“Your passion for this girl—this Gelosa—is it so? By our Lady! there *must* be witchcraft in the case. Ruggieri, proceed with thine enchantments—we must dissolve the spell. Prince,” continued she, in a stern deep tone, “reflect upon our offer. We shall expect your answer on the morrow. Meanwhile, bury the secret we have committed to your keeping within the recesses of your heart. Breathe it not even to your confessor. You can now conjecture wherefore we desired this interview with you—wherefore we selected you as the depository of the secret of Esclairmonde’s birth. You have perused those evidences of her illustrious origin. You have satisfied yourself she is the daughter of Henri de Bourbon. We will

now commit those documents to the secure custody of this coffer.”

Saying which, Catherine extended her hand to receive back the packet.

“ An instant, Madame, I beseech you,” returned the Cavalier, still detaining the papers, while his eyes appeared eagerly to scan their contents.

“ You will have more leisure for their perusal on the morrow,” replied the Queen—“ in the meantime turn your thoughts to her who more immediately claims your attention.”

At this conjuncture, and ere Catherine could possess herself of the package, the chamber was plunged in darkness. Unobserved, during their conference, the Dwarf had silently crawled near the speakers, and at a signal from Ruggieri, suddenly extinguished the lamp, which hung above their heads.

“ The letters,” demanded Catherine hastily. And as she spoke, what she conceived to be the package, was placed in her hands.

Suddenly a low and plaintive strain of music,—whence proceeding, it was impossible to determine—was heard; and at the same moment, a cool and refreshing perfume addressed itself to the senses of the Cavalier. The effect of this subtle spirit combined with the rich and fragrant exhalations of the chafing-dish, induced an agreeable languor, against the overpowering influence of which it was vain to contend. It disposed the mind unresistingly to surrender itself to the delusions about to be practised by the Sorcerer. Through the dense cloud of vapour that now filled the apartment, nothing could be seen but the dull red fire of the brasier: and the symphony became each instant more faint, until it gradually died away. The voice of the Astrologer was then heard chanting the following

Incantation.

LOVELY spirit, who dost dwell
In the bowers invisible,

By undying Hermes rear'd ;
 By Stagyric sage revered ;
 Where the silver fountains wander ;
 Where the golden streams meander ;
 Where the dragon vigil keeps
 Over mighty treasure heaps ;
 Where the mystery is known,
 Of the wonder working Stone ;
 Where the quintessence is gained,
 And immortal life attained—
 Spirit!—by this spell of power,
 I call thee from thy viewless bower.

The footstep of the Astrologer was now heard to approach the brasier. A hissing noise, as of some fluid cast upon the fiery coals succeeded. Fresh volumes of smoke ascended to the ceiling, emitting vivid sparks as they arose, and Ruggieri, muttering some unintelligible sounds, continued his spell.

The charm is wrought—the word is spoken,
 And the sealed vial broken !
 Element with element
 Is incorporate and blent ;

Fire with water—air with earth.
 As before creation's birth ;
 Matter gross is purified,
 Matter humid rarified ;
 Matter volatile is fixed,
 The spirit with the clay commixed.
 Laton is by azoth purged,
 And the argent-vif disgorged ;
 And the black crow's head is ground,
 And the magistry found ;
 And with broad empurpled wing
 Springs to light the blood-red king.
 By this fiery assation—
 By this wond'rous permutation !
 Spirit, from thy burning sphere
 Float to earth—appear—appear !

For an instant all became dark. Even the
 lull glaire of the chafing-dish was obscured.
 A fresh strain of music more soft, more plain-
 ive than the preceding melody was heard.
 A dazzling stream of light was seen to cut
 swiftly through the air, and to settle near the
 Astrologer. It was then perceived that this
 brilliant flame flowed from a sword held by a

female shape, robed in shining attire of almost gossamer texture. This sylph-like figure, so far as it could be discerned through the vapour, appeared of rare and almost unearthly loveliness. In her right hand the spirit bore the flaming brand we have described, in her left, a small vase of crystal; while in a thrilling voice she warbled the following strains:—

Song of the Spirit.

I.

WITHIN the golden portal
Of the garden of the wise,
Watching by the seven-spray'd fountain,
The Hesperian Dragon lies.*

* The above lines are little more than a versification of some of the celebrated President *D'Espagnet's* Hermetic canons, with which the English adept must be familiar in the translation of Elias Ashmole. *D'Espagnet's Arcanum Philosophia Hermetica* has attained a classical celebrity among his disciples, who were at one period sufficiently numerous. The subjoined interpretation of this philosophical allegory may save the uninitiated reader some speculation. 'La Fontaine que l'on trouve à l'entrée du Jardin est le Mercure des Sages, qui sort des sept sources, parce qu'il est le principe des sept métaux, et qu'il est formé par les sept plan-

Like the ever-burning branches
 In the dream of Holy Seer ;
 Like the types of Asia's churches
 Those glorious jets appear.
 Three times the magic waters
 Must the winged Dragon drain ;
 Then his scales shall burst asunder,
 And his heart be reft in twain.
 Forth shall flow an emanation,
 Forth shall spring a shape divine,
 And if Sol and Cynthia aid thee,
 Shall the Charmed Key be thine.

etes quoique le soleil seul soit appelée son père et la lune seule sa mère. Le *Dragon* qu'on y fait boire est la putrefaction qui survient à la matière, qu'ils ont appelée *Dragon*, à cause de sa couleur noire, et de sa puanteur. Ce Dragon quitte ses vêtemens, lorsque la couleur grise succede à la noire. Vous ne réussirez point si Venus et Diane ne vous sont favorable, c'est-à-dire, si par la régime du feu, vous ne parvenez à blanchir la matière qu'il appelle dans cet état de blancheur le regne de la Lune."—*Dictionnaire Mytho-Hermetique*. The mysterious influence of the number *Seven* and its relations with the planets is too well known to need explanation here. Jacques Bohom has noticed it in the enigma contained in his *Aquarium Sapientium*, beginning—

*Septem sunt urbes, septem pro more metalla,
 Suntque dies septem, septimus est numerus.*

II.

In the solemn groves of Wisdom,
 Where black pines their shadows fling,
 Near the haunted cell of Hermes
 Three lovely flow'rets spring.
 The violet damask-tinted,
 In scent all flowers above ;
 The milk-white vestal lily,
 And the purple flower of love.
 Red Sol a sign shall give thee
 Where the sapphire violets gleam,
 Watered by the rills that wander
 From the viewless, golden stream.
 One violet shalt thou gather—
 But ah!—beware, beware!—
 The lily and the amaranth
 Demand thy chiefest care.*

* Vous ne séparerez point ces fleurs de leurs racines--c'est-à-dire, qu'il ne faut rien ôter du vase. Par ce moyen on aura d'abord les violettes de couleur de saphir foncé, ensuite de lys, et enfin l'amaranthe, ou la couleur de pourpre, qui est l'indice de la perfection du soufre aurifique. *Dic. Mytho-Herm.*

III.

Within the lake of crystal,*
 Roseate as the sun's first ray,
 With eyes of diamond lustret
 A thousand fishes play.
 A net within that water,
 A net with web of gold,
 If cast where air-bells glitter,
 One shining fish shall hold.

IV.

Amid the oldest mountains,‡
 Whose tops are next the sun,
 The everlasting rivers
 Through glowing channels run.
 Those mountains are of silver,
 Those channels are of gold ;
 And thence the countless treasures
 Of the kings of earth are roll'd :

* Les Philosophes ont souvent donné le nom du *Lac* à leur vase, et au mercure qui y est renfermé. *Dict. Mytho-Herm.*

† Lorsque la matière est parvenue à un certain degré de cuisson, il se forme sur sa superficie de petites bulles qui ressemblent aux yeux des poissons. *Dict. Mytho-Herm.*

‡ Quelquefois les Alchimistes ont entendu par le terme de *Montagne* leur vase, leur fourneau, et toute matière métallique. *Dict. Mytho-Herm.*

But far—far must he wander
O'er realms and seas unknown ;
Who seeks the ancient mountains,
Where shines the WONDROUS STONE !

As the spirit concluded her song, she presented the crystal vial to the Astrologer, exclaiming :—

In that mystic vase doth lie,
Life and immortality.
Life to him who droops in death,
To the gasping bosom breath .
Immortality alone
To him to whom the “ Word ” is known.
Take it—'tis a precious boon,
Vouchsafed by Hermes to his son.

Ruggieri reverently received the gift. And, as if extinguished at a breath, the blue flame that played upon the edge of the sword suddenly expired, and the phantom vanished. The brasier once more became visible, and the magician resumed the performance of his mysterious rites. At a gesture from his

master, Elberich brought a pannier filled with sundry magical ingredients, together with a ponderous volume, fastened with brass clasps, and clothed in black vellum. From time to time, Ruggieri took some herb or root from the basket, and cast it into the brasier, where it crackled and fumed, and eventually burst into flame. Nothing was wanting to add to the effect of the ceremonial. The dwarf gibbered, the cat hissed, Druid uttered a deep and prolonged howl. The suffumigation mounted in clouds—and the voice of Ruggieri hoarse and broken, and half choked by the vapour he inhaled, arose above the clamour. Thus ran his invocation:—

On the smouldering fire is thrown,
Tooth of fox, and weazel's bone,
Eye of cat, and scull of rat,
And the hooked wing of bat,
Mandrake root, and murderer's gore,
Henbane, hemlock, hellebore,
Stibium, storax, bdellion, borax,
Ink of cuttle-fish, and feather
Of the screech-owl, smoke together.

With his Jacob's-staff, the Astrologer then proceeded to trace certain figures upon the floor, and taking the Black Book from the Dwarf, read aloud a mystical sentence; after which he closed the volume and resumed his spell:—

On the ground is a circle traced;
On that circle a seal is placed;
On that seal is a symbol graven;
On that symbol an orb of heaven;
By that orb is a figure shown;
By that figure a name is known;
Wandering witch it is thine own!—
But thy name must not be named;
Nor to mortal ears proclaimed.
Shut are the leaves of the Grimoire dread;
The spell is muttered—the word is said,
And that word, in a whisper drowned,
Shall to thee, like a whirlwind, sound.
Swift through the shivering air it flies—
Swiftly it traverses earth and skies:—
Wherever thou art—above—below—
Thither that terrible word shall go.
Art thou on the waste alone,
To the white moon making moan?

Art thou, human eye eschewing,
In some cavern philters brewing?
By familiar swart attended—
By a triple charm defended—
Gatherest thou the grass that waves
O'er dank pestilential graves?—
Or on broom or goat astride,
To thy Sabbath dost thou ride?—
Or with sooty imp dost match thee?—
From his arms my spell shall snatch thee.
Shall it seek thee—and find thee,
And with a chain bind thee ;—
And through the air whirl thee,
And at my feet hurl thee !
By the word thou dreadst to hear !
Nameless witch !-appear—appear !

Scarcely were the words pronounced, when a rushing sound was heard, and the figure of a hideous hag suddenly stood before the Astrologer. About her withered neck and shoulders, the witch's wintry locks hung in wildest disorder ; her apparel was loathly and forbidding as her features. For a moment she remained with one arm leaning upon a

staff, and with the other, smeared, it would seem, with blood, stretched out towards Ruggieri.

“ Whence comest thou ? ” demanded he.

“ From my Sabbath-revel at Montfaucon,” replied the Hag.—“ Wouldst hear how we have passed the night ? Wouldst learn what pranks we have played beneath the moon,—how Sathan hath piped for us,—how the dead have danced with us,—how we have boiled infant’s flesh—brewed philters,—and confected poisons,—ha !—ha !—attend.” And in a harsh discordant tone, the hag sang the following wild rhymes.

The Sorcerer’s Sabbath.*

I.

AROUND Montfaucon’s mouldering stones,
 The wizard crew is flitting :
 And ’neath a Jew’s unhallowed bones,
 Man’s enemy is sitting.

* Le Loyer observes, that the *Saboe*, *evohe*, sung at the *orgia*, or *Bacchanalia*, agrees with the acclamations of the conjurers and witches, — ‘ *Her Sabat—Subat ;* ’ and that

Terrible it is to see
 Such fantastic revelry !
 Terrible it is to hear
 Sounds that shake the soul with fear !
 Like the chariot wheels of Night
 Swiftly round about they go ;
 Scarce the eye can track their flight,
 As the mazy measures flow.
 Now they form a ring of fire ;
 Now a spiral, funeral pyre :—
 Mounting now, and now descending,
 In a circle never ending.
 As the clouds the storm-blast scatters—
 As the oak the thunder shatters—

Bacchus, who was only a devil in disguise, was named *Subasius* from the Sabbath of the Bacchanals. The accustomed form of their initiation was expressed in these words, "*I have drunk of the drum, and eaten of the cymbal ; and am become a proficient ;*" which Le Loyer explains in the following manner :—By the *cymbal* is meant the caldron used by the modern conjurers to boil those infants they intend to eat ; and by the *drum* the goat's-skin, blown up, from whence they extract its moisture, boil it up fit to drink, and by that means are admitted to participate in the ceremonies of Bacchus. It is also alleged the name *Sabbath* is given to these assemblies of conjurers, because they are generally held on *Saturdays*.—*Monsieur Oufle :—Description of the Sabbath.*

As scared fowl in wintry weather—
 They huddle, groan, and scream together.
 Strains unearthly and forlorn
 Issue from yon wrinkled horn,
 By the bearded demon blown,
 Sitting on that great gray stone.

*Round with whistle and with whoop,
 Sweep the ever-whirling troop:
 Streams of light their footsteps trail,
 Forked as a comet's tail.
 " Her Sabat!—Sabat!—" they cry;
 An Abbess joins their company.*

II.

Sullenly resounds the roof,
 With the tramp of horned hoof:—
 Rings each iron-girdled rafter
 With intolerable laughter;
 Shaken by that stunning peal,
 The chain-hung corpses swing and reel.
 From its perch on a dead-man's bone,
 Wild with fright, hath the raven flown:
 Fled from its feast hath the flesh-gorged rat;
 Gone from its roost is the vampire-bat;

Stareth and screameth the screech-owl old,
 As he wheeleth his flight through the moonlight
 wold:

Bays the garbage-gluttèd hound ;
 Quakes the blind mole underground.
 Hissing glides the speckled snake ;
 Loathlièst things their meal forsake.
 From their holes beneath the wall,
 Newt and toad and adder crawl,—
 In the Sabbath-Dancè to sprawl !

*Round with whistle and with whoop,
 Sweep the ever-whirling troop :
 Louder grows their frantic glee—
 Wilder yet their revelry.
 “ Her Sabat !—Sabat !—” they cry—
 A young girl joins their company.*

III.

See that dark-hair'd girl advances,—
 In her hand a poignard glances ;
 On her bosom, white and bare,
 Rests an infant passing fair ;
 Like a thing from heavenly region,
 'Mid that diabolic legion.
 Lovelier maid was never seen
 Than that ruthless one, I ween ;

Shape of symmetry hath she,
 And a step, as wild-doe, free.
 Her jetty hair is all unbound,
 And its long locks sweep the ground.
 Hushed in sleep her infant lies—
 “Perish! child of sin,” she cries;
 “To fiends thy frame I immolate—
 To fiends thy soul I dedicate!
 Unbaptized, unwept, unknown—
 In hell thy sire may claim his own.”
 From her dark eyes fury flashes—
 From her breast her babe she dashes.
 Gleams the knife—her brow is wrinkled,—
 With warm blood her hand is sprinkled!—
 Without a gasp—without a groan,
 Her slumbering infant’s soul hath flown.
 At Sathan’s feet the corpse is laid—
 To Sathan’s view the knife display’d.*
 A roar of laughter shakes the pile—
 A mocking voice exclaims the while :—
 “By this covenant—by this sign,
 False wife! false mother! thou art mine!—

* Sathan will have an ointment composed of the flesh of unbaptized children, that these innocents being deprived of their lives by these wicked witches, their poor little souls may be deprived of the glories of Paradise.—*De Lancre*.

Weal or wo, whate'er betide,
 Thy doom is seal'd, infanticide !
 Shall nor sire's, nor brother's wrath,
 Nor husband's vengeance cross thy path ;
 And on *him*, thy blight, thy bane,
 Hell's consuming fire shall rain !”

*Round with whistle and with whoop,
 Sweep the ever-whirling troop ;
 In the caldron bubbling fast,
 The babe is by its mother cast !
 “ Emen hetan !” shout the crew,
 And their frenzied dance renew.*

IV.

The Fiend's wild strains are heard no more—
 Dabbled in her infant's gore,
 The new-made witch the caldron stirs—
 Howl the demon-worshippers.
 Now begin the Sabbath rites—
 Sathan marks his proselytes ; *
 And each wrinkled hag anoints
 With unguents rank her withered joints.

* The Devil marks the Sorcerers in a place which he renders insensible. And this mark is in some, the figure of a hare—in others, of a toad's foot, or a black cat.—*Delrio. Disquisitiones Magicæ.*

Unimaginable creeds—
 Unimaginable deeds—
 Foul, idolatrous, malicious,
 Baleful, black, and superstitious,
 Every holy form profaning,
 Every sacred symbol staining,
 Each enacts, fulfils, observes,
 At the feet of him he serves.
 — Here a goat is canonized,
 Here a bloated toad baptized ;
 Bells around its neck are hung,
 Velvet on its back is flung ;
 Mystic words are o'er it said,
 Poison on its brow is shed.*
 Here a cock of snowy plume,
 Flutters o'er the caldron's fume ;
 By a Hebrew Moohel slain,
 Muttering spells of power amain.†

* As the Sabbath Toads are baptized, and dressed in red or black velvet, with a bell at their neck, and another at each foot. The male sponsor holds their head, the female their feet.
De Lancre.

† The sacrifice of a snow-white cock is offered by the Jews at the Feast of the Reconciliation. This was one of the charges brought against the *Maréchale D'Ancre*, condemned under Louis XIII. for sorcery and Judaism. Another absurd accusation to which she pleaded guilty, was the eating of

— There within the ground is laid
 An image that a foe may fade,
 Priest unholy, chanting faintly
 Masses weird with visage saintly ;
 While respond the howling choir
 Antiphons from dark grimoire.*
 Clouds from out the caldron rise,
 Shrouding fast the star-lit skies.
 Like ribs of mammoth through the gloom,
 Hoar Montfaucon's pillars loom ;
 Wave its dead—a grisly row—
 In the night-breeze to and fro.
 At a beck from Sathan's hand,
 Drop to earth that charnel band,—
 Clattering as they touch the ground
 With a harsh and jarring sound.
 Their fluttering rags, by vulture rent,
 A ghastly spectacle present ;

rams kidneys! Those kidneys, however, we are bound to state, had been *blessed* as well as *devilled*. From Cornelius Agrippa, we learn that the blood of a white cock is a proper suffumigation to the sun ; and that if pulled in pieces while living, by two men, according to the ancient and approved practice of the Methanenses, the *dissecta membra* of the unfortunate bird will repel all unfavourable breezes. The reader of Rabelais will also call to mind what is said respecting *le cocq blanc* in the chapter of *Gargantua* treating ' *de ce qu'est signifié par les couleurs blanc et bleu.*'

* The Black Book.

Flakes of flesh of livid hue,
 With the white bones peeping through !
 Blue phosphoric lights are seen
 In the holes where eyes have been :
 Shining through each hollow scull,
 Like the gleam of lantern dull !
 — Hark ! they shake their manacles—
 Hark ! each hag responsive yells !
 And her freely-yielded waist
 Is by fleshless arms embraced.
 Once again begins the dance—
 How they foot it—how they prance !
 Round the gibbet-cirque careering,
 On their grinning partners fleeing,
 While, as first amid their ranks,
 The new-made witch with Sathan pranks.
 — Furious grows their revelry,—
 But see!—within the eastern sky,
 A bar of gold proclaims the sun—
 Hark ! the cock crows—all is done !

*With a whistle and a whoop,
 Vanish straight the wizard troop !
 On the bare and blasted ground,
 Horned hoofs no more resound :
 Caldron, goat, and broom are flown,
 And Montfaucon claims its own.*

“Thou hast called me,” said the Hag, as she concluded her song.—“What wouldst thou with me? Be brief.—Ashtaroth hath called me twice—the third summons I must obey. There are mortals here whose presence frets me? They are not marked with the sign, or baptized with the baptism of hell. Besides I am in haste to rejoin the revel I have quitted. My aching bones are unanointed, and the caldron boils over. Speak, and let me go.”

“Daughter of darkness—foul hag that thou art,” cried Ruggieri, in a voice of thunder, “was it to hear thine accursed strains that I summoned thee hither?—no—thy master may call thee but I will detain thee at my pleasure”—saying which he sprinkled some liquid upon her face: “Now,” continued he, as the witch howled with pain, “art thou content to tarry?”

“What wouldst thou?” demanded the Hag, fiercely.

“I would have the potion which thou

alone of all thy brood of Tartarus canst prepare," returned the Astrologer, "the draught which will turn love to hate—and hate to love. Hast thou that philter by thee? If so, give it to me, and thou art free to depart."

"I have that will serve thy purpose better," responded the Hag, drawing from her girdle a silver ring fashioned like a wreathed serpent—"this enchanted hoop—thou shalt have it—but take heed upon whom thou bestowest it—thy boon may prove unlucky to thyself, for

Little thrift

Hath the witch's gift:

Ha—ha."—

"Leave that to me," cried Ruggieri, impatiently.

"Ah! there again," exclaimed the witch, "Ashtaroth calls, his tone is wrathful. A moment, master, a moment, and I come. The wizards are shrieking—the fiend is piping, the unguent is seething! Well—well, I will be there anon. Take it—take it,

With a blight and with a ban,
On love of maid, and faith of man—

Take it with the witch's benison, or malison,
which you will—and listen to me—

When the moon was in her trine,
And the star of love benign ;
When a purple gleam was sent
From red Mars beneficent ;
And one ray from Saturn flowing
Struck the cusp of Scorpio glowing ;
Was this wizard ring confected,
And the potent charm perfected.
Gathered at propitious hours
Stone and herb of sovereign power,
Gray ætites, coral white,
Jaspar green, and chrysolite ;
Vervain, violet, and myrrh,
And all flowers that frenzy stir,
Through this ring were swiftly passed,
And in heaps around it cast.
And the fragrant pile was lighted,
And a magic verse recited,
And the starry signs were sought,
And their mystic symbols wrought.

Bound with spell—inscribed with sign—
Take this charmed ring—'tis thine,
He who wears it need not woo,
Woman's will 'twill swift subdue.

And with a wild scream of laughter the witch vanished.

The Cavalier meantime had witnessed Ruggieri's magical ceremonials with impatience, somewhat curbed by astonishment. Prepared to treat the whole performance as the juggling exhibition of a charlatan, he was nevertheless greatly struck by the extreme ingenuity displayed by the Astrologer in his contrivances—nor less surprised at the extent of his resources and the nature of the confederacy required to give due effect to his impostures. But when he reflected upon the length of time which Ruggieri had supported the character of a magician, and that the turret which he inhabited had been erected under his own direction, his wonder at his skill diminished, and his impatience to bring the scene to a close, returned with greater

vehemence than ever. The delay which occurred was in one respect accordant with his wishes, as it enabled him to revolve over some means of extricating himself from the perilous situation in which he was placed, or, at least, of accomplishing the purpose now dearest to his heart—that of communicating to Esclairmonde the secret of her birth. For some time he was lost in painful speculation. Suddenly a plan occurred to him—the expedient was hazardous—but it was the only one which could, with any probability of success, be adopted. Taking a packet from his bosom, he unfastened his scarf, in the folds of which he placed the letters together with the knot of ribands given to him by Esclairmonde, and then calling Druid towards him, contrived in the gloom unperceived to swathe the bandage firmly round the body of the dog. This done, with heart elate, he arose and advanced towards the Astrologer. At this juncture it was, that the Witch disappeared. Ruggieri heard his step, and, in a voice in

which rage struggled with terror, exclaimed, “ Retire — retire—Signore—back, or you endanger soul and body—tread not within that magic circle — the girl is yours — be patient an instant.—Take this ring—the witch’s gift —it will render your suit resistless—and withdraw, or by Orimasis, I will exert my art to enforce compliance with my injunctions.”

Saying which, Ruggieri thrust the ring upon the Cavalier’s finger and stamped upon the floor. The latter uttered an exclamation of impatience, but at that moment his mantle was seized behind with such unlooked-for energy, that he was involuntarily dragged several paces backwards. Placing his hand upon his poignard, the Cavalier was about to free himself from his assailant, who, he doubted not was the dwarf, but his design was checked by the relinquishment of the grasp, and by the sudden opening of a curtain disclosing to his view within a small recess, the sleeping figure of the Gelosa.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TWO MASKS.

One of these men is genius to the other.—

————— Which is the natural man,

And which the spirit?—Who shall decypher them?

COMEDY OF ERRORS.

SUSPENDED over the pallet upon which she lay, a lamp threw a faint light upon the features of the unfortunatè singer. Her countenance was deathly pale; and though her slumber was calm, it was evidently not the repose induced by “nature’s best nurse,” but the torpor occasioned by some medicated potion. Escaped from their confinement, her raven tresses wandered over her person still clothed in the boyish garb of the morning; and their dusky hue contrasted strikingly with the

exceeding fairness of her neck and throat, now partially exposed by the disorder of her habiliments. Something there was in her situation so touching as powerfully to enlist the sympathies of the Cavalier in her behalf; and (shall we injure him in the esteem of our fair readers if we confess so much?) something so resistless in her beauty as to awaken in his bosom a momentary emotion more akin to love than to pity. In palliation of this brief disloyalty we may add that Catherine de Medicis hitherto a stranger to the attractions of the Gelosa—as she regarded her features with some attention was so struck with her beauty, that she no longer felt any surprise at the extravagant passion with which she had inspired her illustrious admirer.

“By our lady!” exclaimed she, “the girl is fairer than we thought her. Is it possible that that lovely creature can be lowly born?”

“It would seem not from the amulet I hold,” replied the Cavalier.

“Permit me to examine that key more narrowly, Signore,” said Ruggieri, advancing towards them, “I may be able to resolve her Majesty’s question. Meantime I pray you take this phial. The damsel sleeps, as you perceive, but let her breathe from this flacon, and her slumbers will at once be dissipated.”

“’Twere better she should awake no more than to dishonour,” murmured the Cavalier, as he took the phial, and restored the golden key to Ruggieri. “Poor girl!” he mentally ejaculated as he approached the couch,—“my chance of rescuing thee from persecution; and from what is worse than death is now slight indeed. But the attempt shall be made. I have vowed to accomplish thy rescue, and I *will* accomplish it or perish in the effort!” And with these musings the Cavalier employed the phial as directed by Ruggieri. He had not to wait long for the result of his application. The Gelosa started and unclosed her eyes; but as

her gaze fell upon the Cavalier's sable mask, with a scream of terror, she hastily averted her head. "He here again," shrieked she,— "mother of mercy, shield me from this demon!"

The Cavalier bent his head over the shrinking maiden, and in a low tone breathed in her ear her name—"Ginevra."

Not more suddenly does the falcon turn her wing at her master's call, than did the Gelosa start at the Cavalier's voice. Trembling from head to foot, she raised herself upon the couch—she bent her gaze upon his figure—she peered into the holes of his mask as if to seek some further confirmation of her hopes—she dashed aside her blinding tresses, passed her fingers rapidly across her brow, as if to collect her scattered senses, and in a low tone, exclaimed — "That voice—do I still dream?—that voice coupled with that hideous phantom—methinks I heard my own name pronounced by tones, so loved, so tender; but it must have been a dream—

how should he know my name? Oh! I am very faint." And she again sank backwards.

The Cavalier regarded her with deep commiseration; but scarcely knowing how far in her present state of excitement it would be prudent to trust her with a knowledge of his plans he deemed it advisable to resume the disguised tone of voice he had adopted in his conference with Catherine.

"For whom do you take me, Ginevra?" asked he.

"For whom?" exclaimed the maiden,—“I took you for an angel of light, but I find you are a spirit of darkness. Hence and leave me. Torture me no longer with your presence. Have I not already endured agony enough at your hands? Must dishonour likewise be my portion.—Never. I have resisted all your efforts—your blandishments—your entreaties—your force—and I will continue to resist you. I can yet defy your power, as I defied you in your palace at Mantua. Wo-

man's love may be fickle, but her hate is constant. I hate you, prince, and I will die a thousand deaths rather than yield me to your embraces."

As Ginevra spoke, she became for the first time, aware of the disordered state of her apparel. If her complexion had been heretofore as white as that of mountain snow its hue was as suddenly changed as that of the same snow when it is tinged by the purpling sunset. Neck, cheek, and throat were turned to crimson by the hot and blushing tide, while shame, mingled with resentment, was vividly depicted upon her glowing countenance.

"Ah! false and felon knight," cried she, bitterly, "thou hast done well to steal upon a maiden's privacy—upon her slumbers—but get thee hence, or by the Virgin I will tear off this bandage from my wound, and breathe out my life before thine eyes. Ah! why was not that blow more surely aimed—why did I not perish in saving Crichton!"

“ And do you love Crichton thus devotedly?” asked the Cavalier.

“ Do I love him?” repeated Ginevra —“ do I love heaven—adore its saints —hate *thee*? — Love *him*!” continued she, passionately—“ he is to me life—nay, more than life. Understand me, thou, whose dark heart can only couple love with desire—the affection which I bear to Crichton is that of the devotee for the saint. He is my heart’s idol - its divinity. I aspire not to *his* love. I ask for no return. I am content to love without hope. It were happiness too much to have died for him; but having failed in that, think not I will live for another.”

“ Then live for him!” said the Cavalier in an under-tone, and resuming his natural voice.

To describe the effect produced upon the Gelosa by these words, and by the sudden change of tone, were impossible. She passed her hand across her brow — she gazed upon her masked companion in doubt and amazement, and then exclaimed under her breath,

and with a look, as if her life hung upon the issue of her enquiry.—“ Is it?” —

“ It *is*,” returned the Cavalier.

Her head declined upon his shoulder.

Catherine was not more surprised at this sudden change in the Gelosa's manner, than the Astrologer appeared to be.

“ Thy spell begins to work, good father,” said she, “ the girl relents.”

“ Maledizione !” cried Ruggieri, furiously—

“ How !—art thou not satisfied with thine own handiwork?” demanded Catherine, in surprise, “ thou art distraught.”

“ 'Tis because it *is* mine own handiwork that I am distraught,” returned the Astrologer. “ My gracious mistress,” continued he, throwing himself at the Queen's feet, who viewed his conduct with increased astonishment, “ I have served you faithfully—”

“ Go to—what wouldst thou?”

“ I ask one boon in requital of my long services—a light request, Madame?”

“ Name it.”

“ Suffer not yon girl to quit the chamber

to-night. Or, if she must go hence, suffer me to accompany her.”

Catherine returned no answer, but clapping her hands together, the Dwarf, in obedience to her signal, rushed to the trap-door.

To return to the Cavalier. His efforts, seconded by his kindly words, speedily restored the Gelosa to consciousness. Gently disengaging herself from his embrace, and casting down her large eyes, as if she feared to meet his gaze, she thus, in a low tone, addressed him :- “ Pardon me, noble Signor, my late freedom of speech. My lips have betrayed the secret of my heart, but on my soul I would not so have spoken had I deemed that my words would ever have reached your ears.”

“ I need not that assurance, fair Ginevra,” returned the Cavalier, “ and much doth it pain me to think that your love is fixed upon one who can only requite your devotion with a brother’s tenderness But listen to me. With this key you will pass, by a subterranean

outlet, to the Hôtel de Soissons. Escape will then be easy. Tarry without its walls, on the quarter nigh the church of Saint Eustache, for an hour. If in that space I join you not, depart, and go upon the morrow to the Louvre. Seek out the Demoiselle Esclairmonde,—do you mind that name, Ginevra?”

“ I do—” gasped the Gelosa, with a sudden pang of jealousy.

“ You will find her amongst the attendants of the Queen Louise. Bear to her this paper.”

“ ’Tis stained with blood,” cried Ginevra, as she received the letter.

“ ’Tis traced with my dagger’s point,” rejoined the Cavalier. “ Will you convey it to her?”

“ I will.”

“ And now,” continued the Cavalier, “ collect all your energies, fair maiden.—You must leave this chamber alone.”

“ And you, —?”

“ Heed me not ; a fate dearer than mine hangs upon that paper — upon your safety. You have said you love me. You have approved your devotion. But I claim a further proof. Whatever you may hear or see, tarry not. When I bid you, go. You have a poignard—ha ?”

“ What Italian woman is without one.”

“ It is well. You who dread not to die, need fear nothing. Your hand. I am once more the Mask. Be firm—ha— it is too late.”

This latter exclamation was uttered as the Cavalier perceived the trap-door open, and Catherine’s guard ascend. One by one the dark figures stepped upon the floor. At last appeared the Mask bound, and conducted by Loupgarou and Caravaja.

“ What means this ?” inquired the affrighted Gelosa.

“ Ask not, but follow me,” replied the Cavalier, advancing quickly towards the Queen.

“ Madame,” exclaimed he, “ before this

execution takes place, I pray you suffer this maiden to withdraw. Let her await our coming forth within the corridor of your palace.'

"Be it so," returned Catherine.

"Go," whispered the Cavalier to Ginevra—"you have the key—there is the masked door."

"She stirs not hence," said Ruggieri, seizing the maiden's arm.

"What mean'st thou, old man," cried the Cavalier,—“What right hast thou to oppose her departure?”

"A father's right," returned Ruggieri—"she is my child."

"Thy child!" screamed the Gelosa, recoiling—"oh no—no—no—not thy child."

"Thou art the daughter of Ginevra Malatesta,—thou art likewise my daughter."

"Believe him not dear Signore," cried the Gelosa, clinging to the Cavalier,—“he raves—I am *not* his daughter."

"By my soul I speak the truth" ejaculated Ruggieri.

“ Our patience is exhausted,” exclaimed the Queen ; “ let the girl tarry where she is. We have not done with her. Crichton’s execution shall no longer be delayed.”

“ *His* execution !” cried the Gelosa, with a thrilling scream. “ Is it Crichton whom you would put to death ? ”

“ Be calm,” whispered the Cavalier—
“ Heed not me—but in the confusion make good your own escape.”

“ Thou hast said it, maiden,” returned Catherine, sternly smiling—“ that mask conceals thy lover’s features—”

“ That mask !—ha ! ”

At this moment Catherine again clapped her hands. There was an instant movement amongst the men-at-arms. Quick as thought the Mask was dragged forwards. A block of wood was placed upon the ground by Caravaja. The sword of Loupgarou gleamed in the air.

The Cavalier placed himself between Ca-

therine and the executioners. His hand was laid upon his vizard.

“ You have said the withdrawal of your mask should be the signal of Crichton’s doom,” cried the Queen, addressing the Cavalier, “ are you prepared Signore ? ”

“ I *am* prepared, Madame,” replied the Cavalier calmly, “ to meet my own fate. Not against yon Mask, but against me must your vengeance be directed. I am Crichton.”

And as he spoke, he withdrew his vizard.

“ Malédiction ! ” exclaimed Catherine, as she beheld the features of the Scot—“ Traitor !—have we then been thy dupe all this while—have we been betrayed into the avowal of our most secret schemes,—into the commission of a grievous and scarce pardonable indignity to our nearest and dearest ally ?—Have we—but thy cunning shall avail thee little—Dieu merci !—thou art still in our power. Don Vincenzo,” continued she turning to the Mask, whose vizard having been in the confusion hastily removed by Caravaja, discovered

dark and haughty lineaments, inflamed with choler, but strongly impressed with the lofty and peculiar character, proper to the Southern noble — (a character which the reader will at once understand if he will call to mind the grave and majestic Venetian faces which he may have haply looked upon in the canvass of Titian)—“ Don Vincenzo,” said Catherine, addressing the Prince, who still remained surrounded by the guard—“ what reparation can we offer you for the affront we have thus unintentionally put upon you ?”

“ One only reparation will I accept,” cried Vincenzo, proudly shaking off the grasp of Loupgarou, and advancing towards the Queen.

“ Give us to understand your wishes,” returned Catherine.

“ I claim the life of my adversary,” returned Gonzaga.

“ Now, by our soul, Prince,” said Catherine in a deep whisper, “ you have asked a boon we cannot grant. Crichton’s life is necessary to *our* safety—to *your* safety. He must die.”

“ He *shall* die, Madame, upon the morrow,” returned Vincenzo in the same tone—“ but the blazon of Gonzaga were for ever stained, —my honour as a knight for ever spotted, if he, whom I have defied to mortal combat should be assassinated in my presence. He must be set free.”

“ Never,” replied Catherine, “ his death will lie at my door. He is in possession of our schemes—of Anjou’s plot—and of a secret of vital import which I deemed I had communicated to yourself—no, he must die.”

“ I had rather perish upon the block, by the hands of those miscreants, than suffer my honour to be thus sullied,” exclaimed Gonzaga, “ Hear me, Madame,” cried he aloud. Suffer him to depart, and I will gage my princely faith that the Chevalier Crichton betrays no secret—reveals no plot. The laws of honour, imperative on me, are not less binding upon him. Let him depart without fear, and intrust the work of vengeance to

me. To-morrow we meet as mortal enemies—to-night we part as fair foemen.”

“Gage not your faith for me, Prince,” said Crichton, who with sword and dagger, fiercely confronted his assailants, “I can neither accept life nor freedom upon the terms you propose. If I depart hence, the secret I have obtained will be revealed—nay if my voice be silenced in death, my last gasp will be cheered with the conviction that other tongues than mine will breathe it for me.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Catherine,

“*My* vengeance will survive me Madame,” continued the Scot “you may float this chamber with my blood—may hew me limb from limb—but that secret will escape you—nay it *has* already escaped you. I may never behold her more—may never exchange word with her again, but—ere to-morrow’s sun shall set, the proof of her birth will be laid before the Princess of Condé.”

“Thou liest!” cried Catherine.

“Where are the dispatches of Tavannes—

the letters of the Cardinal of Lorraine—your own written authority?” demanded Crichton.

“Ha!” exclaimed Catherine, hastily glancing at the packet she held within her hand—
“Traitor! where are they?”

“On their way to the Louvre,” replied Crichton.

“Impossible!”

“I have found a faithful messenger—”

“En verdad, sa magestad, this braggart's, only messenger can have been the great dog who accompanied him,” exclaimed Caravaja. “The accursed brute dashed down the trap door as we ascended, and I remarked that he had a scarf twisted round his throat.”

“That scarf contained the letters,” said Crichton, with a smile of triumph.

“And the hound escaped you?” demanded Catherine, of the Spaniard.

“It is no dog—but a fiend in bestial shape,” replied Caravaja, “the phantasm was out of sight in a moment.”

“Chevalier Crichton,” said Catherine, ad-

vancing towards him, and speaking in an under-tone "those papers are of more value to us than your life—we will capitulate with you. Upon the conditions offered to you by the Prince of Mantua, you may depart freely."

"I have said that I reject them Madame. Bid your assassins advance. To heaven and to Saint Andrew do I commit my cause."

"I will die with you," murmured Ginevra.

"Rash girl—thou hast no part in this fray," cried Ruggieri,"—hence with me—with thy father."

"Never," shrieked the Gelosa, "I will never quit the Signor Crichton's side—the blow which is his death, shall be mine likewise. Let me go, I say—I am not thy child. Thou hast invented this story to betray me."

"Hear me Ginevra—I have proofs—"

"No I will not listen to thee. Thou wouldst have bartered my honour for the Prince of Mantua's gold. Was that a father's love? But if thou *art* my father, leave me,

and draw not my blood, as well as that of my mother, upon thy head,—for, by our Lady of Pity! I will plunge this steel to my heart rather than yield me to thy licentious master.”

“Ginevra, I would free thee from him. In mercy listen to me.” But ere he could proceed, the fiery girl drew her dagger, and extricating herself from his grasp, once more took refuge by the side of Crichton.

Catherine, meantime, despite the indignant remonstrances of Gonzaga, who being unarmed, could take no part in the conflict, had commanded the men-at-arms to assault the Scot. “Upon him, knaves,” cried she, “what do you fear?—he is but one—strike! and spare not.”

Crichton breasted their fury, as the rock resists and hurls back the breakers. The gleam of their swords flashed in the eyes of the Gelosa; the clash of steel resounded in her ears. The strife was terrific. But amidst it all, the Scot remained uninjured: not a thrust could reach him, while several

desperate wounds were received by his antagonists. The vociferations, the clamour, the trampling of feet were deafening. Suddenly the noise ceased. Catherine looked to see if her enemy had fallen, but she beheld him in an attitude of defence, calmly regarding his antagonists, who had drawn back to take breath and to consider upon some new plan of attack. Mortified and dismayed, the Queen began to apprehend the issue of the combat might yet be determined in favour of Crichton, when she beheld a dark figure stealing behind him. It was the Dwarf. With stealthy steps she saw him approach the Scot. He bounded forward—a dagger was in his grasp—when at that moment he was felled by the stiletto of the Gelosa. Catherine could not restrain an exclamation of displeasure “Cravens,” cried she, “ye lack the nerves of men—give me a sword, and I will show you how to wield it.” Thus exhorted, the ruffian band renewed the conflict, and with better success than before. A few blows only had

been exchanged, when Crichton's sword, a light rapier, intended more for ornament than use, was shivered, and with the exception of his poignard, a feeble defence against six trenchant blades, he lay at their mercy. A savage yell was raised by his opponents. A few moments more they saw would now decide the fight. Resolved, however, to sell his life dearly, Crichton darted forwards and seizing the foremost of the crew by the throat, plunged his dagger into his breast. The wretch fell with a deep groan. His comrades pressed on to avenge him. With his cloak twisted round his arm, Crichton contrived for some moments to ward off their blows, and to rid himself of another foe. But the odds were too great—it was evident what must be the result of a contest so unequal: nevertheless the Scot's defence was so gallant as still to leave his enemies in incertitude, when, as he seconded a feint with a thrust at Loupgarou, his foot slipped upon the floor now floating in blood, and he stumbled. Swifter

than thought Ginevra interposed her own person between Loupgarou and Crichton, and the blow intended for him must have transfixed her had not a loud cry from Ruggieri arrested the hand of the giant.

“ Spare my child!—spare her! my gracious mistress!” ejaculated the distracted Astrologer.

But Catherine was deaf to his entreaties. “ Spare neither;” said she, sternly.

Crichton, however, had recovered his feet. A word even in that brief interval had passed between him and the Gelosa. Ere his intention could be divined, he had flown together with the maid to the recess—and the curtains falling at the same moment to the ground concealed them from view. An instant afterwards, when these hangings were withdrawn by Caravaja and Loupgarou, they had disappeared. A masked door within the wall, half open, showed by what means their flight had been effected.

“ Sangre de Dios!” cried Caravaja, as this

door was suddenly closed, and a bar, as was evident from the sound, drawn across it on the other side, "our purpose is frustrated."

"*Cap-dé-diou!*" ejaculated Loupgarou—"whither doth that outlet lead?"

As he spoke the giant felt his leg suddenly compressed by a nervous gripe while, at the same time, a noise like the hissing of a serpent sounded in his ears. Starting at the touch, Loupgarou beheld the red orbs of Elberich fixed upon him. The unfortunate mannikin, wounded to the death, had contrived to crawl towards him. The stream of life flowing in thick and inky drops from his side was ebbing fast—but the desire of vengeance lent him strength. Directing the giant's attention towards a particular part of the wall, he touched a spring and another but smaller door flew open. Through this aperture the Dwarf erept, beckoning to Loupgarou, who, with Caravaja and his two remaining followers, instantly proceeded after him.

Scarcely had the party disappeared when

the door through which Crichton had approached the turret from the Queen's palace, revolved upon its hinges, and the Vicomte de Joyeuse, accompanied by Chicot, and attended by an armed retinue, entered the chamber. He cast a quick glance round the room, and his countenance fell as he beheld the bloody testimonials of the recent fray.

“ Monseigneur,” said he, advancing towards Gonzaga, who remained motionless with his arms folded upon his breast, “ I have it in his Majesty's commands to assure myself of your person till the morrow.”

“ A prisoner!” exclaimed Gonzaga, his hand vainly searching for his sword—“ know you whom you thus address?”

“ I know only that I address one whom I hold to be a loyal Cavalier,” returned Joyeuse, quickly—“ but when I gaze around this chamber, and behold these marks of butchery, doubts arise in my mind which I would fain

have removed. Whom have I the honour to place under arrest?"

"The Prince of Mantua," replied Catherine. —"The King's arrest cannot attach to him."

"Vive Dieu!" exclaimed the Vicomte, "I am indeed much honoured. But you are mistaken Madame—his Majesty's arrest does attach to the prince. Messieurs, to your charge I commit his highness. My duty, however, is only half fulfilled. May I crave to know where I shall meet with the Chevalier Crichton, if he be, as I conjecture, within this turret?"

"You will scarce need to assure yourself of *his* person, Monseigneur," replied Catherine, smiling; "my attendants have already saved you that trouble."

"How, Madame!" exclaimed Joyeuse, starting.

"Outcries and footsteps resound from this doorway," ejaculated Chicot. "Methinks I hear the voice of Crichton—there again—to the rescue, Monsieur le Vicomte."

“ Prince,” cried Joyeuse, “ you shall answer to me for the life of the Chevalier Crichton. In his quarrel with you I was chosen his godfather, and by Saint Paul, if he have perished by assassination in your presence, I will proclaim you felon and craven, throughout every court in Christendom.”

“ Monsieur le Vicomte, you do well to threaten a prisoner,” replied Gonzaga, haughtily. “ But a season will arrive when you shall answer to *me* for these doubts.”

“ And to *me* likewise,” added Catherine, haughtily. “ Monsieur le Vicomte, we command you and your followers to withdraw on pain of incurring our deepest resentment.”

“ I am his Majesty’s representative, Madame,” returned Joyeuse, proudly, “ and invested with his authority to seek out and detain the Prince of Mantua, somewhat distinguished as ‘ the Mask,’ together with the Chevalier Crichton, during his sovereign pleasure. You are best aware what account you will render of the latter to his Majesty.”

“To the rescue! to the rescue! Monseigneur,” screamed Chicot, “I hear a female voice.”

“My daughter! my daughter!” ejaculated Ruggieri.

“Some of you take charge of yon caitiff,” exclaimed Joyeuse, pointing with his sword to the Astrologer—“he is concerned I doubt not in this foul transaction,—and now follow me who may?—Montjoie! Saint Denis!—on!—”

Saying which he dashed through the narrow portal and sprang swiftly up a dark and winding staircase, down which the echoes of oaths and other vociferations now distinctly resounded.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE COLUMN OF CATHERINE DE MEDICIS.

On luy attachoit ung cable en quelcque haute tour pendant en terre : par icelluy avecques deux mains montoit, puis devoit si roidement, et si asseurément, que plus ne pourriez pamy ung pré bien egallé.

RABELAIS. *Gargantua. Liv. I. Ch. xxiii.*

OPPOSITE the rue de Viarmes, and reared against the circular walls of the Halle-au-Blé—with its base washed by a fountain,—its shaft encircled by a cylindrical dial, and huge gnomonic projection, and its summit surmounted by a strange spherical cage of iron—stands, at this day, a tall, fluted, richly decorated, Doric column; bearing upon its aspect the reverend impress of antiquity. The fountain and dial are of modern; the spherical

crest of ancient, construction. Tradition assigns this observatory, for such it is, to Catharine de Medicis, and Cosmo Ruggieri. From hence she is said to have nightly perused, within the starry scroll of heaven, the destinies of the great city stretched out at her feet—while, from the same situation, Ruggieri is reported to have gathered the lore by which he was enabled to avert the stroke of danger, and to strengthen and consolidate his mistress's power. The iron cage, to which we have just alluded, and which is supposed to have some recondite allusion to the mysteries of astrology, was, in all probability, contrived by the Florentine seer. Its form is curious, and has given rise to much speculation. It consists of a circular frame-work of iron, crossed by other circles, and supported by a larger hemisphere of iron bars;—“*des cercles et des demicercles entrelacés,*” says M. Pingré;—the object of which it is difficult to conceive, unless they were intended as types of the science to the uses

of which the structure was devoted. Erected after the designs of the celebrated Jean Bullan, this pillar situated, at the period of our narrative, in the angle of a lateral court of the Hôtel de Soissons, is the sole remnant now existing of that vast and magnificent edifice. Its history is remarkable—but it is not our purpose to relate it. Suffice it to say, that it was preserved from the general demolition of Catherine's palace by the generosity of a private individual, le Sieur Petit de Bachaumont, by whom it was redeemed at the price of 1,500 livres. The effect of the observatory is materially injured by its contiguity to the Halle-au-Blé, and its symmetry destroyed by M. Pingré's horologiographical contrivance, as well as by a tasteless tablet placed above its plinth; but notwithstanding these drawbacks—viewed either in connection with its historical associations, or with the mysterious and exploded science of which it is a relic,—the column of Catherine de Medicis can scarcely be regarded with in-

difference. Within its deeply cut chamfering, now almost effaced by time, are still to be traced emblematic devices, similar to those heretofore mentioned as adorning the walls of Ruggieri's laboratory. Having now described the external appearance of the pillar, it remains only to add that its elevation is nearly a hundred feet from the ground, while its diameter embraces a span of somewhat more than nine feet.

To return to our Tale. When Crichton and the Gelosa disappeared through the recess, their course was for a few moments shaped along a low, narrow passage, evidently contrived within the thickness of the wall, which, after a brief but toilsome ascent, conducted them to what appeared, from the increased height of the roof, and greater space between the walls, to be a sort of landing place. Whether there was any further outlet from this spot, the profound darkness in which all was involved, left them no means of ascertaining. As they tarried for an in-

stant to recover breath, Crichton took advantage of the occasion, warmly to express his thanks to his fair companion for the succour she had so opportunely afforded him. “ But for you, “ said he, “ fair Ginevra, I had perished beneath the daggers of Catherine’s assassins ; to you I owe my life a second time,—how—how shall I requite your devotion ? ”

“ By suffering me to be your slave,” cried the impassioned girl, pressing his hand to her lips and bathing it with her tears, “ to remain ever near you.”

“ You shall never leave me,” returned the Scot kindly ; carrying his gratitude to a scarce allowable length, for as he spoke, his lips sought the burning mouth of the Gelosa, while his arms pressed her closely to his bosom.

“ Santa Madonna ! ” exclaimed Ginevra, hastily drawing back her head, deeply abashed at the impulse to which she had yielded, “ our pursuers are at hand.”

At the same moment, also, Crichton became aware of the sound of hoarse voices and approaching footsteps.

“ There is—there must be a further outlet — this chamber communicates with the Queen’s observatory,” cried the Gelsa—
“ I mind me that I was dragged to some such place as this, by him who falsely calls himself my father, a few hours ago. Each wall in this frightful turret is perforated like a state dungeon, with secret passages. Step forward, sweet Signor, and you will find the outlet.”

With outstretched hand Crichton guided himself rapidly along the wall. The aperture was instantly discovered. His foot was on the flight of steps.

“ Follow me, Ginevra,” cried he, extending his hand in the direction of the damsel. But a grasp was laid upon her, from which she could not extricate herself. At the same moment a hissing laugh proclaimed her captor to be the vindictive Dwarf. With supernatural force the mannikin twined him-

self round her person. The maiden felt herself sinking. His hot breath was upon her face — his horrible mouth approached her throat. She experienced a sharp and sudden thrill of pain. The vampire having no other weapon, sought to fix his teeth in her neck. In this extremity, as she gave herself up for lost, Elberich's grasp relaxed, and the monster sank an inert mass to the earth. Crichton's poignard had freed her from her foe; while his arm bore her up the spiral stairs, just as Loupgarou and his crew reached the landing place. The Giant heard the struggle between Ginevra and Elberich—he heard also the fall of the latter, and with a bound sprang forward. He was too late to secure his prey, and stumbling over the prostrate body of the Dwarf, impeded with his huge person, the further advance of his followers. Muttering deep execrations, he then arose and began to ascend the column. After mounting some forty or fifty steps, a dull light admitted

through a narrow slit in the pillar cheered his progress.

“By my fay!” cried Loupgarou, as he gazed through this loophole upon the gardens of the Hôtel de Soissons, just visible by the uncertain light of a clouded moon — “we are within her Majesty’s observatory — those are the royal gardens — and yonder are the old towers of Saint Eustache.”

“En verdad compañero,” replied Caravaja, thrusting forward his visage and surveying in his turn the scene, “thou hast said it. It must be the structure I have so often gazed at from the rue des Étuves with the cage in which folks say Ruggieri keeps Señor Sathanas confined. Many a time have I seen that sooty imp, whose carcass we have left in the room below practise a thousand fantastic trickeries upon those iron bars. There used to be a rope from which he would fling himself headlong from the summit, and swing backwards and forwards like an ape or a juggler, to the terror of all pious observers.

— Ha! — What means that clamour, and clashing of swords. There are others at work besides ourselves. *Vamos camarada!*”

“ Softly,” replied the lethargic giant, pausing to take breath—“ we do not need to hurry ourselves, *quo magis properare studeo, eo me impedio magis*—as we say in the schools! We are certain our Scot is in this turret—we are certain, moreover, that he cannot descend without passing us—we are furthermore certain that we are four, and that he is but one; *ergo* we may safely reckon upon his head—and upon our reward.”

“ *Concedo consequentiam,*” returned Caravaja,—“ but proceed most redoubted Goliath, or this puissant David may prove too much for thee after all. Ha! hear you that shot? Some one has discovered him from below—mount!—dispatch!”

Thus urged Loupgarou, recommenced the ascent,—Another and another loophole shewed him what elevation he had attained, and at length his mighty head came in contact with

a plate of iron, which proved to be a trap-door opening upon the summit of the column, but which was now fastened on the other side. Here was an unexpected difficulty thrown in their path, not entirely, however, to the dissatisfaction of our Giant, who, despite his bulk and sinew, like all other men of vast proportions, was of a somewhat craven nature at bottom, and regarded the approaching struggle with considerable misgiving. He deemed it necessary, however, to conceal his gratification under a mask of oath and bluster, and seconding his words with a show of resolution, applied his shoulder to the trap-door with so much good will, that, to his astonishment, it at once yielded to his efforts. To recede was now impossible. Caravaja and his comrades were swearing in the rear ; so putting a bold face upon the matter, he warily emerged. What was his surprise, and we may say delight, to find the roof deserted. In proportion to his security his choler increased.

“Hola!—my masters,” roared he,—“we are tricked—duped—deceived. This Crichton is in league with the fiend. He has made himself a pair of wings, and flown away with the girl upon his back—! Cap-dé-diou! we are robbed of our reward.”

“San Diablo!” exclaimed Caravaja, as he also emerged from the trap-door.—“Gone!—ha—higados!—I perceive the device.”

We will now return to the Scot and his fair charge. Sustaining the terrified girl, who was so much exhausted as to be wholly unable to assist herself, within his arms, Crichton rapidly threaded the steps of the column. He arrived at the summit, and gently depositing Ginevra upon the roof, stood with his dagger in hand prepared to strike down the first of his assailants who should appear at the mouth of the staircase. The cold fresh air now playing upon her cheek in some degree revived the Gelosa. She endeavoured to raise herself, but her strength was unequal to the effort. At this moment an outcry was

heard below. It was the voice of Blount, calling to his dog. Crichton uttered an exclamation of delight. The packet had reached its destination—it would be delivered to Esclairmonde. Scarcely had this thought passed through his mind, when the sudden report of an arquebuss was heard—succeeded by a deep howl. Blount's shouts mingled with those of Ogilvy arose loud and stunning. The clash of swords succeeded. Crichton could no longer resist the impulse that prompted him to glance at the combatants. He leaned over the edge of the pillar, but all that he could discern was the Englishman engaged in sharp conflict with several armed figures partially concealed from his view by the intervening shrubs of the garden. Druid was by his side, foaming, furious, and with his teeth fastened upon one of his master's assailants. The scarf was gone. But whether or not it was in Blount's possession, he was unable to ascertain. As he turned in doubt and some dejection towards

the trap-door, his eye chanced upon a coil of rope attached to one of the links constituting the larger hemisphere of iron bars by which he was surrounded. A means of escape at once presented itself to his imagination. Swift as thought he tried the durability of the cord. It was of strength sufficient to sustain his weight ; and of more than sufficient extent to enable him to reach the ground. He uttered an exclamation of joy ; but he suddenly checked himself. The plan was relinquished as soon as formed. He could not abandon the Gelosa.

Ginevra divined his intentions. Collecting all her energies, she threw herself at his feet beseeching him to avail himself of the opportunity that presented itself of safety by flight.

“ And leave you here to fall into the hands of your pursuers—of Gonzaga—never,” replied Crichton.

“ Heed me not—heed me not—noble and dear Signor,” replied the Gelosa, “ I have

my means of escape likewise—go — go — I implore of you. What is my life to yours? By the Virgin!” continued she, with passionate earnestness, “if you do not obey me, I will fling myself headlong from this pillar, and free you from restraint, and myself from persecution.”

Saying which she advanced to the brink of the column, as if resolved upon putting her threat into instant execution.

“Hold, hold, Ginevra,” exclaimed Crichton—“we may both avoid our foes. Give me thy hand, rash girl”—and ere she could advance another footstep the Scot detained her with a powerful grasp. Ginevra sank unresistingly into his arms. Crichton’s next proceeding was to make fast the trap-door; the bolt of which, presented such feeble resistance to the Herculean shoulders of Loupgarou. He then threw the cord over the edge of the column, and advanced to the brink to see that it had fallen to the ground. As he did so he was perceived and recognized by Ogilvy, who

hailed him with a loud shout, but as that doughty Scot was engaged hand to hand with a couple of assailants, he was not in a condition to render his patron any efficient assistance. Having ascertained that the cord had dropped in the way he thought desirable, Crichton again assured himself of the firmness of the knot, and placing his dagger between his teeth, to be ready for instant service on reaching the ground, and twining his left arm securely round the person of the Gelosa, whose supplications to be abandoned to her fate were unheeded, he grasped the rope tightly with his right hand, and leaning over the entablature of the column, pushed himself deliberately over its ledge.

For a moment the rope vibrated with the shock; and as she found herself thus swinging to and fro in mid air, Ginevra could scarcely repress a scream. Her brain reeled as she gazed dizzily downwards, and perceived the space that intervened between her and the earth. Her head involuntarily sank over her

shoulder, and she closed her eyes. Had her safety depended on her own powers of tenacity she had certainly fallen.

The rope, meanwhile, continued its oscillations. With one arm only disengaged, and the other encumbered by his fair burthen, it was almost impossible for Crichton to steady it. The architrave and frieze which crowned its capital, projected nearly two feet beyond the body of the shaft. For some time he could neither reach the sides of the pillar so as to steady his course by its fluted channels, nor would he venture to trust himself to the guidance of the shifting cord. His peril appeared imminent. The strain upon the muscles was too great to be long endured. But Crichton's energies were inexhaustible, and his gripe continued unrelaxing. At length, after various ineffectual efforts he succeeded in twining his legs securely round the rope, and was about to descend when an incident occurred which rendered his situation yet more perilous.

Filled with astonishment at the daring attempt they witnessed, as Crichton launched himself from the column, the combatants beneath—friend and foe, as if by mutual consent,—suspended hostilities. It was a feat of such hair-breadth risk, that all gave him up for lost. But, when he had made good his hold, their admiration knew no bounds. Blount loudly hurraed, and threw his cap into the air. Even the adverse party uttered a murmur of applause. Ogilvy rushed forward to seize and secure the rope—and all had been well, but at the same moment he was grappled by one of his antagonists, and in the struggle which ensued, the cord was so violently shaken that Crichton had need of all his vigour to maintain his position. The rope twisted round and round,—but contriving, in the gyrations which he performed, to insert the point of his foot in the fluting of the pillar, he once more regained his equilibrium.

“Villain,” cried Ogilvy, as he threw his

enemy to the earth, and plunged his dirk within his bosom—"thou at least shalt reap the reward of thy treachery—Ah! what is this?" cried he, as from the folds of a scarf, which had dropped from the man's grasp, a packet of letters met his view. He was about to pick them up when his attention was diverted by a loud cry from Blount.

"Ha! — have a care! — noble Crichton," shouted the Englishman—"have a care! I say. Saint Dunstan and Saint Thomas, and all other good saints, protect thee!—Desist—craven hound, what wouldst thou do? The curse of Saint Withold upon thee!"—The latter part of Blount's ejaculation was addressed to Loupgarou whose huge person might now be discovered leaning over the architrave of the pillar, and who was preparing to cut the rope asunder with his sword—"Oh for a sling!" roared Blount, "to smite that accursed Philistine betwixt the temples."

Directed by these outcries, and, at the same time, perceiving the effect of a blow upon the

rope, Crichton looked upwards. He beheld the malignant and exulting aspect of Loupgarou who, it is needless to say, through the agency of Caravaja, had discovered the mode of flight adopted by the Scot, and instantly resolved upon the only revenge in his power. It was evident from his gestures and ferocious laughter, that the Giant had resolved to exercise his utmost ingenuity in torturing his enemy. Before he attempted to sever the cord he shook it with all his force—jerking it vehemently, first on the right hand, and then on the left—but finding he could not succeed in dislodging the tenacious Scot, he had recourse to another expedient. Taking firmly hold of the iron bar, by dint of great exertion, he contrived to pull the cord up several feet. Uttering a loud yell, he let it suddenly drop. Still Crichton, though greatly shaken, maintained his hold. Loupgarou then proceeded slowly to saw the cord with his sword. Crichton gazed downwards. He was still more than sixty feet from the ground.

“ Ho—ho! bellowed Loupgarou, “ not so fast fair Sir—*qui vult perire pereat*—ho—ho you shall reach the ground without further efforts of your own, and somewhat more expeditiously—*sternitur exanimisque tremens procumbit humi*—ho! ho!”—

“ That fate shall be thy own, huge ox,” screamed a shrill voice (it was that of Chicot) in his ear.—“ Ho—ho,” laughed the Jester, as the giant, whom he pushed forward with all his might, rolled heavily over the entablature — “ not so fast — not so fast — my Titan.”

“ *Quién adelante no mira, atrás se queda,*” exclaimed Caravaja, springing upon the Jester with the intent of pushing him upon the giant —“ thou shalt reverse the proverb—look first and leap after.” The words, however, were scarcely out of his mouth, when he found himself seized by the Vicomte de Joyeuse, who suddenly appeared on the roof of the column.

Loupgarou made an effort to grasp at the

architrave of the pillar as he was precipitated over it—and then at the rope—but he missed both. His great weight accelerated his fall. He descended head foremost. His scull came in contact with the sharp, projecting, edge of the plinth, which shattered it at once; and his huge frame lay without sense upon the pavement of the court just as Crichton and his now senseless burthen alighted in safety upon the ground.

“By my bauble!” cried Chicot, as he hailed Crichton from the summit of the column, “the great gymnastic feats of Gargantua equal not your achievements, compère.”

But Crichton was too much occupied to attend to the Jester. He had now to defend himself against the assault of Gonzaga’s followers, whose object was to possess themselves of the person of the Gelosa.

At this moment the call of a trumpet sounded from the summit of the pillar, and the next instant some dozen men at arms, in the livery

of the Vicomte de Joyeuse, made their appearance at its base.

“Down with your swords, in the king’s name,” cried the serjeant of the guard. “Chevalier Crichton, in the name of his most Catholic Majesty, Henri III, you are our prisoner.”

“Where is your leader?” demanded Crichton sternly, “to him alone will I yield myself.”

“He is here, *mon cher*,” cried Joyeuse, from the top of the pillar, “and rejoices to find you in safety. I will join you, and render all needful explanations. Meantime, you must, perforce, continue my prisoner; your adversary, Gonzaga, hath yielded himself without demur.”

“’Tis well;” replied Crichton, throwing down his poignard.

We shall not pause to describe the rapturous congratulations of Ogilvy and Blount. The former appeared so anxious to relieve his

patron from the burthen of the fair singer, that he at length committed her to his care. The disciple of Knox gazed at her with admiration, and his bosom heaved with strange but inexpressible emotions as he held the lovely player girl in his arms.

“Ha!” exclaimed Crichton, turning hastily to Blount, “thy dog—hath he reached thee?”

“He is here,” replied Blount, patting Druid, “he has been slightly hurt in this fray—poor fellow—the ball of an arquebuss hath grazed his side—”

“There was a scarf twined around him—thou hast it?” demanded Crichton.

“I saw nothing,” answered Blount, staring in astonishment at the question.

“A scarf,” ejaculated Ogilvy, “did it contain a packet?”

“It did,” rejoined Crichton.—“Have you seen it?”

“’Tis here,” answered Ogilvy, springing forward, and once more committing the

Gelosa to his patron.—“ Ha!—here is the sash,” cried he, “ and a knot of ribbands— but the packet is gone.—”

“ Search — it may have escaped thy regards.”

“ It is nowhere to be found;” replied Ogilvy, after a vain quest.

“ Ah!” exclaimed Crichton, in a tone of anguish, “ all my exertions then are fruitless. —The prize is lost as soon as obtained.”

THE SECOND DAY.

February VI.

1579.

THE TOURNEY.

— Tilting furniture, emblazon'd shields,
Impresses quaint, caparisons, and steeds,
Bases, and tinsel trappings, gorgeous knights
At joust and tournament.

MILTON. PARADISE LOST.

THE SECOND DAY.

CHAPTER I.

HIC BIBITUR !

Or, dist Pantagruel, faisons ung trauson de bonne chiere, et beuvons, je vous en prie, enfans—car il faict beau boire tout ce mois.

RABELAIS. *Gargantua. Liv. II. Ch. XXX.*

ON the day succeeding the events we have related, and about two hours before noon, the interior of the Falcon (a small but greatly frequented cabaret in the rue Pelican, to which we have before alluded, and which was famed alike for the excellence of its wines, and the charms of its hostess) presented a scene of much bustle and animation. The tables were covered with viands; the benches

with guests. The former consisting of every variety of refectation, liquid and solid, proper to a substantial Parisian breakfast of the sixteenth century; from the well-smoked ham of Bayonne, and savóury sausage of Bologna, to the mild *potage de levrier*, and unctuous *soupe de prime*. The latter exhibiting every shade of character from the roystering student (your scholars have always been great tavern hunters) and sottish clerk of the Basoche, to the buff-jerkined musqueteer, and strapping sergeant of the Swiss Guard. The walls resounded with the mingled clatter of the trencher, the flagon, and the dice-box—with the shouts of laughter, and vociferations of the company, and with the rapid responses of the servitors. The air reeked with the fumes of tobacco, or, as it was then called, *herbe à la Reine*, pimento, and garlic. Pots of hydromel, hippocras, and claret, served to allay the thirst which the salt meats we have mentioned (*compulsoires de beuvettes*, according to the Rabelaisian synonyme) very

naturally provoked—and many a deep draught was that morning drained to the health of Dame Fredegonde, the presiding divinity of the Falcon.

When we said that the wines of Dame Fredegonde were generally approved, we merely repeated the opinion of every member of the University of Paris, whose pockets were not utterly exhausted of the necessary *métal ferruginé*—and when we averred that her charms were the universal theme of admiration, we reiterated the sentiments of every jolly lansquenet, or Gascon captain of D'Epernon's '*Quarante Cinq*,' whose pike had at any time been deposited at her threshold, or whose spurs jingled upon her hearth.

Attracted by the report of her comeliness, half the drinking world of Paris flocked to the Falcon. It was the haunt of all lovers of good cheer, and a buxom hostess.

Ah ! comme on entrait

Boire à son cabaret !

Some women there are who look old in their youth, and grow young again as they advance in life: and of these was Dame Fredegonde. Like her wine, she improved by keeping. At eighteen she did not appear so young, or so inviting as at eight and thirty. Her person might be somewhat enlarged—what of that? Many of her admirers thought her very embonpoint an improvement. Her sleek black tresses, gathered in a knot at the back of her head—her smooth brow, which set care and time, and their furrows at defiance—her soft dimpled chin—her dark laughing eyes, and her teeth, white as a casket of pearls, left nothing to be desired. You could hardly distinguish between the ring of your silver real upon her board, and the laughter with which she received it. She might have sat to Béranger for his portrait of Madame Grégoire, so well do his racy lines describe her—

Je crois voir encor
Son gros rire aller jusqu' aux larmes
Et sous sa croix d'or
L'ampleur de ses pudiques charmes.

To sum up her perfections in a word—she was a widow. As Dame Fredegonde, notwithstanding her plumpness, had a very small waist, and particularly neat ancles; she wore an extremely tight boddice, and a particularly short vertugardin; and as she was more than suspected of favouring the persecuted Huguenot party, she endeavoured to remove the impression by wearing at her girdle a long rosary of beads terminated by the white double cross of the League.

Among her guests, upon the morning in question, Dame Fredegonde numbered the Sorbonist, the Bernardin, the disciples of Harcourt and Montaigu, and one or two more of the brawling and disputatious fraternity, whose companionship we have for some time abandoned. These students were regaling themselves upon a Gargantuan gammon of ham and a flask of malvoisie. At some distance from this party, sat Blount, together with his faithful attendant Druid, who with

his enormous paws placed upon his master's knees, and his nose familiarly thrust upon the board, received no small portion of the huge chine of beef destined for the Englishman's repast. Next to Blount, appeared Ogilvy, and next to the Scot, but as far removed from his propinquity as the limits of the bench would permit, sat a youth whose features were concealed from view by a broad hat, and who seemed from his general restlessness and impatience of manner, to be ill at ease in the society in which accident, rather than his own free choice, must have thrown him.

We shall pass over the remainder of the company, and come at once to a man-at-arms of very prepossessing exterior, who had established himself in close juxta-position with our buxom hostess, with whom he seemed to be upon terms of sufficiently good understanding. There was nothing very remarkable in the costume of this hero. He had a stout buff jerkin, a coarse brown serge cloak, a pointed felt hat with a single green

feather, a long estoc by his side, and great spurs in his yellow boots. But there was an ease and grace in his deportment, a fire in his eye, and a tone in his voice that seemed scarcely to belong to the mere common soldier, whose garb he wore. His limbs were well-proportioned—his figure was tall and manly—his complexion ruddy and sunburnt—his bearing easy and unrestrained and his look that of one more accustomed to command than to serve. He had immense moustaches—a pointed beard—a large nose slightly hooked, and eyes of a very amorous expression,—and taken altogether, he had the air of a person born for conquest, whether of the fair sex or of kingdoms. His way of making love was of that hearty straightforward kind which seems to carry all before it. Assured of success, he was, as a matter of course, assuredly successful. Dame Fredegonde found him perfectly irresistible. Her last lover, the strapping Swiss sergeant, who saw himself thus suddenly supplanted, was half frantic with

deaf. The combat we came to see will be over before we have done breakfast. Hola!—hola—ho!”

“ And we shall look as foolish as we did yesterday,” added the Bernardin, thumping upon the board with all his might, “ when we found ourselves on the wrong side of the gates of the college of Navarre, during Crichton’s disputation. Body of Bacchus! I faint like a traveller in Arabia the Stony. Have compassion *speciocissima Fredegonda*—your cups are as far apart as the trieteric orgies. The tourney was proclaimed by the heralds to take place at noon, and it is now ten. By the love you bear the Béjaunes of the University use some despatch, or surrender to us the key of the cellar.”

“ The scaffoldings are erected, and the barriers raised,” cried Harcourt. “ I saw the carpenters and tapestry-makers at work—the whole façade of the Louvre looking towards the gardens blazes with silk and scutcheons.

Cavaliers and pages are thronging thither in all directions. 'Twill be a glorious sight! I would not miss it for my bachelor's gown."

"Nor I," rejoined Montaigu—"Mordieu! we shall see how Crichton comports himself to-day. It is one thing to war with words, and another with swords. He may find the brave Prince of Mantua a better match for him than our sophisters."

"He has only to deal with Gonzaga, as he dealt with some dozen of your classes yesterday, sirrah," observed Ogilvy, in a scornful tone, "to ensure himself as cheap a victory as he then obtained."

"Ah!—are *you* there, mon brave Ecossois," cried the Sorbonist—"I did not notice you before. But one has only to whisper the name of their patron saint, Crichton, and up starts a Scot when one least expects such an apparition. However, I am glad to see you, Sieur Ogilvy—we have an account to settle together."

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“ The sooner we arrange it then the better,” cried Ogilvy, drawing his dagger, and springing across the bench.—“ I thought you and your rascal rout had met with your deserts at the scourge of the hangman of the Petit Châtelet ; but I care not if your chastisement be reserved for my hands. Defend yourself, villain.”

“ Not till I have eaten my breakfast,” replied the Sorbonist with considerable phlegm.—“ As soon as I have finished my meal, I will assuredly do you the honour of cutting your throat. *Sede interim, quæso.* We are not now in the rue de Feurre, or the Pré-aux-Clercs, but in the jurisdiction of the Provost of Paris—and under the noses of the watch. I have no intention of baulking your humour, Messire Ecosais. But I have no fancy for exhibiting myself in the Pilon des Halles to please you. Sit down, I beg of you.”

“ Dastard,” cried Ogilvy, “ will not a blow move you ?” —And he was about to strike the

Sorbonist with his clenched hand, when Dame Frédegonde, who had witnessed this altercation with some alarm, suddenly flung herself between the disputants.

“Holy Saint Eloi!” cried she, in a loud tone—“a brawl at this time of the day—and in my reputable house too. I can scarcely credit my senses. Put up your swords instantly, messires, or I will summon the watch, and give you all into its charge.—Ah! you think I only threaten—you shall see.—Maître Jacques,” added she, addressing the Swiss Sergeant—“this is your business. Let tranquillity be restored.”

Maître Jacques, somewhat gratified that he was at length called into notice by his inconstant mistress, stretched out his hand, and without altering his position, dragged Ogilvy towards him, and instantly disarmed him with as much ease apparently as you would take a stick from a child, or remove its sting from a wasp. Blount who was a great admirer of feats of strength could not refuse a murmur

of approbation at the Sergeant's singular exhibition of vigour.

“ You shall have it again when you have recovered your temper,” said Maître Jacques—“ By my beard,” added he, scowling at the Scholars—“ I will brain with my halbert the first of you who draws his sword.”

Ogilvy regarded the athletic Swiss for an instant, with eyes glowing with indignation, and as if he meditated a reprisal. But a gentle voice from the bench recalled him to his seat; and tranquillity was once more restored.

The Soldier, who had watched the dispute and its issue with much nonchalance, now addressed Dame Fredegonde as she returned to his vicinity.

“ What tourney is this, *ma mie* ?” said he, “ of which these brave Scholars have just now spoken? You know I am only just arrived in Paris with the King of Navarre's envoy—and know nothing of court news. Who is this Crichton?—What doth the Prince

of Mantua, if I have heard yon Student aright, in Paris?—and above all, what are the grounds of quarrel between the combatants.”

“ Do you expect me to answer all those inquiries in a breath, messire?” replied Dame Fredegonde, laughing—“ You need not assure me you are a stranger in Paris, since you question me about the Seigneur Crichton. Who is he? He is handsome enough to be a Prince. But I believe he is only a Scottish gentleman. He is, however, the finest gentleman you ever set eyes upon. The Seigneurs Joyeuse, D’Épernon, and Saint-Luc, and others of his Majesty’s favourites are not to be compared with him. He is as witty as he is handsome; and as wise as he is witty. Yesterday he had a great disputation with the heads of the University, and they have not had a word to say for themselves since. To-day he jousts with the Prince of Mantua in the gardens of the Louvre at noon; and, I warrant me, he will come off victorious. In short, he has

but to speak and you are dumb-founded—to draw his sword, and his enemy drops at his feet—to look at a lady, and straightway she falls into his arms.”

“ Of a verity, a most accomplished Cavalier,” said the Soldier, with a smile—“ but you have not yet told me the occasion of his difference with young Gonzaga. — What is their cause of quarrel, sweetheart?—Tell me that?”

“ No one can tell to a certainty,” replied Dame Fredegonde, mysteriously; “ but the challenge was given last night at the Louvre. Some say it is about an Italian mistress—(here the youth near Ogilvy was observed to start)—some that the Seigneur Crichton has discovered a plot against the King’s life, in which Cosmo Ruggieri, and a great lady, whom nobody dares to name,—together with this Prince are concerned—and that in consequence Don Vincenzo, who has been for some time at the court in disguise, has defied him to mortal combat. Certes, there were strange doings

at the Hôtel de Soissons last night, as the Chevalier du Guet informed me when he made his rounds—But that's no business of mine. They *do* say, also, that the Seigneur Crichton's life was twice endangered—first at the banquet by the jealousy of another great lady who is in love with him, and who poured a dose of poison into his wine."

"What great lady do you mean, ma mie? surely not the Queen-Mother!"

"Holy Virgin! — no! — not Catherine de Medicis," cried Fredegonde, with a scream of laughter—"The Seigneur Crichton is hardly likely to be in love with *her*."

"Who, then?"

"You are very inquisitive, messire?—How can it concern you to know in what way queens and other great dames revenge themselves on their lovers' infidelities."

"Ventre-saint-gris!—It may concern me more nearly than you imagine. You know I am from the court at Pau—from Henri of Navarre—You do not mean *his* Queen?"

“ I do not mean the Queen Louise—and you may, therefore, form a shrewd guess whom I *do* mean,” replied Dame Fredegonde, significantly—“ There you will have a pretty piece of scandal to take back to your grand Alcandre. And, as I live, he could not look more blank than you do at the intelligence ha—ha—ha!”

“ Peste!” exclaimed the soldier, biting his lip.—“ And it is for this adventurer that Marguerite refuses to leave her brother’s court, and to rejoin her husband.

“ To be sure!—she would find your psalm-singing Béarnais rather dull after the gay galliard Crichton. But you look serious, messire?”

“ Your sex is enough to make one look serious,” replied the Soldier, forcing a laugh.

“ Femmes sont segretes
 En amour discrettes
 Douces mygnonnettes
 Et tant bien parlantes,
 Mal sont profitables,
 Et fort variables
 Y sont tous les diables.

Our good Henri will care no more about the matter than I do. And hark!—those Scholars are still clamorous for wine. Allow me to attend you to the cellar? You will want some help to carry that mighty flagon.”

Dame Fredegonde nodded a gracious assent, and they were preparing to depart when the Swiss suddenly interposed his huge person between them and the doorway. The hostess frowned—but the sergeant kept his post. “Ventrebœuf! comrade,” said he—“if you go—I go too.”

“But do you not perceive, my friend,” returned the gendarme, in a conciliating tone—“that you are in the way.”

“Humph!—perhaps,” replied the sergeant, bluffly—“but I do not choose to part company with my betrothed.”

“Maitre Jacques!—have I not frequently told you that I look upon obedience as the first of virtues in a husband?” said Dame Fredegonde, with a look as cross as she could compel her good-natured face to assume.

“ You have, Madame.”

“ Return, then, to your seat.”

“ But I have not the happiness to be your husband as yet, Madame.”

“ If you would ever aspire to that happiness you will do as I bid you.”

“ Madame has it in her power to procure my instant compliance with her commands.”

“ How ?”

“ She has only to name the day.”

“ Well ; let me see—will this day year suit you ?”

Maître Jacques shook his beard.

“ Provoking ! this day month ?”

Still Maître Jacques appeared dissatisfied.

“ This day-week, then ?”

The Sergeant opened the door ; and as the pair laughingly left the room, he returned tranquilly to his seat whistling a note or two of the Swiss march. “ A sensible man,” observed the Soldier, as he closed the door—
“ Our grand Alcandre would do well to take pattern by his philosophic conduct.”

We will now return to Ogilvy and his companions. Blount continued sedulous in his attentions to the chine ; but the Scot's appetite was gone. He swallowed a deep draught of wine, and began to hack the table with a knife. To a casual remark, addressed to him by the Englishman, he returned a sullen response. It was evident he was deeply offended. But Blount either did not perceive, or would not take his petulance in umbrage, but continued his repast in silence, ever and anon bestowing a morsel of fat upon his dog. The Gelosa, for we doubt not the reader will have recognised in the youth at his side the unfortunate girl, now drew nearer to the wrathful Scot, and laid her hand gently upon his arm. Ogilvy turned his inflamed cheek towards her—

“ What would you ?” asked he.

“ I would quit this place,” said Ginevra,—
“ a presentiment of misfortune which I cannot shake off, oppresses me. The clamour distracts me—and I am fearful those reckless

scholars may recognise me.—Besides,” added she, with somewhat of reproach in her accent, — “ you but ill fulfil your patron’s injunctions—you were to protect me—not to endanger my safety by provoking hostilities.”

“ Pardon my rashness, fair maiden,” replied Ogilvy, with some confusion,—“ I was wrong in giving way to this foolish display of passion ; but where the honour of Crichton is concerned, my feelings are irrepressible.”

“ I honour you for your devotion, brave Signor,” returned the Gelosa, pressing the Scot’s hand to her lips with a fervour that made his life-blood flow to his heart. “ And let not any thought of risk to me deter you from its manifestation. Conduct me hence, and return, if you see fitting, to avenge yourself upon yon insolent scholar.”

“ Impossible !” replied Ogilvy—“ the escort from the Vicomte de Joyeuse which is to conduct you beyond the gates of Paris, and place you on the route to the frontiers of

Italy, is not yet arrived. We must await their coming. It was the Chevalier Crichton's desire that we should do so. Fear nothing, fair maiden. I will defend you with the last drop of my blood; nor shall you again have to reproach my intemperate zeal in my patron's behalf."

"My heart misgives me," replied Ginevra, "but since it was his wish, I will remain here. — I feel as if I were not yet out of the power of that terrible Gonzaga. And then," added she, timidly, and blushing deeply as she spoke, "shall I confess to you, Signor; that I would willingly hazard my safety by remaining in Paris—nay, within the precincts of the Louvre, to witness this tourney. If Vincenzo fall, I have nothing to fear."

"But from Ruggieri—from Catherine you may still apprehend peril," returned Ogilvy, "besides, know you not that the king has commanded a combat *à plaisance*, and not *à outrance*? The Prince may be worsted therefore—but not slain. Your danger will

not be diminished by the result of this conflict.”

“ True—true,” replied Ginevra, in accents of despair, “ I shall behold him no more.”

“ Now listen to me, fair maiden,” said Ogilvy, in a deep whisper, “ you love the Chevalier Crichton—”

“ Signor !”

“ Nay, hear me ! your love is unrequited—I know it—his heart is pre-occupied. I am of a faith which regards your calling as vain—your creed idolatrous. But the heart, I find, knows no difference of religion. Its worship is from many altars. I love you, Ginevra—and I venture to avow my love,—because a moment hence may snatch you from me for ever. In one respect our feelings are in unison—our devotion to Crichton. I have no other portion to offer you but a true heart and a stanch sword. Will you accept my hand ?”

“ Signor,” replied the Gelosa coldly, “ my calling may be vain—my creed idolatrous—

but my heart owns but one divinity. I *do* love the Chevalier Crichton." And she averted her head.

"Is there no hope for me?" asked Ogilvy, drawing near to her.

"None," answered Ginevra, fiercely—"and if you would not drive me hence, speak no further upon this subject.

A burst of noisy merriment from the scholars came to the relief of the chagrined Scot, and as he turned in the direction of the sound to conceal his mortification, he heard the following irreverent Bacchanalian lay, chanted at the top of his voice by his adversary the Sorbonist; the other students joining in chorus.

Venite Potemus.*

I.

Venite, jovial sons of Hesper,
Who from matin unto vesper,
Roam abroad *sub Domino*;

* Adapted from an old French *Imatatoyre Bachique*.

Benedictine, Carmelite,
 Quaff we many a flask to night
Salutari nostro :
 If the wine be, as I think,
 Fit for reverend lips to drink,
Jubilemus ei.
Ecce bonum vinum, venite potemus !

II.

Hodie, when cups are full,
 Not a thought or care should dull
Corda vestra :—
 Eat your fill—the goblet quaff,
 Sufficient is the wine thereof
Secundum diem :—
 What care I—if huge in size
 My paunch should wax?—it testifies
Opera mea.
Venite potemus !

III.

Quadraginta years and more
 I've seen, and jolly souls some score
Proximus fui ;

And, life throughout, have ever thought,
That they, who tippie ale that's naught,

Errant corde ;

Yea, in my choler waxing hot,
I sware sour beer should enter not

In requiem meum.

Ecce bonum vinum, venite potemus !

The re-appearance of Dame Fredegonde, and the Soldier, bearing a capacious stoup of claret, had given rise to this effusion of the Sorbonist; and as each goblet was now filled to the brim, after having been previously emptied, general hilarity prevailed among the thirsty scions of the University. The Bernardin insisted upon the Soldier taking a seat beside him, and the Sorbonist deemed it incumbent upon him to present a flagon of the ruby fluid to Maître Jacques, who drained it in a breath.

“Lans tringue!” cried the Scholar of Harcourt, slapping the Soldier on the shoulder, “I drink to thee. Thou hast given us good

measure and good wine, i'faith. May our buxom hostess never want such a cellarist—nor ourselves such a drawer—ha—ha!

Remplis ton verre vuide
Vuide ton verre plein."

"I will not refuse thy pledge, comrade," replied the Soldier, "though my brain will not brook many such strong assaults so early in the morning. Here is to thy election to the dignity of chaplain at the next *Fête des Fous*."

"Jest not with me, compaing, but drink," retorted Harcourt, angrily—"it were thy safer course.—Ah!—thou refusest.—I discern something of the Huguenot about thee. I heard thee tell our hostess just now thou wert from the head-quarters of the Béarnais. One might guess as much from thy neglect of the flask, and devotion to the petticoats—*dignum patellâ operculum*. Ah! if it were ever to occur that thy master should be king of

France, a pretty time we should have of it! The good old days of François I. would be revived with a vengeance. Not a husband in Paris could rest in his bed. The Saints defend us from such a consummation. Well, I bear him no ill will—here's to the Grand Alcandre.”

“ Maranatha !” exclaimed the Sorbonist, “ that must not pass. We will be Catholic even in our cups. Thy pledge is heretical and schismatic. Rather let us drink confusion to the Béarnais, the Reform, and the church of Geneva—and success to the League, the true church, and the brave Balafre !”

“ To the Holy Union !” cried the Bernardin.

“ To the Pope !” shouted Montaigu.

“ To Beelzebub !” roared Harcourt. “ By Antichrist, I will hurl my wine-cup in his face who refuses my pledge—Henri of Navarre and the Huguenot cause !”

“ By the mass, I scent heresy in thy pledge, and refuse it,” returned the Sorbonist. The

words were scarcely out of his mouth when he received the contents of the scholar of Harcourt's flagon in his face.

In an instant all was confusion. Swords were drawn and crossed, and the table nearly upset in the confusion that ensued ; but by the united efforts of Blount, who had now formed one of the party, and the Swiss sergeant, the combatants were separated, and tranquillity for the second time restored. The cause of the disturbance, meantime, our nonchalant Soldier, so far from taking any share in the struggle, leaned back in his chair, and indulged in an immoderate fit of laughter.

“ How now, thou insensible varlet,” cried Harcourt, whose furious countenance and ruffled demeanour presented a singular contrast to his companion's apathy,—“ hast thou never a sword to draw in thy sovereign's behalf, or grace enough to thank him who is ready to fight thy battles for thee. By my

soul I was wrong. Brother of the Sorbonne, thy hand. Thou wert in the right to object to my rascal pledge. Ventre-saint-Quintin! from a Huguenot one gets neither aid nor acknowledgment."

"The quarrel was of thine own seeking, comrade," returned the Soldier, with increased merriment, "I pressed thee not into my service—the good cause of the Reformed Faith needs no such blustering advocates as thou art—and the Béarnais will not laugh a whit the less loudly because one sot drinks to his success, and another to his confusion."

"Fairly spoken," cried Montaigu, "for a Huguenot our reformado hath the air of an honest fellow. A truce to raillery, comrades! *Favete linguis*. These brawls interfere with drinking. Let us have a song to restore us to harmony. *Chantons, beuvons, ung motet*, as glorious old Rabelais hath it."

"*Entonnons*," cried the others, laughing.

“ What shall it be ? ” asked the Soldier.

Le chanson de la Peronelle,
La vie de Monsieur Saint François,
Le Confiteor des Angloys,

or the merry burthen of some farce, sotie,
or joyous discourse ? ”

“ *La Réformeresse*, for instance,” retorted
Montaigu, vociferating at the top of his voice—

To Paris, that good city,
Navarre’s young King is come,
And flock forth the damsels pretty,
At the beating of his drum.
But the fairest ’mid the crowd, sirs,
The loveliest of the lot,
Is a nymph, who cries aloud, sirs,
To the church, sire, you go not,

Huguenot !

E’en give us what thou wilt, my puissant
Hector: so thy strains savour not of the
nasal melodies of Théodore Beza, or the can-
ticles of Clément Marot, they will be right
welcome.”

“Lend me your voices in full chorus, then,” replied the Soldier, “and respond to my litany.” And in a deep tone, he sang as follows:—

FROM all men, who, counsel scorning,
To the tavern hie at morning
With latin base their talk adorning,
Liberā nos Domine.

And from all who night and day,
Cards and raiment cast away,
At cards and dice and other play,
Libera nos Domine.

“*Satis superque,*” shouted Montaigne, “thy roagation toucheth me too nearly, as testifieth the tattered state of my *exponibles*, to be altogether satisfactory—*Hei mihi!*”

Alea, vina, Venus, tribus his sum factus egenu s.

Sed parum est. I have still a few liards left, and when my pouch is utterly evacuate, I can turn Huguenot or hang myself—it matters little which. In the meantime;” and

here the reckless youth once more broke into song :—

Song of the Scholar.*

I.

A jolly life enough I lead—that is *semper quum possum* ;
 When mine host inviteth me, I answer *ecce assum* !
 Women, wine, and waissailry *lubens libenter colo*,
 And after meals to pass the time *chartis ludisque volo*,
 Unluckily these games are not *omnino sine dolo*.

II.

Wine to tippie I conceive *quod fui generatus*,
 Treasure to amass, indeed, I doubt if I was *natus*,
 Never yet with coin enough was I *locupletatus*,
 Or, with a superfluity, *vehementer excitatus*—
Despice divitias si vis animo esse beatus.

* An adaptation of a few verses of a macaronic poem of little merit, entitled *Des fames, des dez, et de la taverne*, appended to the last edition of the *Fabliaux et Contes des Poètes François*.

III.

Whither are my raiments fled?—*amice mi!*—*si quæris?*
 Quaffed they were in flowing cups *in tempore (heu!)
 veris;*

Thus am I obliged to roam *subhorridus per vicos,*
 Herding amidst truand rogues *et alios iniquos:*
Cum fueris felix multos numerabis amicis!

“Bellissime!” cried the soldier, “thy case is a hard one I must needs admit, comrade. But thou art a likely lad, and I promise thee, if thou wilt accompany me to the King of Navarre’s camp, whither I set out this morning, and wilt forswear thy roystering habits, and embrace the true doctrine, I will put thee in a way of lining thy pouch with weightier pieces than any it now holds, and of replacing thy thread-bare apparel with the hacquetoon and habergeon of the Bourbon.”

“Weighty blows are said to abound more than weighty pieces in thy king’s psalm-singing camp,” returned Montaigu; “and I must be bribed by present payment if I vend

my soul to messire Sathanas. But come," added he, filling his goblet, "let us drink between our songs, and sing between our draughts. Ædipol! my jolly missioner *ad partes infidelium*, thou hast the throat of a nightingale, and warblest a song divinely; and as thou art chary of the flask, wilt have the more leisure to divert us with another stave."

"Ventre-saint-gris," muttered the Soldier, smiling to himself, "could my faithful Rosni have foreseen, that during his absence, I should play the lover to a buxom aubergiste, the buffoon to a pack of losel scholars, and the rebel to myself, I had not escaped a lecture as long as ever John Calvin pronounced from his pulpit at Geneva. No matter: the monotony of life must be relieved; and he is a wise man who makes the most of the passing moment."

With this philosophical reflection he yielded to the Scholar's importunities. We have before observed, that his countenance was remark-

able for its frankness and cordiality: it had besides an indescribable expression of comic humour, which broadened and brightened as he proceeded with his vocal performance, into a glow of such irresistible drollery, that his auditors were almost convulsed with laughter; and, as real mirth is always contagious, the infection was speedily communicated to every guest of the Falcon,—the pensive and dolorous Ogilvy not excepted. Thus ran his ditty:—

The Chronicle of Gargantua:

*Showing how he took away the great Bells
of Notre-Dame.*

I.

GRANDGŒUSIER was a toper boon, as Rabelais will
tell ye,

Who, once upon a time, got drunk with his old wife
Gargamelly:

Right royally the bout began (no Queen was more
punctilious

Than Gargamelle) on chitterlings, botargos, gode-
billios !*

Sing, Caramari, carimara ! golynolo, golynolo !

II.

They licked their lips, they cut their quips—a flask
then each selected ;

And with good Greek, as satin sleek, their gullets they
humected.

Rang stave and jest, the flask they pressed—but ere
away the wine went,

Occurred most unexpectedly Queen Gargamelle's con-
finement !

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynolo, golynolo !

III.

No sooner was GARGANTUA born, than from his infant
throttle,

Arose a most melodious cry to his nurse to bring the
bottle !

* Gaudebillaux sont grasses trippes de coiraux. Coiraux
sont bœufz engressez à la cricbe, et prés guimaulx. Prés
guimaulx sont qui portent herbe deux foyz l'an.

Whereat Grandgousier much rejoiced—as it seemed,
unto his thinking,

A certain sign of a humour fine for most immoderate
drinking!

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynolo, golynolo !

IV.

Gargantua shot up, like a tower some city looking
over!

His full-moon visage in the clouds, leagues off, ye might
discover!

His gracious person he arrayed—I do not mean to
laugh at ye—

With a suit of clothes, and great trunk hose, of a
thousand ells of taffaty!

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynolo, golynolo !

V.

Around his waist Gargantua braced a belt of silk
bespangled,

And from his hat, as a platter flat, a long blue feather
dangled;

And down his hip, like the mast of ship, a rapier huge
descended,

With a dagger keen, stuck his sash between, all for
ornament intended !

Sing, *Carimari, carimara ! golynolo, golynolo !*

VI.

So learned did Gargantua grow, that he talked like one
whose turn is

For logic, with a sophister, hight Tubal Holofernes.
In Latin too he lessons took from a tutor old and
seedy,

Who taught the '*Quid Est,*' and the '*Pars,*'—one
Jobelin de Bridé!

Sing, *Carimari, carimara ! golynolo, golynolo !*

VII.

A monstrous mare Gargantua rode—a black Numidian
courser—

A beast so droll, of filly or foal, was never seen before,
sir!

Great elephants looked small as ants, by her side,—
her hoofs were cloven,—

Her tail was like the spire at Langes, —her mane like
goat-beards woven !

Sing, *Carimari, carimara ! golynolo, golynolo !*

VIII.

Upon this mare Gargantua rode until he came to
 Paris,
 Which, from Utopia's capital, as we all know,
 rather far is—
 The thundering bells of Notre-Dame, he took from out
 the steeple,
 And he hung them round his great mare's neck in the
 sight of all the people!

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

IX.

Now, what Gargantua did beside, I shall pass by with-
 out notice,
 As well as the absurd harangue of that wiseacre
 Janotus;
 But the legend tells that the thundering bells Brag-
 mardo brought away, sir,
 And that in the towers of Notre-Dame they are swing-
 ing to this day, sir!

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

X.

Now the great deeds of Gargantua,—how his father's
 foes he followed,—

How pilgrims, six with their staves and scrips, in a
 lettuce leaf he swallowed,—
 How he got blind drunk with a worthy monk, Friar
 Johnny of the Funnels,—
 And made huge cheer, till the wine and beer flew about
 his camp in runnels.
 Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

XI.

How he took to wife, to cheer his life, fat Badebec the
 moper ;
 And by her begat a lusty brat, Pantagruel the toper !
 And did other things, as the story sings, too long to find
 a place here,
 Are they not writ, with matchless wit, by Alcofribas
 Nasier ? *
 Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

As the Soldier brought his song to a close,
 amid the thundering applause and inextinguishable
 laughter of the Scholars, his own exhilaration was
 considerably damped by the sudden appearance of two
 new-comers, who

* The anagram of François Rabelais.

entered the cabaret, unobserved, during his performance; and with looks sufficiently expressive of their disapprobation of his conduct, held themselves aloof until the termination of his strains, when they slowly approached the table.

The foremost of these personages was a man of middle age, and severe aspect, fully equipped in the accoutrements of a military leader of the period; but his breast-plate, though of the brightest Milan steel, was wholly destitute of ornament, and resembled rather, in its heavy and cumbrous form, an antique cuirass, of the age of Bayard and Gaston de Foix (a period emulated by the chivalrous followers of Henri of Navarre), than the lackered and embossed armour worn by the knighthood of the court of France. A tall plume nodded upon his morion, and a long two-handed sword, called in the language of the tilt-yard a *gagne-pain*, was girded to his thigh. The hand, able to wield such a blade with ease, could not, it was evident, be de-

ficient in energy. From his right hip hung the long and trenchant dagger, termed, from its use in the combat, a *miséricorde*. His companion was habited in the black Geneva cloak and band, constituting the attire of a preacher of the Reformed Faith. He was a venerable man, with silver hair streaming upon his shoulders from beneath his black silk calotte. His figure was bent by age and infirmities, and his steps needed the support of a staff; but the fire which yet blazed in his deep-seated gray eye, showed that the ardour and enthusiasm of his youthful spirit was still unextinguished.

“Diable!” mentally exclaimed the Soldier, pushing aside his seat and rising to greet the strangers,—“Rosni here—and my old preceptor Doctor Florent Chrétien. Parbleu! their arrival at this juncture is unlucky. But I must put the best face I can upon the matter.” And, as these thoughts passed rapidly through his mind, he reverently saluted the minister and exchanging a significant look with the

Knight, the party adjourned to a more retired part of the cabaret.

“ I did not expect to find your Majesty thus occupied ;” observed Rosni, in a tone of reproach, as soon as they were out of hearing of the company. “ Methinks the wise and valiant Henri of Navarre might have more profitably as well as worthily employed his leisure, than by administering to the amusements, and sharing in the pastimes of these unlicensed and idolatrous brawlers.”

“ Tush, Rosni,” replied the Soldier, who, it is needless to say, was Henri of Bourbon, “ I am *not* a monarch with these revellers ; and were I to vouchsafe any explanation to thee, with whom I *am* a king, I could offer such reasons for my conduct as would convince thee, that what I have done has been without impeachment of my ‘valour and wisdom’, and was merely undertaken with a view to sustain my character as a soldier.”

“ Your character as a soldier would have been better sustained by repressing licence

than abetting it, Sire," returned Rosni bluntly. "Had I been in your Majesty's place, and these riotous Edomites had pressed me to make music for them, I would have treated them to a psalm, such as our pious Calvin hath himself appointed for the recreation of the faithful, or to one of those mournful ballads so displeasing to the enemies of our religion, wherein their own sanguinary atrocities are sternly set forth, and the sufferings of our martyrs painfully recorded."

"And have been laughed at for thy pains," said Henri. "Trust me, my expedient was the wiser one."

At this moment the voices of the scholars again rose loud in song; and the following chorus reached the ears of the King of Navarre and his companions:—

A merry company are we,
 Who spend our lives in revelry,
 Self-nick-named *Enfans-sans-souci*!

Cric, croc, cric, croc, la, la!

"Ohé! soldier of the true faith," shouted

Montaignu—"another song before we start for the tourney! Heed not thy captain's reprimand. We will bear thee harmless."

"Thou hearest," said Henri, smiling, "those *enfants-sans-souci*, as they not inaptly term themselves, are clamorous for my return. *Ventre-saint-gris*! Rosni, I am half disposed to send thee to them as my substitute. I would gladly see what effect one of thy doleful ditties would have upon their high-flown spirits. Wilt take my seat at yon table?"

"I will obey your Majesty's behests," replied Rosni, gravely—"But I wash my hands of the consequences."

"Gothen," replied Henri, laughing—"thou deservest some punishment for thy imprudence. What, in the devil's name, induced thee to bring old Chrétien to this 'meeting of the mockers,' and 'seat of the scornful,' as he would call it? Thy former experience might have led thee to expect some such untoward accident as the present; and it

should be rather thy business to draw a veil over thy sovereign's foibles than to betray them."

"I shall observe more caution in future," returned Rosni in a tone of irony -- "but after his own voluntary promise of amendment it ill became me to doubt my sovereign's maintenance of his word. The Doctor Florent Chrétien, whom I chanced upon at the Protestant consistory in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, this morning, hath a matter of importance to communicate to your Majesty's private ear, and to that end I ventured to bring him hither."

"Thou hast done well, Rosni," replied the King—"nevertheless I cannot pretermitt the punishment I have imposed upon thee.—Hark! my comrades call thee—go and join them."

Again the chorus of the Scholars arose above the general clamour; and a voice, (it was that of the Sorbonist) was heard vociferating the following verses:—

Song of the Sorbonist.

DEATH to the Huguenot ! fagot and flame !

Death to the Huguenot ! torture and shame !

Death ! Death !

Heretic lips sue for mercy in vain,

Drown their loud cries in the waters of Seine !

Drown ! Drown !

Hew down, consume them with fire and with sword !

A good work ye do in the sight of the Lord !

Kill !—Kill !

Hurl down their temples ! their ministers slay !

Let them bleed as they bled on Barthélemy's day !

Slay !—Slay !—

A roar of insolent laughter followed this effusion. Henri of Navarre bit his lips.

“ Go,” said he, frowning, “ leave me with Chretien.”

“ By the holy Evangel ! I will make these accursed mass-mongers such sport as Sampson showed the Philistines,” returned Rosni.

“ But before I quit your presence, Sire ; I must acquaint you that your escort is in readiness at the Porte Montmartre, and that two of my followers with your steed await your coming forth at the door of this cabaret.”

“ Let them wait, “ answered the King, sharply, “ I shall not set out upon my journey till the evening.”

“ How, Sire ?” asked Rosni.

“ It is my intention to attend the jousts held this morning at the Louvre.”

“ But your Majesty—”

“ Is resolved to have my own way—so thou mayest spare me further remonstrances on that head, Rosni. Not only will I witness this tourney, but break a lance at it myself in honour of the Queen my spouse ; though I will freely confess to thee, she deserves no such attention at my hands, after her refusal to join me where she deems I now am, at my court at Pau. But let that pass. There is a Scottish Cavalier, who hath

boasted, as it seems to me, somewhat indiscreetly, of Marguerite's favours towards him, whether truly or not signifies little, as I hold secrecy to be the first duty of a gallant. I have a fancy for lowering this prattling mignon's crest, the rather that he is reputed an expert tilter, and as such not unworthy of my lance. And it may chance if Marguerite sees her favourite laid low, she may change her mind as to returning with us. At all events I shall attend this tourney in the quality of a knight-adventurer. Thou shalt ride forth with me anon, and procure me suitable equipments. My own steed will bear me bravely through the day."

"Your Majesty shall commit no such folly," replied Rosni, bluntly.

"Baron de Rosni," exclaimed Henri, haughtily, "we have honoured thee thus far with our friendship — but there are limits to our goodnature which even *you* shall not exceed."

"Pardon my bluntness, Sire," returned

Rosni—"but at the hazard of forfeiting your favour would I step between you and the peril to which you thus rashly expose yourself. When your faithful counsellors reluctantly consented to your coming hither on this fruitless embassy to a Queen who loves you not, but who partakes of the perfidious and inconstant nature of her family—when, I say, they consented to your accompanying your own messengers, in disguise, my life was pledged for your safe return. That life is nothing. But upon your security, Sire, hangs the fate of a kingdom, and the prosperity of a pure and holy faith of which you are the defender and champion. Bethink you of the cause in which you have embarked—of your zealous followers—of the whole Protestant world, whose eyes are fixed upon you—bethink you also of the risk you run—of the inevitable consequences attendant upon a discovery of your presence—of your long captivity in the walls of the Louvre from which you have

so recently escaped.—Think of all this, and blame (if you can ?) the zeal which prompts me to speak thus boldly.”

“ Leave me, sir,” replied Henri—“ I would speak with my old preceptor. You shall learn my resolves anon.”

Rosni bowed and took the place assigned to him by the monarch at the table of the revellers. His arrival was greeted with loud laughter, and many muttered allusions from the reckless crew to his Huguenot principles.

“ Hark'ye, messires,” said Rosni, “ you have prevailed upon one of my troop to sing for you, and in return have favoured us with one of those ferocious melodies which your brethren howled to the thundering tocsin of the bloody day of Saint-Barthelemi. Ye shall now have my response. But first I charge ye let your goblets be filled to the brim, and drink the pledge I shall propose to you—‘ The Downfall of Antichrist, the Extermination of the League, and the universal establishment of the true Faith.’ Ha! you hesitate. By the

Evangel! messires, I will thrust my poignard into his throat who refuses my pledge." Saying which he drew his dagger, and glanced fiercely round the group.

A stern silence succeeded this speech. The mirth of the Scholars was suddenly checked.—Each one glanced at his neighbour, as if he expected he would resent the insult. But no one dared openly to do so.

"I am with you, Sir Knight," exclaimed Blount. "I will see that all obey you."

"The pledge!" said Rosni, seizing the Scholar of Harcourt by the throat, and forcing him to pronounce the hateful words, and afterwards to wash them down with a deep draught of wine.

"By Saint Thomas; thou escapest not," cried Blount, grappling with the Sorbonist.

"Not one shall escape me," said Rosni—"he shall drink it, or die the death."

Accordingly, seeing resistance was in vain against armed force like that of the knight, the Scholars sullenly complied.

“ I have not yet done with you, messires,” said Rosni, in a tone of mockery—“ I will not insult the religion I profess, by allowing blasphemers, like yourselves, to take part in its holy psalms—but as you have rung in mine ears the death knell of our slaughtered saints, ye shall listen to the judgment called down from on high for that offence upon the head of your late treacherous and bloodthirsty sovereign, Charles IX. Stir not, neither offer any interruption as ye would avoid a sudden and speedy doom.”

“ Lend me your dagger, Sir Knight,” said Ogilvy, unable to control his choler, and springing towards the table; “ and I will compel as attentive audience to your strains as ever was accorded to the sermons of our pious Knox ”

“ And as willing,” said the Bernardin, with a sneer.

“ Take that in earnest of the chastisement I will inflict upon him who shall disobey this Knight’s commands,” said Ogilvy, bestowing

a sounding buffet upon the Scholar's cheek, adding fiercely, as he received the *miséricorde* from Rosni, "the first of you who speaketh word of offence breathes his last."

Amid the glances of defiance and suppressed rage cast upon him by the Scholars, the Knight, in a deep stern tone, sang the following ballad :

Charles III. at Montfaucon.

I.

"TO HORSE—to horse!" thus spake King Charles,
 "to horse! my lords, with me!
 Unto Montfaucon will we ride—a sight you there shall
 see."—
 "Montfaucon, sire!" said his esquire—"what sight
 my liege! how mean ye?"
 "The carcase stark of the traitor dark, and heretic
 Coligni."

II.

The trumpets bray, their chargers neigh a loud and
 glad *revéillé*—
 And plaudits ring, as the haughty king from the Louvre
 issues gaily :

On his right hand rides his mother, with her dames—
 a gorgeous train—
 On his left careers his brother, with the proud duke of
 Lorraine.

III.

Behind is seen his youthful queen — the meek
 Elizabeth*—
 With her damsels bright, whose talk is light of the sad,
 sad show of death :—
 Ah ! lovely ones !—ah ! gentle ones ! from the scoffer's
 judgment screen ye !
 Mock not the dust of the martyr'd just, for of such
 was good Coligni.

IV

By foot up-hung, to flesh-hook strung, is now re-
 vealed to all
 Mouldering and shrunk, the headless trunk of the good
 old Admiral :

* Elizabeth of Austria, daughter of the Emperor Maximilian, an amiable and excellent Princess, whose genuine piety presented a striking contrast to the sanguinary fanaticism of her tyrannical and neglectful spouse. “ *O mon dieu !*” cried she on the day of the Massacre, of which she had been kept in ignorance ; “ *quels conseillers sont ceux-là, qui ont donné le Roi tel avis ? Mon dieu ! je te supplie, et je requiers de lui pardonner, car si tu n'en as pitié j'ai grand peur que cette offense ne lui soit pas pardonnée.*”

Gash-visaged Guise the sight doth please—fierce lord,
 was naught between ye!—
 In felon blow of base Poltrot* no share had brave
 Coligni.

V.

“ Now by God’s death !” the monarch saith, with in-
 auspicious smile,
 As, laughing, group the reckless troop round gray
 Montfaucon’s pile ;
 “ From off that hook its founder shook—Enguerrand
 de Marigni— †
 But gibbet chain did ne’er sustain such burthen as
 Coligni.”

* Jean Poltrot de Méré the assassin of François de Guise, father of the *Balafré*, probably, in order to screen himself, accused Coligni and Beza of being the instigators of his offence. His flesh was afterwards torn from his bones by red-hot pincers, but Henri of Lorraine never considered his sire’s death fully avenged until the massacre of the Admiral. Coligni’s head was sent by Catherine de Medicis to Rome as an offering to Gregory XIII. Upon this occasion the Pope had a medal struck off, stamped with an exterminating angel and subscribed—*Ugonotorum Strages*.

† *Pereat sud arte Perillus*. Enguerrand de Marigny, Grand Chamberlain of France, during the reign of Philippe-le-Bel constructed the famous gibbet of Montfaucon, and was himself among the first to glut its horrible *fourches patibulaires*, whence originated the ancient adage :—*Plus malheureux que le bois dont on fait le gibet*.

VI.

“ Back ! back ! my liege,” exclaimed a page, “ with death the air is tainted,

The sun grows hot, and see you not, good sire, the queen has fainted.”

“ Let those retire,” quoth Charles in ire, “ who think they stand too nigh ;

To us no scent yields such content as a dead enemy.”*

VII.

As thus he spake, the king did quake—he heard a dismal moan—

A wounded wretch had crept to stretch his limbs beneath that stone :—

“ Of dying man,” groaned he, “ the ban, the Lord’s anointed dread,

My curse shall cling to thee, O King !—much righteous blood thou’st shed.”

VIII.

“ Now by Christ’s blood ! by holy Rood !” cried Charles, impatiently ;

“ With sword and pike—strike, liegemen, strike !—God’s-death ! this man shall die.”

* Ensuite Coligni fut traîné aux fourches patibulaires de Montfaucon. Le Roi vint jouir de ce spectacle, et s’en montra insatiable. On ne concevait pas qu’il put résister à une telle odeur ; on le pressait de se retirer. *Non* dit-il, *le cadavre d’un ennemi sent toujours bien !* LACRATELLE.

Straight halbert clashed, and matchlock flashed—but
ere a shot was fired—

With laugh of scorn that wight forlorn had suddenly
expired.

IX.

From the Louvre gate, with heart elate, King Charles
that morn did ride ;

With aspect dern did he return, quenched was his
glance of pride :—

Remorse and ruth, with serpent tooth, thenceforth
seized on his breast—

With bloody tide his couch was dyed—pale visions
broke his rest ! *

As the Baron de Rosni (for such was the
rank of the Huguenot leader) concluded his
speech, a sullen murmur arose amongst the
soldiers, deepening, as it proceeded, until it
bore the character of an angry groan.

— Par la Porte d'Enfer, which once con-

La maladie de Charles IX. était accompagnée de symp-
tômes plus violens qu'on n'en remarque dans les maladies de
fièvre ; sa poitrine était particulièrement affectée ; mais
le sang coulait par tous les pores : d'affreux souvenirs per-
turbèrent sa pensée dans un lit toujours baigné de sang ; il
mourut et ne pouvait pas s'arracher de cette place. LACRA-
ZE. *Histoire de France pendant les Guerres de Religion.*

ducted the neophyte to our halls," muttered Harcourt, "I would as soon die with the confession of Augsburg upon my lips as listen to such another ditty. Coligni's own epitaph would make a sprightlier lay:—

Cy gist, mais c'est mal entendu,

Ce mot pour luy est trop honneste.

Icy l'Admiral est pendu

Par les pieds à faute de teste!"

"*Par les pieds à faute de teste!*" chorussed the others with a roar of derisive laughter.

"Peace, on your lives;" cried Ogilvy, with a threatening gesture.

"By the memory of the good Thomas Crucé, who slaughtered eighty of these schismatics with his proper hand," whispered the Sorbonist to the Scholar of Harcourt; "I will wash out the affront put upon us, in the blood of that accursed Scot—*offensam ense vindicabo.*"

"My blade shall second you," returned Harcourt in the same tone.

CHAPTER II.

THE HUGUENOT.

Chaque mot qu'il disait était un trait de flamme,
 Qui pénétrait Henri jusqu'au fond de son ame.
 Il quitte avec regret ce vieillard vertueux ;
 Des pleurs en l'embrassant coulèrent de ses yeux.

VOLTAIRE. *Henriade: Chant I.*

No sooner had Rosni quitted his Sovereign's presence than the venerable Florent Chrétien approaching Henri, took his hand and pressed it fervently to his lips. As the King withdrew his fingers from the old man's grasp, he perceived they were wet with his tears.

“ Nay, by my faith, my excellent friend,” said he in a tone of great kindness, “ this must not be. Tears from such eyes as yours are reproaches too cutting for endurance. I

had rather you would chide me in the harshest terms you could employ, than assail me with the only weapons against which I am not proof. What would you have me do?"

"Does not your own great and generous heart, my liege," returned the Minister, "which prompts you to interpret the overflowing of an anxious breast into rebuke, tell you what course you ought to pursue? Does it not point out to you that your life, precious in itself—but oh! of inestimable value to all members of our pure religion, to whom you are as Joshua, or Maccabæus, may not be lightly imperiled by your own act, without manifest departure from that high course, which the King of Kings hath appointed you to run; and which in due season, if you remain true unto yourself, and to your cause, you will doubtless gloriously accomplish. Well and truly hath your faithful follower, the Baron de Rosni, spoken when he averred that on your safety dependeth that of the true Church of Christ; and not in vain will my tears have been shed if they avail to

turn you from these vanities, and recal your nobler nature. Better I should lament than your enemies rejoice. Better one should blush in secret, than a whole kingdom be turned to shame for its Sovereign's defection. Cast off this slavery of the senses. Yield not to the devices and snares of the Prince of Darkness. You are our guardian, our bulwark, our tower of strength. Pause ere you wantonly expose our decimated flocks to the further ravages of these devouring wolves." As he spake the old man's eyes glistened, and his looks kindled till his glowing countenance wore an air of apostolic fervour that produced, more than his words, a strong impression upon the King.

"Rest assured, my good friend," replied Henri, "I will in no way compromise my own security, or that of the church over whose welfare I watch, and in whose behalf I have raised my banner. I have other and stronger motives than the mere love of such a pageant which attract me to these

jousts, but I here gage my royal word to you, that I will place neither my life nor my personal safety in needless jeopardy. And now," added he, with a smile, "cordially thanking you for your admonitory counsels which, as you well know, are seldom pleasant in the ears of Kings; and, having scarce leisure for a longer homily, or even for further conference at this moment, let us turn to your own peculiar concerns. If you have any communication to make, delay it not. I am impatient to know how I can serve you."

"It is not in my own behalf that I would claim your Majesty's services," rejoined the Preacher, "but in that of one in whom you yourself are nearly interested. Know, Sire, that a sister of the Prince of Condé is at this moment a captive in the hands of the bloody Jezebel of France, Catherine de Medicis. It is for her deliverance from thralldom and oppression that I solicit your aid; and if you *are* resolved to expose yourself to needless risk, let it be to effect the liberation

of a Princess of your own royal blood, a zealous believer in our creed, and in the eyes of a searcher of knightly adventure, for as such I must regard your Majesty, a distressed and forlorn damsel.”

“ If this, indeed, were as you represent it, my good friend,” replied Henri, “ you should have my instant aid, even though it were needful to bear her from the Louvre with my handful of men. But you have been deceived by some false statement.—Our cousin of Condé has no sister at the court of France.”

“ The Prince believes she perished in her infancy, Sire,” returned the preacher, “ but her preservation from the sword of those fierce Amalekites who beset the good Louis de Bourbon on his flight to Rochelle was little less than miraculous, as you will find when I relate to you the history of this unfortunate Princess as it was delivered to me by one of the attendants of the Queen-Mother, who hath recently become a convert to our faith.”

“Your information is derived from a suspicious quarter, Messire,” returned the King with a smile of incredulity. “Catherine’s *cameriere* are as deceitful to the full as the daughters of the Philistines. I know them of old. Your proselyte may prove a Delilah after all, and her specious story only a snare laid to entrap you. Our uncle, Louis de Bourbon, it is true, hath often spoken of the hapless fate of his infant daughter in the mountain defiles near Sancerre, but he believed, nay, was assured, that she perished.”

“Credit me, Sire, she lives,” replied Chrétien. And he then succinctly detailed such particulars of Esclairmonde’s story as are already familiar to the reader — adding that the Princess had been hitherto kept in ignorance of her illustrious origin from a fear lest some inadvertence, not unnatural on the part of one so young and inexperienced, should betray her consciousness of her real rank and condition to the suspicions of Catherine, and militate against any plans formed for her de-

liverance. The Preacher likewise stated, that he had been summoned at an early hour on that morning to the Louvre by Annunziata, (the attendant from whom he had obtained his knowledge of this important secret) to visit Esclairmonde—that she had revealed to him, without reserve, the events of the preceding night—imploing him to free her from the persecution of her royal lover, who, it appeared, had despatched a *billet*, stating that if she offered further opposition to his passion he would denounce her as a heretic to the inquisition of the Catholic priesthood. “She was bathed in tears when I entered the chamber,” said Chrétien, “and at first refused to be comforted, but deeming the proper period arrived for its disclosure, I communicated to her from what illustrious stock she sprang, and besought her to comport herself like a descendant of that royal house.”

“Ha! corbleu! how received she this intelligence?”

“Like a daughter of the race of Bourbon,”

replied Chrétien—" Her grief was at once checked, and she spake calmly and deliberately with me upon the means of her evasion. One circumstance alone appeared to give her uneasiness—but I doubt whether I am at liberty to mention it to your Majesty—"

" I care not to know it, my good friend," returned the King, " if it is aught the Princess would not wish to be divulged to me."

" It is, however, desirable, I think, that your Majesty should be acquainted with the state of her heart, the rather that you may form a judgment—"

" Whether the alliance be suitable, ha! Messire.—What Cavalier has been so fortunate as to ingratiate himself into the good opinion of this captive Princess?"

" A Scottish Gentleman, my Liege, who hath greatly distinguished himself at the court of your royal brother of France—the Chevalier Crichton."

“*Mort de ma vie!*” exclaimed Henri, angrily,—“Doth *he* aspire to her hand?”

“Your Majesty forgets that he knew her only as one of Queen Catherine’s maids of honour.”

“True,” replied the King, sternly—“but she is now our cousin, and as such no mate for an adventurer like Crichton.”

“It was her sense of this change in her condition, my Liege, and of the impassable bar placed between her and her lover that gave her so much pain:—nor was her uneasiness diminished, when she learnt, as she shortly afterwards did from a missive conveyed to her from the Chevalier Crichton, that he had by accident made the discovery of her exalted origin, and at the peril of his life wrested the proofs of it from Catherine’s own hands, but in his endeavour to transmit the packet to her, while he was yet in the power of the Queen-Mother, it had been irrecoverably lost.”

“Ventre-saint-gris!” exclaimed Henri—
“were there such proofs?”

“The Chevalier Crichton affirmed that the packet contained letters from the Queen-Mother, the Maréchal de Tavannes, and the Cardinal of Lorraine.”

“Diable!” cried the King with vivacity, —“those letters were well worth the risk of a life, and would have obviated the necessity of bringing forward the scarce-credible statement of your proselyte Annunziata. Heaven grant they have not fallen again into Catherine’s clutches! It was a bold deed to tear her prey from the lioness, and this Crichton hath approved himself a Cavalier of no mean prowess. One question more, good Chrétien, did not this Scottish knight promise to finish his adventure by delivering our captive cousin?”

“Of a verity, my liege, he did so,” returned the Preacher, with some reluctance.

“I knew as much,” said Henri, smiling—
“Esclairmonde is now at the Louvre?—ha!”

“ In the train of the Queen Louise, whom she accompanies at noon to the lists, where by his Majesty’s commands she presides as sovereign-arbitress. To-night there is a new fête and masque at the Louvre. Before that time she must be delivered from thralldom, or her fate is sealed.”

“ Before that hour she *shall* be delivered,” replied the King, “ or I will myself proclaim her rank before Henri and his assembled court. But time presses, good Chrétien, and I must to the tilt-yard.”

“ Your Majesty—”

“ Is peremptory — headstrong — what you will? But waste no more words upon me. Tarry here till the jousts are over, and I will rejoin you.”

As he spoke, the King made a sign to the Baron de Rosni, who, with a glance of ineffable disdain at the menacing gestures of the Scholars, instantly rejoined him; and after a little further conversation with the Preacher, and a valediction, which greatly scandalized

the good old man, proffered to his buxom hostess, Henri and his follower quitted the cabaret.

They were about to mount the steeds awaiting their coming forth, at the door of the tavern, when a band of equerries, pages, and gentlemen-ushers in superb liveries of crimson velvet, slashed with yellow satin, accompanied by a crowd of trumpeters and hautboy-players blowing loud flourishes, rode furiously down the Rue Pelican, shouting as they passed—“way for the Queen-Mother — stand back —stand back.” Henri drew his cap closely over his brow at this intimation, and appeared to busy himself about the saddle of his charger. Presently appeared Catherine, mounted upon a beautiful Spanish jennet, and attended by her *petite bande des dames*, all on horse-back, on their way to the Louvre. It was impossible to conceive a gayer or more attractive sight than this brilliant troop of youthful dames, each attended by a page habited in her colours, presented. All were

masked in demi-vizards of various dyes, and the beholder therefore could do little more than guess at the loveliness of their lineaments. But the brightness of the orbs flashing through the apertures of those witching *tourets de nez*—the splendour of their attire,—the grace they displayed on their steeds,—the waving of their silken tresses,—the elegance and lightness of their figures left him in little incertitude as to the charms of feature thus enviously concealed from view. In spite of the risk incurred by such a proceeding, Henri could not resist the temptation of stealing a glance at the fair equestrians as they passed in review before him; and as the person of one, who seemed to be more exquisitely proportioned than her companions, attracted his ardent gaze, the damsel (it was La Rebour) remarked to her companion—“ Sainte-Marie! La Fosseuse, only see how much that soldier resembles the King of Navarre!”

“ Nenni!” returned La Fosseuse pertly, “ I discover no likeness—or if there is any, the

soldier has decidedly the advantage over the monarch—his shoulders are broader —”

“ Perhaps so,” sighed La Rebours; “ but the resemblance is very remarkable.” And as she turned her head to satisfy herself of the fact, the king had disappeared. “ How very singular!” thought she, musing on the circumstance as she rode along.

We will now return to the cabaret and enquire after the *Gelosa*. With difficulty the unhappy maiden mastered her terror when she perceived *Ogilvy* engaged in a second brawl with the *Scholars*, and found herself deserted by both her protectors; but her alarm was greatly increased, when after the departure of the *Baron de Rosni*, the menaces of the *Scholars* assumed a more determinately hostile shape; and the *Scot* was loudly threatened with death on all sides. Neither could the strong arms of *Blount* and the *Swiss sergeant*, nor the peaceful interposition of the *Preacher* avail to allay the storm. They cried out loudly for his blood, and

swords and daggers were drawn,— tables and benches overturned, — glasses broken— deep and vindictive oaths uttered ; and a sanguinary conflict must have ensued had not the Chevalier du Guet and his two lieutenants armed with partisans, and accompanied by several other personages in sable dresses, whose sallow countenances, as well as certain peculiarities in their costume, proclaimed them to be Italians, suddenly entered the tavern. The chief of the watch commanded peace in the King's name ; and apprehensive of the consequences of a refusal to obey his order, the combatants were compelled to sheath their blades. But in the meantime another event occurred, which gave a new turn to the affair, and served to re-awaken their suspended animosity. As her eye rested upon the new-comers, Ginevra could not repress a faint scream, and attracted by the sound, one of the foremost of their number instantly rushed towards her ; and ere the hapless maiden could offer any resistance, she

found herself in the power of the followers of Gonzaga. To rush to her assistance, to extricate her from the grasp of her assailant, was with Ogilvy the work of a moment. But his assistance was ineffectual. Ginevra only escaped from one hand to be retaken by the other. The Sorbonist twined his arms round the form of the flying girl and bore her back to her captors. Ogilvy meanwhile had not relinquished the grasp he had fixed upon the Italian. In the struggle that succeeded, a packet fell from the doublet of the latter. The Scot recognised it at once.

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed he, setting his foot upon the papers,—“ to the rescue Blount,—to the rescue,—there is the object of our patron Crichton’s search,—the documents establishing the Princess Esclairmonde’s birth,—to the rescue,—to the rescue ! ”

“ Gracious heaven ! ” exclaimed the Preacher, “ to his aid young man. I would fain wield a sword in such a cause myself—help!—help ! ”

Blount needed not this incitement to draw his sword. He threw himself resolutely upon the Italians, whose weapons were all directed against Ogilvy's breast, and struck the foremost of them to the ground. But his purpose was checked by a sudden and fatal issue being put to the combat. One of the followers of Gonzaga, watching his opportunity, plunged his stiletto deeply into Ogilvy's breast. Without a groan, though he felt himself mortally wounded, the Scot now stooped down, and receiving as he did, numberless wounds from his adversaries, obtained possession of the packet.

“Take it,” said he, as with a dying effort, he reached the Englishman's side, “you know its destination—heed me not—away—my strength will not avail me to fly—but my heart goes with you and to my patron—tell him—but I cannot speak—go—go.”

Uttering these words, he committed the packet to Blount's custody, and suddenly

turning, confronted his adversaries with a look so fierce and desperate, that the boldest of them shrank back appalled.

“Follow me, messire,” whispered Dame Fredegonde, who, under cover of the protecting arm of the Swiss sergeant, had ventured to approach the combatants, “follow me,” said she, plucking Blount’s sleeve, “and you too, worthy sir,” addressing the Preacher, “you can render little assistance to that dying man, and your presence will only incite these murderous students to further acts of violence. Holy Virgin!—blessed Luther I mean—but I scarcely know what I am saying—that such a fray as this should have dishonoured my dwelling. Maître Jacques, look to their swords—mercy upon us!—ward them off—I will find means to requite your valour—come along, Messires—quick—quick, this way—this way.”

Blount looked irresolute.

“By Saint Ben’et,” said he, “I never yet turned my back upon an enemy; and I see

not why I should fly for the first time when I have a friend to avenge."

"If thou wouldst indeed avenge me, tarry not," cried Ogilvy.

And as he spoke, the sword of one of his antagonists was thrust through his body, and the Scot fell to the earth.

"Let them not wholly triumph," gasped the dying man,—“ah! he escapes,” cried he, turning his glazing eyes in the direction of Blount, who, defended by the nervous arm and huge falchion of the Swiss, as well as by the dreaded fangs of his dog Druid, and guided by the friendly hostess, speedily effected his retreat, together with the Preacher, through a small door-way, not hitherto observed by the guests. As this door was closed and barricaded by the stalwart person of Maître Jacques, a smile of exultation lighted up Ogilvy's features: “I die content,” murmured he.

At this moment a piercing shriek rent the air. It proceeded from the Gelosa. Her

captors were about to bear her off, but finding she continued her outcries, one of them twisted a scarf round her throat in such a manner, that it was impossible for the wretched maiden to utter further sound. This done, regarding neither the entreaties of Dame Fredegonde, nor the impotent threats of Ogilvy, they disappeared with their prey. At the same time the Chevalier du Guet and his attendants quitted the tavern.

“Recreants,” cried the Scot, who had raised himself upon one arm—“will none lend a hand to the rescue?—will none help her?—That youth, as you deem him, is a maiden in disguise,—will ye stand by and see wrong done to a woman?—to the rescue if ye be men!”

“Think you we will defend thy leman, fool,” said the Sorbonist, with a derisive laugh, as he passed him; “our vengeance is now fully complete—thou art robbed of thy life and thy mistress—ha—ha.—Come, comrades, let us to the lists. This augurs well. This Scot’s countryman may chance to meet a like

downfall. We shall see. And hark ye, messires, if we can lay hands upon that heretic Preacher, we will see if there is a billet to be found in the Prés-aux-clercs :—

Death to the Huguenot !—fagot and flame!

Death to the Huguenot !—torture and shame!

Death ! Death ! ”

And all joining in this menacing chorus, the Scholars quitted the cabaret.

Scarcely had the reckless troop gained the street, when a band of men, wearing the livery of the Vicomte de Joyeuse, entered the chamber.

“ Where is the youth, whom we are to conduct from Paris ? ” asked their leader, glancing around in astonishment and alarm.

“ In the hands of —— ” gasped Ogilvy.

But ere he could complete the sentence, the brave Scot became for ever silent.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROCESSION.

Genets, coursiers, riches bardes, houssures,
 Plumars remplis d'orphaveries fines,
 Chanfrains dorés à grans entrelassures,
 Armets luyans, bicquoquets, capelines,
 Bucques de pris, tres riches mantelines—

ANDRE DE LA VIGNE. *Le Vergier d'Honneur.*

As the hour for the opening of the lists drew nigh, all the avenues and approaches of the Louvre were thronged with eager and curious crowds hurrying from each quarter to behold the chivalrous pageant. This concourse consisted of every class of society to be found in the vast and miscellaneous population of Paris, from the sedate citizen and his demure spouse, to be distinguished by the propriety of their gear, (costume being then subject to a royal ordinance), down to the rough and half-clothed boatmen, who plied upon the Seine, and the sturdy artisan

who haunted its banks. Nor must we omit a host of Jews, beggars, truands, and other nondescript vagabonds who usually formed the mass of a Parisian crowd at the period of our narrative. Amongst these the magistrates of the City, the provosts of the merchants, the echevins and their followers in bipartite robes of crimson, and tawny-coloured stuffs embroidered with a silver ship (the civic cognizance), the sergeants, archers, cross-bowmen, and arquebussiers of the town-guard cut a conspicuous figure. As usually happens, however, where a crowd is collected, the softer sex predominated. For one steel or felt cap there were ten coifs of silk or linen. Nor were the members of the various religious fraternities wanting : the gray or russet frock—the cowl or shaven head—and the long staff—might be detected amid the dense assemblage. Cordeliers, Carmelites, and Minims were mingled with the higher dignitaries of the church. The students of the University, ever on the alert when a spectacle was about

to take place, herded thither in vast bands. Here came a courtly Abbé—it was our acquaintance, Pierre de Bourdeille—upon a mule with its superb housings followed by a train of richly-clad lacqueys. The mob doffed their caps as Brantôme ambled on. Next appeared what in our own time would be regarded with much merriment, but which was then a matter of too frequent occurrence (*vide Sauval*) to excite either surprise or ridicule, a couple of gaily-attired youths mounted upon the same steed—then a cavalier and dame likewise on horseback, the latter seated *en croupe* on a velvet pillion, her features concealed, as was the universal mode with the ladies when out of doors, by a demi-mask. The housings of the charger were unusually superb; his broad martingal and wide-reined bridle being of crimson leather richly ornamented with gold. Next followed a company of singly-mounted cavaliers with a host of valets and attendants arrayed in the extremity of the court fashion, with dancing feathers and fluttering mantles;

the curveting of their coursers, and the blows of their *houssines*, as they dashed recklessly onwards, occasioned considerable confusion amongst the foot-passengers; and the smiles and compliments they lavished upon the fair *citoyennes* and their daughters hardly compensated with the bluff burgesses for their own sprained shoulders and broken heads. Nevertheless, in spite of the jostling and hustling, the striving, straining, and squeezing, the utmost good humour prevailed; but this, indeed, might be attributed to the presence of so many armed authorities.

Loud shouts were now raised, and the multitude was pushed backwards and driven into more compact masses as the magnificent litter of the Queen of Navarre was borne along to the Louvre. In vain did the spectators endeavour to catch a glimpse of the features or person of the lovely Marguerite. A mask defied their scrutiny, and she leaned back in her carriage as if anxious to elude observation. Not so her attendant

Torigni. The swanlike throat of the sprightly Florentine might be observed above the sides of the conveyance, and her snowy hand, divested of its glove, and covered with rings negligently arranged a raven ringlet. Marguerite's litter swept by, and was followed by the huissiers and guard of the governor of Paris. René de Villequier boasted the most magnificent caroché in Paris; and the vehicle which, upon this occasion, conveyed the portly person of the Marquis was little inferior in decoration and gilding, though somewhat different in construction, from our own Lord Mayor's state equipage.

Then came the trampling of hoofs, and the loud fanfares of trumpets, and the superbly-accoutred band of Gascon gentlemen—forty-five in number, whence their designation—commanded by the Baron D'Épernon, wheeled into sight; the sun-beams brightly glancing upon their corslets, and upon the tips of their lances. The last fourteen of this gallant company were sheathed in

complete steel with yellow scarves crossing their burnished cuirasses. Two pages succeeded in the violet-coloured livery of the Baron, with his blazon displayed upon their sleeves and doublets. Then came his esquires sustaining his shield, charged likewise with his cognizance; and lastly appeared D'Épernon himself in a costly suit of russet armour, enriched with chiselled arabesques and deep reliefs of gold,

Scarcely had the admiration excited by the Baron's retinue subsided, ere the spectators were attracted towards a further display of knightly splendour. A flourish of trumpets blown by six mounted men-at-arms, whose clarions were ornamented with silken bandrols fringed with gold, displaying the princely scutcheon of the family of Gonzaga, announced the approach of the Duke of Nevers. The Duke rode a noble Arabian courser, and proceeded at a slow and stately pace. His valets and pages were more numerous than those of the Baron D'Épernon, and he was attended by four gentlemen ushers who walked

by his side bareheaded, with wands in their hands. He was fully armed in a suit of Milan steel, of the finest workmanship. His breast-plate was brighter than silver, and reflected the rays of the sun as from a dazzling mirror. His bourginot, as well as his corslet, was crusted with gold and pearls, and from his neck, suspended to a chain of the same metal, hung the order of the Saint-Esprit : a plume of white ostrich feathers nodded on his crest. His demeanour was so dignified, and his train so sumptuous, that his appearance was greeted by the assemblage with deafening acclamations—acknowledged by the proud Duke with a haughty inclination of his head. Nor was the popularity of the wily Italian diminished, as his attendants showered amongst the mob broad silver pieces, for which they fought and scrambled. By his side, in his full ecclesiastical costume of scarlet silk simar with lawn sleeves and snowy rochet, and upon a sleek, well-fed mule, led by two attendants,

each of whom had a hand upon its bridle, rode Pierre de Gondi, Bishop of Paris; a prelate in high favour with the Queen-Mother, to whom, indeed, he owed his elevation. There was something sinister in the dark and shifting glance of this churchman of Florentine origin, which seemed to confirm the horrible reports that prevailed as to the motives of Catherine's predilection for him. But be this as it may, the hypocritical smile which now lit up his sallow features was construed by the observers into an expression of infinite benevolence, the rather that his almoner who followed closely at his heels, distributed his dole with no sparing hand.

Immediately behind the suite of the Duc de Nevers came an esquire of Vincenzo de Gonzaga bearing a small triangular shield, painted white, on which appeared the device of a sable mask, inscribed with the motto *Vendetta*. This esquire wore the livery of the Prince (the combined hues of red and yellow) displayed in the flowing satin housings of

his steed, traversed with broad cross-bars of orange and crimson, in his slashed velvet doublet, haut-de-chausses of different dyes, and parti-coloured plumes. Next advanced a band of youthful pages magnificently attired, and mounted on coursers caparisoned in cloth of gold, barred like the housings of the esquire, the stripes being described upon their gorgeous trappings by alternate lines of frieze-wrought, and smooth-beaten tissue. Upon the silken just-au-corps of each page was embroidered in golden thread the ducal badge of Mantua and Montferrat. So gorgeous were their appointments in detail, that their bonnets, shoes, saddles, bridles, and even the scabbards of their rapiers blushed with crimson velvet. Then followed a host of lacqueys on foot, similarly, though less splendidly arrayed: then another esquire sustaining the tri-coloured lance of the Prince, decorated with silken pennoncel: then two foot pages attired in habiliments of cloth of gold and silk, leading his steed—a mighty Allemayne charger

with eyes of flame, expanded nostril, and pawing hoof—furnished for Gonzaga's use by the provident Duc de Nevers. Thick crimson velvet housing, enwoven with the ducal cognizance covered this noble animal, and descended almost to his pastern joints; the saddle was of velvet of the same hue as the rest of the harness—the chamfrin, or head-piece was of gilded mail, with a short projecting steel pike, and tufts of scarlet, and saffron-stained plumes adorned his front and croup.

Lastly, armed cap-à-pee, in a suit of black mail embossed with gold and precious stones, rode the prince Vincenzo. A *garde-bras*, or *haute-pièce* as it was subsequently termed, covered the front of his cuirass, and defended his throat and left arm, so far as the gauntlet, but being of a single piece, and introduced in those later days of chivalry, for the better conservation of the jousts, the posture assumed by the knight, who adopted this safe-guard in the combat, became fixed and unalterable as that

of a statue ; his right arm alone being left at liberty. A tall egret of sable feathers shadowed his helm ; and with his visor closed, and maintaining, of necessity, a stern and moveless attitude, Gonzaga passed slowly onwards. His cortège was completed by another band of gaudy valets, and the minstrels, who enlivened the procession with the tambour, the cornet, and the clarion.

A fresh clangour of trumpets admonished the spectators, that other comers were at hand ; and the announcement was speedily followed by the brilliant retinue of the Vicomte de Joyeuse, which, if it could not vie with that of Gonzaga in magnificence, surpassed it in number and consequence, consisting of a throng of lordlings and youthful gentlemen of the best families of France, who were eager upon this occasion to array themselves under the banners of their monarch's chief favourite, and to distinguish themselves with the snowy scarf which he had adopted as his ensign. It was

true the same prodigality of cloth of gold and velvet was not here exhibited, as in the preceding cavalcade :—

Mais de harnois, ne d'armure de jousté
Ne leur falloit une petite pièce.

There was no lack of “tilting furniture, emblazoned shields.” A gayer troop was never seen. Nor could a greater contrast have been found to that which preceded it. The vivacity of their hilarious leader seemed to have diffused itself throughout his company. Success appeared to be written in their beaming features. Nothing was heard but shouts of laughter, and the jingling of arms; nothing seen but the waving of plumes and banners, the glimmer of helm and spear, and caracoling of coursers.

Completely armed in a suit of polished steel, Joyeuse rode a charger barded with *ung bel et grand couvrechief* of silver tissue, edged with azure fringe; and wore a scarf of white silk, richly embroidered, thrown across his left shoulder. From his morion floated

a lambrequin of slashed satin, and his surcoat was decorated with his armorial bearings. His handsome countenance was riant with gaiety; and he conversed in an animated manner with a knight, who careered by his side, and upon whom, even more than the Vicomte, the attention of the gazers was fixed. Nor was the appearance of this cavalier undeserving the admiration he excited. He seemed the very mirror of chivalry. The experienced horseman applauded the consummate grace with which he sat his courser (a powerful and beautifully-formed bay, whose skin shone almost as brightly as his rider's coat of mail), and the ease with which he ever and anon compelled him to perform the balotades, croupades and other graces of the high manège, alluded to in the following alliterative verses—

Vite virade,

Pompante pannade,

Suut soulevant,

Prompte petarrade.

while the female portion of the assemblage marvelled at the exceeding beauty of feature, disclosed by the open visor of his casque, and the manly symmetry of the limbs, defined by his light and curiously-fashioned breastplate, "brassards, cuissards, jamb and solleret." The housings of his steed were of white damask, diapered with gold, and bordered with miniver. His chamfrin was decorated like that of Gonzaga, with a superb *houpe de plumes*, and similarly accoutred. From the crest of the knight depended a lambrequin of slashed silk; and his surcoat was woven with his blazon, a lion rampant azure, armed, and langued gules.

Following this preux chevalier, rode two esquires, in liveries of azure and white; the one carrying his painted lance, on the coronel of which was fastened a knot of ribbands; the gage, doubtless, of the dame in whose honour he was about to run a course: the other bearing a silver shield with the device of a dragon vert, spouting out fire—and the motto

Loyal au mort, inscribed in blue characters upon a scroll.

When it became known to the assemblage that this knight, in whom all felt so much interest, was no other than the Admirable Crichton, the adversary of the Prince of Mantua, their acclamations were so loud and deafening; and the efforts of those in the rear so strenuous to obtain a nearer view of his person and features, that it required the application of both partisan and sword on the part of the attendants to keep back the rabble; while the object of their curiosity, apprehensive of some such tumult taking place, as occurred on the preceding day at the University, was fain to set spurs to his charger, and to urge his companions into a quicker movement, in order to escape from observation.

“By my halidom!” exclaimed Joyeuse, as they reached the grand portal of the Louvre, and found the space before it invested with a gay confusion of litters, caroches, steeds, lac-

queys and pages in their various and resplendent liveries—"to judge from this rout we shall have goodly attendance at our jousting. You must do your devoir gallantly, *mon cher*, for you will have the eyes of all the chivalry and beauty of France upon you. There is not a magnate of our court, whose colours I do not discern amidst yon rout of servitors. But we are late. Those knaves in the slashed doublets, form part of the train of our challenger's padrino. Gonzaga is already in the *steccato*."

"Better be the last to enter the field than the first to quit it," replied Crichton, smiling. "But whom have we here? By Saint Andrew! my gossip, Chicot. So ho! Bayard," cried he, patting the neck of his charger, who, obedient to his voice instantly stood still; but evinced his impatience by arching his neck, champng at the bit, snorting and pawing the ground. "What wouldst thou?" demanded the Scot, as the Jester approached him with an odd serio-comic look.

“ I am the bearer of a cartel to thee,” replied the Jester, in a tone of mock defiance.

“ Gramercy—gossip—a challenge !” ejaculated Crichton ; “ from thy brother, Siblot, to shiver a marotte against his cock’s-comb ?—ha ! But know’st thou not, that by the laws of honour, I am restrained from entering into a second quarrel, until my first be disposed of.”

“ I know it,” answered Chicot, in an under tone. “ But thou must offer some response, yea or nay, to my appeal. Here is the missive,” added he, delivering a perfumed note sealed and secured with a silken thread to the Scot ; “ peruse it and deliver me thine answer without wrong or supersticerie.”

“ The cipher of Marguerite de Valois,” exclaimed Crichton, as he regarded the billet ; “ nay then, it is indeed a combat à outrance.”

“ I would advise you to decline the encounter, or rather peaceably to arrange it,” returned the Jester ; “ but in the meantime

will it please you to read the cartel, and to furnish me with some token of your intentions to convey to my royal mistress."

Crichton hastily broke open the seal, and as his eye glanced over the contents of the note, a slight flush of anger rose upon his cheek.

"I will rather perish than accept the terms she proposes," murmured he, tearing it in pieces, and scattering the fragments to the breezes.

"Hold, gossip," cried Chicot, "reserve that thread of gold, I am to take that to her Majesty as a sign of your acquiescence."

"Never," answered Crichton sternly; "tell her I have burst her chains. She would have some token—tis well," added he, withdrawing his gauntlet from his hand, and giving the bezoar-ring to the Jester, "let this gem be a proof to her, that I neither fear her threats, nor will accept of her tenderness."

"At least beware of,—" but ere the Jester's warning could be concluded, Crichton had

given the rein to his steed and dashed swiftly through the gateway.

“ Par Saint Fiacre en Brie !” cried Chicot, looking after him with a smile of derision. “ I will prove a better friend to thee than thou deservest. This ring will well beseem my own finger, while this thread,” added he, picking up the fastening of the billet, “ will perfectly content her jealous majesty of Navarre. For what saith the good Pantagruel,

*Paternostres et oraisons
Sont pour ceux-là qui les retiennent :
Un giffre allant en fenaisons,
Est plus fort que deux qui en viennent.”*

And chanting this wholesome advice “ *de la marraine de mon grand-père,*” he entered the lofty portal of the Louvre.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LISTS.

Ce jour de may en beau harnois de guerre,
Nous joustames assez doucette^{ment},
Et de noz fais qui en voudroit enquerre
Icy n'en fais mencion autrement.

LOUIS DE BEAUVEAU. *Le pas de la Bergière.*

ACCOMPANIED by the Vicomte de Joyeuse, Crichton now rode into the *champ clos* appointed for the combat. Erected within a garden, or court as it might more properly be termed, at the back of the Louvre, the lists were elevated to the height of the thigh-piece of the jousters, and extended to the length of sixty yards ; while the space within the barriers being carefully sanded and cleared of all impediments, presented a very advantageous arena for the exhibition of knightly prowess.

Along the façade of the palace, on a level with the windows now thrown open, for the convenience of the spectators, was raised a temporary balcony, descending in wide steps, and hung with magnificent tapestry. Divided, at certain distances, into open canopies, fashioned of the richest brocade, decorated with fleurs-de-lys ciphers and escutcheons, and fluttering with silken streamers, this balcony occupied one side of the quadrangular court. At the further extremity of the lists stood a grand roofed gallery, supported by heavy pillars, destined for the reception of the three queens, their attendants and dames of honour. The curtains and hangings of this splendid structure were of gridelin velvet, flowered with ciphers of silver; displaying in the centre a vast argent shield, emblazoned with the royal escutcheon of France. At the right of the tilt-yard, was placed a scaffold, with palisades reserved for Montjoie, the king-of-arms, the marshals and judges of the field; and next to this, under a canopy fretted

with gold, ran a line of tabourets, set apart for the favourites of Henri III.; in the centre of which was a raised velvet fauteuil for his majesty's own occupation. At either end stood two pavilions of striped silk for the use of the esquires, armourers, and other attendants of the combatants. Upon a low scaffold to the left of the grand gallery, guarded by four officials, disguised in the ghastly leaden-coloured hood called the chaperon, and surrounded by a band of halberdiers, stood Ruggieri; with his hands folded upon his bosom, and his eyes fixed upon the ground.

Indicating to his retinue the position they were to occupy, Joyeuse rode through the entrance of the lists and joined the marshals of the field. Crichton followed more slowly. The breast of the Scot beat high as he gazed upon the inspiring scene. The morning was bright and beautiful; the sunbeams glanced on casque, on corslet, and on the thousand dyes of banner and blazon; the soft breeze tempered by the genial warmth of approaching spring,

served with its freshening breath to give enthusiasm to the heart, and vigour to the frame; and so fully did Crichton feel the influence of these stirring thoughts, that spurring his charger, he compelled him to perform a demi-volte in the air, and then to career round the arena. All was animation and excitement. The rustle of silks, the pleasant sound of gentle voices, the flash of brilliants from above, announced the arrival of the *anges de paradis*, (as they were rapturously termed by the minstrels) in the balconies. Each casement of the Louvre poured forth its stream of beauty; and as our hero gazed upon those lovely and high-born dames, whose natural charms were heightened to the utmost, by the aid of costliest ornament and dress, he felt his bosom beat with redoubled ardour. Reining his steed, he paused to look around. On all sides, were ranged dense masses of spectators, over whose uncovered heads bristled the glancing pikes and halberts of the sergeants. On the right of the royal

gallery were arrayed the fourteen followers of the Baron D'Épernon, glistening in steel, and headed by the Baron himself: on the left, behind the scaffold of the Astrologer, the sumptuous retinue of the Duc de Nevers. Bands of cavaliers, who, on the appearance of the dames on the balcony, regardless of the interdiction of the heralds, had dashed into the course, were now seen extending their lances towards its sides, from whence fell a shower of wreaths, bracelets and scarves, which were speedily attached to sallade and spear. Much occupation was thus given to the king-of-arms and the marshals, whose province was to maintain a clear field; and the champions, waving their hands to the mistresses of their hearts, quitted the ring. Amid the subordinate officers of the tilt-yard, we must not omit to enumerate the pursuivants, the trumpeters with their clarions dressed with silken flags, and troops of minstrels stationed at each outlet.

A shout was now raised by the crowd, and

the Scot's attention was directed towards the grand gallery, in which the Queen Louise and her demoiselles made their appearance. Amid the latter Crichton at once distinguished Esclairmonde. The Princess of Condé, as we shall henceforth style her, was perfectly pale ; but her want of colour in no wise detracted from her loveliness. On the contrary, she had never before appeared so eminently beautiful in the eyes of her lover ; nor had he heretofore, as he thought, remarked so much dignity and self-possession in her demeanour. In fact the events of the last night, and the knowledge so recently and mysteriously acquired of her exalted origin, had worked a sudden but entire change in Esclairmonde's character. She was no longer an orphan maiden without name, and without family. She now felt a pride, of which she had been hitherto unconscious kindled within her bosom ; and a resolution, as yet wholly unknown to her, animate and sustain her spirits against the perils and difficulties to which she was exposed. This new-

sprung courage was the more fully proved in the ordeal, to which she was shortly afterwards subjected in an interview with Catherine de Medicis, and Marguerite de Valois ; both of whom, with their attendants, now entered the gallery. But her firmness failed her not in this trial ; and she returned the scrutinizing look of the Queen-Mother, with a glance as lofty as her own. Marguerite was all smiles and courtesy : but the smile of a rival is seldom to be trusted, and Crichton, who was well acquainted with Marguerite's talent for dissimulation, read in her professions of friendship, and winning attentions, the deadliest treachery. These greetings concluded, Esclairmonde at the request of the Queen Louise, took the throne appointed for her as sovereign arbitress of the tourney,—a chair placed a little in advance of the royal seats, and so situated as to make her the principal object of attraction to the spectators. Her costume was a robe of white damask, flowered with silver, with sleeves of snowy silk of the

ample mode of the period, embroidered with roseate and green pearls. Never had Queen of the Lists appeared so attractive; and a murmur of admiration arose from the multitude as she became more fully revealed to their view.

At this moment the gaze of the Princess fell upon the knightly figure of her lover, who, bending to his saddle-bow, gracefully tendered his homage. As she returned his salutation Esclairmonde trembled—and her courage entirely forsook her. Crichton perceived the change in her deportment; and anxious, if possible, to dissipate her anxiety, compelled his steed into its liveliest caracoles; and was about to quit the field, when his progress was arrested by loud cries of “*Noel! Noel!—vive le roi—vive le roi.*” Fanfares of trumpets and the clash of cymbals succeeded, and Henri fully and magnificently armed, entered into the arena. He was attended by the Marquis de Villequier, Saint Luc, and a courtly throng. The royal charger (a

snowy Arabian) was caparisoned with sweeping bards of crimson velvet,—

Toutes chargées de riche orphaverie.

and figured with golden fleurs-de-lys. Courteously saluting the Scot, and bidding him prepare for the signal of the combat, which would be shortly given, Henri directed his course towards the grand gallery, and addressing Esclairmonde, solicited a *favour* at her hands, that he might break a lance in her behalf. Unable to refuse his request, Esclairmonde took a string of pearls from her rich auburn tresses, and despatched it to the monarch by a page. Acknowledging the boon with a smile of gratification, and passing many well-turned compliments upon her charms, Henri proceeded to hold a brief conference with the Duc de Nevers.

Crichton, meantime, rode into the pavilion appropriated to his attendants; the hangings of which were closely drawn after him. Dismounting from his steed, he was presently joined by the Vicomte de Joyeuse, Montjoie,

and Pierre de Gondi, by the latter of whom the customary oaths of the combat were administered. Kissing the crucifix and the *Te igitur*, the Scot next submitted himself to his armourer, who riveted upon his cuirass a placcate of shining steel, similar to that borne by Gonzaga. Being thus fully equipped for the fight, notwithstanding the increased weight of his armour, he vaulted into the saddle without the aid of the stirrup; and taking his lance from his esquire awaited the signal for the combat.

Henri having by this time taken his seat beneath the canopy, gave with his baton a signal to Montjoie, the king-at-arms, who, attended by two heralds, advanced amidst a flourish of clarions and hautboys, towards the centre of the arena; and, commanding silence, proclaimed with a loud voice the names and titles of the appellant and the defendant, together with their cause of quarrel, prohibiting all persons whatsoever, on pain of death, from offering any interruption, by word

or sign, to the combat. Fresh fanfares of trumpets succeeded this ceremonial during which all eyes had been fixed upon Ruggieri, who, though pale as death, maintained a composed and resolute demeanour, ever and anon stealing a glance towards the gallery, in which sat the Queen-Mother. Silence being once more restored, Montjoie cried aloud, "*Faites vos devoirs, chevaliers.*" On the third call, the curtains of the pavilions were swiftly drawn aside, and both knights issued forth, each taking up his position at the right of the barriers. Esclairmonde's bosom palpitated with emotion as she beheld the stately figure of her lover cased in steel, thus suddenly set before her, and recognized her own gage upon his lance's point. Any fears she might have entertained for his safety vanished in his presence; and with a heart throbbing with expectation, she heard the first blast of the clarion sound for the hostile career. A profound hush now reigned throughout the assemblage. Even the royal tenants of the

gallery rose and advanced towards its edge, and Marguerite de Valois disregarding Montjoie's injunction, leaned over the side of the balcony and waved her hand. Crichton perceived the action; and, unable otherwise to account for it, attributed it to some return of tenderness on the part of the impassioned queen. Again the trumpet sounded, and as this blast was blown, Crichton struck his spurs into his steed, executing a demivolte to the right, while he slightly raised his lance in the air, bringing the truncheon within a few inches of his thigh, in readiness for the career. In this action was displayed the unequalled grace and dexterity in the management of his steed, for which the Scot was so eminently distinguished. The martial notes of the clarion now resounded for the third time, and hurling a gauntlet to the ground, Montjoie shouted in a voice of thunder, "*Laissez-les aller—laissez-les aller.*"

Swift as the bolt from the cloud, did Crichton, at this signal, speed from his

post. As the steed started on his rapid career, the Scot, quick as thought, raised the truncheon of his lance to a level with his line of vision, and then firmly fixing it in its rest, declined its point towards the left ear of his charger as he approached within some half dozen paces of his adversary, and directed his aim against the upper part of his helm. Both lances were shivered as the champions met in mid career. Gonzaga's mark had been the same as that of his antagonist, but the point of his lance glanced off the sharp gorget of the plastron; while the blow of Crichton, taking place upon the crest of the Prince, carried off the panache with which it was surmounted, and scattered the plumes far and wide over the field. Neither, however, had been dismounted; and as each knight gracefully brought his steed to a rest, and hurled away the truncheon of his broken lance, he opened his gauntlet to show that he had sustained no injury from the encounter.

Snatching fresh lances from the attendants, the combatants again started on a new career. In this second attainte the advantage was decidedly in favour of the Scot; his lance striking his adversary's visor, and staggering him so much, that he could with difficulty rein in his charger. Notwithstanding the shock he had sustained, the prince seized a sharp-pointed lance from his esquire, and bidding a pursuivant communicate his intentions to his opponent, prepared himself for the final course.

The excitement of the spectators was now raised to the highest pitch. On the issue of this trial, depended the fate of the accused, and the movements of the combatants were watched with intense interest. For the third time they started upon their career. Upon this occasion the steel edge of Gonzaga's lance drew sparkles from the beaver of the Scot, as it came in contact with his helm; but the blow, though well directed, could not shake the firm horseman in his saddle. Not so was

it with Gonzaga. The stroke of Crichton, into which he had thrown all his force, was dealt with such resolution upon the visor of Vincenzo, that, unable to resist its violence, and still maintaining his hold of the bridle, horse, and rider were hurled backwards upon the dust.

Instantly recovering his feet, and unclasping his visor, with a countenance flushed with shame and fury, the Prince walked across the lists to the tribunal of the judges, and claimed in a haughty tone, to be allowed the privilege of the combat with the sword. This request was peremptorily refused, but Crichton, riding up at the same moment, generously seconded his adversary's request, and refusing to consider the triumph he had obtained as decisive, Montjoie's objections were overruled, and the combatants retired to renew their conflict with different weapons. The cheers, meanwhile, from the lookers-on, were almost stunning; and the courtesy of the Scot was on all hands loudly applauded.

Crichton now withdrew to the pavilion, where his armourer unbraced his *haute-pièce*, and furnished him with another and lighter morion of Damascus steel, crested with a tall cluster of white feathers. A long estoc was girt to his side, and to the pommel of his saddle was fastened a keen well-tempered *miséricorde*. Thus accoutred, he mounted a light agile barb, sent to him by the Vicomte de Joyeuse, as being fitter for the rapid and furious passades he would now have to perform, than his own charger, and returned to the lists “*bien gentement ferant de l’esperon.*”

Meanwhile, the barriers which traversed the arena, had been removed, and the space was left vacant for the combat. As he passed through the outer pales, his visor was raised, and he cast a look towards the gallery in which Esclairmonde was seated. The Princess rose as he appeared and gracefully saluted him. Crichton returned her greeting, and unsheath-

ing his sword, kissed the hilt as if he had vowed to draw it in her name. The action was not unobserved by Marguerite de Valois, over whose countenance came a sudden and fearful change. The Vicomte de Joyeuse on the one hand, and the Duc de Nevers on the other, had in the interim marked out upon the sand of the tilt-yard, a circular space, within the limits of which it was necessary that the combatants should keep. Armed in all respects like his antagonist, and similarly mounted, Gonzaga now rode into the lists. Making a motion to the Duc de Nevers, that he desired an instant's speech of the Chevalier Crichton, apart from their *parrains*, he rode towards the Scot, who sheathed his sword as he drew nigh and advanced to meet him. This proceeding on the part of the Prince was watched with great anxiety by the spectators, who were apprehensive lest they should lose the most interesting part of the anticipated spectacle. Their doubts, however, were quickly relieved

as they noted the imperious gestures of Gonzaga, and the corresponding haughtiness with which they were received by his adversary.

“Chevalier Crichton,” said the Prince, in a deep low tone—“I am aware that by the laws of arms I am already vanquished, and not more so by your address, than by your generosity. So much am I beholden to you for the opportunity you have afforded me of redeeming my honour, that I would evince my sense of your high and chivalrous conduct by the proffer of my friendship, if so be you will accept it in lieu of doing battle upon a quarrel which methinks might be easily adjusted.”

“Prince of Mantua,” replied Crichton, courteously—“I should be proud to accept your friendship could I do so without impeachment of my honour. But it may not be. I have denounced Ruggieri as false and perjured; an enemy of God, and a traitor to his king. You have falsified my charge—and I must make good my accusation with my sword.”

“ Enough,” replied the Prince, haughtily—
“ once and again, I thank you. You have now
liberated me from the weight of obligation
under which my spirit laboured. The combat
which ensues must be a duel to the death.
Your generosity might have restrained my
arm. It is now free to strike—and by Saint
Paul, I charge you look well to yourself.”

“ To your post then, Prince,” replied Crichton, sternly, “ and by the aid of God, our
Lady, and Saint George the good knight, I
will approve with my body against your body
the justice of my quarrel.”

Saying which, with a proud salutation,
he closed the visor of his helm, and backed
his charger till he brought him on a line with
the Vicomte de Joyeuse, while Gonzaga turn-
ing his horse’s head, rejoined his sponsor and
second the Duc de Nevers.

After some little further delay, the com-
batants, placed about forty paces asunder,
awaited with rapier drawn and beaver up
the fulfilment of the trumpeter’s devoir. As

the third charge was sounded grasping the rein firmly with his left hand, plunging his spurs up to the rowel in the flanks of his steed, and raising his sword-arm in the air, each champion dashed furiously against the other, dealing, as he passed him, a mandritta, or blow from right to left, on his antagonist's casque, and then wheeling suddenly round, performed a demi-volte with curvets, and returning with the same fury as before, reiterated his stroke. Upon the third encounter, executing a shorter demi-volte, Crichton turned sharply round and faced his assailant. Continuing their curvets and voltes, each champion then discharged a succession of imbrocatas and riversas upon his enemy's morion and breastplate. No attempt on either side, on the onset, appeared to be made to ward off those blows, but on the third volte Crichton directed a heavy stramazone (or cutting blow) against Gonzaga's crest. The Prince raised his estoc to beat away the

blow, but the weapon flew from his grasp, and so terrible was the stroke, that Crichton's own blade shivered to the hilt. Plucking his dagger from its sheath, and grasping it in his right hand, each now spurred his steed close to that of his antagonist. Accustomed to this species of encounter, the animals stood stock still. Crichton then grasped the left hand of his enemy, and a deadly struggle ensued.

It was evident to the spectators that a few more blows would now decide the conflict, and their interest rose in proportion. Not a breath was drawn. Esclairmonde leaned over the balcony with a look as if her own life hung upon that of her lover. Nor could Catherine de Medicis, whose cause was leagued with that of the opposite party, control her anxiety. At this moment, a voice soft and low, in whose tones, altered as they were by passion, she yet recognized those of Marguerite de Valois, reached the ear of the Princess of Condé.

“ I would give my soul to perdition,” said the Queen of Navarre, “ to see the poignard of Gonzaga pierce the heart of his enemy.”

“ For pity’s sake— wherefore ?” asked the Princess without removing her gaze from the combatants.

“ To be avenged of thee,” answered Marguerite in a hollow voice.

“ Gracious heaven !” exclaimed the Princess —“ thy horrible wish is accomplished—he falls—he falls.”

In the struggle it appeared that the dagger of the Prince, glancing from the corslet of the Scot, had dangerously wounded the steed of the latter in the neck. The blood gushed in torrents from the deep gash, and the horse reeled with faintness. Pursuing an advantage obtained contrary to the laws of the combat, which forbade hurt to be done to the charger, Gonzaga threw himself furiously upon his antagonist, endeavouring to drive him beyond the boundary described upon the arena ; but Crichton, feeling his steed totter

under him, avoided the blow by leaning backwards; and disengaging at the same moment his feet from the stirrup, leapt to the ground, and ere the Prince could regain his balance, seized him by the arm, and dragged him from the saddle.

The conflict was now continued on foot. Blow after blow was dealt upon helm and cuirass. The tilt-yard rang like the forge of an armourer. Hacked off by the trenchant edges of the poignards, chips of the gold embossments and enamel strewed the arena, promising a rich harvest for the heralds. Gonzaga displayed all the address of a finished man-at-arms. In strength he was evidently inferior to his antagonist, but so expert was he in the use of the dagger, so dexterous in avoiding foyns and thrusts which must have proved fatal had they taken effect, that the spectators felt doubtful as to the issue of the strife. At length, the poignard of Crichton, driven through the vantbrace of the Prince, but without inflicting more than a

trifling scratch, snapped in twain, and he appeared at the mercy of his opponent. Ruggieri lifted up his hands and uttered an exclamation of joy.

“ Now Heaven be praised !” cried Catherine de Medicis—“ the right will triumph.”

“ He is not yet vanquished, Madame,” exclaimed Esclairmonde,—“ and trust me, the right *will* triumph.”

As she spoke the Prince advanced his dagger’s point to the throat of Crichton, and glancing at him through the bars of his visor, commanded him to yield.

“ Yield,” replied Crichton, fiercely—“ it is a word I have never pronounced. Let this decide the combat.”

Saying which, with the broken blade of his poignard he delivered so terrible a blow upon the morion of the Prince, that head and casque appeared to be crushed by it. Gonzaga fell without sense or motion ; a stream of gore flowing from out his visor.

“ Yield prince,” exclaimed Crichton, stoop-

ing over him, and snatching the dagger from his loosening grasp, “ or by Saint Andrew ! you have breathed your last.”

But Gonzaga answered not.

At this moment the Duc de Nevers and the Vicomte de Joyeuse, followed by Montjoie and his attendants, spurred their horses to the spot.

“ The victory is yours, Chevalier Crichton ; slay him not,” cried the Duke, flinging himself from his steed ; “ ha ! ” exclaimed he, as he regarded the motionless form of the Prince—“ you have destroyed the hopes of my brother of Mantua. By Saint Francis ! you shall answer to me for this deed.”

“ If the Prince is slain, he hath perished in the quarrel he himself provoked,” replied Crichton sternly,—“ to yourself, my lord, or to others of his house, I will answer for what I have done.”

“ The Prince your nephew hath been fairly vanquished, my lord,” said Joyeuse ; “ and the only felon stroke dealt during the combat,

was that by which yon bleeding charger was wounded.”

“ And that was accidental,” said Crichton.

By this time the attendants had unclasped Vincenzo’s helmet, and though stunned and wounded by the concussion, his life was evidently not in danger. Satisfied with this examination, the Duke became eager in his apologies to the Scot for the impatience he had exhibited; and his excuses being courteously accepted, he next directed his followers to remove the senseless body of the Prince from the field. While this took place, amid the shouts of the spectators, and a loud flourish of trumpets, Crichton proceeded to the canopy occupied by the king, and prostrated himself before him. Henri greeted him with a smile, and raising him from the ground, passed many encomiums upon the bravery he had displayed.

“ You have approved yourself a loyal and valiant knight,” said he, “ Chevalier Crichton, and have fully established the truth of the charge you brought yesternight against

the traitor Ruggieri. His guilt admits of no further justification. *Quia transivit in rem judicatam, et judicatum debet inviolabiliter observari*, as is appointed by the ordinance of our predecessor, the good king Philippe-le-Bel, respecting the judicial combat. Par la Mort dieu! the place de Grève shall blaze this night with his funeral pyre. Let him be removed to the Châtelet, and see whether the question will extract the truth from his lips."

"My gracious liege," said Crichton, "I crave a boon at your hands."

"Name it," replied the King, "if it refer not to one, whom we will not name, it is yours, ere asked."

"Let the punishment to which you have condemned the traitor Ruggieri be commuted into perpetual exile."

"Do I hear you rightly?" asked Henri in surprise.

"Grant me his life, Sire, upon the terms I shall propose to him;" continued Crichton.

"He is in your hands—deal with him as you see fitting," returned Henri, "Bring

hither the traitor," added he, speaking to his attendants, "and let him now be confronted with his accuser."

And half dead with terror the Astrologer was dragged by his hooded attendants into the King's presence, amid the execrations of the spectators.

"Cosmo Ruggieri, thy guilt is fully approved," said Henri sternly,—“thy sentence, whether of death or banishment, rests with the Chevalier Crichton. It is with him to pronounce thy doom. Down on thy knees, miscreant, and sue for grace. To me thou pleadest in vain.”

Crichton approached the Astrologer, who cast himself abjectly at his feet, embracing his knees, and striving to move his compassion with floods of tears.

“Mercy,” cried he, in a piteous tone.

“Thou wilt find none, unless thou provest obedient,” replied Crichton — “Arise and listen to me.”

And as Ruggieri obeyed, Crichton whispered

in his ear the conditions upon which he might look for clemency. The Astrologer started and trembled.

“ I dare not,” said he, after a moment’s pause, during which he stole a troubled glance towards the gallery.

“ To the rack with him,” said Crichton.

The hooded officials instantly darted upon him like kites towards a carcass.

“ Hold!—hold!” cried Ruggieri, “ I cannot brave that dreadful engine. I will do as you command me.”

“ Take him hence, then,” commanded Crichton, “ and let him remain with a sufficient guard within my pavilion until after the tourney.”

“ Your own lives shall answer for him,” added Henri, as the Astrologer was removed ; “ and now, *mon cher* Crichton,” added he, “ if you would effect the liberation of a captive princess from an Enchanted Castle, in which she is detained by magic arts, haste and equip yourself in fresh armour. Joyeuse will find you another steed in lieu of the one slain by the

felon blow of your antagonist. Away, arm yourself and join our ranks. And now, messeigneurs, for the Châtel de la Joyeuse Garde! What, ho! Du Halde—my horse—my gallant Papillon.”

Crichton joyfully departed to array himself for this new encounter; while the King, mounting his snow-white Arabian, proceeded to superintend the preparations for the grand estour. As he rode across the arena a billet was presented to him by a page in the livery of Catherine de Medicis. Henri knit his brow as he perused it.

“Peste!” muttered he—“am I ever to be a puppet in my mother’s hands?—By Saint-Louis! this shall never be. And yet all things considered it may be better to concede this trifle. Du Halde,” added he, beckoning to the Chief Valet, and speaking in an under-tone—“get thee to Crichton’s pavilion, and contrive some means for Ruggieri’s instant escape. We desire not to be known in this matter.—Thou understandest—about it quickly.”

Du Halde departed on his mission, and Henri, turning to his courtiers, with a smile that but ill-concealed his mortification, said, “ It is our mother’s pleasure, Messieurs, that the grand mêlée be deferred till night. The defence of the châtel will, therefore, take place, as at first designed, by torchlight. Joyeuse, do thou give orders to this effect. Her Majesty hath desired instant speech with us—on affairs of state,” added he, in a sarcastic tone, “ we presume—no matter—after our conference, which we shall certainly not prolong, it is our intention to essay a course with this preux Scottish knight, in honour of our fair Queen of the Lists.”

Saying which, the Monarch pressed forward, and dismounting from his charger, entered the royal gallery.





